



## For the Love of Jim Beam

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H. G. Wells said, "Advertising is just legalized lying," (*qtd. in Michael Jackman, Crown's Book of Political Quotations, 1982, New York: Crown Publishing Inc., p. 2.*) but, in the case of the Jim Beam ad from the 2002 December issue of Rolling Stone Magazine, painful honesty is also a way to sell bourbon. The ad itself is straightforward, pictured in black and white. It portrays a man riding up an escalator, alone, carrying a briefcase, in what appears to be an airport or train terminal. The only writing

included in the ad is a sign over the escalator that says: "A lot easier to give than a hug" with a picture of a bottle of Jim Beam next to the phrase. Without wordiness or overselling buyers, Jim Beam has simply attempted to sell liquor based on its ability to alleviate social awkwardness. In terms of rhetorical analysis, the ad depends mostly on Pathos, to a lesser degree Ethos, and distinctly lacks any sort logical reason that would accompany Logos.

The advertisement is directed at a fairly broad audience. Readers of Rolling Stone Magazine and the people most likely to respond to this ad are probably 20 to 30 year-old, caucasian males. These men are probably single, given that men who hug women generally do not stay single very long. The professional status of men this ad is generated for is probably somewhere between blue collar and white collar, given the audience of Rolling Stone Magazine. Their hobbies are probably social drinking, hanging out with friends, music and other general forms of laid back entertainment. Factors such as sexual orientation, political affiliation and area of residence are all irrelevant here because of the broad nature of the ad's single statement. Religious audiences that do not drink are definitely excluded from the customer base because of their beliefs. The only person represented within the ad is a 30 to 40 year-old white man, who is slightly overweight and who, from the back, seems to be balding. He is carrying a brief case and wears semi-professional clothing. He is, therefore, the sum of many characteristics that are easily related to by the target audience.

This ad's appeal to credibility through Ethos, though limited, is still present. Jim Beam seems to be reaching out as a fellow man with the same values and beliefs as its target audience of single white men, men who value alcohol as a form of social acceptance. The figure in the ad may even be a generic representation of the average Rolling Stone Magazine reader's future, one which Jim Beam strives to make more enjoyable or maybe just more acceptable. A further aspect of the Ethos represented to this ad's viewers is the appreciation of "a good time" which is something that, for this audience, is likely to be induced by alcohol, rather than time spent sharing feelings or other more feminine activities like hugging. The slogan, "A lot easier to give than a hug," is a clear and confident appeal from Jim Beam to those who view alcohol as an avoidance technique for physical intimacy. The ad is also made to appeal to its target audience based on basic stereotypes about the male value of image and manliness. That generalization goes hand in hand with the ad's presumed male characteristic of emotional repression. In general, the Ethos used in this Jim Beam ad is mainly geared toward the element of male social dysfunction that alcohol represents.

Jim Beam has, instead of appealing by Ethos, spent the majority of this ad using Pathos, an emotional appeal. After generalizing its audience with a set of social values and repressed characteristics, the advertisers use a psychological hang up to appeal to the type of man they have targeted. By addressing a male characteristic that many consider a fault, the advertisers are playing on specific emotions that are experienced by the repressed male. Those emotions included the loneliness that comes with social incompetence or lack of social acceptance. The timing of the ad's appearance is also a direct reference to the population,

specifically single men, who have no one to celebrate the holidays with or may not enjoy this time of year. Those men will, therefore, need a friend to lean on or distract them. Jim Beam wants to be that friend. Additionally, the male fear of commitment is played upon by devaluing hugs and supports the unwillingness to partake in or avoid social contact. The black and white coloring of the ad starkly portrays the frustrated nature of emotional suppression and the lack of range in expression. Pathos is also appealed to through simplicity and sincerity with the straightforward message of the slogan Jim Beam uses. With honesty, Jim Beam implies that alcohol can be a social deliverer, and answer to male problems that ends in relief, specifically from nagging fears about intimacy and commitment. As a hard liquor Jim Beam whiskey also appeals to its target audience, who may be confused as to their role in holiday situations (given the time that the ad appeared) and the worthiness of their contribution or even their presence.



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"A lot easier  
to give than  
a hug"

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Jim Beam offers a remedy for awkwardness, a provider of good times. It is not only a relief to bring booze but adds to a sense of security that the target audience may be lacking. The humor used in this

ad is another element of Pathos. By softening the harsh reality of loneliness that comes with both the holidays and alcoholism, the ad very effectively makes a disturbing topic easier to stomach, even something to laugh at. With these multiple factors, Pathos, by sheer volume, becomes the leading method of appeal to its audience.

Logos (the appeals to logic) in contrast, suffers considerably in this ad. The ad actually represents more logical fallacy than it does logical reasoning for buying anything, much less whiskey. Foremost are the ad misericordiam and non sequitur fallacies that appear in the slogan "A lot easier to give than a hug." Unless one does not have arms, it is actually much easier to give a hug than it is to give a bottle of Jim Beam. Neither does it logically follow that an appropriate substitute for a hug is a bottle of hard liquor. It obviously costs less to give a hug, and money is a restrictive issue for many people. Since it is not possible for anyone in the U.S. under 21 to buy alcohol legally, it is harder for a portion of Rolling Stone Magazine's audience to give. There is also the issue of the appropriateness of giving alcohol since the receivers of the gift are limited to those who are of legal age and choose to drink. This makes a hug a much more easily accepted gift. There is also the factor of absolute lack of statistics or facts in the ad to support the advertiser's claim. Jim Beam is making several restrictive assumptions about its audience, and, hence, clearly not advertising based on reason or Logos.

This ad shows an unbalanced, though effective, use of Ethos, Pathos and Logos. If anything, the dominant use of Pathos is the most effective way to sell hard liquor, especially during the excessively emotional nature of the Christmas season. It would not be a smart use of advertising space to use fact or logic to sell Jim Beam based on how many other people drink it or what its alcohol content

is. Despite the inconsistent logic and humorous fallacies of this advertisement, it is true that for certain people it remains easier to give a bottle of booze than it is to give a hug. And those people are exactly the type who will see this ad and be convinced to buy Jim Beam.