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An Effortful but Ineffective Attempt at Satirizing Apple Computer, Inc.

Established in 1977, Apple Computer, Inc. has been a prevalent company in pop-culture due to its strive for innovation, perfection, and commitment to “Think[ing] Different.” Its products have continually set themselves apart from the industry standard; however, that has also made them a popular target of satire among tech enthusiasts. They ridicule Apple's tendency to exaggerate their products' performance and features by imitating its advertisements. These satirical videos and articles amass a large following on *Youtube* and other platforms, with it being a tradition for creators to publish satirical content after every launch event. Generally, these satires present well-deserved criticism about the company humorously. However, sometimes they can be ineffective, and such a recent example was published on October 3, 2020, by Mathew Baum for *The Leader*. Baum is unable to successfully satirize Apple's products in his parody news article “Apple unveils new Water, Earth and Fire properties” due to his loosely connected analogies to *Avatar*, random exaggerations, lack of cohesiveness, and broad scope, all of which make the follies of the targets unclear, diminishing any reason for change.

To critique Apple's products, specifically their names and high prices, Baum makes unnecessary connections to *Avatar* that confuse the reader and fail to critique any of Apple's follies. He makes a connection between the show's plot, which relates to different elements such as fire, water, air, and earth, and Apple's new iPad Air by creating and satirizing three fictional Apple products: iPhone Water, iPod Earth, and MacBook Fire. Here, the connection to *Avatar* is

weak because it is only based on a single factor: the iPad Air's name. In fact, he, himself, identifies that there is no clear connection because "it was not yet known how the Apple devices [were] tied to the Nickelodeon franchise [...] there must be some connection behind the scenes" (Baum). By refraining to explain the connection, he makes it difficult for the audience to identify the follies of Apple's naming structure. His fictional naming structure is quite random because he gives no reason for the names chosen for the products. This vagueness is the main reason the audience is unable to identify Apple's follies. If he had critiqued a real product's name and eliminated the references to *Avatar*, he would have been more effective at satirizing Apple and spreading his message because more members of his audience would have understood his reasoning. The author also makes an unconnected reference to *Avatar* when critiquing Apple's prices. After stating that the new line of products will not come cheap, he adds that "interested parties must defeat Tim Cook in an Agni Kai, a duel between two people that primarily involves hand-to-hand combat and a series of devastating firebending blows" (Baum). Fortunately, he does explain what the reference to *Avatar* is; however, the connection is still unclear since he does not explain how this fight relates to the products being expensive. In addition to being unclear, this reference also appears towards the conclusion of the article, making it the main takeaway for the audience. Instead of being left with the main idea of this article, the audience is left with the imagery of a fight, which greatly undermines his main goal of elucidating Apple's follies.

Baum attempts to satirize the fact that Apple's products have unnecessary features by giving his fictional products exaggerated characteristics; however, since these are not analogous to features for real Apple products, he makes it even more confusing for readers to identify the follies he is satirizing. He does a good job at critiquing the iPhone which has "a total of five

brehtaking UltraHD cameras, both front-facing and back-facing, [making it] a go-to choice for perfect posts" (Baum). By exaggerating the number of cameras, he keeps the hyperbole restrained to real-life, unlike the future exaggerations. This also allows the audience to identify what the vice of iPhones is: they have too many cameras. By avoiding a reference to *Avatar* and keeping it simple, he can effectively satirize the iPhone Water. Although the hyperbole for the iPhone is effective, the exaggerations for the other products are not as effective because he gives them nonsensical features and does not follow a consistent style. For example, the fictional MacBook Fire has "an app that says 'Flamethrower Feature' and the Macbook turns into a flamethrower" (Baum). This exaggeration has no connection to the real-life product itself; it only relates to its fictional name of MacBook Fire. Since this exaggerated feature has no clear connection to the real world, the audience cannot easily discern what the MacBook's shortcomings are, which makes the satire ineffective. Another example of a disconnected exaggeration is the iPod Earth which "[has] the ability to survive in two meters of molten lava" (Baum). Here Baum makes an unconnected exaggeration regarding the iPod's ability to survive in Lava, a feature that is not analogous to a real-life feature, making the vices of the iPod unclear. However, he does, later on, exaggerate realistic features (the battery life and storage), which satirizes the fact that iPods do not have a long battery life or much storage. Next, Baum exaggerates the defensive features of the Apple Watch. Users can use this Apple Watch to "control the SynthMetal that forms their screens outside of the bounds of the exterior shell, using the material to ward off unwelcome advances with a series of water-bending-style moves, ensuring maximum safety in dire situations" (Baum). Similar to his previous attempts for exaggeration, he gives the product an extremely unrelated defensive feature, especially since the feature relates to "magical" components. This hyperbole does not elucidate a real-life folly of the

