

# **HOW RHETORIC THEORY INFORMS THE CREATIVE ADVERTISING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: RECONCILING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADVERTISING SCHOLARSHIP AND PRACTICE**

## **Abstract**

This paper explores rhetoric theory as a comprehensive theory of the advertising development process. It compares the five canons of rhetoric with the stages in the advertising development process to explore the possibility of finding parallels between them. Close examination and comparison suggest there are parallels. It goes further to examine whether the generative mechanisms of each canon have explanations for strategies employed in its equivalent stage in the advertising development process. To explore fully, principles extracted from rhetoric theory and a model developed from it subsequently found support in advertising practice and findings from advertising research. The theory states that the principles of rhetoric must undergird strategies in the advertising development process before persuasiveness can be guaranteed. This is the “big picture” perspective which the theory proffers for both research and practice.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

To manage and get the most outcome from the advertising development process, advertising agencies and their marketing clients must have a thorough understanding of the process. Although expertise on the creative process may reside with advertising professionals, a better and deeper understanding of its theoretical underpinnings may unearth principles that can guide practice in different advertising situations. It may also enable advertising professionals to have better explanations for their decisions and actions during

advertising development, presentations and pitches. Nyilasy and Reid (2012) suggest that advertising professionals sometimes lack explanations for their work.

On the side of marketing clients, they are known to influence the outcome of the advertising development process (Koslow, Sasser and Riordan 2006). They may influence the process more positively, contribute more meaningfully and evaluate creative outcome more objectively if they better understand the process (Turnbull and Wheeler 2017). A better understanding of the advertising process may also serve to increase the predictive value of advertising research, because variables used may be better understood and given enduring valid definitions.

The creative process has been widely studied (Amabile 1996; Ciszentmihalyi 1988; Lubart 2001). However, there is a dissension among researchers as to whether or not it conforms to stage-modelling (Lubart 2001). Even those who are of the stage-model persuasion are at variance on the number of stages in the process (Wallas 1926; Osborn 1953; Amabile 1996). Most scholars, however, seem to have agreed that micro-processes take place at each stage of the creative process (Lubart 2001). At the micro-process level, scholars contend that generative and exploratory mechanisms (Finke, Ward and Smith 1992) which require divergent and convergent thinking (Guilford 1967) are responsible for cycles of idea-generation and evaluation (Basadur 1995; Runco and Chand 1995) that take place in the creative process (see Lubart 2001). Domain knowledge is identified as the cause of convergent thinking, and divergent thinking happens as a result of connections between at least two different domains (Mednick 1962). Convergent thinking is responsible for the appropriateness of a creative outcome, while the distance between connecting domains determine the degree of originality (Kilgour 2006). The further the connecting domains, the more original the creative outcome. An extremely creative outcome without any basis in appropriateness is considered bizzare. On the contrary, a very appropriate work that lacks

originality is run-of-the mill, me-tooish. There is usually a trade-off between originality and appropriateness (Kilgour and Koslow 2009; O'Connor et al 2016), the two components of creative outcome (Koslow, Sasser and Riordan 2006; Runco and Jaeger 2012).

Some studies have attempted to understand the process in the specific field of advertising. Unfortunately most of these studies have been carried out in piece-meal; few dwell on only the idea-generation stage (Griffin 2008; Stuhlfaut and Vandenberg 2014), while even fewer focus on the advertising brief, which constitutes the first stage in the advertising development process (Baskin 2010). Sadly, some of these studies use students as subjects as opposed to advertising professionals who possess and demonstrate expert knowledge of the process.

In a comprehensive empirical study of the advertising development process, with advertising professionals as subjects, Turnbull and Wheeler (2017) describe a seven-stage process that consists of: (1) task identification (2) agreement of task objectives (3) ideation (4) response (5) validation – internal review (6) validation – external review (7) Decision. While this impressive model is a detailed description of the surface structure of the advertising development process, it fails to provide us with the generative mechanisms behind each stage of the creative process (Pentland 1999). A full grasp of the mechanisms that generate each stage of the process is needed to exploit the process for better outcomes. Furthermore, an understanding of the generative mechanisms will help us know what can impact upon the process and help us explain how it might respond to each kind of impact. To be of immense use to researchers and practitioners, a theory of the advertising development process should provide us with both its surface and deep structures (Pentland 1999).

This thesis proffers *rhetoric theory* of the advertising development process. Yet it is hardly the first to propose rhetoric as a useful framework to understand the advertising development process. Pracejus et al (2006) bluntly argue that rhetoric should take center

stage in advertising: “Rhetoric is persuasive communication; advertising is rhetoric,” (p. 82). McKenna (1999) is also direct, stating, “The largest, most pervasive, and most successful rhetorical enterprise on the planet is advertising,” (p. 103). Phillips and McQuarrie (2008) even provide us propositions explaining how rhetoric should work in advertising.

