

Rhetoric of affections: advertising, seduction and truth

Retórica dos afetos: publicidade, sedução e verdade

Retórica de los afectos: publicidad, seducción y verdad

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Abstract

Advertising frequently provokes pathos and elicits emotional reactions (e.g. fear, patriotism, guilt, pity, joy, satisfaction, etc.) to get what it wants. Considering the rhetorical ability and the proliferation of advertisements in the contemporary Western societies, this article analyzes these omnipresent, seductive and affective discourses. Following a theoretical and reflexive approach, the objective is to argue and understand the power of rhetoric developing seduction and provoking affections in advertising strategies.

Keywords

advertising; deception; rhetoric; seduction; truth

Resumo

A publicidade frequentemente provoca o pathos e estimula reações emocionais (como medo, patriotismo, culpa, pena, alegria, satisfação, etc.) para conseguir o que quer. Considerando a habilidade retórica e a proliferação de anúncios publicitários nas sociedades ocidentais contemporâneas, este artigo analisa esses discursos onipresentes, sedutores e afectivos. Seguindo uma abordagem teórica e reflexiva, o objetivo é discutir e compreender o poder da retórica em explorar a sedução e provocar afetos nas estratégias publicitárias.

Palavras-chave

engano; publicidade; retórica; sedução; verdade

Resumen

La publicidad a menudo provocan el pathos y estimulan reacciones emocionales (como miedo, patriotismo, culpa, pena, alegría, satisfacción, etc.) para conseguir lo que quiere. Considerando la habilidad retórica y la proliferación de anuncios publicitarios en las sociedades occidentales contemporâneas, este artículo analiza estos discursos onipresentes, seductores e afectivos. Siguiendo un enfoque teórico y reflexivo, el objetivo es discutir y comprender el

poder de la retórica en explorar la seducción y provocar afectos en las estrategias publicitarias.

Palabras clave

engaño; publicidad; retórica; seducción; verdad

1. Introduction

“Power derives from knowledge and also from madness and passionate emotion.”
(Plato, *Protagoras*)

Rhetoric is a skillful use of language to influence how people think, feel, and act; it is a set of fixed, regulated, insistent figures (Barthes, 1991, 151) which may appeal to rational (*logos*) or emotional (*pathos*) reactions. The focus of this article is the *pathos*, i.e. the rhetoric of *pathos* or rhetoric of affections. In its most general acceptance, *pathos* means “something that happens” to bodies (qualities) and to souls (emotions), notes F. E. Peters (1967, 152). The perspective of this article is that of *pathos* as something that happens to bodies and souls indistinctly caused by the intentional and strategic use of language, like advertising. According to Barthes (1977, 33), “in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed *a priori* by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible”. If this is so, the use of rhetoric is emphatic to explore the *pathos* in the advertising image.

For Aristotle, the *pathos* is action and response; it is an expression of contingency, a mobile, reversible and susceptible psychological state. The *pathos* causes changes in people and differentiates their judgments. The *pathos* is a set of passions or emotions of the audience. The second book of Aristotle’s *The Art of Rhetoric* is entirely dedicated to the passions. However, passions left the field of rhetoric about two thousand years ago (Meyer et. al. 1999). The relevance of *pathos* is because it influences with a passionate logic. Passions are obsessive, blind, irrational, illusory, and people only see what they want. The logic of the *pathos* is a logic of emotional reactions. Therefore, the rhetoric of affections is based on rhetorical illusions applied and conveyed as believes by the speaker (Meyer et. al. 1999).

The rhetoric of affections is the appeal to emotions and it is evident in some public discourses, like advertising. Advertising aims consumption, but also satisfaction, pleasure, comfort, happiness, or status and social success (Wharton, 2013, 4). Facing the increasing profusion of advertising messages in contemporary Western societies, typical of the industrialized world, this article focuses on a critical analysis of such public discourses.

The profusion of advertising messages in the public space appealing to everything leads to the mass, unconscious, and conspicuous consumption. This changes the socio-cultural ecosystem, transforming it into a more and more secular, visual, and popular culture.

Following a theoretical and reflexive approach, the objectives of this article are: a) to show the power of rhetoric when developing seduction and provoking affections in advertising strategies, producing *simulacra* (collective illusions and social imaginaries) and masking reality; b) to argue the complexity of the perception of certain subliminal (below the liminal, i.e. under the threshold or transitional stage) meanings in words and images of deception.

In a more and more visual and popular culture, it is relevant to recognize the influence of advertising's rhetorical strategies. They are everywhere and affect the way people think, feel and act.

