

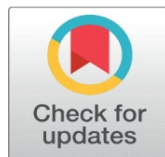
ETHOS, PATHOS, AND LOGOS IN CORPORATE PRESENTATIONS: A RESEARCH CASE STUDY OF THE FIRST IPHONE LAUNCH PRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

The present research paper is an examination of the rhetorical methods that were used by Steve Jobs when launching the first iPhone at the Macworld Conference and Expo 2007 on January 9, 2007. The presentation is commonly seen as one of the most influential product launches in the corporate history since it was a mixture of technological innovation and the outstanding use of persuasive communication. This research employs the qualitative case study research design and applies the classical rhetorical system of ethos, pathos and logos to the presentation style, speech structure, visual design, and audience engagement strategies used by Jobs. The data was elicited by launch transcripts, video recordings, published commentary, and scholarly literature on rhetoric and business communication. Results show that Jobs was strategic in establishing credibility by using the reputation of Apple as well as his own persona, created emotional excitement by using suspense, humor and visionary language, and supported claims logically through live demonstrations and comparative reasoning. Other devices like repetition, contrast, storytelling and minimalist slides further enhanced the persuasive power. The paper theorizes that effective corporate presentations are not only based on the quality of products, but also on the framing of the story, the psychology of the audience, and the rhetorical performance. Furthermore, the paper will consider how Jobs kept the design of his slides to a minimum and how he always made time to slow down his speech in order to maximize the convincing effect of his words. Breaking down these components, the study will help to shed some light on successful strategies of public speaking that can be implemented in different fields. Learning the rhetorical strategy used by Jobs can provide useful lessons to professional, business leaders, marketing managers, and presenters aiming to influence and motivate their audiences, consumers, media, and presenters. The paper concludes that the launch of the iPhone by Steve Jobs is a lasting example of how leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, marketers, and professionals can use to communicate innovation successfully in competitive markets.

Keywords: Persuasion, Communication, Rhetoric, Product Launching Presentation, Ethos, Pathos, Logos, Public Speaking

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern life of the organization, especially in the organization, communication is one of the most precious assets. Companies might have the best products, the best technology, the best capital, the best motivator, the best attractor all, but without the best communication they may fail to gain consumer confidence, investor interest, employee

motivation or market attention. In this regard, corporate presentations have become strategic leadership and branding tools. Product launches in particular, are high stakes situations where organizations are trying to convince more than one stakeholder at the same time.

One of the most popular examples of corporate communication is the presentation of the first iPhone by Steve Jobs in 2007. This was more than just the introduction of a new device. It reset expectations when it comes to executive talks, product narration and brand persuasion. Jobs made a technical release a cultural one, and took a blend of drama, reasoning, anticipation, and emotional appeal.

The iPhone itself was an invention, yet its commercial and symbolic success was also due to the manner of its introduction. The style of presentation used by Jobs showed that the presentation can be used to shape the perception, accelerate the adoption and frame the innovation as the natural progression.

In this paper, the launch of the first iPhone is studied in the light of the rhetorical framework of Aristotle: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic). These principles, notwithstanding the fact that they were developed in classical Greece, have a strong relevance in the discourses of business communication, politics, education, media, and leadership.

The main thesis of this paper is that Steve Jobs success in the launch of the iPhone was not necessarily due to the product itself but to his skill in applying rhetoric. The paper aims at eliciting lessons on contemporary professionals who need to convey ideas convincingly by examining his language, delivery, sequencing, visual design, and the management of his audience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhetoric is the art and science of persuasion of ancient times. Aristotle has defined rhetoric as - the faculty of seeing in any given case, the available means of persuasion- (2007). The treatise of Rhetoric by Aristotle has had a significant and long lasting influence in the development of Rhetoric studies. Famous Roman rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian together with the followers of their teachings applied all the aspects of the rhetorical theory of Aristotle to their teaching. One of the main discoveries was that the concept of persuasion, introduced by Aristotle is closely intertwined with the concepts presented in his works on logic, ethics, politics, and psychology.