Central to rhetoric are the five canons. This thesis proposes that canons of rhetoric have correspondences in advertising. Advertising message strategy harks back to *invention*, the first canon of rhetoric. Executional factors in advertisements is largely a rediscovery of *arrangement*, the second canon of rhetoric. Ideation techniques in advertising consist of figures, the critical factor in *style*—the third canon of rhetoric. Advertising media is a contemporary information storage mechanism operating similarly to *memory*, the fourth canon of rhetoric. Finally, advertising production relates to *delivery*, the last canon of rhetoric. And it is noteworthy to point out that the contemporary departmental organization of most advertising agencies is largely around the five canons.

Unfortunately, rhetoric’s value in advertising is still questioned (Theodorakis, Koritos and Stathakopoulos 2015). The poor reception rhetoric has had in advertising could be because it has been introduced piecemeal rather than as a comprehensive theory of the advertising development process. For example, some have dwelt on figures of rhetoric, an element of only one of the five canons in rhetoric (Durand 1987; McQuarrie and Mick 1996; Philips and McQuarrie 2010). Others have theorised about the existence of rhetoric on modes of advertising media (Scott 1990, 1994; McQuarrie and Mick 1996; Caivano and Lopez 2010). Still on media, especially new media, some others have argued for interactivity and co-creation as an evidence of rhetorical dialogism (Miles 2010). A few have been able to connect a small aspect of invention, the first canon of rhetoric with message strategy (Marsh 2007). Yet, others trace source and performance to the canon of delivery in rhetoric (Stern 1994a, 1994b). Working in their different silos, with their micro-theories, these scholars fail

to see rhetoric as the big picture—and the key to understanding the advertising development process.

What rhetoric offers advertising strategy is a framework with establishing concepts and principles that can help understand facets of advertising strategy - message strategy, creative strategy, media strategy and other sub-strategies – and how all fit together and interact. For example, some scholars in advertising investigate strategy through the lens of account planning (Hackley 2003), often with a focus on insight (Parker 2017). But in the absence of account planning, creatives still unconsciously perform this function of finding insight such that each of the canons of rhetoric need to be considered in total to understand each part. Likewise, one can approach the media selection problem from purely a media standpoint and come away with an appreciation for media-neutral work (Elms 2017; Zambardino and Goodfellow 2003)—but this doesn't square with what we know about how creative skills constrain the media palette of campaigns (Sasser et al. 2007). We cannot even begin to discuss the many “moving parts” of advertising strategy without understanding dynamics of the advertising development process, something rhetoric had long ago been established to understand.

Rhetoric as a process theory establishes the surface structure of the advertising development process, with each stage of the process finding a parallel in the canons of rhetoric. Much more than that, the generative mechanisms (Pentland 1999) behind each of the stages in the advertising development process is found in rhetoric theory. *Kairos*, *stasis*, *topics* and *commonplaces* are the generative systems behind message strategy; figures are the generative systems behind ideation strategy, and so on. The “it all depends” theory among practitioners (Nyilasy and Reid 2012) is confirmation of the generative mechanisms of rhetoric theory, and that the strategy platform they come up with in each advertising situation will always be different.

In the following pages, this thesis shows rhetoric as a theory of the advertising development process in both its surface and deep structures; extracts the principles of rhetoric theory and gets support for them in advertising research and practice; develops a model of the advertising process that approximates real world practice; and highlights the need to adopt the rhetoric model and combine its principles for persuasive advertising strategy. This is the “big picture” perspective - and the rhetoric approach.

## 2 THEORY DEVELOPMENT

### *2.1 Rhetoric on All Media*

Corbett and Conors (1999) define rhetoric as ‘the art or the discipline that deals with discourse, either spoken or written, to inform or persuade or motivate an audience, whether that audience is made up of one person or a group of persons’. Although this definition limits rhetoric to its spoken and written modes, its frontiers have since been extended to its visual (Durand 1987; McQuarrie and Mick 1999; Scott 1994; Blair 2012; Crowley and Hawhee 2012), sonic (Scott 1990; Hung 2001) and chromatic modes (Caivano and Lopez 2010; Courtis 2004; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002). For rhetorics to adequately explain the advertising development process, it has to exist and perform the same functions in all modes of advertising media.

Some researchers and theorists see chromatic rhetoric as a subfield of visual rhetoric, and sonic rhetoric as a sub-field of verbal (classical) rhetoric (Scott 1994; Blair 2012). Recent studies highlight how these different rhetorics may complement themselves to communicate a rhetorical figure in a multi-modal medium like the television (Forceville 2008). All said, rhetorics exist and perform the same and complementary functions in all the modes that constitute advertising media.