Apple watch, and the reference may be difficult to understand for most audiences since it uses terminology specific to *Avatar*. The convoluted hyperboles that do not critique real-life features of Apple products make it hard for the audience to identify the target's follies, diminishing the efficacy of this article.

Baum's article aims to emulate a news article by formally introducing his audience to a new line of *Avatar* related Apple products; however, the way this article is constructed does not fully adhere to that style because there are improper diction and unorganized sections, which take away from the article's "genuineness." Baum tries to emulate formal product reviewers by using similar diction to reviewers like *The Verge* or *CNET*. For example, when describing the iPod Earth, he states the iPod, "boast[s] an impressive 23-hour battery life and an astonishing 1.25 terabytes of internal storage" (Baum). This description is similar to other product reviews since they tend to emphasize numbers and use adjectives similar to "impressive" and "astonishing." However, Baum does not continue with this type of wording throughout the whole article, using descriptors such as "smash-hit" to describe the fictional products by the end. That makes the article incohesive and difficult to follow because the tone changes from formal to informal drastically. Readers get conflicting messages due to this change as well. Lastly, the article is unorganized because Baum only introduces three products (MacBook Fire, iPod Earth, and iPhone Water) in the beginning; however, he goes on to satirize four products, including the Apple Watch. A formal product reviewer would not have made that mistake, which makes his article a little less realistic. He should have tried to follow the formal articles' styles as closely as possible, which would have made it more organized and allowed him to clearly present the follies of Apple's products.

Additionally, the article would have been more effective in satirizing Apple's products if Baum had a more focused scope. The article tackles too many follies regarding too many products, which forces him to quickly introduce ideas and then switch to a different product, leaving the ideas in an undeveloped state. For example, when introducing the MacBook Fire, he quickly states, "the MacBook Fire has a flame thrower [...] that's it" (Baum). Then, he transitions into his conclusion without elaborating on the flamethrower much. By not fully connecting his ideas, he forces readers to do too much thinking and makes it difficult for them to understand the follies. Instead, if he focused on one product he can provide the audience with specific follies and also follow the general conventions of formal product reviewers better since they tend to also focus on one product at a time.

Baum was unsuccessful at satirizing Apple's products because of his loosely connected analogies to *Avatar*, which did not add anything to the satire. The analogies instead just confuse readers as they are either too specific to the show or do not elucidate any follies of products. Also, another aspect that made it hard for readers to identify the follies was that he critiqued his own fictional Apple products. By critiquing those he failed to present the follies of real Apple products. Finally, Baum's article did not have an organized or consistent style, which made it even harder for the audience to understand his claim. If Baum had avoided his references to *Avatar*, critiqued realistic features of Apple products, and maintained the organization of a formal new article he would have been more clear and allowed his audience to identify Apple's follies, making the article more effective. However effective or ineffective it may be, elucidating problems in society in a creative fashion through satire is difficult. It requires the author to utilize complex hyperboles, use literary devices effectively, and write in a style that may be unfamiliar to the author, all while being relatable to their audience.

Bibliography

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