Towards a New Typology For Visual and Textual Rhetoric in Print Advertisements

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[to cite]:

[url]:
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Margot van Mulken, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT
Several studies have shown that rhetorical figures enhance the appreciation of print advertisements. In order to predict the effect of these figures, a typology of figures in relation to their complexity and deviation is required. McQuarrie & Mick (1996, 1999, 2003) have been the first to combine text-interpretative analysis with consumer response. In this paper an expanded model, based on the one developed by McQuarrie & Mick, will be presented and tested. With the help of semiotic content analysis a large sample of 600 ads will be used to test the validity, interrater reliability and feasibility of the taxonomy. Results show that the integration of verbal-pictorial figures in the rhetoric framework for print advertising deserves to be considered.

INTRODUCTION
“Top People Take The Times” is a nice example of a rhetorical figure in advertising. The catchy alliteration and colloquial phrase ‘top people’ suggest the liveliness of the newspaper. Rhetorical figures involve more elaboration (Mothersbaugh et al, 2002, Schilperoord & Maes, 2003), assure longer retention (Tom & Eves, 1999, Toncar & Munch, 2001, McQuarrie & Mick, 2003), and are seen as more rewarding for persons with a relative high need for cognition (Perachio and Meyers-Malaviya, 1994). Lee and Mason (1999) and Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1989) have also shown that unexpected (or incongruent) information elicited better recall and more appreciation. Houston et al (1987) report more elaborate processing in cases of picture-word inconsistency in advertisements. In other words: it pays to put rhetoric in ads. The number of rhetorical devices, however, is very large. Do all rhetorical devices contribute to the appreciation of ads in the same way? We therefore need a framework that allows to describe and classify the different rhetorical figures of speech.

RHETORICAL FIGURES IN ADVERTISING
The first encompassing typology of figures in advertising, related to their complexity and deviation, is proposed by McQuarrie & Mick (1996, 1999, 2003). McQuarrie & Mick define rhetoric as an artful deviation relative to audience expectation and propose a text-interpretive typology, in which they exploit the classical distinction between schemes and tropes, and which they apply to both visual and textual figures. This is a clever attempt to discern more simple figures from more complex figures, and this presupposes an underlying difference in effect and appreciation. In line with Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1995[1986]), it can be assumed that more complex figures require more elaboration and cognitive effort. However, since readers/viewers are compensated for this extra processing effort in terms of pleasure or self-contentment (for having solved the riddle) (cf. Tanaka (1994), Forceville (1996)), more complex figures are more appreciated than less complex figures.

McQuarrie and Mick show that the Quintilian distinction between schemes and tropes is very valuable for the discernment between more simple figures, schemes, and more complex figures. Schemes are based on overcoding, in that they involve a deviation from the ordinary pattern or arrangement of words, for example, excessive order or regularity (cf. alliteration or rhyme). ‘Beanz meanz Heinz’ is a well-known example. Tropes involve a deviation from the ordinary and principal signification of a word, when a text or image contains excessive irregularity (undercoding) (McQuarrie & Mick 1996). ‘Put a Tiger in your Tank’ is a nice example of a trope. Schemes represent deviations that occur on the surface of the text, tropes function at the level of meaning (McQuarrie & Mick 2003). Within the category of schemes, schemes of repetition (e.g. alliteration, rhyme) are distinguished from the slightly more complex schemes of reversal (e.g. antimetabole, antithesis). Tropes are subdivided in a similar way: tropes of substitution (e.g. hyperbole, ellipsis) are less complex than tropes of destabilization (e.g. metaphor, homonym, irony). The difference can be quite subtle: “Whereas in a trope of substitution, one says something other than what is meant and relies on the recipient to make the necessary correction, in a trope of destabilization, one means more than is said and relies on the recipient to develop the implications. Tropes of substitution make a switch, while tropes of destabilization unsettle” (McQuarrie and Mick 1996, p. 433).