As an attempt to show that rhetoric comprehensively explains advertising, each of the five stages of the advertising development process – message strategy development, ideation, execution, production and media use - is juxtaposed with its equivalent among the five canons of rhetoric - *invention*, *style*, *arrangement*, *memory* and *delivery*. This first section shall be treated as if teaching beginners rhetoric, assuming that scholars and practitioners have varying degrees of acquaintance with rhetoric. This treatment is necessary to lay a solid foundation for the second and third sections of this study. Subsequently, a model is developed for the advertising development process, and the implications of these similarities for the advertising practice and research are highlighted.

## 2.2 Advertising Message Strategy: An Invention of Rhetoric

*Invention* is the centre of rhetoric; the systematic process of developing insights that will make the most compelling proposition (Glenn and Goldthwaite 2008). It helps the rhetor ‘to get ideas that are appropriate for a given situation’ (Crowley and Hawhee 2012). This it does through two key concepts – *stasis* and *topics*. ‘*Stasis*, on one hand, is a procedure by which a speaker poses questions in order to clarify the main issues and persuasive points of a speech’ (Sloane, 1989). *Topics*, on the other hand, is the issue at hand. *Commonplaces* are sources of information for developing insights into the issue at hand, that is, the culture of the people concerned.

Hackley (2003) emphasises sound strategy as the basis for creative work. Marsh (2007) argues that the success of an exercise in persuasion should be based on the first and crucial canon of rhetoric, *invention*. The means of *invention* are *kairos*, *stasis*, *topics* and *commonplaces*. An understanding of all the means of *invention* suggests rhetoric theory as the

basis for advertising message strategy, which is encapsulated in an advertising brief (Koslow et al. 2003).

Most of the elements of strategy have been variously highlighted in different studies, albeit, only in clusters (Moriarty 1983; Dahlén et al. 2010; Laskey et al. 1989; Meyers 1986; West and Ford 2001; Hackley 2003). However, a qualitative study (citation intentionally omitted) has crystallized the seven elements of advertising message strategy in a comprehensive grounded theory. Interestingly, the process of developing each of these elements in praxis have their equivalents in *invention* as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Rhetoric - Advertising Message Strategy Fit

<b>Elements of Strategy</b>	<b>Elements of Invention</b>	<b>Means of Invention</b>	<b>Properties of Strategy Elements</b>	<b>Properties of Invention Elements</b>
Challenge	The arguer, the argument and the audience	The Argumentative Situation ( <i>kairos</i> )/What is the situation? ( <i>stasis</i> )	Opportunity Problem	Logic Dialogic Dialectic
Community	The Audience	Who are we talking to? ( <i>Stasis</i> )	Motivations	Emotional Logical Ethical
Purpose	The Objective	What do we wish to achieve? ( <i>Stasis</i> )	Effect Engagement Action	Invitational Collaborative Experiential Persuasive
Connection	Insight	What 'truth' do we know about the audience in reference to the issue at hand? ( <i>Stasis</i> )	Insight Convention	Human Acceptable "Truthful" Argumentative Figurative
Promise	The Issue	<i>Topics</i>	Attributes Benefit Insight	Propositional Controversial Argumentative Figurative
Support	Proofs	<i>Commonplaces</i>	Attributes Benefit Personality	Accessible Argumentative Figurative
Personality	The Arguer	Who is talking? ( <i>Stasis</i> )	Tone	Ethical Argumentative Figurative



Brand challenge, the first element of advertising message strategy, presents each peculiar situation that requires the advertising development process. This is an equivalent of *kairos*, an argumentative situation in *invention* (Crowley and Hawhee 2012; Tindale 2004). In advertising, the argumentative situation consists of the marketer, the advertisement and the audience; in *invention*, the argumentative situation consists of the arguer, the argument and the audience.

The remaining six elements of advertising message strategy, namely; community, purpose, connection, promise, support and personality, are the subject of *stasis* in rhetoric. ‘*Stasis* is a procedure by which a speaker poses questions in order to clarify the main issues and persuasive points of a speech’ (Sloane 1989). The questions of *stasis* are about *kairos*, the situation at hand. That is, ‘Who is the speaker talking to?’, ‘What does the speaker wish to achieve?’, ‘On what issue should the speaker base his argument?’, ‘Why would the audience believe the speaker’s argument?’, ‘What ‘truth’ do we know about the audience in reference to the issue at hand?’, ‘Does the audience see the speaker as credible?’ These questions cover all the elements of *invention*, and they are the same questions an account planner attempts to answer in developing an advertising brief (citation intentionally omitted).

*Topics* are issues. A proposition is a standpoint on an issue. A standpoint requires arguments. In advertising, a topic is an issue a brand addresses or should address. This is usually a cause of contention between agencies and their clients. Marketers and their advertising agencies have to be clear on the main issue the brand should address before an agency brief can be written. Once this is agreed, an account planner seeks and gets the right insight on that issue. Then the brand takes its stand-point on the issue. That stand-point is the brand’s proposition to the target audience. Of course, the brand must have arguments to back up the proposition.

