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Chapter 5

Marketing Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of Marketing – Manipulation or Mutuality?

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Abstract

In this chapter, four different understandings of rhetoric in marketing will be identified and

presented: 1) marketing as a rhetorical discipline or genre; 2) rhetoric as superficial wordplay,

or false marketing, which frustrates the true intentions of marketing and undermines efforts to

realize or comply with the marketing concept; 3) rhetoric as a special stage in marketing

development; and 4) rhetoric applied in marketing communication, as a theory of

communication strategies and related cognitive responses. The conceptions of rhetoric that

prevail in mainstream marketing are often very broad, imprecise or reductionist, but the

view that marketing is or should be a-rhetorical is the most prevalent. Critical marketing

scholars, on the other hand, point out that marketing is (also) rhetorical by nature. The fact

that many marketing theorists dismiss or simply ignore rhetoric does not mean that rhetoric

plays no role in the field. Marketing thinking, research and writing are constructed through

the use of specific rhetorical devices. In the marketing sub-discipline of advertising, rhetoric

is used more explicitly in theory and research to analyze advertising effects, as well as, in

practice, to design advertisements and campaigns. In a future where marketing may become

less a matter of product and price and more a performance of "brand personality", a more

mature understanding of rhetoric is required.

There are probably few areas of research and fields of organizational communication practice that are subject to as many misunderstandings, misconceptions and prejudices, and so much distrust, as marketing and advertising. Many people believe that marketing is solely a matter of manipulation to maximize profit – with the former as the means and the latter as the end. If there ever was a contemporary term that suffered the derogatory taint of "sophists," it must be "marketing people."

The best-known and most widely-used definition of marketing is: "Marketing is the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires" (Kotler, n.d.). The American Marketing Association Board of Directors (2013) defined marketing as: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." A common misconception is that marketing is synonymous with selling, and perhaps even, in the worst case, a matter of manipulating consumers into buying something they do not need at too high a price, and which may even be harmful to their health or the environment. As a result of this misunderstanding, marketing research is sometimes perceived as the theory or doctrine of sales or manipulation. The reason why many people view marketing as simply selling may be linked to the fact that the earliest understanding of the purpose of marketing, or its mission – as it is sometimes formulated – was to promote sales. But according to Kotler (n.d.), selling is just the tip of the iceberg: Marketing is also everything that precedes the sale, such as the invention and manufacture of the product, and everything that comes after the sale. He claimed that "marketing and selling are almost opposites." Later, the understanding of the mission was extended as: "to create products that satisfy the unmet needs of target markets" (Kotler, n.d.). Or with what Kotler himself described as a more philosophical answer, the mission of marketing is no less than

"to raise the material standard of living throughout the world and the quality of life" (Kotler,

n.d.). The bad reputation of marketing probably also relates to the manner in which some

companies, as will be seen in the following discussion, are in practice exclusively profit-

oriented and short-term in their approach, and "self-centered" in their focus.

This chapter starts by presenting a perspective on marketing that addresses a limited

role of rhetoric in marketing, and concludes by suggesting an alternative perspective. Midway

through the chapter, research is reported that links advertising to rhetorical enrichment of

messages. Finally, in keeping with preferences of marketing experts that products and

services should speak to customers, a view can be advanced that products/services are rhetors

themselves by providing fact/evidence and reasoning, ethics/moral judgment, and emotional

appeals that seek favorable responses by customers.

Marketing: A Perspective

Marketing is often described with the help of the four Ps: Product, Price, Place and

Promotion (McCarthy, 1964). Traditionally, marketing communication has been assigned the

fourth P – Promotion – and has therefore merely been viewed as a subset of marketing.

According to other perspectives, however, there are communicative aspects to all parts of

marketing (e.g., DeLozier, 1976). This view is expounded by, for example, Jefkins (1990):

> Marketing is in the communication business – call it branding, labeling, advertising,
>
> research, public relations, instruction manuals, what you like; it is not easily tucked
>
> away in one of the 4 Ps … . [I]f we take a broad view of marketing communications,
>
> it cannot be compartmentalised or used as an umbrella: it flows like a telephone cable
>
> linking up numerous users. (p. 2)

Several researchers have even claimed that marketing *is* communication (e.g.,

Bouchet, 1991; Miles, 2010). Schultz and Kitchen wrote that "communication is becoming

the heart and soul of marketing" (2000, p. 55) and significantly influences corporate

strategies and organizational culture. Elsewhere, Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn wrote (1994) that integrated marketing communication has had the effect that "we have turned all forms of marketing into communication and all forms of communication into marketing" (p. 58).