Van Mulken (2003) has shown that this framework works well, but that it is too coarse grained: too many ads belong to the class ‘Destabilization’ (e.g. metaphor, irony, puns), the most complex figure in the typology. Further, interrater agreement is fairly low, which too limits its feasibility. Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) also criticize the McQuarrie & Mick framework by pointing to the fundamentally textual nature of the taxonomy. They propose a new grid for analyzing visual rhetoric apart from textual rhetoric (Phillips & McQuarrie 2004). Forceville (1996) and Leigh (1992) also propose analyzing grids, and they too constrain their models by limiting the scope to either metaphors (Forceville) or verbal rhetoric (Leigh). Since the goal of the typology is to be able to predict the effect of all the rhetoric in advertising, we think it is necessary to develop and refine an all-encompassing framework. In order to refine the McQuarrie & Mick framework, we decided to include more aspects in the typology of rhetorical speech. We retained the distinction between schemes and tropes, but not the respective subdivisions, since these classes were not explicative enough. Apart from the difference in schemes and tropes in both the visual and textual mode, we added, on the basis of Heckler & Childers (1992), the features ‘expectancy’, and ‘relevancy’, and on the basis of Barthes (1964) and Phillips (2000), ‘verbal anchoring’. ‘Mention of brand/logo’ and ‘Depiction of the product/service’ was added on the basis of Hager (2001) and Kröber-Riel (1993). All criteria will be illustrated below. The inclusion of ‘expectancy’ is in line with the findings of Heckler and Childers (1992), where they define expectancy in the visual as the relationship of the message with the ad theme (Heckler and Childers 1992, Lee & Mason 1999). Verbal Anchoring was added on the basis of Barthes (1964) and Phillips (2000), where it shown that the degree in which the text guides the interpretation of the visual (and vice versa) imports for the distinction between simple and complex figures. Hager (2001) and Kröber-Riel (1993) stress the fact that the absence of the product or service in the visual can be an indicator of indirectness. This is also in line with the observation of Phillips and McQuarrie (2004), where they show that juxtaposition (two side-by-side images) or fusion (two combined images) is less complex than replacement (where the image points to an absent image). Groupe Mu (1992) define this criterion as In absence or In presence (Groupe Mu 1992).

Generally, the Sender of the message is identified in the logo or in the brand name. However, it may occur that the Sender presupposes that the reader/viewer is so familiar with his or her
advertising style, that he or she even dares to leave out his or her stamp. This is our final criterion, based on Hager (2001). Table 1 presents all criteria used.

We will illustrate these criteria with examples. The already mentioned “Top People Take The Times” is an example of a verbal rhetorical figure. It is a schematic figure, since the repetition of the sound signals that something is deviant. Figure 1 presents an example of a visual scheme, the presence of a visual rhetorical figure. The folds in the woman’s dress are repeated in the form of the perfume bottle. “Nothing comes between me and my Calvin Klein jeans” is an example of the third criterion, a verbal tropical figure, where the pun resides in the ambiguity of the expression ‘nothing comes between’. Figure 2 is an illustration of the fourth criterion, the presence of a visual trope. The Mercedes is like the pearl in an oyster, and thus constitutes a metaphor.

Figure 3 (Bulova Watches) illustrates Expectancy: the position of the watch is not where one would habitually expect to find watches. Verbal Anchoring is illustrated in Figure 4: the header ‘Nymphomaniac’ adds a rather deviant interpretation of the person eating a bar of chocolate. Absence of the product is shown in the Wonderbra ad in Figure 5. The bra is not depicted, just the button of the blouse that tried to hide it. And absence of logo or brand name is shown in Figure 6, where the reader has to infer that this pen allows to write infinitely, just as the mathematical symbol indicates. Only if the reader understands that this ad serves to sell Bic pens, he or she catches the meaning of this ad.

This expanded taxonomy was tested for validity and reliability. Note that all criteria are dichotomies, and each criterion is either plus or minus rhetorical.