Classical rhetoric posits that arguments must be based on truth. However, in modern times, Tindale (2004) argues convincingly for acceptability, rather truth as the basis of arguments. Insights are ‘human, cultural, category or brand truths’. These ‘truths’ may not be facts, but they are acceptable in their contexts (citation intentionally omitted). Here again, there is a correspondence between advertising message strategy and *topics*, a means of *invention* in rhetoric. In fact, advertising agencies are so very well aware of this important element of truth that a global agency, McCann-Ericson, prides itself in the slogan ‘Truth Well Told’. In addition, there are regulatory bodies in many countries that investigate the veracity of brand claims in commercials.

*Commonplaces* refer to the culture of the target audience. They are markers of a people’s collective memory (Pruchnic and Lacey 2011) and sources of ‘truth’ that serve as the basis of arguments among the people. In other words, they are sources of insight and unique selling points: sources of a unique selling point when the truth is about a brand and sources of insight when the truth is in reference to the audience. They both correspond to emotional and rational appeals (Bruner 1986). Together, they form brand proposition. All the sources of insight listed in the qualitative study (citation intentionally omitted) are represented in rhetoric, plus even more (Crowley and Hawhee 2009; Corbett and Conors 1999). Rhetoric has a comprehensive list of the sources of insights.

In the print campaign for Immodium, a diarrhea treatment, the visual element shows a man or woman strapped to a toilet seat. The copy reads: ‘Immodium - sets you free.’ It can be deduced from the advertisement that the truth in reference to the audience (insight) that served as the basis for its argument is that ‘the right to move around is fundamental to human existence’ and the brand truth (selling point) is something like ‘an effective relief from diarrhea’. The *commonplace* that provided this insight is definitely human experience and that of the selling point is science. The issue or topic at hand in the advertisement is running

stomach. The standpoint of Immodium on that issue is that a person should be cured of running stomach so that s/he can re-gain freedom of movement. That is why the brand's proposition to sufferers of running stomach is that it can restore their freedom. The correspondences between advertising message strategy and the means of *invention* are not happenstance. They suggest that rhetoric is the fountain of advertising message strategy. This is a more comprehensive and complete picture of invention as message strategy than shown in Marsh (2007) or anywhere else in extant literature.

### 2.3 Advertising Ideation Techniques: Expressions of the Rhetorical Figures in Style

Mastery of language use is one of the defining qualities of rhetors. This is the pre-occupation in *style*, the third canon of rhetoric. Figures of rhetoric are the most crucial factor in *style*. A figure of rhetoric must fulfil three conditions: one, it must have a repeatable structure. Two, it must have "a use that is different from the normal manner of expression". Three, consequently, it must "attract attention" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). Interestingly, many scholars have identified figures of rhetoric in different modes of advertising media (Durand 1987; McQuarrie and Mick 1996; Scott 1994). And remarkably, in a comparison between figures, ideation techniques and ideation templates, there are striking commonalities.

The resemblances between figures, ideation techniques and ideation templates are as follow: One, figures of rhetoric fit the description of the ideation techniques (Pricken 2008) and ideation templates (Goldenberg et al 1999). For example, *Ellipsis*, a figure of rhetoric, creates a missing link in the form or content of an element and expects the audience to guess right; Activation, an ideation template demands active participation of the audience in order to get the full understanding of its message; and Interactive, an ideation technique, requires an audience or something in the environment to do something to complete an idea, and by so doing, the audience comes to a full understanding of the advertising message. By their

description, the three are essentially the same. This sameness of description occurs between many figures, ideation techniques and templates.

Two, figures share the repeatability of structure with ideation templates (Goldenberg and Mazursky 2008; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). Consistency informs the nomenclature of both figures and templates; figures have to fit a particular form and/or content and templates have to follow a particular scheme. Pricken's (2008) techniques lack any such underlying principle of structure. They are simply a compendium of tools for the use of creatives, and for them, a description of each ideation technique suffices.

Three, figures perform the same operations in their contexts as ideation techniques (Goldenberg et al. 1999; Durand 1987; McQuarrie and Mick 1999; Phillips and McQuarrie 2004). Aside from structure, modern scholars have attempted to categorise figures based on the operations like addition, suppression, substitution and exchange (Durand 1987); repetition, reversal, substitution and destabilization (McQuarrie and Mick 1999); juxtaposition, fusion and replacement (Phillips and McQuarrie 2004); turn it right around, repetition and accumulation, exaggeration, analogy, double meaning, mixing and matching, omission and suggestion (Pricken 2008); fusion, replacement, subtraction, multiplication, division, extreme analogy, exaggeration, inversion and more (Goldenberg et al. 1999; Goldenberg et al. 2009). The similarities of operations can be seen between substitution in figures, replacement in templates and omission and suggestion in techniques; between addition or juxtaposition in figures, extreme analogy in templates, and analogy in techniques; and between repetition in figures, repetition and accumulation in techniques and multiplication in templates. The list continues.

