A dark, blue-gray blanket covers the sky outside my kitchen window. I sit at the table under the artificial light, drinking my juice on autopilot. It's too early to be up. My stepbrother drags himself over to the counter and sluggishly pops a piece of bread into the toaster. He mumbles, "So easy a woman can use it." Then he turns to face me with raised eyebrows. "Speaking of which, the roles seem to be reversed here. I should be sitting down while you make my breakfast." I'm too tired to even muster a laugh. For decades, there has been a jocular stereotype that women belong in the kitchen. Interestingly enough, the companies that experienced the most success in selling kitchen products didn't address this stereotype. Instead, it is seen throughout each passing decade that in order to thrive in any economy, producers must have been able to incorporate current values, trends, and beliefs into their advertisements as well as appeal to buyers in not only an emotional sense, but a logical and ethical sense, too.

The economy of the 1930s was devastated by a stock market crash and bank failures. However, that didn't ensure that all companies would also fail. As Tom Nicholas pointed out in his article, "Innovation Lessons from the 1930s," the most difficult times "can create huge opportunities for companies with money and ideas" (82). In one Super-Automatic Kelvinator ad, yes a refrigerator was being sold, but it was more than that. This refrigerator was equipped with a
motor that regulated temperature, instead of an icebox which was the key component of most other fridges prior to this innovation. A new invention alone wouldn't sell, however. By using pathos, an appeal to emotions, the Kelvinator Corporation, the company selling in this advertisement, assuaged consumers’ fears. Loaded language like "rugged metal construction," "eliminating the least need for regulation on the part of Kelvinator users," and "lifetime of hard service" helped to ensure that buyers would be making a good, long-lasting investment (Kelvinator Corporation). This company's logos, or appeal to logic, was strengthened by advertising the price to be "as low as $185" and that it is "100 per[cent] cost efficient" (Kelvinator Corporation). If that wasn't enough, ethos, or an appeal to ethics, was used to dissuade any remaining fear by stating in the ad that the Kelvinator Corporation had been around for fifteen years prior to their publication of this ad in Good Housekeeping (Kelvinator Corporation). Good Housekeeping was a magazine dedicated to helping others create exemplary homes and simply being published in that magazine added to the company’s ethos. By remaining innovative and addressing fears in such a difficult economic period, this corporation was able to remain strong and successful.

Also in the 1930s, a woman named Syrie Maugham, an interior designer, was on the rise. She popularized the all-white room, which would begin appearing in many movies (Larson, 24-26). The Super-Automatic Kelvinator was advertised as being available in white because it seemed to be a very popular color. Its popularity could have been due to many factors. The color itself is simple, crisp, clean. Its association with Syrie Maugham and the film industry made white stand for elegance. Another possibility is that white could have been a symbol for superiority. Now while slavery was a thing of the past by the 1930s, some people still believed in white supremacy. It's even apparent when this ad states the refrigerator is a "cost efficient
servant” (Kelvinator Corporation). Those three small words emotionally appealed to consumers’ desire for status and power. The ad also pictured what seemed to be a dinner party, which was a popular pastime during this decade (Batchelor 86). Displaying a lavish party with sophisticated people poked at consumers’ snob appeal. Taking popular culture and incorporating it into their advertisement is what made the Kelvinator Corporation succeed in this trying decade.

Fast forward just two decades and much had changed. World War II had just ended, there was a baby-boom, the divorce rate remained almost unchanged, and families were increasing in size (Stanley 11). Home seemed to be a happier, warmer place. By the beginning of the 1950s, millions of refrigerators were already in use and had become a necessity in every home (Batchelor 343). Producers had to find new techniques to sell their products. In 1954, Frigidaire, a company that sold kitchen products, began advertising colored appliances that would "glorify your kitchen" (Frigidaire Appliances). The introduction of brightly colored kitchen tools separated the fifties from the monochromatic thirties and better suited the aura of happy home life during this time.