Figure 1

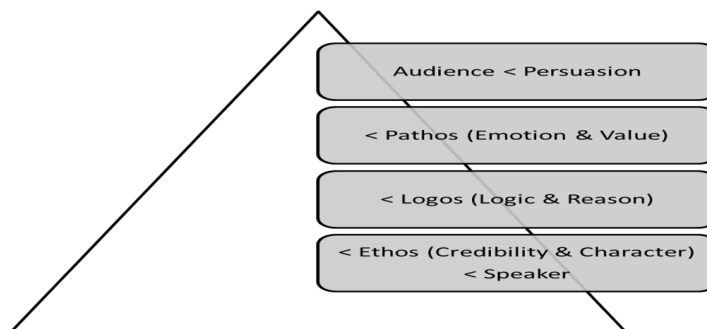


Figure 1 Elements of Rhetoric

Rhetoric has been influencing the manner of constructing and communicating arguments over the centuries (Herrick, 2018). It suggests that persuasive arguments should be used to persuade an audience. According to Aristotle, these arguments could be effectively built with the help of the three modes of persuasion Ethos, Pathos, and Logos (Aristotle, trans.). (2007). These three appeals are acceptable in the modern rhetorical theories, which approve the importance of these three appeals in the modern rhetorical theories (Heinrichs, 2017). Ethos (Credibility or Character): This is an appeal to credibility and moral character of the speaker, and makes the argument more credible (Kennedy, 1994). Ethos is significant in political, social, and professional communication, during which the credibility of the speaker has an impact on the attitude and emotions of the audience (Crowley and Hawhee, 2016). Logos (Logical Appeal) is the appeal to logic and reason, through the use of facts, data and rational arguments they are able to convince an audience (Bitzer, 1968). In academic writing, scientific, and legal argumentation, logical thinking is essential (Toulmin, 2003). Pathos (Emotional Appeal) is an appeal to the emotions of the audience, making them feel to be more persuasive

(Heinrichs, 2017). Emotional appeal is an essential approach to advertisement and political speech (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). The theory of the rhetoric developed by Aristotle has three primary branches: forensic (judicial), epideictic (demonstrative), and deliberative (political speeches).

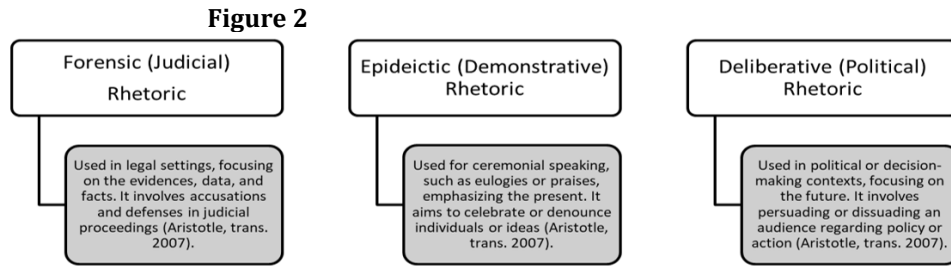


Figure 2 Branches of Rhetoric

Rhetoric has evolved from Greek era this modern digital era. Its adaptability ensures its relevance in different domains of contemporary world. The evolution timeline is as follows:

Table 1

Table 1 Evolution of Rhetoric			
Period	Key Developments	Influential Thinkers	References
4 th Century BCE (Origin)	<i>Rhetoric</i> as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." Introduces ethos, pathos, and logos.	Aristotle	Aristotle (trans. 2007), Kennedy (1991)
1 st BCE - 5 th CE (Roman Adaptation)	Roman orator Cicero uses <i>Rhetoric</i> with oratory aspects. Quintilian focuses the ethical dimension of rhetoric.	Cicero, Quintilian	May (1988), Murphy (2001)
5 th -15 th Century (Medieval Period)	Thomas Aquinas integrates Aristotelian rhetoric into Christian theology.	Thomas Aquinas	Black (1990), McKeon (1942)
15 th -18 th Century (Renaissance and Enlightenment)	<i>Rhetoric</i> leads to humanist education reforms. Renaissance thinkers discuss the role of rhetoric in reasoning.	Erasmus, Petrarch, Francis Bacon, John Locke	Conley (1990), Howell (1971)
19 th -20 th Century (Communication and Media)	Aristotle's ideas regarding visual communication influence political speeches and mass media.	Kenneth Burke, Lincoln, Churchill	Burke (1950), Leff (2003), McLuhan (1964)
21 st Century (Contemporary Modern-Day Communication)	Aristotle's persuasion principles are applied in digital rhetoric and business communication.	Digital media theorists	Zappen (2005), Miller (2020), Gross and Walzer (2000)