Four, figures draw attention, just like ideation techniques (Goldenberg et al. 2009; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). Six, some figures even go by the same name as the techniques and templates. For example, metaphor, analogy, paradox, pun and hyperbole are

generally known by the same name. Figures of rhetoric are indeed ideation techniques. The equivalents of templates and techniques in rhetorical figures are not always perfect fits. This is because, Pricken's techniques, for instance, are sometimes fragmentations that go by different names, but essentially contain one and the same rhetorical figure. For example, Pricken's *Change the product*, *Reframing* and *Take a look inside* can all be categorised as *allusion*, a figure that is very closely-related to *metaphor*. At other times, the misfit results from an improper definition. For example, Pricken's techniques and Goldenberg et al's templates lump *metaphor* and *allusion* together as *metaphor*. Justifiably enough, rhetoric separates *metaphor* from *allusion*; the former as a similarity in form and the latter as a similarity in content (Durand 1987). In some other cases, the misfit is because Pricken's techniques and Goldenberg et al's templates consist of more than one figure of rhetoric. For instance, the template, *absurd alternative*, sometimes consists of three figures - *allusion*, *paradox* and *hyperbole*, at the same time. Phillips and McQuarrie (2002) observed multiple layering of rhetorical figures in magazine advertisements in recent times.

Compared with rhetorical figures, Pricken's techniques and Goldenberg et al's templates lack the depth of delineation that rhetorical figures afford. This suggests that figures are the best units for classifying ideation techniques. Although extant literature identified figures in advertisements, the connection between ideation techniques and figures and how they relate was not made until now.

#### *2.4 Executional Factors in Advertising: An Arrangement of Rhetoric Theory*

*Arrangement* is the stage at which arguments are organized to make the most persuasive impact. As noted previously, this canon corresponds largely to executional factors in advertisement development process. It involves the ordering of arguments to make the greatest impact. The arguments to be selected and the order in which they are marshalled depend largely on the situation (*kairos*). Rhetorical arguments are usually broken into six

elements: introduction (*exordium*) statement of facts (*narratio*), division (*partitio*), proof (*confirmatio*), refutation (*refutatio*), and conclusion (*peroratio*). Not all the elements of compositions are required in all cases. And the conclusion is usually infused with emotional argument (Crowley and Hawhee 2012).

Arguably, we incorporate the narrative route to persuasion (Fisher 1987; Phillips and McQuarrie 2010; Dainton and Zelle 2015) into modern rhetoric (Attea 2008), specifically in the canon of *arrangement*. Although the rigidity of classical rhetoric on logic and truth tends to exclude the narrative paradigm from it (Fisher 1987), Tindale (2004) convincingly persuades on acceptability as premise for arguments, rather than truth. We argue that this simply admits the narrative paradigm, which has *mythos* or acceptability as the premise for its arguments, into modern rhetoric. Whereas rhetorical arguments based on truth are *logos*, those based on acceptability are *mythos*. Therefore the heart of modern rhetoric should consist of *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos* and *mythos*; the last two being alternatives to each other.

Rhetoric has been shown as a theory for visual communication design (Mejia and Chu 2014). The classic print advertisement is divisible into headline, visual, body copy, and call-to-action. This fits the statement of the issue (narration), confirmation (proof) and conclusion aspects of arrangement in ancient rhetoric. The composition of television and radio commercials consists of the same elements. A piece of advertisement can only project its strongest argument if that argument is given the best place and the most prominence (Attea 2008). The several rough layouts developed for a print ads before selecting one for finished art; the selection, ordering and arrangement of details (Stern 1994c)—editing of frames from a shoot to tell a television story; the choice between either a monologue or a dialogue in a radio commercial, and considerations of the smooth flow of either—all these are attempts at using executional elements to create a powerful impact on an audience. Thus, most research

into the executional factors of advertisements are attempts at assessing the impact of *arrangement*.

Comprehensive studies on executional factors further illustrate the relationship between arrangement and executional factors. For example, Stewart and Furse (1986) examined 160 executional factors in one of the largest studies of its kind. Despite expressing frustration that they had no framework they could use to select suitable executional factors, the elements of the arrangement canon of rhetoric theory is still evident. The 160 executional factors distilled down to 24 statistical factors, and over half of these dimensions relate to each of the six elements of rhetoric's canon of arrangement: Several others relate to the delivery canon, as with the casting and setting of the advertisement. The rest deal with rhetoric's persuasion appeals, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*—and advertising scholars would be more familiar with the names *source credibility*, *emotional appeal* or *rational appeal*. Although lacking a theoretical framework to identify executional factors, it's uncanny that these findings corresponded closely to classical rhetoric's canon of *arrangement*.

