

## Media Advertisements Driving Emotional Reformation: A Reflection of Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle in Pakistan

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### Abstract

This paper aims to identify the emerging patterns of emotional reformation in media advertisements in Pakistan. Aristotle's rhetorical triangle model provided theoretical implications to fathom the incessant communication strategies in top 8 advertisements – selected through purposive sampling – aired on Pakistani mainstream media during the post-noughties period. The qualitative content analysis ascertained a paradigm shift from rational advertising strategy to emotional strategy in the form of *Dastak's "Split the Plate"*, *Pepsi's "Liter of Light"*, *Coke's "Small World Machine"*, *Surf Excel's "All Age Home"*, *"Bottle of Change"* of Coke, *Jam e Shirin's "Goodness Within"*, and *"Others Before Self"* of Surf Excel in the advertising industry of Pakistan. This study found that pathos is the incessant rhetorical appeal in all these ads which acts as a potent force in ameliorating the consumer attitude. It further validates the direct affect-transfer hypothesis – the emotional elements in the advertisement enhance its likelihood to catch more eyeballs. Nonetheless, this study suggested that there's little margin between intriguing and triggering the desired audience. Hence, advertisers are advised to take every step of the way prudently while dealing with emotionally brimmed campaigns.

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## Introduction

Media advertisements have been influencing people in various ways — building up trust and valuing relationships with consumers worldwide (Berger, 2020; Sama, 2019; Azar et al., 2023). The cognitive, emotional, and behavioral desires of the consumers want to be heard (Kemp et al., 2020; Tellis et al., 2019; Machleit & Wilson, 1988). The advertisers have been presenting the products in presentable and effective ways which ultimately leave a great impact on the consumers (Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2020; Jaegar & Weber, 2020; Kapoor, 2019; De Mooji, 2019). Therefore, this value-driven advertising shapes the perception of the consumers and helps in the emotional reformation (Williams & Drolet, 2005; Jaegar & Weber, 2020). The most important part of an emotional reformation strategy is knowing what the customers want (Duff & Segin, 2019; Tellis et al., 2019). Then you target that specific audience who has the same values as your brand (Zheng, 2020; Ruckenstein & Granroth, 2020). Such advertisements convey their messages by using the mass media platform, not to transmit the information but to evoke strong emotional feelings in people (Pham, 2022; Taylor, 2005; Ducoffe, 1995; Albers-Miler & Stafford, 1999). These emotional feelings like fear, joy, sadness, harmony, kindness, and courtesy enable them to get directly involved in the purchase of products (Kaur et al., 2022; Bagozzi, 1999). The world and media field is filled with tremendous examples of advertisements that have been shaping people's beliefs, emotions, and perceptions. Just like "Body Shop", they gained the value-trust of the consumers by their motive of Not Testing their products on animals. They inspired their audience and got the trust of their targeted audience in a very emotional and intriguing way (Otamendi & Sutil, 2020; Zheng, 2020; Pham, 2022). It hits the emotions of the customers about how a brand is producing cruelty-free, and environmentally friendly products (Lichtel, 2007). People are moved by these motives behind the brand advertisements that are basically product-selling strategies (Sama, 2019; Poels & Dewitte, 2006; William & Drolet, 2005).

## Paradigm Shift: Mobilisation of Emotions in Advertising

Lacniak and Muehling (1993) observed that initially targeting human emotions was catered as an irrelevant thing while designing any advertisement campaign; but the technological paradigm shift — along with rapidly increasing competition in the market — compelled advertisers to make human emotions as a pivot as they believed it could give them the desired boost up in sales. In addition to the increase in sales, the emotional strategy uplifts the target audience to live the experience of the celebrity — cast in your ad — by using the products that they were holding in your ad (Mizerski & White, 1986; Kemp et al., 2020). Emotional reformation has come up as a strong component in the field of advertising as it compels the audience to buy that product even when they don't actually need it, or they already own an alternative of that product (Samovar & McDaniel, 2016; Zheng, 2020). Even if an individual does not like that genre of product — neither he ever used that in his life nor he plans to ever use it in the future — but, somehow, if you have triumphed in hitting his emotional chord, the ad will leave an impression on his mind that would ultimately make him know more about your product or give it a try at least once in his life (Hermeking, 2006; Ruth, 2001; Berger, 2020; Albers-Miler & Stafford, 1999). Shahid & Bilal (2006) proposed that

just like every ordinary act that we face in our usual life sows the seed of impulsive emotional reaction; every ad is prone to an affectionate response.

