

"Baseball Is Weird And I Love It"

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Baseball is an incredibly weird sport. It is filled with so many paradoxes, so many contradictions in and of itself, but at no point does it ever feel out of place. Of the four major North American Sports, it is easily the most boring, but at the same time it is the most exciting and nothing can compete with it. It is filled with what seem to be ordinary people, especially in comparison to the land of athletic giants like in basketball or football, but at the same time it has so many tremendous athletes that it boggles the mind. The games take forever, and yet they are done in a flash. It is something that while people may not like, there is plenty of intrigue with it to be at least fascinated by it.

This was the basis of this persuasive campaign, an attempt to show how this strange sport can be such a fun thing to watch at any point in time. There are so many different things that go into baseball that it is at the very least an interesting watch, despite the declining viewership numbers and general perception of baseball being boring. This was manifested in a twelve minute, scripted video, a prototype of a future project called "Baseball Is Weird, And I Love It." The video talks about many of the oddities that baseball has, and how it manages to defy logical expectations, which is one of the many ways that it remains interesting.

There are two primary methods used within this video, a more statistic based approach and a narrative approach, with at least some context given to both sides. This ensures a variety of methods to attempt to convince the audience, in this case the primary audience being anyone that may know what baseball is but find it uninteresting, that there is a wide range of factors that go into baseball and its mystique.

One of the main strategies used in the course of the video is that the video takes on a mostly friendly tone, drawing the viewer or listener in. The casual style of dialogue, peppered in

with a few small jokes builds a rapport with the viewer and sets a person up for the perception of the narrator being a reliable, and more importantly, likeable source. The primary crux of the style of video, especially in terms of the scripting, has to do with the perception of social attractiveness. Social Attractiveness, as explained in Richard Perloff's "The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century," features three primary factors: Likeability, Similarity, and Physical Attractiveness (250-54). The calm, lighthearted demeanor of the narrator is an attempt to make the viewer or listener drawn into the statements. The relatively slow, mostly clearly spoken dialogue brings a sense of casualness, not that this is an attempt or demand to get the audience to be convinced of a particular end goal, which is also stated at a number of points in the video. With a video such as this, the personality that is established and shown within a short, twelve-minute span is meant to allow for the audience to gravitate towards that and listen to the person, the narrator, attempting to make themselves as socially likeable.

However, the personality of the narrator is not the only factor within the video. While having an auditory component is certainly a major point, being the primary way to deliver the message, there are still other factors involved in accommodating the viewer towards a more likeable, comfortable place. Tied in with the words is the video playing in the background, showing highlights of different plays in baseball from the previous season. In a minor case of using the peripheral route, the use of other tangentially related components (Perloff 190), the videos are meant to show some of the most exciting portions of baseball. The video playing for the most part does not have much relation to the words being spoken, but it is meant to put the audience at ease by allowing a more relaxed environment.

While these previous points have tied in with the video as a whole, there are still small subsections of the video, which had been divided in the script in order to ensure a solid flow to

the subject. The first part of the video goes into detail about numbers, mostly attempting to put seemingly arbitrary numbers into a context that is beneficial for the viewer. The entirety of the first subsection, titled in the script as "Small Number, Big Impact," is an exercise in framing, defined as the overarching way an idea is communicated (276). This beginning section goes into a few numbers, in particular fifteen miles per hour, ninety miles per hour, and fifty percent, and gives them contexts that are immediately relatable. This, much as with the general demeanor of the narration, is to give an air of social attractiveness, showing a somewhat disconnected sense of similarity. By putting context on these numbers, starting with one that people can easily grasp before moving to more difficult to understand points, there is a sense of familiar ground set up by this framing.

After establishing how some more easily recognized numbers are relevant, the framing moves on to attempt to give way to this feeling of "weirdness" within the audience's mind. The juxtaposition between what is generally considered as a "good percentage," that being the aforementioned fifty percent, and the reality of what is considered "good in baseball," that being around a thirty percent marking, is somewhat a case of cognitive dissonance. Generally speaking, many audience members would have the thought that a fifty percent mark is not very good, in particular with the examples given in the video of a failing grade and an example where succeeding fifty percent of the time would get someone immediately fired from a job. This is then opposed by the realization that the best that the sport has struggle to even "succeed" thirty percent of the time. The use of cognitive dissonance is to accentuate one of the primary words in the premise of the video: "weird." This accentuation of the weird draws the audience back in and allows that dissonance to work as persuasion in and of itself.

While the first part of the video focuses on a more cognitive based argument, the second half of the video begins to appeal to the "heart" of the audience. The first portion of this section begins by laying out a story, establishing a narrative in the mind. The narrator sets up a scene, setting up the context and execution of this exact action. There is a description of the general situation, what definitive things that there are - concrete evidence of what there is, in particular the state of the game. There is also the description of more peripheral cues, primarily with the mention of flashing lights and the call that those who are more familiar with the sport would recognize. This very process of transformation, moving someone to the persuader's world of imagination (272), places the audience into somewhere where they can relate to the situation at hand.

This is then all brought together with the very next portion, where it ties up many of the points used prior with the story of David Bote. The narrator, rather than making themselves socially attractive, call attention to the social attractiveness of David Bote, in particular the similarity factor. The narrator mentions how Bote is a mostly average person, setting them up to be someone that the audience can relate to in order to pin this story home. The author uses this story in order to accentuate the feelings of baseball in their mind, in particular the romantic nature of "anyone at any time," allowing the viewer to picture themselves in the place of these moments.

As a whole, the video primarily focuses on the logical strategies of ethos, the nature of the communicator, and pathos, the emotional state of the audience, as opposed to logos, the arguments of the message (42). The function of the article is how irrational and illogical baseball is, and thus it serves that logos begins to crumble. Ethos is primarily used in the sense mentioned earlier in terms of social attractiveness, the communicator setting themselves up as a laid back

and somewhat weird individual, giving themselves a trustworthy vibe. Pathos is used intensively in the second half of the video, drawing the audience in with the story of David Bote and allowing themselves to be one with the scene itself. The video focuses on the emotional state most prevalently even with the title, with the use of words that invoke certain feelings such as "love" and "weird."

Baseball is a romantic sport. There is so much emotion in every single moment, every game the battle between two people trying to get the better of each other. How the most mundane things become something major, how even the tiniest moments can mean so much. Someone does not need to be a fan of baseball, but the video hopes to capture at least some of the essence of why baseball is so weird and yet loveable

References

Perloff, R. M. (2021). *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge.

Link to Video

https://youtu.be/dMa8aD69_tg