Here, this study contributes to extant literature on rhetoric by incorporating the narrative paradigm into rhetoric. Now at the heart of modern rhetoric are *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos* or *mythos*, the last being the latest inclusion.

### *2.5 Advertising Media: All That Exists in the Rhetor's Memory*

The need to align advertising with rhetoric theory is more obvious in the canon of memory than all other canons. Media has been an integral element in the extant definitions of advertising (Schultz 2016; Dahlen and Rosengren 2016). And with the various changes taking place in the digital sphere (Hoffman and Novak 1996; Miles 2007, 2010, 2016), some scholars posit that the definition and existence of advertising appears threatened (Schultz 2016), and some have proffered definitions that safely do away with media inclusion (Dahlen and Rosengren 2016). Unknown to scholars who nurse this fear, they are simply reliving

historical antecedents of disquiet that happens when a new and major advertising medium is introduced. Isocrates and other rhetors present in the transition from the spoken medium to the written medium also faced the same dilemma with their audiences and had to learn the peculiarities of the “new media” – print (see Marsh 2012). The advent of the television medium was equally intriguing to advertising practitioners (see Kover 2016). Major changes in media have always caused disequilibrium in rhetorical enterprise.

The panic during media transitions occurs because a fundamental misconception exists in the definition of media which when corrected can gradually take us back to equilibrium. We must agree on what constitutes media or a medium to draw a parallel between the canon of memory and advertising media. From an historical perspective, the spoken word was the first medium of rhetoric (Marsh 2012; Crowley and Hawhee 2012; Corbett and Conors 1999). When writing as a medium of rhetoric followed, it was all letters without pictures. Spoken words or language was a system of sounds that served to convey meaning. Writing was a system of letters that had the same function. This suggests that a medium is a system of meanings.

Each mode of communication is a medium, and each has its own system of creating and conveying meaning. The system of the verbal or written mode consists of letters, words, phrases and sentences; the visual mode consists of lines, figures, pictures and images; the sonic mode consists of spoken sounds, music notes, sound effects, and para-verbal sounds; and the system of the chromatic mode is made up of primary and secondary colours and combinations of them. These systems of sounds, signs, symbols, lines, pictures, colours and images are actually in themselves the media of expressing meaning. Thankfully, rhetoric exists in each mode of communication which should be rightly referred to as media.

Rhetoric scholars have identified the canon *memory* as media. *Memory*, the third canon of rhetoric meant more than just passive recollections in ancient times. To make use of



each medium, their systems of expression must first have been internalised by the rhetor.

Rhetors used systems of communication modes in their memory to produce and store content (Pruchnic and Lacey 2011; Gossett 2008). Therefore memory in pre-literate rhetoric consists of these systems that produce content and the memorised content itself. This is internalised memory (Pruchnic and Lacey 2011).

To externalise these systems, the modern rhetor requires a channel for each medium. The technological apparatuses and channels used to convey media have been mistakenly referred to as media. For example, the machine that turns pulp into paper is an apparatus of the print channel, while the printing machine, another apparatus of the print channel, puts the written medium on its channels (newspapers, magazines, books and out of home print materials). This is the reason Pruchnic and Lacey refer to externalised memory as media. But we argue that externalised memory should actually be the matter on media channels. The systems in the rhetor's memory are actually the media. Therefore media is externalised memory.

The memory of a sender or receiver is the more important factor in the comprehension of communication. Whatever exists in the memory of both sender and receiver can be used for communication, especially the *commonplaces*. This explains why anything and anywhere can serve as an advertising medium, in so far as they exist in the *commonplaces* and *memory* of the rhetor and the audience. Any change in *commonplaces* of the rhetor and his audience are easily noticeable. This informs the creative use of media (Rosengren et al. 2015).

In addition, Pruchnic and Lacey posit that there is a constant interaction between internalised and externalised memory. Modern rhetors consume the content on various media channels, including anything and everything in society, combine these content with the content of their internalised memory and use all of these to produce fresh content which they deposit on media channels (externalised memory). This is clearly demonstrated on today's

media channels like youtube, instagram and facebook. Media channels form part of the collective memory of a people, because they all have access to it (Hess 2007; Haskins 2007). In other words, 'the medium is the memory' (Brody 1998) applies to a channel that accommodates a medium that is made of a system of conveying meaning, like a system of letters for the print medium. But for the whole of life as a medium with no formalised system of conveying meaning, memory is the medium.

The notion of media as externalised memory rightly applies to both the simplest and most sophisticated present day media. Using ancient texts, Gossett (2008) shows clearly that the canon of memory in medieval times is a complex multimodal use of colour, design, text and image in learning and composition. This runs parallel to the hypermedia computer-mediated environments described in the seminal work of Hoffman and Novak (1996). The only exception being motion pictures, which were unavailable at the time. But the point is, the canon of memory has the capacity to explain available media and their combinations. Hypermedia is an externalised version of what already exists in *memory*, but the computer-mediated environment (CME) is just the media channel.

