

# Media Rhetoric



# Media Rhetoric:

## *How Advertising and Digital Media Influence Us*

Edited by

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## INTRODUCTION

# WHEN *HOMO RHETORICUS* MEETS THE MEDIA: THE FIELD AND SCOPE OF MEDIA RHETORIC

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This is a book about the media effects on *homo rhetoricus*. By *homo rhetoricus* I understand the human symbolic craft of the world and reality through discourse (both verbal and non-verbal, such as visual discourse). Rhetoric can be used for ethical and unethical means. So, it does not mean that rhetoric can appear to be true while manipulating the audience. *Homo rhetoricus* translates here as an anthropological dimension close to Oesterreich's Anthropological Rhetoric (*Antropologische Rhetorik*) (2008) in which humans base their fundamental communicative nature in rhetoric—seen as a persuasive communicative technique. In fact, the rhetorical canons (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, actio*) are considered by him as universal anthropological invariants closely related to the way individuals can describe, judge and empathize with each other. We are *homo rhetoricus* because we are entirely formed by rhetorical practices (Lanham, 1976) that constitute our social self, constructed among competing interpretations. As Burke (1969) suggests, we are always in a rhetoric.

*Media Rhetoric: How Advertising and Digital Media Influence Us* concentrates on the paramount implications of persuasive communication that media use to influence how we collectively think, express ourselves, argue and feel. It is concerned with both the media practice of rhetoric activity and the rhetorical practice of media activity: on one hand, it respects how media have integrated rhetorical speech and, on the other hand, it analyses how rhetoric has adapted to media societies. Media and rhetoric are interpenetrated notions highly dependent on each other. There are, of course, rhetorical acts in the absence of media. Yet, the majority of media activity can be scrutinized by adopting a rhetorical matrix.

This book is not about the rhetorical discourse of Media. It is not about Media Discourse. Instead, it is about how Media alter the ways we talk, discuss, argue and convince. It focuses on the theoretical and empirical analysis of communication technologies such as advertising and digital technologies as persuasive mechanisms and central tenets of contemporary, 21st-century rhetoric.

More than figures of speech, style or eloquence, *Media Rhetoric: How Advertising and Digital Media Influence Us* focuses on persuasive Media in its cultural, economic, social and political dimensions. It looks to Media as a rhetorical actors. Media are not examined from a rhetorical standpoint. Instead, the perspective adopted is that, above all, Media form key rhetorical agents that add layers of symbolic complexity to our worldviews.

The current selection of essays takes the next step in this line of thought. Its novelty is to put rhetoric at the centre of media processes instead of adding Media to the equation or taking them as simple channels of persuasive communication. Each of the six chapters recognizes Media as fundamentally rhetorical. This is what distinguishes Media Rhetoric from rhetoric in media: the assumption that Media alter the rhetoric scaffolding, to paraphrase a renowned expression from Winston Churchill's little text (Churchill, 1897).

Concentrating on two of the most fundamental areas of Media Rhetoric—advertising and digital media—these six chapters demonstrate how persuasive speech is exerted well beyond eloquence and co-presence (speaker and audience). Together, they provide a theoretical and empirical perspective authored by scholars from different countries, traditions and fields. They focus on the specificity of rhetorical activity, paying attention to the characteristics and constraints imposed by the Media presence on Rhetoric. The chapters intend to present the state of Media Rhetoric analysis in such diverse genres as printed and television advertisements, political communication and videogames.

The concern of these international contributors is to deepen a path that is now slowly being made which tries to answer the mysterious and (still) missing link that connects the ancient art of rhetoric to the modern mass communication media. Even though there aren't many books specifically on Media Rhetoric (cf. Mateus, 2018), we can observe an intense increase of interest in Advertising Rhetoric (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2008) and Digital Rhetoric (Lanham, 1993) that, undoubtedly, launched the theoretical and empirical foundations of the essays here presented.



Before introducing the various chapters, an enlarged perspective on the field and scope of Rhetoric is presented; then, the potential contributions of Media Rhetoric to Communication, as well as to rhetoric studies, are discussed. The two core subjects of this book—advertising rhetoric and digital rhetoric—are also considered before the introduction closes with some hypotheses about the future directions of research of the Media Rhetoric field.

## **The field and scope of Media Rhetoric**

What happens when *homo rhetoricus* meets the Media?

The result is an enlargement of the field of Rhetoric. This expansion of Rhetoric is not new, and several authors have already noted it (Reboul, 1991; Barthes, 1970) as it is divided into several domains such as stylistics, composition, poetic and literary rhetoric. In fact, Rhetoric is not just classical oratory and composition (Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero), neither is it a form of language criticism (Hobbes, Nietzsche, Heidegger) or linguistic device, nor simply a *topos* in Philosophy in its quest for Truth and certainty (Plato). Also, Rhetoric is not just argumentative activity within a democratic perspective (Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca, Burke, Walton). Despite all these different domains indeed contributing to the richness of the rhetoric corpus, the shattering of Rhetoric in the 20th and 21st centuries is well beyond these approaches.