Argumentation theory covers the whole field of speech that seeks to convince or persuade (Perelman 1977, 19) and it is useful to understand how affections are used in public discourses with a large reach of influence.

Consumers are frequently shaped by seduction-appeals. Advertising messages constantly appeal and conceive an illusory, ideally imagined or fantastic world, i.e. a virtual dimension that induces the idea or sensation that it is more real than reality itself. Today, lie or falsity becomes more staggering and decisive. The masses are more credulous and distracted, and a rhetorical message is more effective to influence. For this reason, there is a rhetorical dialectic between the ancient and the modern. The rhetoric remains active today in the mass discourses like advertising, consistent with Barthes' (1993, 19) claim that "the world is incredibly full of ancient rhetoric".

2. Advertising and rhetoric: developing the *pathos*

Advertising messages reveal much about what we are and what we desire to be. The power of advertising messages is in its capacity to shape people's desires and fuel their dreams. As a rule, dreams and desires are non-rational. Both cannot be reduced to a normal rational and conscious thought. Passion is what is beneath *logos*: "The irreducibility of expressed passion into *logos* means that the logic of emotions (what Meyer calls affective reasoning) is always metaphorical" (Kastely 2004, 228). The *pathos* (passions, emotions, affections, desires, feelings) come to us either as a discourse itself or in the signs (words and images) used by the advertising message. The rhetoric of affections cannot be accomplished without the power of language. For this reason, Huxley (1961, 127) remarks that advertisement is "the most exciting, the most arduous literary form of all, the most difficult to master, the most pregnant in curious possibilities". A summarized and fulminating meaning presented in a synthetic image is preferable; it fascinates and seduces more (Sartori 1998, 150); it is more spectacular and sensational in thrilling effects and affections. Fashion is the language of seduction. Consequently, it is also the language of advertising (Lipovetsky 1996, 165).

How does a given product or brand become an object of desire? Zizek defines desire by what is always just out of our reach and, for this reason, our search can continue. Desire is the feeling that accompanies an unsatisfied state, an inclination to want things, a strong feeling difficult to self-control or sustain. That is why advertising messages use desire. When they do, consumers sympathize the feeling.

In Western modern industrial societies, brands mean social and symbolic values and express moral principles like prestige, elegance, honesty, etc. (e.g. fashion brands,

namely the premium and luxury fashion segment like Versace, Armani, or Hugo Boss). Objects, products and brands are signs expressing certain qualities and meanings. In almost every culture, "objects are chosen to represent the power of the bearer" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1999, 26). This power represents different values for men such as virile virtues, strength, bravery, prowess and endurance; and for women, seductiveness, fertility, and nurturance.

Thoughts and feelings are connected to the products and brands, according to the signs used in the advertising strategy. For example, Lancôme's slogan for the fragrance Magie Noire says "The source of enchantment", representing the perfume with social, cultural, and emotional meanings (Leiss *et al.* 2005, 221). The aim of this slogan is to provoke emotions. For this reason, Lipovetsky (1996, 214) argues that advertising does not seduce the *homo psychanalyticus* (the intelligent man who reflects), but the *homo ludens* (the superficial man who amuses himself). The effectiveness is due to its amusingness.

Lacan locates the essence of human existence in desire (Wood 2012, 85). Approaching the Lacanian perspective about desire, Žižek notes the problem of the reflexivity of desire: "desire is always a desire of a desire" (2008, 196); it is never simply desire (2005, 247). "The Real of desire is a lack that cannot be filled; in this sense, desire is the desire to desire" (Wood 2012, 102). The question is not what one should desire, since there are a lot of things to desire, states Žižek (2008, 196), but "which of them is worth being the object of my desire?" or "Which desire should I desire?".

Žižek examines how desire operates around us with products, goods, services, brands, ideas, concepts. The Coke advertising, for example, stages this relationship to desire. For Žižek, Coke promises us the "it" when the advertisement says "Coke is It!" (the slogan from the early eighties), while Kinder Surprise Chocolate egg actually materializes this "it" offering a superfluous supplement. Coke and Kinder Surprise manipulate and deceive consumers' desires and needs.

The Coke advertising message is paradoxical: the product does not satisfy any need. On the contrary, notes Žižek, the result is unexpected: the more we drink it, the thirstier we get. It is the product itself that makes our thirst for it more insatiable (Žižek 2000, 22). Advertising create dreams, desires, needs.

The desire of consumers is fascinated by the need or lack and by what they think they can do with the object, when they imagine themselves using the object. A fantasy is an imagined scenario representing the realization of desire, but this usual definition is, according to Žižek (2008, 132), somewhat misleading or at least ambiguous: "in the fantasy-scene the desire is not fulfilled, 'satisfied', but constituted (given its objects, and so on) - through fantasy, we learn 'how to desire'".