Rhetorical elements are used by businesses to create an appealing narrative attracting customers and other stakeholders. As an illustration, Apple branding is highly based on ethos (credibility of the brand), pathos (emotional connection with innovation and creativity), and logos (technical specifications and product benefits) (Scott, 2020). Modern business communication embraces the use of rhetoric strategies, which help increase clarity, persuasiveness, and engagement with the audience. Rhetoric is a tool that is used by an effective leader to inspire, motivate and influence employees. It has been found that more cohesive teams are created by business leaders who employ persuasive tale telling and emotional appeal (Gallo, 2016). The industries going through crisis use rhetorical approaches to regain the confidence of the people. As an example, in the case with the Volkswagen emissions scandal, the reaction of the company incorporated ethos (recognizing a sense of responsibility), logos (offering remedial actions), and pathos (expressing regret) (Coombs, 2020). Convincing dialogues are part and parcel of business transactions and corporate talks. Rhetorical techniques that executives commonly use include anaphora (repetition with emphasis), rhetorical questions and metaphors (Higgins and Walker, 2012). Therefore, Rhetoric is an essential instrument used in contemporary business communication, which influences interaction between firms, staff, and consumers. Through proper application of components of ethos, pathos, and logos, business communicators can be able to create better clarity, engagement, and persuasion in business communication. The value of this paper is to interpret the first iPhone launch in a systematic way using the rhetorical theory.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following questions will be examined in relation to the first iPhone launch presentation by Steve Jobs:

- To find instances of ethos, pathos and logos within the speech.
- To examine other rhetorical elements like suspense, repetition, humor, and contrast.
- To get an idea of how rhetoric was able to increase audience reaction and product perception.
- In order to extract some lessons on how to communicate in a modern company.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- In what ways did Steve Jobs build credibility in the presentation?
- What emotional strategies were employed to create excitement?
- How were rational arguments put forth to support the value of the product?
- What were some other rhetorical devices that enhanced persuasion?
- What do you think are the practical lessons to leaders and professionals?

5. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design: The current study will take a case study approach, which is qualitative. A case study is suitable since it would enable a close look at a single high-impact event of communication in real-life situations. Case Selection: The launch of the iPhone in 2007 was chosen due to: It has historical significance. It got international attention of the media. It had an impact on the standards of presentation in the future. Video and transcript information are publicly accessible. It is deep in illustration of the rhetoric in business practice.

6. DATA SOURCES

- Video recordings taken publicly of the launch.
- Speech transcripts.
- Slide pictures and screen shots.
- Books on Jobs and commentary on communication by Jobs.
- Scholarly sources in the field of rhetoric.

7. METHODOLOGICAL STEPS

- Went through the entire presentation.
- Organized the presentation into sections: opening, build-up, reveal, demonstration, closing.
- Coded visual and verbal information based on ethos, pathos, logos.
- Identified rhetorical devices like: repetition, humor, metaphor, contrast, suspense, pause.
- Synthesized managerial implications.

8. LIMITATIONS

- The study focuses on one presentation and cannot represent all corporate contexts. Audience reaction data are interpretive rather than experimental.

9. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The presentation of the iPhone launching was one of the most iconic events in the history of business communication because of the credibility of Steve Jobs, as a visionary leader, logical explanation of the technology of the product, and emotional appeal to the audience. Jobs effectively combined ethos, pathos and logos to craft an involving and compelling product introduction. The rhetoric presentation of Steve Jobs during the first introduction of iPhones can be analyzed as follows:

The persona of Jobs, and how he presented Apple, with the introduction of the Ethos of Apple, was an important part of the presentation.