This shattering is directly concerned with the emergence of modern mass media and communication technologies that extended persuasion from oral and written speech in front of a presential and live audience to multimodal speech in front of media, non-presential, audiences. This means rhetoric is broken into a multiplicity of contexts (well beyond the political assembly, the legal court or the everyday forum) that now encompass distinct symbolic practices such as ludic and entertaining ones, and a diversity of objects including advertising. One example of this is the differentiation between live audiences and media audiences. While live audiences tend to rely on sound (the voice of the speaker) and are pre-existent to the rhetorical performance, media audiences are much more dependent on vision (how the speaker appears on multiple screens) and are only created by their watching of the rhetorical performance (Fidalgo, 2010; Mateus, 2018: 163). Besides, the traditional live audience—such as the political assembly of classical rhetoric—is receptive to a full appraisal of the subject, and the speaker has time to present his case by carefully communicating his arguments and demonstrating the reasonability of his thesis. Media audiences, in turn, are

constrained by the technical temporal limitations of communication technologies. Therefore, rhetorical messages tend to be much more concise and appealing. This stimulated the emergence of rhetorical mechanisms that are (almost) completely new, such as soundbites (see Chapter Six), slogans or 30 second advertising spots. Each one of these can be seen as developmental upgrades to the rhetorical doctrine induced by the emergence and omnipresence of Media in our everyday lives.

In the 21st century, Rhetoric is much more present in our daily lives and is used by a panoply of professional routines more than ever before. Media magnify these rhetorical activities and, at the same time, they extrapolate rhetoric presence in our lives by integrating, *per se*, rhetoric mechanisms in their everyday functioning. So, on one hand, Media give visibility to already existent rhetoric discourses (such as political ones) and, on the other hand, they integrate, appropriate and assimilate rhetoric in their own activity and discursive practice.

In this light, the expression *Media Rhetoric* can be used in three main senses.

Firstly, “*Media Rhetoric*” encompasses the study of Rhetoric in Media, that is, the persuasive verbal, sonic and visual mechanisms contained in discourses that are given visibility through Media. This mainly concerns rhetorical performances that are disseminated through Media. It’s Rhetoric *in* the Media. Media are, in this case, the technological means to rhetorical discourse (for example, the broadcasted presentation of the Address to the Nation by the President). As such, for instance, one can examine how the environmental discourse of a given organization builds a rhetorical discourse and its relations with the Media. This is the most used sense of Media Rhetoric: the rhetoric of a particular (individual or collective) speaker in the general context of media performances. Several examples include: *The Rhetoric of Political Correctness in the U.S. Media* (Losey and Kurthen, 1995), *Media Objectivity and the Rhetoric of News Story Structure* (White, 2000), *American Elections and the Rhetoric of Political Change: Hyperbole, Anger, and Hope in U.S. Politics* (Stuckey, 2017) or *Whose tweets? The rhetorical functions of social media use in developing the Black Lives Matter movement* (Wilkins, Livingstone, Levine, 2019).

Secondly, the expression “*Media Rhetoric*” is also used to describe Media themselves as agents of rhetorical discourse. It’s the Media *under* the influence of Rhetoric. In this sense, scholars examine Media and its use of Rhetoric starting from the notion that media practices are, in themselves, a form of persuasive, discursive activity. Starting with a rhetorical doctrine,

Media are scrutinized. In such cases, researchers try to identify, isolate and classify the specific elements of media discourse that consubstantiate its rhetorical dimension. Examples of this are found in studies such as *Journalism Hits a Wall: Rhetorical construction of newspapers' editorial and advertising relationship* (Artemas, Vos, Duffy, 2016), *Rhetorical Audience Studies and Reception of Rhetoric, Exploring Audiences Empirically* (Kjeldsen, 2018), *News Media's Rhetoric on Facebook* (Yngve, 2019), or *Rhetoric in Digital Communication: Merging Tradition with Modernity* (Bendrat, 2019). In this second sense, authors use a rhetoric framework in which the Media analysis is based.

Thirdly, “*Media Rhetoric*” is also used to describe the persuasive potential of media. This is a much newer sense and is now under development by authors like Fidalgo and Ferreira (2005) or Mateus (2018). The foundations of this sense lie in the transformation of Aristotle’s rhetoric triangle (speaker, message, audience) to the rhetoric square (speaker, media, message, audience). The inclusion of Media in the rhetoric equation does not mean that persuasion is now conducted *in* Media or *through* Media—as in the first two senses of Media Rhetoric. Instead, Media Rhetoric, in a third acceptation, points to the fact that Media completely changed the traditional rhetorical canons by maximizing potential audiences and by imposing a series of constraints on the rhetorical craft. Basically, it contends that the modern functioning of persuasive discourse cannot be separated from modern mass media. Media Rhetoric acquires, in this light, the sense of a contemporary Rhetoric that influences and is influenced by the Media concerning the profound modifications Media introduced to persuasive communication.

One of these radical transformations has to do with the fact that contemporary Media Rhetoric is not more limited in temporal and spatial terms. Rhetorical messages can be recorded and watched an infinite number of times. Also, messages can be broadcast immediately or subject to extensive processes of pre- and post-production, as in the case of YouTube Videos. These technological contours give communicative messages an unusual potential of persuasion that ultimately culminates in the problem of the veracity of the message after it enters the media circuit (e.g. fake news, faked videos turned viral). If “The Media is the Message” as suggested by McLuhan, the Media are a central tenet of persuasion due to their capacity to change the efficacy of the messages and their ability to alter the scope of persuasion, including their potential to make pathos a much more important canon. Media changed the nature of Rhetoric, for example, by widening the notion of verbal discourse into visual discourse or sonic discourse. And by

so doing, they transformed the ways we communicate and persuade each other. Since a large part of today's communication comes through media, a thorough study of the mutations it introduces in persuasion is key to having a clear picture of its importance today.

The chapters presented in this book cover all three senses of Media Rhetoric mentioned above. There are chapters that deal with Media Rhetoric as a Rhetoric in Media, the use of Rhetoric to understand Media, and the persuasive potential of media in a close association between persuasion and technological media. These are the three levels of analysis implicit in the recent literature on this subject. This distinction is useful, mainly to separate contrastive approaches to Media Rhetoric. But, in empirical terms and in the everyday practice of persuasion, all these levels are intertwined.