The famous advertisement for Marlboro uses the picture of "the bronzed cowboy, the wide prairie plains" connoting "a certain image of America", "the land of hard, honest people, of limitless horizons" (Žižek 2008, 106). The rhetoric of affections occurs when "real" Americans start to identify themselves (in their ideological self-experience) with "the image created by the Marlboro advertisement", when "America itself is experienced as 'Marlboro country'" (Žižek 2008, 106). The Marlboro billboards develop passionate reactions instead of intellectual reactions. A picture of a cowboy on a horse smoking a cigarette has a patriotic visual influence, which is more powerful than any possible reasoning offered by words. Seeing the cowboy is feeling America.

Regarding the advertisement for Coca-Cola, like all “mass-media symbols” of America, the point is not the connotation to a certain ideological experience or vision of America; the point is that this vision of America achieves its identity by identifying itself with the signifier “Coke”, saying “America, this is Coke!”. The crucial point to grasp is that the ideological vision of America as a land of diversity is given in the advertisement by the signifiers “Coke”, “this is it!” and “the real thing”, i.e. the unattainable X, “the object-cause of desire” (Zizek 2008, 106).

Marlboro cowboy, Coca-Cola and all mass-media symbols of America exploited in advertising are Americanisms: peculiar customs of the US or its culture and people. This concept operates meanings, social imaginaries and cultural identifications, like the concept of “Italianness” or “Italianicity”, meaning the Italian character, quality or state of what belongs to Italy, expressing what is coded as Italian. E. L. Wyss (2012, 180) notes that the nationalizing construction of Italianicity “endows the products with an identity, a sort of specific anthropomorphic ontology”, which is affective.

When these concepts are processed in advertising, they provoke exuberant affections, reporting national or patriotic ways of life, fashion styles, and daily cultural patterns. In these cases, advertising connects the commercial product or brand with a stereotyped cultural and national identity (Edensor 2002; Wyss 2012). Following this strategy, advertising creates stereotypes, meanings and affections of patriotism and national culture.

Marlboro cowboy and Coca-Cola are symbolically transformed by the style they are represented in advertising images of seduction. Advertising show consumers’ habits where these products become traditions, symbols, mass-media symbols of America. These products and their images become national symbols of good taste, wellbeing, contentment, status and power. They suggest desire: the desire to live in a desirable environment or situation as it is represented in the attractive and suggestive images used to advertise these products. Images that have signs of seduction, social enjoyment and pleasure. These are emotional and visual arguments for consuming; they use passionate and seductive associations between the product and sensuality, pleasure, desire. Advertisements of Swiss chocolate, German cars, Italian pasta, etc. also seduce developing a cultural and national character of the products.

2.1. Using fallacies of affections

Seductive advertisements have a personal and humanized look, a soul, like the confident Marlboro cowboy or the sensual Dior woman, symbols of fashion and seduction. Fashion and seduction are ingredients of advertisements; they are associated with physical aspect, body outside appearance for the Platonian concept of cosmetic in *Gorgias* (465b); they are directed to the eye. That’s why “many products are sold by appealing to sexual attraction and physical beauty” (Fennis & Stroebe 2010, 17). Seduction and attractiveness often function as a halo or a simple decision rule like “what is beautiful is good” or what is pleasurable, comfortable, elegant, tasty, beautiful, etc. is good.

Some advertisements explore the fallacy named appeal to emotion (viz. appeal to pity or *argumentum ad misericordiam*) to persuade, inducing pity and manipulating people’s affections instead of using valid reasons. For example, the advertisement

of the Portuguese League for Animal Rights and Acção Animal, a close-up shot of a chimpanzee face-painted of clown behind bars, uses an argument that does not provoke intellectual impact or thought. It follows a simple strategy: the development of an easier way to make people understand the idea (the animal rights) touching their emotions. The advertisement's rhetorical argument is both textual and visual, but affections are caused particularly by the image. The close-up emphasizes a sad expression.

The argument is emotional; it's a *pathos* appeal and it fulfils the meaning structure. The chimpanzee (signifier) is a sad clown (signified). This is a metaphor of animal abuse and lack of freedom. A chimpanzee behind bars represents the captivity, incarceration, which means sadness instead of joy. The clown is the exponent of joy, fun, amusement and happiness in the circus.

Dark colors prevail, emphasizing sorrow for animal mistreatment; on the other side, the vivid colors of the clown face-painting are not sufficient to transmit joy, fun, amusement and happiness (these are the peculiar emotions aroused by clowns in the circus, always the most hilarious moment of the show).