Marketing communication may be defined as: "All forms of communication between the players in a market relating to products, services and experiences" (Torp, 2013). There are of course a number of different understandings and interpretations of what marketing communication is, in both theory and practice. The understanding or interpretation of marketing communication is linked to the idiosyncratic view of communication upon which it is based. If communication is for example viewed as a transmission process in which certain messages are transferred (transported) from a sender to a receiver, then marketing communication is matter of a company sending a message to a customer or potential customer, who, if the marketing communication is sufficiently clever and well-designed, will become convinced of the positive properties of the product or service, and perhaps even make a purchase. If, on the other hand, communication is viewed as something that emerges in a mutual interaction between sender and receiver, in which the meaning of the communication arises in the encounter between the players, then marketing communication is something that is expressed between the players in a market. From this point of view, marketing communication is not just something that occurs between companies and (potential) customers. Communication between customers – and between consumers more generally – on products, services and related experiences can also be said to be marketing communication.

Rhetoric and marketing communication or communication within marketing, are not generally perceived as synonymous concepts or phenomena: While communication may be seen as an aspect of marketing in some of the more recent approaches, or marketing may

even be viewed as a form of communication in a very broad sense, rhetoric is viewed by many people in the mainstream area as vacuous communication or perhaps merely manipulative communication. Within the field of marketing, only a few people address rhetoric as a theoretical, academic or research discipline, which is why research in rhetoric within marketing is extremely limited.

There are some interesting exceptions: According to Tonks (2002), "marketing management" incorporates rhetoric as the art or craft of persuasion. Marketing rhetoric is clearest in relation to consumers, but it is relevant to all exchanges, and all relationships. To a large extent rhetoric, it is claimed, that energizes the exchange. Another example is Miles (2014), who has studied the rhetorical and narrative strategies in Vargo and Lusch's seminal paper on Service-Dominant Logic (2004).

In the marketing sub-discipline of advertising, rhetoric (as we will see later in this chapter), is used more explicitly in theory and research to analyze advertising effects, as well as in practice, to design advertisements and campaigns (see also Chapter 16 on rhetorical figures in advertising). Advertising is defined by The American Marketing Association (2017) in the online dictionary as:

> The placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/ or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas.

This definition limits advertising to purchased mass communication (which is limiting in relation to the complexities of marketing in social media), but on the other hand includes objectives such as *inform* audiences about *ideas.* Advertising is then much more than straight sales pitches about products, but the main difference from a very broad idea about "marketing

as communication" (e.g., Miles, 2010) is the direct and overt use of purchased mass media. It makes advertising a very obtrusive and parasitic communication that always needs to negotiate the attention of the audience (as in the "old mass media-days") bought from the media industry. Percy and Rosenbaum-Elliott (2016) defined differences between advertising and promotion (a basic function in marketing) as strategy versus tactics: "Advertising is aimed towards the long-term building of positive brand attitude by 'turning' the consumer towards the brand; promotion is aimed at the more short-term tactical goal of "moving forward" brand sales now" (p. 4).

"Advertising," meaning "to turn towards" in Latin (*advertere*), is the marketer's direct address of the audience, where "marketing" is a much broader discipline of knowing the audience and deciding the overall strategy (through marketing research, setting the stage, price, distribution, product innovation, logistics, service etc.).

The view of rhetoric that prevails in marketing is often very broad, or imprecise and vague, or reductionist, but the view of rhetoric as hot air and as a means of manipulation is the most prevalent. If we examine the perception of rhetoric in a historical perspective, we it is almost reminiscent of the one we find in Plato (Torp, 2015; see also Chapter 1). At a general level, four different understandings of rhetoric in marketing may be identified:

1. Marketing as a rhetorical discipline, or a genre in line with others (e.g., Brown, 2005; Hackley, 2001, 2009).

2. Rhetoric as superficial wordplay, or false marketing which frustrates the true intentions of marketing and efforts to realize or comply with the marketing concept (e.g., Kitchen, 2003a; Evans, 2003).

3. Rhetoric as a special stage in marketing development (e.g., Yoon & Kim, 2003).

4. Rhetoric applied in marketing communication – in particular advertising – as a theory of communication strategies and related cognitive responses (e.g., McQuarrie

& Mick 1992, 1996, 1999).

To put it more bluntly, "marketing rhetoric" is typically treated as points 1-3, while the "rhetoric of marketing" is mainly treated as point 4.

If such views and assumptions prevail, is it likely that marketing communication suffers by being separated from 2500 years of careful and insightful analysis of the means and rationale for persuasion that can be applied to marketing? In the following, we will attempt a more fluent treatment than simply dividing it into four parts, but in two tempi: first the *marketing rhetoric*, secondly the *rhetoric of marketing* (mainly as advertising and branding).