### **Credibility Approach: Be Rational or Emotional?**

The advertisement that carried out a rational appeal — dispensed factual information — couldn't draw attention as much as the ones that executed an emotional appeal (Pham, 2022; Albers-Miler & Stafford, 1999; Zheng, 2020). The rational strategy failed in developing a positive association of consumers with the brand; hence, emotional reformation emerged as a potent force in ameliorating the attitude of even those who had never heard of your brand (Kapoor, 2019; Berger, 2020). The rational approach is restricted to the ones who must have heard of your brand once in their life — as this is the only way they can process those informative facts — while the emotional strategy caters to everyone (Ruth, 2001; Berger, 2020). Nevertheless, the advertisement using emotional appeal and celebrity endorsement turned out as a huge success in making that product a huge success in the market (Pham, 2022; Kaur et al., 2022; Machleit & Wilson, 1988). Yoo and MacInnis (2005) argued that in emotional ad formats positive feelings were heightened and negative feelings were suppressed that enhancing the credibility of the ads and also enhancing the attitude of the brands. Whereas, for the informational ads, the positive feelings were amplified by augmenting the evaluative ideas while they seemed to reduce the negative feelings. The brand attitude was not solely influenced by these variables but also by the influence of the ads. Thus, the theoretical implications of these results help to study the various processes of brand attitude formation and regarding advertising copy-testing (Yoo & MacInnis, 2005).

Eckler and Bolls (2013) proposed that viral advertisements have got the attention of several advertisers, yet, they don't actually realize it's working from the perspective of information processing. This study highlighted the impact of using emotional tones like pleasant, unpleasant, and coactivity in viral video ads that play a vital role in shaping the attitude of the target audience towards the brand and advertisement itself. They disclosed that the pleasant as well as satisfying emotional tone draws out a strong attitude towards the brand and the ad; contrary to this, the unpleasant coactive emotional tones had a comparatively negative impact (Eckler & Bolls, 2013). Pavelchak (1988) talked about the effect of *Super Bowl XX* on the pleasure and arousal sentiments of the viewers in three cities and the influence of these sentiments in making them recall broadcasting ads during the game. The difference in, the overall, emotional reaction of these cities was observed; not to mention, the difference in the capacity of this emotional reformation in recalling the brand was also analyzed. The recall was negatively related to emotional intensity but was not related to emotional contentment. In the broader context, arousal is massively related to recall than to pleasure (Pavelchak et al, 1988).

### **Affect-Transfer Hypothesis: Pathos driving Consumer Behaviour**

Emotional strategies are the markers through which consumer behavior can be assessed; furthermore, they reinforce the cognitive process (Berger, 2020; Lichtel, 2007;

Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Brand familiarity facilitates the relationship between the advertisements and the brand attitude (Pham, 2022). Machleit & Wilson (1988) used familiar and unfamiliar brands to study the impact of emotional feelings and attitudes regarding advertisements. They proved the direct-affect-transfer hypothesis as the attitude regarding the brand gets influenced by the emotional sentiments in the advertisements (Machleit & Wilson, 1988). The experiment disclosed that emotional ads were getting popular among aged consumers; the perspective of time horizon facilitates the age-related differences. The advertisements that tended to inoculate the positive thoughts among the target audience were more recalled by the older audience. This study encouraged advertisers to cater to the age-related difference among the audience that plays a great role in information processing (Williams & Drolet, 2005).

The history of emotions was developed in Europe as a field of inquiry; the field is distributed all over the globe today. Historians of emotions have shared that cultures shape the emotional life; therefore the feelings are different from the time and culture (Poels & Dewitte, 2006). The historical works have studied the changing roles of emotions in politics, private life and economics as well (Richardson, 2006). There are several issues within the field, firstly the relationship between words and feelings, and the change in emotional culture and experiences (Matt, 2011).