Further to whether or not rhetoric is capable of explaining present day media is the issue of interactivity. Miles (2010) goes to great lengths to show a constructionist model of interactivity that is devoid of control. Although Miles' submission is noteworthy and would be most appropriate for service brands, the elements of his model – invitation, exploration, recursion and coordination - echo the attributes of rhetorical argumentation – invitation, dialogue and dialectics (Tindale 2004). Practised as rhetoric, advertising should be devoid of control, especially because it is usually based on truth that is acceptable to all parties concerned. The second canon of rhetoric, arrangement embodies the points Miles raised, and 'refutation' an element in the canon of arrangement takes control out of the hands of both the

rhetor and his audience. In fact, ‘invitation’, ‘exploration’ and ‘coordination’ simply underline the principle of refutation in rhetoric.

However, Miles nails down an attribute of digital marketing which is already being practised in advertising – the rapidly changing argumentative situation which requires repeated kariatotic and static analysis to keep up with refutations from consumers. In traditional media, change in the argumentative situation is seldom observed until research is carried out. Real-time interactivity is not a peculiarity of modern media. Interactivity between a rhetor and his audience happens in real-time, and his audience ranged from one to many, some taking sides with the rhetor and others against him, so that what started as one-to-many may actually end up being many-to-many. This approximates the digital media experience in Hoffman and Novak’s (1996) model.

One of the problems with previous definitions of advertising has been the inclusion of what was conceived as media and the number of people in the audience in its definition. And this is because advertising was taken away from its natural domain of rhetoric and persuasion. Persuasion can take place without any media channel, and the principles of rhetoric that determine persuasion apply to one person as much as they apply to many. The five characteristics of media itemised by Hoffman and Novak are actually characteristics of media channels, in this case, the CME. Some of these characteristics are even possible without any media channel (see Stern 1994a & b). A return to rhetoric puts emerging media in perspective in relation to the principles on which rhetoric operates. Hopefully, the rhetorical perspective which this article presents should disarm the unfounded threat the new media holds for advertising.

## *2.6 Advertising Production: A Rhetorical Delivery of narratives*

*Delivery*, the last canon of rhetoric is equivalent to advertising production, the last stage of the advertising process. The *ethos* of the rhetor is produced and reflected in *delivery*.

Voice and gesture are the salient issues in *delivery*. The volume, pitch, pace, tone and intonation of a rhetor should be right at each point in a speech. Facial and bodily gestures should follow the rhythm of delivery. Stamping of feet, clapping of hands and similar sound-effects from bodily movements can also be used where and when appropriate (Crowley and Hawhee 2012). In *Rhetoric and Poetics*, Aristotle refers to the unity of time, place and action as being necessary in all dramatizations (see Attea 2008). Most importantly, rhetors should practice often, out loud.

From the description above, classical rhetoric demands more than a soul-less verbalization, but requires a passionate performance of the rhetor's speech. Performance is one of the key elements that distinguishes drama from other genres of literature. Other key factors are narration, plot and character (Stern 1994c). Television commercials contain these key factors, and have been shown to be dramatizations (Stern 1994c; Deighton et al. 1989; Esslin 1979). Wells (1989) distinguishes between "lecture" and drama in television commercials. However, rhetoric covers both forms of presentation and anything in between, depending on the degree of dramatization. All these also apply to commercials on radio, which is already referred to as the "theatre of the mind". Print is no different. A set of fashion advertisements shown in Phillips and McQuarrie (2010), and to which they referred as "grotesque" are quintessential exemplars of "plotted drama" in print advertisement. Each shows (performs) a story, as opposed to the other set that just tells it. Advertisements should have inherent drama (Martin 1989).

### **3 Implications**

#### **3.1 Rhetoric Theory Describes Advertising's Unique Identity**

The rhetoric paradigm supports the structure, process and theories of practitioners. For instance, advertising agencies were long structured around the canons of rhetoric: account planning department, which is responsible for message strategy; creative department, which takes care of ideation and campaign creation; production unit, which is allied to the creative department and is responsible for bringing campaigns to life; and the media department, which ensures campaigns get the most profitable exposure. This compartmentalisation reflects an orientation towards *invention, style, arrangement, delivery* and *memory* - the canons of rhetoric. Other disciplines identified in advertising simply help to manage the process the canons describe. An adoption of the rhetoric paradigm will definitely make research more relevant to practice.