Marketing Rhetoric

Marketing, according to Alvesson and Willmott (1996), is one of the management specialties that is least self-reflective but most self-satisfied (p. 119). According to Hackley (2009), mainstream marketing is characterized by anti-theoretical rhetoric (p. 132). Marketing is also sometimes accused of being merely a parasitical area of research, in that many of the theories or fundamental elements in the field of marketing derive from other areas, such as economics, psychology, sociology or behavioral science. The field of marketing therefore struggles to be considered a genuine science. In addition, critical consumers question marketing's *raison d'être* as such, since marketing, from this perspective, is an illegitimate practice that is simply about fooling people into buying something they do not really need, and which therefore contributes nothing beneficial at all.

If rhetoric is a vacuous or misleading discourse strategy, can it help correct the view that marketing is much of the same? This chapter will argue that instead of such narrow and misleading thoughts on these matters, a better understanding of rhetoric (and the role of rhetoric) can add depth and ethics to our understanding of marketing, marketing communication and advertising.

The mainstream marketing field, in an attempt to legitimize itself and present itself as a real science, abjures rhetoric (Brown, 2005). Stephen Brown pointed out that this is a paradox, since many of the disciplines that the field of marketing wishes to resemble or be respected by have long since acknowledged the role of language and discourse strategy, and that marketing, simply by maintaining that one cannot distinguish between and separate content and style and remain non-rhetorical, thereby maintains its status as a non-serious science:

> The very fact that marketing can ignore literary matters when its intellectual elders and betters consider them worthy of detailed attention is clueless at best and cretinous at worst. Marketing likes to boast that it focuses on the facts, but the fact of the matter is that the facts don't speak for themselves. They are selected, shaped and spread by literary means. They are spun on a textual loom. Facts are textual constructs. They only exist on paper. They are entirely textually mediated. There is nothing untouched by text. (Brown, 2005, p. 5)

The fact that large parts of the marketing field dismiss or simply neglect rhetoric does not of course in any way mean that rhetoric does not or should not play a role in the field. Hackley (2001), for instance, demonstrated how mainstream marketing thought, research and writing is constructed through the use of specific rhetorical devices. Marketing texts are often highly normative, but present this normativity as a neutral and non-constructed normality – as a description of the factual conditions in a concrete world. From this ostensibly mainstream perspective, marketing is not, therefore, as social constructivist theorists would argue, a social construct, or to put it differently, constituted through communication and by means of rhetorical devices.

On the contrary, true marketing can be conceptualized as a pure description of and a direct reflection of reality, undisturbed by the intervention of rhetoric. Precisely by claiming

the a-rhetorical nature of marketing, the fact that marketing is not a natural phenomenon, but also merely a social construct, rhetorical by nature, and which could be different, is concealed. The anti-rhetorical approach might itself be a "rhetorical device which obscures the way in which forms of representation can mask ideological content" (Hackley, 2009, p. 129). Critics' point out that marketing is also – like many other things – rhetorical by nature, but this view is perceived as a radical and profound critique of the whole social order and the underlying ideology as such. Emphasizing a critical perspective, Hackley (2001) observed

> that marketing rhetoric used unconsciously becomes a powerful tool to dominance for relatively narrow groups of interests. One such rhetorical device of mainstream marketing is to divert attention away from its rhetorical character by labeling all such criticism as criticism of capitalism …rather than criticism of very particular ways of studying and writing about marketing. (p. 11)

The assumption within mainstream marketing thus seems to be that reality may be accessed without the use of language, or at least without the use of rhetoric. Humans have direct title to reality, and if you are clever enough, it can be impartially described. Language is thus a purely descriptive medium that can be used to objectively record and analyze the world, and which in no way plays a constitutive role. The role of language and rhetoric in marketing practice is seriously underplayed by marketing texts (Hackley, 2009). The reproduction of marketing ideology is enabled by the fact that it is not condoned or acceptable within this tradition to critically reflect on the role and use of language (Hackley, 2001, p. 22). The linguistic turn has thus in some sense bypassed most of the field.