Media Rhetoric is, thus, a polysemic term reflecting the manifold effects of the intersection between Rhetoric and Media.

## **The Potential of Media Rhetoric**

Given this wide scope, what can be gained from the study of Rhetoric *in, through* and *within* Media? Answering this involves contemplating how Media means an expansion of the object of rhetoric study, grounding its analysis on multimodal and multimedia communication—not just oral and written speech but also images, sounds, music and other semiotic modes that, combined, have changed the classical matrix of persuasive communication.

Rhetoric is not a declining field (Manovich, 2002: 77) since it is not reduced to rhetorical figures and tropes nor to a theory of elocutio (cf. Ricoeur, 1978). Verbal language is persuasive but so are the other semiotic forms of representing and communicating in the world. From this, it follows that Media Rhetoric not only attests to the strength of Rhetoric today but also removes a kind of logocentrism in which western thinking tended to put verbal language above all other possible languages. So, by studying Media Rhetoric, scholars are contributing to putting an end to the verbal discourse privilege of classical rhetoric to the detriment of visual and sonic discourses, for instance. Media Rhetoric entails a wide field of persuasive practices that do not strictly culminate in the text and the speaker. Instead, they accommodate a large spectrum of meaningful activity that did not exist until modern mass media.

That's why the history of rhetoric (Meyer, Carrilho, Timmermans, 2002) dwells between Logic, Argumentation and Stylistics. It comes mainly from Literary and Classical Studies, Composition, Philosophy, Philosophy of Language and Argumentation Theory (Ribeiro, 2009).

So, *in, through* and *within* Media—the three senses of the expression, “Media Rhetoric”—Rhetoric is reshaped, and, at the same time, it is acknowledged that Media incorporate rhetoric precepts in their daily functioning. Media Rhetoric, first of all, points to the fact that traditional rhetorical canons, goals and proofs do not completely cover all the specificities of communicative persuasion in the 21st century. One good example of this is the topic of genres in a time of intense mediatization (as Chapter One will address). While Aristotle defined three genres (and accordingly three aims) of rhetorical discourse, today it is no longer easy to clearly choose between the deliberative, judicial and epideictic. Most media persuasive messages cannot be encapsulated in just one of these rhetorical genres. In fact, media messages tend to complexify this simple separation between a discourse that praises, judges or deliberates. Advertising messages, for example, can be difficultly identified with just one of these genres since they tend to praise while arguing an implicit deliberation about the object of praise. In reality, advertising discourse tends to mix judicial, epideictic and deliberative genres even if, by definition, it is an acclaiming type of persuasion.

Concomitantly, Media transformed the classical Rhetorical matrix because they evidence other symbolic, more subtler means, of persuading the audience. Instead of presenting an argumentative, full presentation of the topic, in Media, speakers now must appeal to the audience's attention (that is intensely fragmented by multitasking and the multiple media present in their lives). This led to the need for rhetorical scholars to consider other forms of persuasive messages beyond argumentation. In fact, most Advertising and Digital Rhetoric today relies on implicit argumentative schemes and is concentrated in seductive and affective forms of persuasion (Mateus, 2018a). So, while argumentation is still a key aspect of Rhetoric today, Media have showed that it is not the only way to persuasively communicate. It is easy to remember how advertising sells the most mundane of commodities, such as toilet paper or men's deodorant, not so much by arguing the advantages, merits, reasons or virtuosities of those products, but, in contrast, by linking and associating them with pleasurable moments and emotional appeals.

Therefore, the task of Media Rhetoric is to provoke an adaptive response from Rhetoric practitioners and scholars into the persuasive textual artefacts within a Media Culture such as ours. Deeper insight into the processes of rhetorical functioning *in, through* and *within* Media, and the transformations they impose on the classical matrix of Rhetoric, are the two fundamental goals of Media Rhetoric.

As Rhetoric has adapted to Media society, and as Media impose new constraints and opportunities in Rhetoric, the task that lies ahead is to generate fresh theoretical and empirical insights about the radically new, current phase in the development of Rhetoric. What, for sure, cannot happen is for scholars to eschew the tremendous opportunity presented by Media to enlarge the study of Rhetoric and at the same time expand the Rhetorical doctrine and matrix. If rhetoricians cling stubbornly to ancient classical ideas about the use of stylistic devices or the traditional use of canons on speech, for example, and insist on *applying only these inherited ideas* to pictorial and sonic artefacts as well as to media messages, the revival of this ancient discipline of Rhetoric—initiated by Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca's *New Rhetoric*—will be, for certain, lost. By failing to acknowledge the mutations in rhetorical art (*techné rhétoriké*) introduced by mass media and by ignoring how Media base their efficacy on rhetorical discourses, we are condemned to misunderstand both the role of Rhetoric in today's Media Societies and the role of Media in the evolution of ancient Rhetoric.

Media Rhetoric undoubtedly means a ripe enterprise for rhetorical enquiry and is a fruitful domain for Media Studies. To the rhetoric field, it suggests an original way to integrate the classical doctrine into modern communication, facilitating the approach between rhetoricians coming from Classical Studies, Philosophical or Literary Studies and rhetoricians akin to Media Studies. At the same time, it confirms the pertinency of Rhetoric in examining modern technological, economic, political, cultural and social phenomena such as the Media and its pervasive messages.

To Media and Communication studies, *Media Rhetoric entails a new perspective providing a Rhetorical framework to understand Media efficacy and importance as main catalysts of new ideas, values, causes and lifestyles in society*. Media Rhetoric, in this light, helps to enlighten the process of production and dissemination of ideas among the social tissue while adding itself as an alternative analytical methodology to the assessment of the cognitive and persuasive effects of mass communication (Bryant and Oliver, 2009), including theories like Agenda-Setting, the Spiral of Silence

or Framing. Each one of these would be enriched by an approach where media messages are scrutinized from a rhetorical standpoint.