Mukherjee and Dube (2012) argued that fear is used to advertise different products like anti-smoking, safe driving, and sun-screen. The fear arousal among the audience can reduce the persuasive effect of the ads. Not to mention, humor can reduce defensive responses and increase the persuasiveness of advertising fear (Eisend, 2022; Kaur et al., 2022). Moreover, when humor is absent, it decreases persuasion. Therefore, the effect of fear advertising can be enhanced by adding the factor of humor into it (Kaur et al., 2022; Eisend, 2022; Mukherjee & Dube, 2012). Bagozzi (1999) in his appraisal theory of emotions talks about the differentiation of emotions from effects, moods, and attitudes. The arousal factor in advertisements acts as a key component in hitting the emotion of the viewers.

All these studies conducted in other regions of the world put forward the need to assess the rhetorical strategies used in the media advertisements of Pakistan. Hence, this study tends to answer the following question

RQ1: Which rhetoric strategy is popular among the media advertisements of Pakistan?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The Rhetorical Triangle Model of Aristotle lays out the foundation to explore the communication appeals deployed in the mainstream media advertisements of Pakistan. Aristotle put forward three ways in which the encoded message can reach the audience more effectively: Ethos (Ethical Appeals), Pathos (Emotional Appeals), and Logos (Logical Appeals). Pathos — emotional affiliation — in any ad is a salient feature towards making it intriguing for the public as it gets registered in their memory and they are most likely to recall this ad even if they saw it for once; this strategy can be fruitful in any corner of the world. In addition to growth in sales, emotional appeal compels people to associate a positive attitude regarding the brand. The rhetorical language in the media advertisements of Pakistan can be assessed in the light of these Aristotle's communication appeals.

## Data and Methodology

This study used qualitative content analysis to explore the presence of rhetorical language and to better understand which communication strategy — as put forward in Aristotle's rhetoric triangle model — was being more incessantly used in the advertisements aired on mainstream media. As a result of keen observation of random ads aired on Pakistani television channels in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the researchers selected 8 advertisements that seemed to deploy the above-mentioned rhetoric tools on the basis of purposive sampling techniques. The sample included *Dastak's* “*Split the Plate*”, *Pepsi's* “*Liter of Light*”, *Coke's* “*Small World Machine*”, *Surf Excel's* “*All Age Home*”, “*Bottle of Change*” of *Coke*, *Jam e Shirin's* campaign of “*Goodness Within*”, and “*Others Before Self*” of *Surf Excel*. The content of the advertisements aired in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century — post-noughties period — was taken as the unit of study.

## Results & Analysis

### Aristotle's pathos in Pakistan: “Small World Machine”, “All Age Home” and “Goodness within”

Leo Burnett and Coke initiated a vending machine that aimed to bring the nations of India and Pakistan together. It had webcams from top to bottom that enabled people from both countries to see as well as touch each other through the screen. Some vending machines were placed in Mall One, Lahore in Pakistan while some were in New Delhi, India. The emotional appeal used by the advertisers — to unite the people of two nations — sparked joy among people on both sides of the vending machines as they were eager to interact with each other. Since Coke already owns a big market share in India, the motive to boost its sales in Pakistan made them come up with this idea; adopting the emotional strategy to address both markets in one advertisement; hence, making it more influential than it would have been if both nations were treated as separate markets. The emotional reformation bore fruit as the campaign turned out to be a huge success in making people believe that coke represents ‘happiness’. Moreover, the sentiments of individuals lead the way for them to buy your product (Taylor, 2005).