Although some of the leading lights in marketing do not regard themselves as "rhetoricians" and, as mentioned above, perhaps even denounce rhetoric on the grounds that it does not or should not have anything to do with how humans think about and react to reality – in this case, marketing – Brown (2005) claimed to be able to demonstrate that they

are themselves extremely skilled orators, and that this is precisely the precondition for rising

to the top – also in academic marketing research. An outstanding and almost iconic figure in

the marketing world is Shelby D. Hunt, who can most certainly be said to be a skilled

rhetorician, but who nonetheless quite explicitly rejects rhetoric. Paradoxically enough, he

wrote: "Those who are skilled in rhetoric have long known that their normative views are

often more persuasive when disguised as declarative, positive assertions" (Hunt cited in

Brown, 2005, p. 114). Hunt's views on rhetoric and on how it can be applied are concisely

expressed in *Controversy in Marketing Theory: For Reason, Realism, Truth, and Objectivity*,

where he wrote:

> Academic integrity is worth safeguarding. Words have meaning. Rhetoric has
>
> consequences. Communities of academic researchers have fiduciary responsibilities to
>
> their colleagues, to other academics, to students, and to society at large. The price
>
> paid for historically false rhetoric is the potential destruction of trust.... This price, I
>
> suggest, is too high – it is also a price that it is unnecessary to pay. (Hunt, 2003, as
>
> cited in Brown, 2005, p. 92)

Rhetoric does not necessarily imply awareness of its use, and rhetoric may appear

even stronger if one makes a virtue of distancing oneself from it (Brown, 2005). Central to

the project of this *Handbook*, analysis of rhetoric as such and as part of activities such as

marketing (including advertising) offers a tradition of scholarship that justifies a more

insightful and nuanced view of how language relates to reality, and therefore supports the

constructive function of marketing. Such insights are contingent on an assessment of

"rhetoric as superficial wordplay" – as in itself a superficial view.

Rhetoric as Superficial Wordplay

A prominent example of the perception of rhetoric as mere wordplay and something

potentially manipulative is found in Kitchen, whose book, *The Rhetoric and Reality of*

Marketing – An International Managerial Approach, describes the rhetoric of marketing as "a business that proclaims allegiance to the marketing concept, yet for them it never develops much beyond a form of wordplay in which trappings of marketing are taken for the reality" (Kitchen, 2003a, p. 1). There is often a difference between what the rhetoric of marketing promises, and what is actually delivered (Kitchen, 2003b, pp. 180-181). There can, in other words, be a gap between rhetoric and reality (p. 182). Evans (2003) cited as an example of such a gap the way in which, while rhetoric is about customer focus and relationships, the reality is that companies are simply eager to make more money from their customers (p. 46).

In opposition to the rhetoric of marketing, some discussants present the concept of marketing, which is about balancing organizational and consumer needs (Kitchen, 2003b, p. 176) while at the same time satisfying customers and consumers, as well as the organizational imperative for sales, profits, growth, and market, mind and heart shares (Kitchen, 2003a, p. 9). In contrast, rhetoric is seen as one of the negative factors that frustrates the true intention of marketing and turns it into a matter of seduction and superficial wordplay. Kitchen poses the question: "Is marketing more concerned with rhetoric, spin and jargon than actually seeking to satisfy customer needs?" (Kitchen, 2003a, p. 6). A shift, it is claimed, may have taken place, such that the focus is now more upon competition than on consumers, and one can experience "corporate executive greed, even in the face of declining markets" (Kitchen, 2003a, p. 6).

The true heroes of Kitchen's narrative are the managers and executives who, in their companies and organizations, strive and endeavor to realize the dictum of the marketing concept about satisfying the needs and wants of the target customers, and for whom marketing as a concept and a business philosophy is closely aligned with organizational goals and is driven deep into the organizational culture (Kitchen, 2003a, pp. 4-5). However, few companies are willing or able to practice marketing, as it rightly should be done. Marketing,

according to Kitchen (2003b), will for most companies never be anything more than simply a rhetorical device (p. 180). Kitchen seems to express a form of despondency or despair over the way that marketing is in many cases performed, when he writes that "marketing itself may be no more than a form of rhetoric" (p. 177). On the basis of this very idealistic perspective, marketing is about developing and maintaining relationships and interactions that are mutually beneficial and fruitful, and which can benefit all parties: the company/organization, the consumer/customer and, ultimately, society.

Rhetoric as a Special Stage – A Matter of Theoretical and Practical Maturity

Some marketing researchers view rhetoric as a question of the degree of theoretical and practical maturity. An example is the Goldstar company – now LG Electronics – which, according to Yoon and Kim (2003), developed their marketing concept by shifting from the rhetorical stage into real marketing (p. 93) – from rhetoric-driven marketing to reality-driven marketing (p. 89). The immature theory and practice of marketing – for want of better terms – actually worked, according to these researchers, for a period of time (p. 92). The idea seems to be that the articulation of marketing as a concept precedes its realization, and perhaps even in some cases, includes a national development perspective and provides a prerequisite for nationality. That approach to marketing rhetoric can be better than nothing, at least for a while.