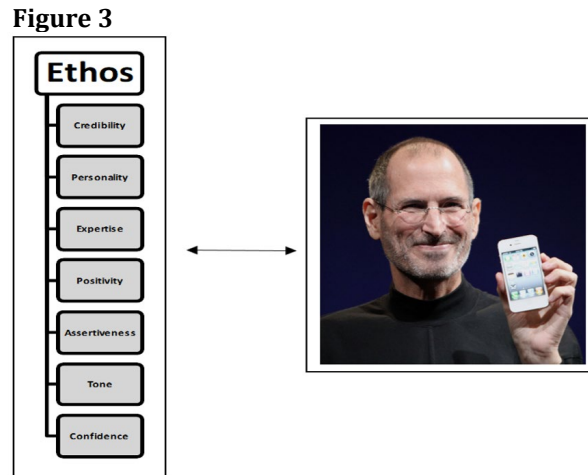


Figure 3 Elements of Ethos

Being the co-founder and CEO of Apple, Jobs already commanded a considerable degree of credibility, yet he further strengthened this credibility by recounting the history of innovation at Apple, citing such historic hits of Apple products as the Macintosh, iPod and iTunes. Moreover, the stage presence of a charismatic Jobs who wore his signature black turtleneck and jeans, created a level of authenticity, making Jobs a person to whom one could relate but who could dictate.

He used pathos by using storytelling techniques, including curiosity, humor, thrills, and personal anecdotes as a way of establishing an emotional connection. He masterfully resorted to pathos, the appeal to emotions, in order to appeal to media and audience.

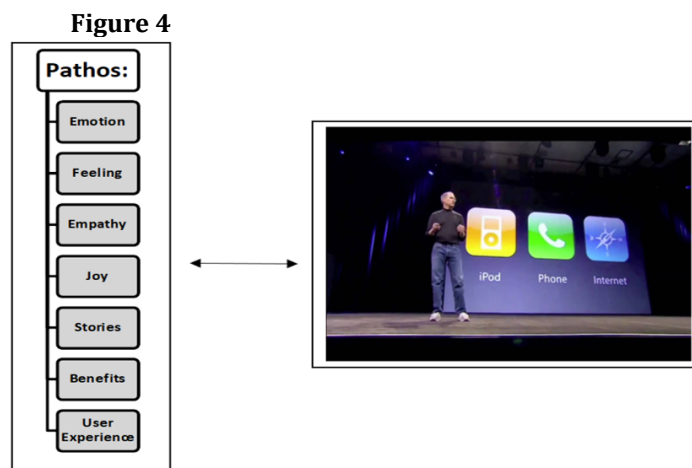


Figure 4 Elements of Pathos

Additionally, his use of inclusive sentences, such as - “We’ve reinvented the phone” fostered a sense of belonging, making the audience feel like they were part of a historic moment.

To employ Logos, Jobs highlighted the iPhone’s revolutionary features, such as touchscreen interface, lack of a physical keyboard, and seamless integration of phone, iPod, and internet technology. Logical and reasons were visible in his structured arguments and factual comparisons with other cell phones.