*Surf Excel* in its “*All Age Home*” used **pathos** by showing an exchange of emotions as the orphans visit the old age home and spends a whole day there doing different fun activities with each other. In the end, they are shown to be completing each other by deciding to live together as both sides have lost their loved ones. The ‘*Liter of Light*’ campaign of *Pepsi*, the “*Bottle of Change*” of *Coke*, and the “*Others Before Self*” of *Surf Excel*, all used pathos to prosper a positive relationship with consumers. Even *Jam e Shirin's* campaign of “*Goodness Within*” in Ramzan didn't miss the chance to emotionally motivate the consumers to use their product. In this campaign, they showed a taxi driver returning home for Iftar after a tiring day when he sees the bag of a rider in his taxi and eventually goes there to hand over her bag. As a gesture of kindness, she offers him an Iftar that has a glass of *Jam e Shirin* as well. The representation of such daily life occurrences makes it easier for

the audience to feel relatable to your brand. Not only this, they are most likely to recall this ad whenever they go grocery shopping during Ramadan. The tendency of emotional appeal to convince the viewer to recall your advertisement as well as earn their loyalty is unrivaled (Poels & Dewitte, 2006).

### **Emotional Reformation: A case of ‘Split the plate’**

Advertisements play an important role in emotional reformation (Moore, 1995). The amazing manifestation of this strategy and idea can be seen in the advertisement “*Split the Plate*” by a local cooking oil brand, *Dastak*. They promoted such an emotional yet powerful message in their ad that instead of wasting your food, you split your plate with the deserving person. This ad got highlighted on many platforms for the emotional drive and its huge impact on people. This ad actually became a reason for many food-splitting social drives and other social works. *Surf Excel* uses the same strategy and gives a value-driven message to its consumers that helping others is more important and a sacred act. While doing so if you get stains, *Surf Excel* would clean it. Thus, they promoted the emotional message of harmony, humanity, and brotherhood. The targeted audience actually felt emotionally attached to the advertisement and the brand got so hyped up because of its marvelous advertising ideology. The brands have been using this strategy; they understand the emotional needs of their customers. The result of the conducted study showed that by increasing the level of emotional drive in an advertisement, the tendency to persuade people to buy your product also increases. Advertisements that show more emotional appeals tend to reshape the perceptions, beliefs, and emotions of people accordingly (Poels & Dewitte, 2006).

Considering the behavioral and emotional impact of *Dastak* cooking oil and *Tarang* Milk, the advertisement for *Dastak* cooking oil was more emotional; whereas, *Tarang* was more focused on showing music and dance to sell their product; therefore, it couldn't intrigue the emotional chord. People were more inclined towards emotional advertisements and were more likely to buy them. People are usually easier to persuade with emotional advertisements. Therefore, when the brands target the audience on an emotional level then it becomes easier for the brands to connect with their consumers on a personal level (Moore, 1995). People will be more likely to buy such products because of being emotionally touched by them and making them feel more relatable to them. Emotional advertisements are powerful enough to revive emotions in individuals by making them sad or happy (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012).

### **Conclusion**

The diversity in the market has assorted consumer behavior due to which the advertisers are keenly looking for different appeals — from which emotional reformation has been observed to be at the top — to catch more eyeballs. The incompetency of rational appeal in providing factual information to the public paved the way for emotional reformation in the advertisement. The paradigm shift towards using emotional appeal in advertisements at a large scale all over the world can be observed in the advertising industry of Pakistan as well. This study did a content analysis of 8 advertisements aired on Pakistani

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mainstream media during the post-noughties period. This purposive sample included *Dastak's "Split the Plate"*, *Pepsi's "Liter of Light"*, *Coke's "Small World Machine"*, *Surf Excel's "All Age Home"*, *"Bottle of Change"* of Coke, *Jam e Shirin's* campaign of *"Goodness Within"*, and *"Others Before Self"* of *Surf Excel*. In light of Aristotle's rhetoric triangle model, this study put forward that **pathos** was the most popular rhetoric tool being used by advertisers in Pakistan. The emotional affiliation in any ad is a salient feature towards making it intriguing for the public as it gets registered in their memory and they are most likely to recall this ad even if they saw it for once; this strategy can be fruitful in any corner of the world. But we must not forget that whenever you are dealing with emotions, you are left with a fine line between intriguing or triggering the desired audience. Any foul-up could lead to a massive backlash from the public or a drop in sales. In such a fiasco, it is advised to acknowledge your debacle before the public and apologies to maintain your brand perception. The emotional appeal that worked on one ethnic group in Pakistan might not sound pleasing to the other ethnic group. The advertisers are advised to take every step of the way prudently while dealing with emotionally brimmed campaigns.

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