Marketing Managers and Advertising Creatives as Using two Different Kinds of Rhetoric

Some in marketing might prefer to treat advertising and other forms of marketing communication as being less essential than the actual presentation by products themselves. Rather than narrowing the topic, research suggests that advertising, using techniques associated with rhetoric add value to marketing. According to Hackley, if we examine the rhetoric or language/stylistics that are expressed in marketing and advertising, we can

observe the interesting fact that there are two languages in operation. On the one hand we have "quantitative rhetoric," which utilizes a realist vocabulary drawn from hypothetico-deductive research, while on the other we have hermeneutical and interpretation-based qualitative rhetoric. Sometimes these languages are mutually antagonistic (Hackley, 2001, pp. 20-24), while at other times they are interwoven in various ways. They imply each other, inasmuch as they position themselves in opposition to each other. "You have, broadly, the two languages, two tribes, two cultures: the "suits" and the "creatives," the stiffs and the cools, the establishment and the oppositional, the conformists and the subversives" (Hackley, 2001, p. 21). The rhetoric of the creatives is oppositional to managerial quantitative rhetoric as a way of justifying their domain in marketing as *creative*. No "suit" should ever reduce the creative process or product to a simple concept, or to a repeatable, measurable "thing." On a speculative note, the application of rhetorical theory in advertising research, in order to improve the efficacy of advertising, could be viewed as an attempt to do just that (though we do not claim knowledge of any such stated agenda or "conspiracy of suits" in mainstream marketing).

Rhetorical Perspectives in Advertising Research

How is rhetorical theory approached in advertising, which is a sub-discipline of marketing? In her text on advertising rhetoric, Scott (2008, p. 297) defined rhetoric as what "people do when they use symbols to get their way." However much this view points to outcome, it begs the question of means. Under this definition we must also include semiotics, price-setting (economics), and pretty much all of the communication discipline. Focus is achieved by realizing that we are mainly concerned with the more explicit use of the terms and concepts of the rhetorical discipline (as for example outlined by Corbett, 1990).

In advertising research, the figures and tropes of elocution (see also Chapter 16 on rhetorical figures) mainly comprise what is understood as "rhetoric," and what has been

implemented in the attempt to develop theory on the execution of advertising

communications, and in order to understand how to create "effective" advertising (e.g., as

"executional factors" in textbooks such as Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2016). Often this

view is perceived through the lens of efficacy in relation to general communication

objectives, e.g., memory effects such as brand recall, or other related effects such as brand

attitude/purchase intention/sales (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2016). It is rare in marketing to

find studies of advertising rhetoric that locate the use of rhetoric in detailed analysis of the

situational factors (as exigence or constraint as discussed by Bitzer, 1968), but studies of the

historical development of style and rhetoric have been published in central marketing journals

(e.g., Philips & McQuarrie, 2002).

As long ago as the 1980s, Deighton (1985), Durand (1987) and Dyer (1982) were

sketching out the use of classical rhetorical concepts in advertising practices and research.

Deighton (1985) suggested that rhetorical theory could be useful for advertising researchers

"to identify the rhetorical characteristics of communications that affect […] sense-making."

(p. 432). Deighton's paper suggested both the application of tropes ("rhetorical form") and

argument structure (based on Toulmin, 1958). Durand (1987) offered some rather schematic

applications of the rhetorical canon of tropes and figures to visual examples of advertising.

Some of these "visual" interpretations of verbal rhetorical concepts may seem a bit odd to

contemporary readers, but his work has been highly influential, and has inspired visual

applications of rhetoric in both marketing and communication studies (Rossolatos, 2014).

Umiker-Sebeok's (1987) landmark publication raised awareness of how semiotics and

rhetoric could be useful in the marketing field with contributions from Jacque Durand, David

Mick, John Sherry and many other important scholars who later defined the use of rhetoric

and semiotics in marketing (and eventually also what became included in the field of