**METHOD**

In order to check whether the various criteria are effectively informative for rhetorical communication, a sample of 600 magazine ads was composed. We gathered the first 100 full-page advertisements in the German opinion weekly Der Spiegel, of the years 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000. A reliability check was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Brand/Logo</td>
<td>Visual/Verbal</td>
<td>Hager (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 2
Visual trope (cr. 4)

FIGURE 3
(Bulova watches) Expectancy (cr. 5)

FIGURE 4
Verbal Anchoring (cr. 6)
performed on 25 percent of the sample. Further, in order to check whether it is possible to cover all forms of visual and verbal rhetoric with this framework, we tested whether a generally accepted diachronical trend in advertising development would appear (=validity). Phillips and McQuarrie (2002) detected a change and transformation in the rhetorical style in magazine advertisements since 1954, in American magazines. Pollay (1985) and Gross & Sheth (1989) found a similar development. The hypothesis we tried to falsify is whether a diachronical evolution in stylistic approach can also be detected in German print advertising.

A pretest was used to verify the usefulness of the above mentioned criteria.

The criteria of rhetorical communication have been coded as dichotomies, 0 for absence, 1 for presence, and, in the case of Verbal Anchoring, following Phillips 2000, we coded 0 (=complete), 1 (partial) or 2 (absent). The coding reflects an increasing degree of rhetorical speech. Analysis concerned only header, primary visual and logo/brand name. Body copy and secondary visual supports were not included in the analysis.

RESULTS

Two independent judges have categorized 25% of the data. The reliability check that we performed on 25 percent of the sample showed that interrater agreement was rather comfortably high for most of the dichotomies. As was to be expected (cf Van Mulken 2003), interrater agreement was lowest for the variables 'tropical transformation' (k=.427, moderate) and 'Verbal Anchoring' (k=.387, fair), since these variables require interpretation of the advertisement. This aspect is renown to lower Cohen’s kappa.

To test the validity of our framework, we tested the diachronical hypothesis, and the results are presented in Table 2.

We see then that there is a general trend, for all variables except Logo or Brand Mention, towards the use of more rhetorical speech. One-way Anova were performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the means per decade. It appeared then that all criteria show significant development on a p<.001 level, except for the absence or presence of a textual rhetorical figure (p>.08).

We collapsed these remaining criteria to create one measure for rhetorical speech. Table 3 shows the means (and standard deviations) per decade. Again, we used Anova to verify the significance of the change thru time. It appeared that the evolution is indeed significant (F(5, 559)=21.82, p<.001). Figure 7 illustrates this evolution.

A post-hoc test (Tukey HSD) revealed that the decades 1950 thru 1980 constitute a subset, that 1970 thru 1990 constitute another subset (but without the decade 1980), and that 2000 is a separate subset.

A principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used because correlated factors were expected. To isolate the factors, a minimum primary loading of .30 was used. Overall, the three factors explain 63.6 per cent of the variance—a substantial performance. Three factors emerged in the analysis (Table 4).
TABLE 2
Mean scores (and standard deviations) for each indicator of rhetorical speech (0=non rhetorical, 1=rhetorical) per decade\textsuperscript{1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Rhetorical Tropic Expectancy</th>
<th>Fig transformation</th>
<th>Image/Text</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Image/Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>0.00 (.00)</td>
<td>0.00 (.00)</td>
<td>0.32 (.47)</td>
<td>0.06 (.24)</td>
<td>0.93 (.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>0.11 (.31)</td>
<td>0.1 (.30)</td>
<td>0.27 (.44)</td>
<td>0.15 (.359)</td>
<td>0.82 (.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>0.05 (.22)</td>
<td>0.27 (.45)</td>
<td>0.27 (.44)</td>
<td>0.13 (.34)</td>
<td>0.64 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>0.03 (.17)</td>
<td>0.11 (.32)</td>
<td>0.18 (.39)</td>
<td>0.06 (.24)</td>
<td>0.8 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0.14 (.35)</td>
<td>0.25 (.43)</td>
<td>0.31 (.47)</td>
<td>0.12 (.33)</td>
<td>0.97 (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.14 (.35)</td>
<td>0.49 (.5)</td>
<td>0.55 (.5)</td>
<td>0.36 (.48)</td>
<td>1.27 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.08 (.27)</td>
<td>0.2 (.4)</td>
<td>0.32 (.46)</td>
<td>0.35 (.01)</td>
<td>0.91 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>21.33</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{1}Verbal Anchoring: 0 = complete verbal anchoring, 1 = moderate verbal anchoring, 2 = no verbal anchoring

