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Taking Nutrition Too Far:  
Company Lies and Slippery Slopes

Would you still eat at your favorite restaurant if you knew that they were lying to you about what they put into your food? If you answered no, and Chipotle is your favorite restaurant, then you are in some trouble. In the article, "Chipotle is Being Sued Over Its Anti-GMO Advertising. Serves Them Right," the author, Alison Griswold uses rhetoric to convince the audience that the company deserves the lawsuit. She also criticizes the audience for avoiding GMOs, assuming that all of her readers think that they are bad. Arguments in the field of Nutritional Science are always fueled by the latest breaking news, or fads of what to eat and what to avoid. The reason behind all of the arguments over what one should digest are all of the studies conducted by researchers, scientists, and universities. Rhetorically, authors who write in this discipline write articles that take a strong stance towards one side, and they can often leave out counterarguments. There is really no excuse for this, because you can find studies proving and disproving the safety of eating just about any food- except for things that the general public knows to be harmful (like eating swimming pool chlorine tablets).

In this instance, we will explore the rhetorical strategies used in an article about genetically modified organisms (GMOs). A GMO is a food that was not grown “naturally.” Instead of collecting seeds occurring naturally from a plant, the plant is modified in a lab. GMOs can also include animals, like a chicken or cow. The purpose is to grow food that is bigger, grows faster, and can be grown less expensively. Some view this as “franken-food,” while others see this as a way to feed our overpopulated planet. There are arguments for and against GMOs. For example, the FDA regulates GMOs, and they claim that all of the genetically engineered foods that they approve are safe for consumption<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, there are people who view GMOs to be unsafe for consumption- the majority of countries do not accept GMOs as safe<sup>2</sup>.

In the article, “Chipotle is Being Sued Over Its Anti-GMO Advertising” is an example of how people in the field of Nutritional Science tend to write opinionated articles, without addressing the opposing argument. The author of this article, Alison Griswold, is a journalist for the website Slate. She writes for the “Business and Economics” section, but takes a focus on restaurants, food, and fast-food chains.

When analyzing an act of public speech, it is important to consider the credibility of the author. The author’s credentials play a role in the article because she is not a scientist. She is involved in the business side of food, which is why she is more concerned about Chipotle’s actions rather than taking a stance on public food safety. She states, “When the chain first announced its anti-GMO push in April as part of its mission to sell ‘food with integrity, we argued that dropping GMOs was the wrong way to do it’<sup>3</sup>. A further look into her twitter may prove that she may not even be interested in

the nutrition of what she eats, “Olive Garden sent me a never-ending pasta pass. Today is a good day”<sup>4</sup>.

Another important aspect of an article to analyze is the audience- who is this writer speaking to? The website Slate is a typical style of magazine website. If you’ve never heard of it before, it is comparable to Gawker or Wired. The people who are reading it range in age from 18-60, and since it is known as a left-winged site, there is a high chance that the readers are liberal. This is important because her argument is not typical of liberal views, which makes it even more powerful. Liberals tend to favor government regulations to create standards in society<sup>5</sup>, in this case government limiting and regulating genetically modified organisms. This is consistent with Griswold thinking that Chipotle should be sued, but inconsistent with her thinking that people are overreacting to GMOs. This is important because if you are a democrat reading an article on a knowingly liberal website, you would be more likely to accept someone of your own kind trying to give you a reality check. She says, “to me it sounds a lot like capitalizing on an admittedly unproven fear while it’s trendy”<sup>3</sup>. She is directing her untraditional opinion of being fine with GMOs at the right audience.

The bottom line is that the writer thinks that Chipotle is in the wrong, and GMOs are fine. While she does link the reader to another Slate writer’s article on the safety of GMOs, her argument is one-sided because she does not offer any words of caution or advice to the reader. She does not prove that GMOs are the same as regularly grown foods, and she does not present any scientific evidence proving that there are no negative effects of GMOs on humans. Instead, she criticizes her audience. She says,

“so as long as you’re worried, they’re [companies pushing anti-GMOs] happy to reassure”<sup>3</sup>. Maybe she can get away with the digs.

When analyzing an act of public argument, it is important that you cover all of your bases. Doing research on the author is crucial because it can give you insight into their credibility and any biases that they may have. Looking into the target audience can show you why they use the techniques that they do to prove their points. Also, look at the strategies that they use. Are they focusing on one more than the other? Why do they use the ones that they do? In the field of nutrition, you must look at all sides of the story in order to provide the most unbiased argument as possible.

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