Consumer Culture Theory: Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

The work of McQuarrie and Mick (1992, 1996), Scott (1990, 1994a, 1994b), and Stern (1990), pointed out that rhetorical and "interpretive" perspectives became firmly introduced into mainstream of marketing and consumer research (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Scott, 2008). This remains the largest and most influential strand of research in marketing that explicitly uses rhetorical theory (Scott, 2008). With the work of McQuarrie and Mick (1992, 1996), rhetorical concepts were combined with experimental, positivistic consumer research and modern communication theory (e.g., the ELM theory of Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Not only was it now possible to point to rhetorical content, form, and style in an advertisement, but they also proposed and tested their theory of how rhetorical elements in advertising actually worked to persuade consumers. One such element is resonance: a "specific structural relation among signs within the text of an ad" (McQuarrie & Mick 1992, p. 194). An example was an ad for a dessert, picturing shortcake with strawberry sauce, with the headline "Berried treasure" (a *consistent* form of resonance). The concept is explained as a form of wordplay, but also includes visual/verbal relationships. The receiver is invited to play with the meaning of "berry" as a resonant meaning from the image of strawberry, and to invoke "buried" positive connotations such as "a treasure trove of buried pirate gold." By such reasoning, McQuarrie and Mick (1992) were able to show empirical evidence of resonance that enhanced ad liking and brand attitude formation.

McQuarrie and Mick (1996) presented a taxonomy ordering all the figures and tropes according to their degree of deviation and complexity (see Chapter 16). This taxonomy is structured along a dimension of applied rhetorical artfulness or *deviation* (inspired by Corbett, 1990, based on an idea with a long history in classical rhetoric, often with reference to Quintilian). McQuarrie and Mick suggested that rhetorical figures offered the receiver potential pleasure (aesthetic appreciation, feeling clever), and that this increased involvement

with the ad may consequently boost attention, emotional impact, memory and attitudes (see McQuarrie & Mick 1996, 1999, 2003; Tom & Eves, 1999).

The taxonomy of McQuarrie and Mick (1996) orders all rhetorical figures ranging from the least deviant, less complex figures of repetition, such as rhyme or anaphora, to the highest gradient of deviation, such as metaphor, irony or paradox. They place the reversal schemes, such as antitheses, and substitution tropes, such as metonyms, at the intermediate degrees of deviation (see Chapter 16–18). The gradient of deviation principle should not lead to the conclusion that all advertising can be made more efficient simply by adding as many tropes as possible, although complexity has been linked with pleasure and involvement (Mothersbaugh et al., 2002; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). It is not unusual for a single ad to employ a mix of schemes and tropes, and to do so verbally as well as visually (McQuarrie & Mick, 2003; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004). The important idea is that the tropes may open the ads up to more interpretive participation, through their "irregularity," incongruence or "strangeness." And conversely: the excess regularity of the schemes may work as a structuring aid, making the slogan or headline more memorable through rhythm and sound repetitions. A slogan such as "Coke is it!" (from the 1980s) has an unusually strong rhythm and chime that may work as a simple, memorable signal (as has the brand name itself: "Coca Cola"). In a print ad for Benson & Hedges from 1998 made by LeoBurnett (see LeoBurnett [1998] for image and Tom and Eves [1999] on the effects of this ad), depicting a pair of cigarettes relaxing on a park bench with a sunset in the background, the "irregularity" of "cigarettes sitting on a bench" (a visual metaphor) destabilizes the meaning and invites the receivers' involvement in and interpretation of the meaning of the ad, resulting in better recall and persuasion (Tom & Eves, 1999). This particular advertising campaign, showing "human" cigarettes relaxing (a personification metaphor), was claimed to be very popular among smokers, who even asked for posters with the images (Pollack, 1997). The image in the ad is

supported by the headline "Peace & Quiet, Benson & Hedges", showing the brand name in a way that visually and verbally indicates excess regularity of symmetry around the "&" sign (the regularity/similarity of verbal structure, the figure of *isokolon*). With this performance of visual and verbal "eloquence," the orator and advertiser, not only try to make the audience "turn towards" the ad and the brand, but *constructs* the essence of the brand's personality and experience, the balance, harmony, pleasure and elegance.

The use of personification metaphors (anthropomorphism, prosopopoiia) has a long tradition in advertising and may be applied on many levels, making the ad itself appealing, as shown above, but also giving the brand a "soul" and integrating the communication as a brand mascot, such as the Michelin Man, who is made of car tires (Andersen, 2012; Brown, 2011; Delbaere et al., 2011). Forceville (1996) developed a theory on the application of visual metaphors in advertising and how these relate to verbal elements, for example in headlines or slogans, and which elements are employed to construct the metaphor, or whether both elements of a metaphor are visually presented. In the Benson & Hedges advertising example above, we only have "cigarettes as humans" (two elements), presented with only cigarettes (one element) – the "human" element has to be inferred from the size and curved position on a bench. The work of Forceville seems more influential in marketing literature than in the fields of communication and linguistics, although his categories of metaphor inspired the later development of the McQuarrie and Mick taxonomy by Phillips and McQuarrie (e.g. 2004).