Media Rhetoric offers, then, the chance not only to recover the forgotten insights of the ancients—classical authors like Quintilian or Gorgias—but above all, offers contemporary rhetoricians a singular chance to build on those insights while trying to develop new ideas that help us to devise the complexities of today’s persuasive communication.

*In other words, the importance of Media Rhetoric lies in the potential to reintegrate the communicative, mediated, dimension of rhetoric.*

## **Two Central Topics of Media Rhetoric**

This book pursues the Media Rhetoric potential highlighted in the previous section by interrogating the reformulation of the rhetorical system through the lens of two of the most pervasive Media Rhetoric domains: advertising and digital rhetoric.

### **Advertising**

Rhetoric can be taken much further through its application to advertising discourse. This can be fruitful in two main ways: by illuminating the construction of the persuasive framework of advertising; and by advancing theoretical theory itself through the empirical explanations advertising provides.

Rhetoric, in our media times, is flourishing once more and this is clearly felt in advertising studies. By the 1990s, the conceptual and empirical usage of rhetorical ideas in advertising had begun to appear on a regular basis (Scott, 1990; McQuarrie and Mick, 1992) and these first studies were promptly followed by empirical surveys that established positive implications between verbal rhetorical figures and a better rate of memorization and persuasiveness. Rhetoric was first associated with advertising by the various stylistic options available to means of persuasion (Phillips, 1997; Huhmann, Mothersbaugh and Franke, 2002). McQuarrie and Mick (1996) defined a rhetorical figure as an artful deviation and proposed a taxonomy based on the development of a framework for classifying rhetorical figures that distinguishes between figurative and nonfigurative text, between two types of figures (schemes and tropes), and between four rhetorical operations that underlie individual figures (repetition, reversal, substitution, and destabilization). McQuarrie and Mick (2009) explored how figurative

language and resonance influenced the advertising process, while Fox, Rinaldo and Amant (2015) concentrated on the study of the power of figurative language in word-of-mouth campaigns. Huhmann and Albinsson (2012) concluded that rhetoric can enhance awareness/persuasion by mitigating the negative effects of advertising elements that increase cognitive resource demand (e.g. longer copy). Burgers, Konijn, Steen and Iepsma (2015) demonstrated that conventional metaphors are persuasive by reducing complexity and increasing creativity and appreciation, just as van Mulken, le Pair, and Forceville (2010) evaluated the impact of perceived complexity, deviation and comprehension on the appreciation of visual metaphor in advertising in three European countries.

Furthermore, Scott (1994) emphasized visual rhetoric in promotional communication, while visual rhetoric was examined in a global context by Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver (2006) as well as by Pracejus, Olsen and O'Guinn (2006). The effects of erotic rhetorical constructions on the reception of advertising was also examined by Theodorakis, Koritos and Stathakopoulos (2015). Last but not least, the application of rhetoric in advertising suggests it can generate positive consumer responses (Delbaere, McQuarrie and Phillips, 2011), while driving consumer engagement (including perhaps advertising messages) is a key goal of social media marketing (Ge and Gretzel, 2018).

It is no accident that most of the studies on advertising rhetoric are being published in Advertising, Marketing Management and Consumer Psychology journals. In fact, the first interest in applying the rhetorical framework to advertising came from advertisers and marketers in order to become more efficient and successful in their commercial messages. The paper by Hackley (2003) dwells on the rhetorical strategies implied in marketing textbooks and confirms how empirical studies on advertising rhetoric are deeply indebted to marketing management. Miles (2014), for instance, investigates the strategic use of rhetoric by marketing practitioners and scholars. And Brown and Wijland (2018) comment on the use of figures of speech like metaphor, simile and metonymy in marketing. In fact, some authors argue that marketers need to re-embrace persuasion (hence, rhetoric) in the context of ever-changing fluid, interactive and complex environments (Miles, 2013). This could, for instance, adopt the perspective of expanding rhetorical proofs to develop research on branding while establishing similarities between rhetorical strategy and marketing (and advertising) strategy.



Indeed, the practice of rhetoric and the practice of advertising are in similar veins: both are tasked with decisions about the benefits to the audience, target messaging or the discursive (both verbal and visual) construction of attributes. Whether rhetor or advertiser, the task is to identify and to differentiate the available means of persuasion.

There are three fundamental attributes that both advertising and rhetoric share.

Firstly, advertising rhetoric is epideictic (ceremonial) by definition: it praises or blames (although this is less likely to occur in commercial advertising) a given topic, subject or product. By being epideictic, the advertising rhetoric must convince and genuinely communicate an inspirational message or vision, a credible understanding or a sense of commonality. It assures the value of the brand, client, product or service it offers. Because it is epideictic, advertising should instil a sense of trust and authenticity in order to create value in the product it praises and, thus, to persuade the audience of its advantages. The epideictic rhetoric of advertising is a key aspect of today's Media Rhetoric and part one of this book points to this fact.

Secondly, both rhetoric and advertising are different kinds of pragmatic communication since they are primarily concerned with causing a specified action to occur. Besides, the attention to context and contingency are among the stated advantages offered by rhetoric to advertising: just like a rhetor needs to focus on his audience's expectations, so the advertiser needs to address his audience's needs. There is a kind of adaptation to the *Kairos* of the moment because the dynamics of the rhetorical situation must be opportunistically seized upon. Improvisation is the main asset in advertising rhetoric, enabling a rapidly changing message to be produced and accommodated.