TABLE 3
Means (and standard deviations) of Rhetorical Speech per decade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>2.0800</td>
<td>1.29240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>2.0309</td>
<td>1.41755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2.2737</td>
<td>1.65954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2.0538</td>
<td>1.46232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2.7283</td>
<td>1.66478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3.9886</td>
<td>1.78431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.5027</td>
<td>1.68706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We see then that the first cluster groups the presence of expectancy, visual product depiction, verbal anchoring and pictorial tropes. The second cluster combines the presence of pictorial tropes with pictorial rhetorical figures. A third cluster is defined by the presence of textual tropes, the textual representation of the product, and verbal anchoring.

CONCLUSION
The reliability check of our typology worked fairly well. We also were able to confirm the diachronical hypothesis, we used to test the validity of our taxonomy. We found a diachronical evolution in rhetorical speech in ads in Der Spiegel from 1950 until 2000. We were enabled to confirm the hypothesis based on Phillips & McQuarrie (2002). Indeed, the degree of rhetorical speech is highest in the year 2000. We also see a sudden decline of rhetorical speech towards 1980. Gross & Sheth 1989 detected a similar curve in time-oriented ads in American Magazines. This may correspond with a different trend in creative advertising in the 80s—for instance, the emergence of media policies in advertising agencies.

We therefore conclude that the refinement of the McQuarrie & Mick framework permits a detailed account of rhetorical speech in advertising. Presence of brand name or logo appears not yet to play a role as a rhetorical feature in German advertising. Rhetorical speech in text seems to be a constant factor since the 1950s: there is no relative increase or decline thru time. All other factors indicate a strong development, towards an increment in rhetorical speech in 2000. It appears then that the increased use of rhetorical strategies can be explained by the fact that with the advent of more media exposure, and new technologies, copywriters tried to differentiate their messages by using more complex rhetorical communication.
However, the decade of the 80s shows a different aspect: a sudden decline of rhetorical features. This is in line with other findings (Pollay 1985, Gross & Sheth 1989, Phillips and McQuarrie 2002) where in American Magazine a similar trend is to be found. It is not easy to explain this sudden collapse, but the history of advertising agencies might furnish an explanation: towards the 1980s economic development and the emergence of more commercial television chains in Europe, obliged copywriters to rethink their strategies, and focus might have been on commercials.

With regard to the feasibility of our taxonomy, we conclude that the integration of verbo-pictorial interaction—in other words: verbal anchoring—and the place of the figure (in text, in visual, in
both) allow to refine the analysis of rhetorical speech in advertising.
The three clusters of criteria point in the same direction: verbal
rhetorical strategies, pictorial rhetorical strategies and strategies
that combine the two modes, i.e. verbal anchoring, deserve to be
analyzed separately to discover the rhetoric used.

One important limitation of our taxonomy is that we have not
yet accounted for the possibility that an advertisement contains
more than two figures within the same mode. Phillips and McQuarrie
refer to this phenomenon as ‘layering’ (Phillips & McQuarrie
2002). Of course, if an ad contains a rhetorical figure in the visual,
and in the text, then this is accounted for in our taxonomy. But the
text may contain more than one figure, and the same is true for
visual figures. We therefore hope to integrate layering in a further
refinement of the taxonomy.

In the mean time, the new typology offers an alternative
account of how rhetorical strategies may play a role in advertising
and defy readers/viewers.

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