Like any brilliant advertiser, Frigidaire utilized all three rhetorical appeals- logos, pathos, and ethos. Detailing their electric range as thirty inches wide, fifteen cubic feet, and having seven ways to cook appealed to the consumer's logic. Their range could fit in any kitchen and support the large families that were now becoming common. These appliances that sported "self-service features" and made "chores lighter" appealed emotionally to Americans’ desire for more free time (Frigidaire Appliances). More women started entering the work force and they didn't have time to maintain a household and spend countless hours in the kitchen making dinner (Commuri 118). The picture in this ad features only women however, because they were still expected to be the homemaker. Free time was a luxury and offer no woman could refuse. Frigidaire urges, “See
these new products Arthur Godfrey recommends on TV and radio,” (Frigidaire Appliances). Mentioning Arthur Godfrey, a famous television star, also appealed to consumer's emotions (“Arthur Godfrey”). Using a celebrity made people more likely to buy a product because it meant that a celebrity endorsed something they- ordinary people- owned. To make their advertising argument even stronger, Frigidaire proved they could be trusted by stating they were built and backed by General Electric, an electric company. The fact that they had locations outside of the United States made it even more trustworthy because it meant Frigidaire was a large, established company. The collective use of all of the rhetorical appeals and relation of the ad to current times is what helped this company succeed. Offering matching refrigerators, ranges, and freezers only boosted sales.

Jump ahead almost three decades to 1982 and advertisers yet again had to find new ways to entice consumers. Just like producers had to shift gears in the fifties when refrigerators became standard, so did producers in the eighties when it was considered strange not to own a television and women started working more hours (Commuri 116). Advertisers couldn't rely on lengthy, emotion-filled descriptions to push their products. Television had decreased Americans’ attention spans. They wanted all writing short in length and for everything to include some type of visual stimulation. In 1982, KitchenAid, another company dedicated to the kitchen, advertised a dishwasher in an ad that seemed dominated with writing. However, it was presented in a clever way. Each section had a bold headline that is just a little bit bigger than the explaining text below it. Also, each section was accompanied with a relevant picture, appealing to the shortened attention span of consumers. This enabled readers to quickly understand the gist of the advertisement without reading through the whole thing.
While KitchenAid had to devise new ways to advertise, they also used the tried and true methods of rhetoric. They established their ethos first by promising to buy consumers any dishwasher that was better than KitchenAid's. Doing so first thing caused the reader to start off viewing the ad with trust in this company, which is an effective technique because a consumer is more likely to buy a product from someone they trust. Then KitchenAid reeled the reader in through emotional appeals of loaded language such as "high pressure multi-level system" and "heavy duty" (KitchenAid). They also addressed any fears consumers might have by advertising the dishwasher's durability, perfect temperature setting, and backup valve in case the first one messed up. Just as the consumer started to think this would be a good buy, KitchenAid introduced the logic. Its racks are "100% usable [with] large capacity" (KitchenAid). Water temperature is maintained at 150 degrees Fahrenheit and the motor contained 1/2 horsepower, which was more powerful than any other leading brand had at the time (KitchenAid). The ad ended with an ethical appeal, by offering a triple protection warranty to strengthen KitchenAid's credibility. KitchenAid's method of advertising persuaded the increasing number of working mothers (Commuri 116) by promising that their washer would result in less time spent slaving in the kitchen. The presentation of information in the ad matched the speed of delivery that a TV commercial would provide.

I haven't moved from my spot at the kitchen table. I blankly stare straight ahead, frozen, unable to even blink. Pale, blue-white light forces itself between the cracks in the blinds. The artificial light isn't needed anymore. I move to turn it off while my stepbrother is at the sink washing his dishes, laughing to himself. "So easy a woman can use it,' that'd make a great advertising slogan for any kitchen appliance." That's when I have my first critical thought of the day: advertising is everywhere. It's on the juice carton we drink from in the morning. It's on the
clothes we dress ourselves in while getting ready. It's even on all the billboards and signs as we drive to school. Companies and producers have been advertising as long as consumers have been purchasing, especially when it comes to the necessities like kitchen products. Whether by using emotional, logical, and ethical appeals or infusing current events into its persuasion, advertising will always find a way into our lives, even if it’s through the early-morning, sexist thoughts of a stepbrother.
Works Cited