Thirdly, different audiences and persuasive situations require different stratagems and adaptations if the desired outcome is to be achieved. Advertising rhetoric is audience/customer-centred and focused on the different moods, hopes and fears they need to address to locate their messages in a persuasive framework. So, rhetoric and advertisement are always a co-creation: while the rhetor/advertiser attends to the needs of his audience, she allows the audience to act, think, believe or feel while judging the communicative message.

This all means a practical commitment that both rhetoric and advertising are dedicated to in order to respond to the contingency of the situation. To rhetors and advertisers, the context matters, and they are always returning to the questions of what suits and what works. In other words, the advertising rhetorician necessarily comes to the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric: *the finding of the available and most adequate means of persuasion*.

Advertisements, thus, can be seen as representing one of the epitomes of Media Rhetoric and persuasion on contemporary culture. The study of Advertising Rhetoric aims to provoke a deeper insight in the very phenomena of both advertising and rhetoric.

## Digital Rhetoric

As new media have emerged as central elements of societies, a new question has surfaced: does new media mean a new rhetoric?

The answer seems to point to a round yes. However, this new rhetoric does not necessarily have anything to do with Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca's New Rhetoric (1957) taken as a rational foundation to argumentative reasoning. Instead, a new rhetoric means, in this case, an expanded understanding of how rhetoric works in digital media (Carnegie, 2009).

Digital Rhetoric is concerned with the study of persuasion in digital environments including computers, videogames, websites and discourse on new media. It is generally divided into theoretical and empirical endeavours: theoretically, it investigates and describes the scope and effects of digital persuasion; empirically, it measures and classifies the persuasive processes involved in computational systems.

In a theoretical sense, it relates to a "nethoric", that is, a study of rhetorical mechanisms within the rhetoric of discourses that are produced, disseminated and put into circulation in digital media. In this light, it can function as an important tool to recognize how social discourse inhabits and is reproduced in online environments. This is close to the sense originally used by Richard Lanham (1993). The expression "digital rhetoric" was an emerging academic discipline centred on digital media in the new digital genre of discourses. Digital rhetoric here focuses on the role of rhetoric in the formation of online communities and social identities and the role of new media in the exacerbation of collective discourses. This nethoric is

sometimes referred to as cyber-rhetoric (Albadejo, 2014) and is seen as digital discourse's rhetoric.

In an empirical sense, the expression "Digital Rhetoric" includes the specific new media discourses that emerged from computational systems. It purposely respects new media as producers of singular media discourses. There are two main fields that illustrate this second meaning of Digital Rhetoric: Captology and Procedural Rhetoric.

On one hand, Captology (Fogg, 2003) studies the influence of digital technologies as means of persuasion. Captology is the partial acronym of *Computers as Persuasive Technology* and basically refers to the idea that computers are particularly useful in persuading people for the purpose of changing their attitudes or behaviours, such as buying certain products, or handing over personal information. So, Digital Rhetoric embraces a more technological dimension when it is compared to Captology. It explores the intersection between persuasion in general (influence, motivation, behaviour change, etc.) and computing technology including design, research, and program analysis of interactive computing products (such as the Web, desktop software, specialized devices, etc.) as its objects of study.

On the other hand, Procedural Rhetoric designates the process by which new media artefacts, such as videogames, persuade through rules and processes. Bogost (2007) contends that videogames make strong, implicit claims of how the world works by the way they embody a set of processes. So, procedural rhetoric is not so much an art of persuasion through the oral or written word but an art of persuasion through the interaction between humans and computational systems. It focuses on how game makers craft laws and rules within a game to convey a particular discourse or ideology. Videogames are strongly rhetorical because they are the deliberate expressions of certain perspectives and the exploration of those perspectives and rules is up to the player through play. Hence, videogames are powerful persuasive tools that function as an influential force in society.

Part II of this book concentrates on Digital Rhetoric in both the first (theoretical) and second (empirical) senses, seeing persuasion being exercised *through* and *by* technologies—as a nethoric and as Captological and Procedural Rhetoric. Chapter Four pursues the implications of Procedural Rhetoric and Chapter Five focuses on alternative ways of claiming a point of view in online environments.

This does not mean that the field of Digital Rhetoric is not wide and ample. In fact, many other works explore the rhetorical dimension of digital technologies. For example, Carnegie (2009) sees the computer interface as performing an exordium:

In new media, the exordium is not the introduction but the interface. Like the warp in a woven fabric, the interface as exordium is ever-present throughout a new media composition. Instead of making a good first impression, the exordium works continually to engage the audience not simply in action but in interaction. As users experience higher levels of interactivity, they experience higher levels of empowerment: they become senders and creators of messages and content (Carnegie, 2009: 171).

He continues by outlining the modes of interactivity that make the user/audience more disposed to persuasion. Rhetorically, higher levels of interactivity and involvement tend to produce higher levels of acceptance and disposition to persuasion.

Porter (2009), for his part, emphasizes the role of the rhetorical canon of Delivery in Internet-based communication by drawing a framework for digital delivery.

The real value in developing a robust rhetorical theory for digital delivery lies in production: How can this theory aid productive action? How can it prompt the critical thinking of writers/designers and help them produce better (more valuable, usable, and useful) online communications and thereby help people with their lives? As always, the ultimate point of rhetoric is to help writers/speakers/designers do a better job of helping people live their lives—or, even, save lives. Developing a robust rhetorical canon for digital delivery is necessary to achieve that end (Porter, 2009: 221).

Ge and Gretzel (2018) discuss social media influencers' persuasive attempts to initiate engagement through emojis, suggesting that emoji use by social media influencers is complex and strategic, and serves multiple persuasive and communicative purposes. "An emoji is a conceptual metaphor that allows one to say one thing but mean another (Burke, 1969) and therefore serves as an important rhetorical device, i.e. a means of conveying persuasive content" (Ge and Gretzel, 2018: 1279). They showed how social media influencers deploy diverse types of emojis to not only express opinions and emotions, but also to convey factual information and initiate phatic communication (small talk). They conclude that emojis have become an essential aspect of marketing rhetoric in the context of social media.