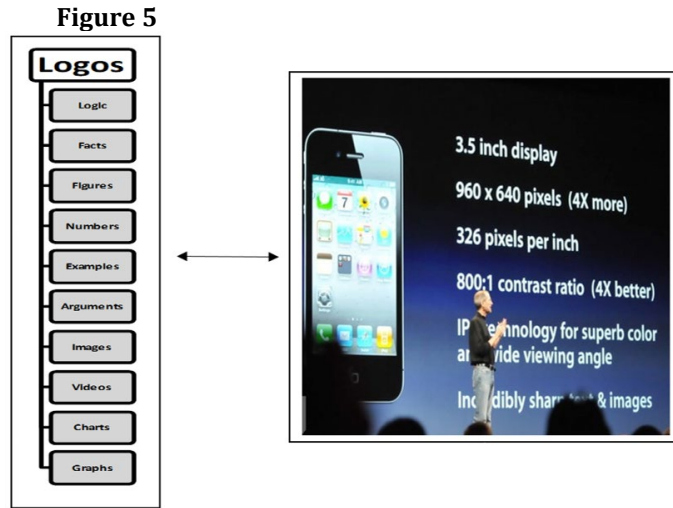


Figure 5 Elements of Logos

He provided side-by-side comparisons with existing mobile phones, demonstrating their limitations and positioning the iPhone as a superior alternative. Live demonstrations, such as scrolling through contacts and browsing the web, served as tangible proof of the device’s functionality, reinforcing his claims through visual evidence. The analysis of speech contents used by Steve Jobs' having rhetorical appeal during the iPhone launch using is as follows:

Table 2

Table 2 Analysis of Speech Content		
Rhetorical Appeal	Sample of Steve Jobs' Speech	Analysis
Ethos (Credibility)	<i>"Apple has been very fortunate to introduce a few revolutionary products. In 1984, we introduced the Macintosh. In 2001, we introduced the first iPod. Today, we are introducing three revolutionary products."</i>	Jobs discussed Apple's credibility by presenting past successes, positioning the iPhone as the next major innovation.
Pathos (Emotional Appeal)	<i>"Every once in a while, a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything."</i>	Jobs created excitement making the audience feel like they are witnessing historical event.
Logos (Logical Reasoning)	<i>"An iPod, a phone, and an internet communicator... Are you getting it? These are not three separate devices. This is one device, and we are calling it iPhone."</i>	He uses logical sequencing and clear argumentation to explain why the iPhone have multiple functions in it.
Ethos (Credibility)	<i>"We've been working on this for over two and a half years."</i>	Jobs reassures the audience that the iPhone is the result of extensive research and development, reinforcing Apple's expertise.
Pathos (Emotional Appeal)	<i>"We're gonna make some history together today."</i>	He connects with the audience emotionally, making them feel like participants in an important event.
Logos (Logical Reasoning)	<i>Demonstrating the multi-touch interface and explaining its functionality in real time.</i>	He provides practical, step-by-step demonstrations to validate the iPhone's usability and technological superiority.
Ethos (Credibility)	<i>"Apple is five years ahead of any other phone."</i>	Jobs claims Apple's leadership in innovation, reinforcing the company's status as a pioneer in the tech industry.

Pathos (Emotional Appeal)	<i>Showing a picture of traditional mobile phones and mocking their clunky keyboards.</i>	He humorously contrasts old technology with the sleek iPhone, appealing to the audience's desire for modernity and elegance.
Logos (Logical Reasoning)	<i>Explaining the physics of multi-touch technology and why it works better than traditional buttons.</i>	Jobs rationally breaks down how Apple's technology surpasses competitors, making a convincing argument for the iPhone's innovation.

10. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that effective persuasion is multidimensional. Had an unknown company made identical claims, skepticism would have been higher. Jobs' credibility lowered resistance. This supports Kennedy's argument that speaker character strongly influences acceptance. Consumers rarely purchase based on utility alone. Identity, excitement, prestige, and emotional anticipation shape decisions. Jobs made the audience feel they were witnessing the future. This aligns with Heinrichs (2017). Emotion without proof can collapse into hype. Jobs neutralized skepticism through live demonstrations. This supports Toulmin's evidence-centered reasoning model. The greatest strength was integration: Ethos made people listen; Pathos made people care; Logos made people believe. This combination explains why the launch remains iconic. Many corporate presentations fail because they contain: Excessive bullet points, Dense jargon, Weak narrative flow, Little audience emotion, and Poor delivery. Thus, the launch became communication theatre supported by substance.

11. CONCLUSION

Steve Jobs' iPhone launch presentation remains a benchmark for persuasive communication. By skillfully leveraging ethos, pathos, and logos, along with compelling visuals and deliberate pacing, he not only introduced a revolutionary product but also inspired and persuaded his audience. His rhetorical approach provides valuable lessons for professionals across various domains, business leaders, marketers, and public speakers—who seek to influence and inspire their audiences. Understanding and applying these techniques can enhance one's ability to communicate effectively and drive impactful change.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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