Metaphor and metonymy have been the central interest for marketing literature investigating advertising rhetoric (Kjeldsen, 2000; Scott, 2008), but the destabilization trope *irony* has also been examined (Andersen, 2003, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2015; Stern, 1990). The research literature suggests that in advertising effects, irony has results comparable to the previously-mentioned studies of rhetorical figures and tropes, but it has been suggested that

there may be a need for continuous development of advertising creativity, and the increased focus on irony in advertising may also be about "upping the stakes" or simply finding new ways to attract the attention of savvy consumers who see "tons of advertising every day" (Kim & Kim, 2015, p. 13).

This interdisciplinary "transfer" of rhetorical theory is problematic, as it views rhetoric as a box of "persuasive tools." This school of thought has been criticized as reductionist and for ignoring some very important constraints on the meaningfulness and usefulness of rhetorical effects (Kjeldsen, 2000; Scott, 2008). It has for example been said that the research ignores the context and complexity of "real" advertising reception (Kjeldsen, 2000; McQuarrie & Mick, 2003). On a more philosophical note, too, relying on positivistic reductionism and cognitivism to justify rhetorical perspectives in marketing and advertising is somewhat at odds with an interpretive (or holistic, context-related) rhetorical perspective.

To take just one specific case of political advertising, Kjeldsen (2000) showed that pointing to the metaphor (and the rhetorical artfulness) explains very little of the complexity or potential meaning (e.g., the metaphorical/metonymical use of a bicycle helmet in the ad), and argues that is essential to examine the arguments, "persuasive cues," and historical, cultural and intertextual factors in order to understand the rhetorical strategies and persuasive potential of such advertising (e.g., the ad would only make sense to Danes familiar with a very specific incident involving the prime minister's bicycle ride and his notoriously large head).

Philips and McQuarrie (2002) is one of few attempts to contextualize advertising rhetoric in advertising research (whereas in cultural studies, sociology and history, the use of advertising as important historical documentation is common). They identified changes in rhetorical style in print advertising: a trend moving in the direction of complexity and a less

explicit anchoring of tropes. They suggested that this is related to the expectations of creativity (an "aesthetic imperative") and is therefore also, in a broader sense, a question of efficacy, using a rhetorical style that is deemed appropriate to the audience of the time.

Future Research Agendas

Scott (2007) found that the literature focusing on the employment of rhetorical devices is too narrow. The notion of rhetorical "magic bullets" should be dispensed of altogether, and she called for a movement towards an "expanding rhetoric" that requires more self-reflection in the way rhetoric is applied, while "in the process serving a particular locus of power." This means also studying "how people *get their way* by the use of symbols" – even if they do not invoke the term "rhetoric" or claim persuasive intentions. In essence, this is a call for self-reflexive and "ethical" rhetorical research – a perspective in which "good" rhetorical practice is a far more complex standard than efficacy, "getting our way" or "persuading." Even marketing in the service of moral good, such as AIDS campaigns, can be questionable when deceptive or exaggerated advertising is utilized (Andersen, 2011). Scott (2007) suggested that the already prominent and fruitful marketing research into rhetorical figures, elements and genres should be developed and expanded with more specific genres, forms, figures, modes, modalities, etc., and indicates how they could be combined to constitute, for example "brand personality".

On a more speculative note, it could be a fruitful venture to reform marketing and advertising rhetoric through a more *performative* perspective on the uses of rhetoric (e.g., Brummet, 2008). In the classical tradition, all artifacts of speech, such as the written word, provide only a bleak blueprint of the intended performance of rhetoric, which is realized though *action* (Corbett, 1990; Fafner, 1982). It has been suggested that we are moving towards an oral future (Lindhardt, 1993), in which the formal value and legitimacy of written rhetoric will be increasingly challenged by changes in society and (media) technology:

today's bestselling authors are those who have built their audiences through oral video performances on YouTube or reality TV (Votta, 2015; see also Chapter 25 on visual and multimodal rhetoric).