As these studies pinpoint, Digital Rhetoric represents a wide spectrum of rhetorical objects (websites, computers, videogames, emojis, etc.) and persuasive practices (social discourses, digital rules as processes, human-computer interaction, etc.). This proves not only the pervasiveness of digital media in today's persuasion but also demonstrates the importance of considering computational systems within the rhetorical framework.

So, the analysis of Media Rhetoric should not ignore the ubiquity of persuasion *through* and *in* Media. Just like advertising rhetoric, so digital rhetoric is a fundamental domain of persuasive communication that cannot be dismissed. By briefly exposing the contours of these fields of Media Rhetoric, it will, hopefully, be clear why this book addresses advertising and digital rhetoric.

### **Variations on a core subject: six contributions to the Media Rhetoric field**

The six chapters comprising this volume make original contributions to the study of Media Rhetoric, especially in the domains of advertising and digital rhetoric. Together, they provide us with theoretical and empirical perspectives authored by scholars in the fields of Communication, Design, Rhetoric, Advertising and New Media. Authors focus on the specificity of rhetorical activity and pay attention to the characteristics and constraints imposed by the Media presence on Rhetoric. The chapters intend to present the state of the art of Media Rhetoric analysis in such diverse genres as printed and television advertisements, political communication and videogames.

Part I is dedicated to Advertising Rhetoric and addresses a fundamental question: how does advertising persuade?

Chapter One, *Advertising as a rhetorical metagenre*, by Ivone Ferreira, presents us with not one but two bold statements: not only can advertising be considered as a rhetorical genre but it is also a special kind of genre: a metagenre. Inspired by Nietzsche's *Rhetoric and Language* essay where the existence of thirty rhetorical genres are acknowledged in the Classical Period, and drawing on Bakhtin's genre theory, Ferreira concludes that advertising rhetoric can be seen as an autonomous genre. Moreover, Ferreira postulates that we are living a new paradigm in the rhetorical field in which linguistic discourses exist in a multimedia environment. Without proposing a new taxonomy of existing rhetorical genres, the chapter demonstrates that there are no pure genres and that socio-historical conditions demand that

rhetorical praxis be reassessed. Since advertising discourse is characterized by particular communicative strategies, it is composed of a set of distinctive attributes that may inaugurate a specific rhetorical genre:

(...) It also seems to us defensible the thesis presenting Advertising as rhetorical genre, read and interpreted in the light of the type of action that triggers and the spatiotemporal context that generates it, justifies and nourishes, being also permeable to its influence, within a speculate dialectic. Action and context lead us, inevitably, to the image and to the role it plays in advertising discourse, in its persuasiveness capability and its power of seduction.

Considering advertising as a Rhetorical, encompassing metagenre means a revalorization of the audience. It can be considered a participant in the persuasive process and can be an integral part of the process of strategic advertising creation, becoming both target and speaker. *Advertising as a rhetorical metagenre* is, thus, contending that Media Rhetoric presents us with new challenges from a rhetorical standpoint, demanding an adaptation of the rhetorical framework in order to accommodate the specificity of audiovisual discourses, namely, Advertising discourse. Advertising is here portrayed as a persuasive communication that is not exactly part of traditional, Aristotelian, epideictic, deliberative and judicial genres. So, the first chapter already claims that Media Rhetoric is a kind of sub-discipline developing beyond classical boundaries.

In *Artwork as representation in advertising: a visual rhetorical perspective*, Fatma Köksal and Ümit Inatçı continue the debate around the power of visual rhetoric already alluded to in the first chapter. Although acknowledging rhetoric deals primarily with oral discourse, it emphasizes “the transformation of the oral to the written word and ultimately to visual communication too”. This second chapter argues that Rhetoric can be applied to any field of human activity. And since the 20th and 21st centuries emphasized an ever-growing dependency on visual discourse, Visual Rhetoric is a field that is suffering a crucial expansion. Drawing on Durgee, Tom, Eves and Foss, the chapter posits rhetoric as having the capability to deal with images since images are a system of symbols that can be used to persuade and are a key element in today’s advertising.

(...) the function of a visual representation is to affect the audience via a strategically selected or developed image. The advertiser transforms the communicative images in the advertisement into persuasive tools, definitely needing representations in the visual stratum. The representation designed by the advertiser originates from images in the advertisement and, at the

same time, it requires a combined contextual and configurational remodeling process to be transformed into the rhetorical backbone of the advertisement.

In the second part of the chapter, Köksal and Inatçı concentrate on advertising's representation of works of art and analyse some examples such as Lipton's Persistence of Memory ad. "It can be said that art and advertising are two forms of expression that use the different elements of each other, where art takes components originating in advertising and ads benefit from the achievements of art (...)". And they add:

the advertiser uses the artwork as a representative representation both formally and contextually. In terms of form, it is inevitable for the advertiser to, naturally, resort to an aesthetic language; in fact, the aesthetic that the artwork already embodies transforms into the formal language of advertising and becomes an aesthetic code. Indeed, form needs context. Here, although the artwork is produced with a sense of form, the semantic role it takes on in advertising transforms the artwork into a visual image of the advertisement. The visual rhetoric emerges when what is to be designed is done so within a semantic system and when the artwork is used as a figurative representation tool in advertising.

The aim of the chapter is, then, to explain how advertisements use works of art and it claims that the visual rhetoric in advertising should be understood according to a dual structure: aesthetics and representation.