It has long been a challenge to define what is part of advertising and what is not because of the nature of the discipline, or sometimes called types of field. Advertising is an example of a “variable field” which differs from “level fields” (Faber et al. 2012; Paisley 1972). Many scholars from diverse level fields conduct research into various topics of advertising and contribute to it. As a result, this may confuse the identity of advertising. However, rhetoric theory is inclusive, eclectic and expansive enough to accommodate all the contributing disciplines.

A full understanding of rhetoric implies that each discipline has something worthwhile to contribute to advertising research: Philosophy applies to logical and ethical argumentation; Sociology answers to cultural and demographic relevance; Communication incorporates process issues; Media studies handles communication platforms; Language studies (Linguistics and Semiotics) decipher the use of language, rhetorical symbols and their meanings; Literary studies respond to the art of narration and performance; Psychology caters to motivation and response to stimuli (emotional and rational appeals); Art gives us a perspective (design, photography and visuals); Cinematography hones in on crafting the

visual story (directing and editing); Ethics considers audience protection, source identity, character and credibility. These disciplines apply in and define advertising praxis. We need to include them in theory and research. Rhetoric theory has the potential to do this.

### *3.2 Rhetoric Theory Puts Advertising Training in Perspective.*

An adoption of rhetoric theory implies that all the fields mentioned above should contribute to training in advertising. To be well-rounded, each practitioner must have thorough knowledge of every facet of the business before settling into a department of the field. Lawyers study all aspects law, but specialise only in an aspect of it during practice; the same thing happens in many other professions. All advertising professionals should know the rudiments of argumentation, culture, statistics, research, strategy, marketing, management, communication, media, language, literary studies, drama, psychology, design, photography, music, directing, editing, ethics and more.

### *3.3 Rhetoric Theory Engenders Professionalism in Advertising.*

Rhetoric theory will enable academics to help practitioners professionalize. No occupation can be elevated to the socially enviable status of a profession without “their claim of possessing a unique and complex theoretical knowledge base that informs and legitimises their operations” (Abbot 1988; MacDonald 1995). Rhetoric theory holds that promise for both practitioners and researchers. Drawing on Weick’s (2003) typology of the relationship between academe and practice, as referenced in Nyilasy and Reid (2012), an adoption of rhetoric theory will make advertising academia *correspondent, complementary, parallel, reciprocal* and *conceptually equivalent* to practice. This is required to professionalize this field in which both practitioners and researchers are passionate stakeholders.

### *3.4 Rhetoric Theory Puts Interactivity on All Media.*

The new media, because of its interactivity, was expected to put control in the hands of the customer or consumer (Rodgers and Thorson 2000; Hoffman and Novak 1996), but

marketers continue to manipulate and control consumers and customers, even in this era of new media (Miles 2016). This suggests that the problem is deeper than just media channels; it is a conceptual, foundational problem. Most so-called persuasion theories that emanate from social psychology (Cialdini 1993, 1994) tend to be manipulative. Building practice on these theories engenders manipulation, whatever the communication channel. However, if marketing communication recognises and adopts the rhetorical paradigm, it would have to play by the principle of refutation on all media channels, and problems of manipulation will be virtually non-existent. Rhetoric plays by truth and genuine motivations of the audience. Miles (2016) concludes that ‘there is nothing inherently liberating about the hypermedia computer-mediated environments and nothing that necessary empowers anyone’. Only rhetoric theory empowers the audience and forces the rhetor to appreciate the long-term benefit in behaving credibly on all media.

### *3.5 Rhetoric Theory Widens Research Directions*

The rhetoric route to advertising research can be as vast and varied as the contributing disciplines. Rhetoric affords each discipline the opportunity to explore all possible contributions to advertising research, provided they stay faithful to the distinguishing variables that it confers on advertising. It will serve advertising research and practice well to see more work done in the fields of philosophy (argumentation and ethics), literary studies (narration, drama and performance), music (genres and translations) and persuasion (principles and practice), from rhetorical perspectives. More importantly, rhetoric makes room for research projects that take together the different principles in order to ascertain true effectiveness.

If what allows rhetoric theory to further advertising research is rhetoric’s comprehensive nature, then researching canons other than arrangement should widen the

view of advertising research. The canons can also be used to push the limits of theoretical comparisons by systematically relating the different canons.

## **Conclusion**

In using rhetoric to show the true identity of advertising, we have highlighted the resemblances between canons of rhetoric and the advertising development process; uncovered a more comprehensive basis for advertising message strategy; shown that ideation techniques are and consist of figures of rhetoric; and highlighted the difference rhetoric makes between media and media channels. To show how advertising works, we have extracted principles from rhetoric that have the potential of reconciling advertising researchers and practitioners. We have also developed a more true-to-life model to give a better and deeper understanding of the advertising development process. Having explored rhetoric as an advertising theory, future research may follow the rhetoric route to grand research projects that will be inclusive of all contributing disciplines, bridge the divide between practice and research, and by so doing, move advertising practice forward.

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