Similarly, the marketing and advertising rhetoric must embrace a fuller notion of performativity in service performances, guerilla marketing, events (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), cultural branding (Holt, 2004) and inviting co-performances (dialogue, co-creation, etc.) from the audiences. In contemporary marketing, the eloquence of advertising style (whether visual or verbal) in the old Mad Men tradition is very likely to yield instant, informal and opaque marketing communications in social media, or as content marketing and product placement. This development could make *invention* argumentation and *actio* more relevant in the marketing rhetoric of the future, as bloggers unbox products on YouTube while praising their benefits (Smith et al., 2012). In some sense, it may appear to be a return to the sales rhetoric of the 1950s era of product demonstration, but under the banner of User Generated Content (Smith et al., 2012). It has been argued that the "traditional persuasion" of advertising rhetoric is more ethical than the development of indirect marketing rhetoric such as social media "influencer marketing," "content marketing," "native advertising," "product placement," and "advertiser funded programming" (Rossiter & Percy, 2013). The names of these strategies tend to change with the current marketing hype, but the central idea is to hide the nature of the "real orator" (the marketer) and blur the lines between entertainment-, editorial - or personal contents, in the attempt to persuade while audiences' "guards are down." The ethics of these "subtle" forms advertising has been challenged as deceptive by both consumer organizations and trade regulators. John Rossiter and Larry Percy (both well established marketing scholars and practitioners) have clearly and firmly denounced these strategies:

We deplore the blatant deceitfulness of the last three forms of "advertising" […]:

product placement […]: sponsored content […]: and brand advocates (especially the "shills" paid to post subtle "plugs" for products on Twitter and Facebook). These practices are deontologically unethical (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005) because the audience is not fairly forewarned that they are being advertised to. (Rossiter & Percy, 2013, p. 397)

If we look at marketing rhetoric as such, we can see that it has had a major impact beyond the marketing discipline itself. The broadening of the marketing rhetoric is as an essential factor in the "strategic turn" within communication (Torp, 2015). The strategic turn is not a substitute for the communicative turn. It is an additional perspective that transforms all communication into strategic communication (Torp, 2015). Where marketing once was practiced only by commercial, private, profit-oriented companies, since the late 1960s, when Kotler and Levy (1969) called for a "Broadening of the Concept of Marketing," there has been an increasing penetration of marketing rhetoric to other areas such as health care, education, voluntary organizations and religious associations (Thording, 2002). The idea behind this broadening was that marketing thinking and marketing concepts – marketing rhetoric, if you will – could also usefully be applied in areas that are not concerned with the sale of goods or commercial services, but rather with effecting behavioral change, for example in relation to health, safety or the environment, to the benefit of individuals, groups or society as a whole (Kotler, Roberto & Lee, 2002).

This form of marketing is known as "social marketing" (Eagle et al., 2013, Hastings, 2010). The expansion of marketing rhetoric has not only been directed externally, encompassing conditions outside the organization; attempts have also been made to understand and articulate the "inner life" of the organization through marketing vocabulary. This development has meant that in some organizations, it has become customary to perceive and refer to persons previously called citizens, clients, colleagues, employees, etc., as

customers, while in relation to the internal aspect of the organizations' work, the terms "internal marketing" and "internal customers" are used (du Gay & Salaman, 2000).

The broadening of marketing rhetoric has been met with criticism and opposition from various quarters. It has for example been claimed that marketing rhetoric reduces human relations to quasi-financial transaction relationships, and, using a concept borrowed from the German social theorist Habermas, it could be debated whether the broadening of marketing rhetoric amounts to a colonization (of the lifeworld) (Habermas, 1994). In connection with the rise and implementation of integrated marketing communications (IMC) – the integration of the various forms of internal and external communication practiced by a company (Torp, 2009) – public relations theorists and practitioners have warned of marketing imperialism (Lauzen, 1991; see also Chapter 4 on marketing) and claimed that IMC is merely a cloak for the efforts of the marketing discipline and its people to take over functions and positions that have hitherto primarily been held by communication and public relations professionals. A specific point of contention in relation to the proponents of marketing and IMC has for example been the question of which concepts should be used. The public relations exponents and advocates believe that stakeholders is a much more appropriate term for players who are not part of or involved in a financial transaction or exchange (Torp, 2014). Brownlie and Saren eloquently criticized the "one-dimensionality" of mainstream marketing rhetoric as a lost opportunity:

> the poverty of much marketing rhetoric resides in its effect, in that it projects one view of marketing and marketing management onto the research base itself and delineates that which can be talked about and thus "known". The ensuing discourse thus produces a kind of "alchemy of knowledge", whereby gold is turned into base-metals. (1997, p. 159)

One could perhaps even argue that marketing rhetoric potentially contains another

side and another potential, inasmuch as customers, from a marketing perspective, are ideally

the focal point – in contrast to, for example, employees and colleagues, who do not always

enjoy a great deal of positive attention and are not always treated particularly well. A dictum

in marketing is that "the customer is king," in the sense that it is a question of being service-

minded, meeting customer requirements and satisfying their needs. If employees or

colleagues were to be suddenly perceived and treated in accordance with that ideal, it might,

at best, also be a positive development.

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