*Iconic Rhetoric in the Discourse of Advertising*, written by Carmen Neamtu, closes the first part of the book. In this chapter, the author describes the importance of the image and its relation to the word. In fact, it is pointed out, "few readers of a newspaper or magazine go through the entire text of an advertisement". As a result, we encounter a series of characteristics of the construction of ads, preparing a visual path of reading and a special visual construction. Neamtu approaches visual rhetoric without forgetting to recognize the integration of both iconic and linguistic signs.

In commercials we encounter a rhetoric of indirect approach, therefore, the image provides maximum information in the shortest possible time and with minimal effort to decode. Every day images overwhelm us, that is why an image must capture our attention in order to influence us. We may identify chromatic codes, typographical codes and morphologic codes.

Trying to deepen the analysis of visual rhetoric in advertising, Neamtu considers multimodal discourse and calls on Margulies and Jouve's theoretical frameworks to present a small typology on the use of chromatic, typographical and morphological codes. This leads her to Barthe's *Rhetoric*

of *Image* and the evaluation of connotation and denotation levels of the image. Providing several examples of print advertising—such as Marlboro ads—the chapter offers us an important method to understand the use of multimodal elements in advertising. By doing so, it values Visual Rhetoric and claims a key position for it to appreciate advertising’s persuasive intent.

Part II of the book is dedicated to Digital Rhetoric and addresses a fundamental question: what makes digital media persuasive?

In *Rhetoric in video games: what makes games persuasive?* Tael Harper and Jordana Elliott offer a compelling argument about the persuasiveness of videogames. Re-appreciating classical teachings on Rhetoric, they apply them to videogames from a tripartite perspective:

any attempt to understand the persuasiveness of any game must take into account all three of the following elements: the cultural content of the game, the emotion generated by the game and the logical argument mounted by the game. Each of these “elements” of persuasion, we argue, can be loosely equated to “ethos, pathos and logos”, insofar that each works independently as a force of persuasion and in the sense that each element directly relates to appealing to authority and cultural power (ethos), emotion (pathos) and logic (logos).

About the ethos, they argue that

thematic elements in games—the representational content—comprise an appeal to ethos because the applied persuasive force of such content is imbued by the player’s identification with an external regime of truth, and, more specifically, by the player’s belief in, or understanding of, the authority of that external regime. So, the persuasive force of representations within a game largely depends on players accepting whether a game’s theme, genre and content triggers that identification.

Referring to pathos, they observe that

games can employ pathos as a persuasive device in two related ways: firstly, games can be designed to encourage the game player to experience specific emotions compelling them toward a predefined goal; secondly, games can use emotionality to further transport the player into the game and increase their susceptibility to persuasion. While the former is about achieving a specific rhetorical purpose, the latter is a device of general amplification to be employed for other rhetorical purposes.

And concerning the logos, Harper and Elliott write that



every videogame has the potential to employ these same rhetorical appeals to logic because, as Bogost (2007) explains, their system processes can operate as “enthymemes”. Enthymemes are a rhetorical device that omits a premise from a syllogism as a way of getting your audience to assume the premise to be true.

In the second part of the chapter, we encounter two videogame case-studies: *Detroit: Become Human* (2018), and *Depression Quest* (2013). *Detroit: Become Human* expresses a highly focused rhetoric against domestic violence. It expresses “a clear rhetoric about the harmfulness of domestic abuse, which has been marginalized by a broader cultural judgement about the ethos of the game. As a result, *Detroit: Become Human* presents an illustrative example of why focusing solely upon representational content (and not rhetorical context) can lead to a misinterpretation of a game’s likely rhetorical effect”. In *Depression Quest*, the primary rhetorical goal is to evoke a sense of empathy for people suffering depression.

*Depression Quest*’s primary procedural logic then, is founded within player choices—or lack thereof. Prior choices made by the player (for example, the choice to attend therapy) will impact the overall variety of choices available to the player, with the choices one cannot make as a result of previous decisions still visible but crossed out. The way choices are afforded and limited here actively work to create a procedural enthymeme, which argues that the feeling of depression is about knowing you could be doing better things, and yet you are somehow unable to do them. This logic of choice making is an attempt to represent the decision-making processes of an individual with depression—those who are often characterized by a sense of hopelessness, fatigue, and apathy.

These examples clearly exemplify the theoretical framework posited by authors and demonstrate that

any attempt to understand the rhetorical force of a game has to be informed by playing the game; not just by assessing its representational content from afar. Secondly, in assessing the rhetorical appeal of a game, a rhetorical analysis should also understand that the effectiveness of a game will be determined by the appeals it makes to pathos, logos and ethos.

In Chapter Five, Eric Walsh presents *A Rhetorical Framework for Impact Design in Games*. The chapter starts by stressing the value of the impact of videogames:

Game designers should thus have a vested interest in better understanding how impact operates so that they can more effectively implement it in their own work. Designing for impact with the player’s needs in mind isn’t just

more likely to ensure that the game's effects are positive, but also that the player cares deeply about the experience presented by the game and becomes more invested as a result.

Walsh endeavours to find a rhetorical approach to impact, defining it as follows: "the symbolic abstraction of a system into a possibility space for player action that encourages identification between the player and the designer's worldview such that the player is persistently and intentionally changed". Breaking down fundamental concepts in this approach, such as agency, authenticity, context, identity, affectivity, intrinsic motivation, dissonance, ambiguity, complicity and interactivity, Walsh presents a unified view of impact creation through identification.

Identification requires that the rhetor first establish a rapport with the player such that both understand one another, and the player is thus willing to engage with and accept the designer's message. If this process is successful, then the game has achieved its desired impact. This is why identification sits at the centre of my framework: impact may be the ultimate result of the rhetor's efforts, but identification is the tool they use to get there.

So, the chapter give us a practical model to assess and describe rhetorical impact in videogames, or in other words, impact through rhetoric-informed design.

Part III is a case study in the rhetoric analysis of political soundbites and answers the question: how can we apply rhetoric to political discourse?

In *Brevity, emotion and frugality in political media rhetoric: the use of soundbites in Portuguese political discourse*, Francisca Gonçalves Amorim addresses the problem of Media Rhetoric through the lens of the persuasive dimension of soundbites. Defined as "a short sentence or expression taken from a political speech and repeated in the media", Amorim describes soundbites as key political messages that involve short and clear arguments intended to be put into circulation by mass media. A soundbite is a rhetorical technique implemented by two different types of discourse-producing subjects—journalists and politicians—while adapting to media and getting attention thanks to its emotional and concise nature.

The language through which politicians convey their message in order to reach the media and hence public opinion is the result of a careful strategy. This strategy takes into account political marketing studies. Selling a politician as if he were a brand or product implies paying attention to his image but also to the language he uses.

After defining and explaining the functioning of soundbites as rhetorical mechanisms, Amorim concentrates on the 2015 Portuguese parliamentary elections, as the presence of several soundbites were particularly evident. The chapter, then, contends that the rhetorical force of soundbites is primarily linked to the moral image, and the ethos, pathos and logos of the political leaders who delivered them. For instance, ethos is visible in the *A word spoken is past recalling* soundbite. António Costa used the soundbite when he overthrew the right-wing government, whose coalition had won a minority victory in the parliamentary elections, by allying with the Left Bloc and the Communist Party to form a left-wing majority government. In the Assembly of the Republic, he stated that he always said that he would not allow the PSD/CDS government's policies to continue, stressing that a "given word is an honourable word". Despite its ethos, logos and pathos appeals, the soundbite is posited by Amorim as a neutral rhetorical strategy

without ideology and values, which is used by different political and media actors to persuade their audiences. Besides, a soundbite is amoral, being a rhetorical strategy that can defend and attack itself. Neither good nor bad, it can be whatever a politician wants, which makes it a potentially dangerous argument.

It is up to politicians to present soundbites as ideological constructs, good or bad. But one must recognize that soundbites are rhetorical strategies used to build a politician's ethos and give dimensions to their messages, logos and pathos. To speak of a Media Rhetoric is also to speak of the discursive mechanisms that emerged when persuasive messages needed to get the transient and ephemeral attention of both the audience and Media. Soundbites are perhaps examples of the adjustment of discourses to the media societies in live in.

## **Directions for Future Research**

Following the presentation of the field and scope of Media Rhetoric, and given the issues that the different chapters address, I present below the possible directions that future research could pursue. Of course, I don't do futurology and science is unpredictable. Nonetheless, there are a few unavoidable tasks that Media Rhetoric scholars will confront.

Firstly, studies on Media Rhetoric push the boundaries of Rhetoric into a technological and multimodal dimension, away from strict oratory and eloquence. The contours of these boundaries are precisely what future research could further enlighten. It seems clear that Rhetoric scholars have

a lot to gain from integrating their different fields of research independently of Linguistics, Classical Studies, Communication Sciences, Design or Technology domains. One of the core aspects of Media Rhetoric is precisely the way its comprehension demands the interaction and symbiosis of different modes of persuasion, from sound and images to computer procedures.

Secondly, and related to the above, there is a need to establish a solid methodology as regards empirical analysis as, for example, demonstrated by Walsh's chapter. Media Rhetoric requires interdisciplinary approaches that can produce reliable and replicable methodologies capable of providing rigorous analysis and measurable results. This does not mean abandoning qualitative evaluations over quantitative ones. Instead, it means Media Rhetoric will probably encourage the development of qualitative and quantitative approaches to persuasion which are able to provide a coherent examination of distinct media objects such as movies, sites, advertising, software or videogames. Hopefully, future research will help to inform this integration of different objects in a strong empirical methodology.

Thirdly, Media Rhetoric research will be further pursued as media technologies and discourses are progressively more ubiquitous in our lives. Concomitantly, it will be developed as our public and social perception about their persuasive contours is acknowledged. The first studies already published help society to be attentive to the several ways media can influence our lives. Ultimately, these studies—such as those here presented—confirm that the realm of persuasion is very wide and uses different symbolic modes. But they are also a sign that confirms what Mediatization research has already discovered: the incredible influence of Media upon us. Media Rhetoric and Mediatization both dwell on the influence of media on societies and individuals. But while Mediatization focuses on the great macro-processes of Media influence, Media Rhetoric is mainly interested in Media's specific rhetorical elements that convince us to adapt, change, modify or alter our way of thinking and doing. It is at this point that Media Rhetoric studies may stop being, above all, an academic affair to be envisaged by business companies as a fundamental area of knowledge. Software start-ups, advertisers, and all the companies interested in moving their clients in a given direction will be interested in understanding how they can better answer their audiences' expectations through the use of Media. So, Media Rhetoric will not only be a central field of Rhetoric in the 21st century, it will also be an important field of business as companies try to pass their messages in subtler, indirect ways. Marketing

and Advertising have already started this trend in developing product placement or developing social media campaigns.

These three aspects certainly present an auspicious future for Rhetoric and Media Rhetoric. In fact, Media Rhetoric has matured markedly in the few decades since it was introduced. Having established itself as a valid approach to understanding how Media affect Rhetoric and Rhetoric affects Media, I think the time is right to deepen and extend its contribution. I hope the reader finds a wealth of insights in this book and takes up the invitation to pursue these ideas further. The territory is vast, and much, indeed, remains to be explored.

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