In the advertisement for Opium perfume, from Yves Saint-Laurent, the mythical meaning "female beauty" is explored through the representation of a typical scene of ecstasy, a state in which a woman is carried away by an overwhelming emotion. The model Sophie Dahl is a stereotype of female beauty in the advertisement. "Clearly the sign 'Opium' has connotations of indulgent pleasure which derive from the codes for representing drugtaking and sexual abandonment, and the connotations of the ad's visual signs supported them" (Bignell 2002, 33). The mythical meaning associates the product (the perfume) and an exotic sensual pleasure. The same development of *pathos* happens with the supermodel Kate Moss. During the famous 1993 campaign for Calvin Klein's Obsession perfume, Kate Moss is lying naked on a sofa and it took about ten days to photograph this scene and get the intended and ideal picture. This scene is iconic, seductive; it provokes strong emotional reactions, as the name of the fragrance (Obsession) reveals.

The rhetoric of *pathos* is a strategical appeal to emotion, namely: a) pity (developing an *argumentum ad misericordiam* or appeal to pity); b) fear (using an *argumentum ad metum* or appeal to fear to provoke concerns or anxious feelings about some consequence); c) flattery or adulation (to show praise and appeal to self-conviction and self-presumptuousness of consumers if they use the product or brand advertised); d) joy and enthusiasm (whether real or illusory happiness, people feel satisfaction and fulfillment); advertisements are typically happy-ending messages and, therefore, they correspond to the expectations (needs and problems) of consumers and present an easy and simple solution to them; e) wishful thinking, a rhetorical exploitation or development of affections, because a wishful thinking, as it suggests, is a type of appeal to *pathos* based on a suggestion of a desire and a believe creating the illusion that what receivers wish for is true or beneficial and that is offered by the product or brand, and suggested by the advertising message, according to what consumers want to hear. A wishful thinking is a desire or believe that correspond to what is pleasing to imagine; it is wished and thought in a consistent way to the expected affections (not reasons nor facts).

The rhetorical appeal to emotion is often based on logical fallacies; their arguments are made to increase the *pathos* and manipulate recipient's emotions. Argu-

ments induce emotional stimulation. The purpose of the rhetorical appeal to emotion, and rhetoric *lato senso*, is to provoke passionate reactions. This strategy doesn't use factual evidence or reasons. Emotions (viz. pity, fear, flattery, joy, and wishful thinking) may be provoked by a fallacious appeal; rational arguments with intellectual reaction are neither used nor necessary.

2.2. Seduction and truth

Persuasion and seduction are two old abilities of communication strategies. Both aim to influence. We receive advertising's messages everywhere (including in our home, brought by the TV screen) and everytime. Whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of the messages or not, advertising is part of everyone's daily life.

Seduction is peculiar to human nature and it appeals to strong emotions. Using seductive strategies to disarm reflection in its quest to persuade and sell, advertising easily run over ethical-moral values and principles. It suggests a gap, a lack or a need for the consumers, saying what is convenient (not necessarily the truth) and that's why it always tells us a happy-end story. This strategy might be a perverse way to satisfy people's needs, but it also shows a persuasive strength.

A way by which advertising is rhetorically effective and unethical is by seeking to create false needs. False needs "are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression", with common ones being "to relax, to have fun, to behave and to consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and to hate what others love and hate" (Marcuse 2007, 7). Advertising encourages consumers to develop false needs and to satisfy those needs in misdirected ways purchasing non-essential commodities (Leiss *et al.* 2005, 83).

Advertising lies or deceives when it says what is convenient (false needs), which is different or the opposite of true needs. Advertising does not lie nor deceive, strictly speaking, when it says "this car will make you fly", "this perfume will let you conquer any women" or "lose 60 pounds in one week eating all you want". The hyperboles are tolerated, even when we know that it is not possible to obtain the results and benefits the advertising assures. Advertising lies and deceives if it says literally (nor metaphorically) the previous assertions. Exaggeration of benefits and affections given with the products (and expressed by the messages) is a technique to get influence and provoke emotions.

When seduction is used in advertising messages, it is always intentional, it is developed or performed consciously (by the seducer). However, the effects are often unconscious for the seduced. This happens with the subliminal advertising. Seduction is never explicitly; otherwise, it would not work effectively. People are not aware that they are led astray; most of the time people are seduced and yearn to be seduced (Greene 2003, xxiv).

Seduction is both in the commodities and in the appeals to commodities, i.e. in the messages intentionally produced with certain meanings to create intended moods in the public about the acquisition of those commodities. Marx (1982, 163) uses the expression "fetishism of the commodity" and notes that "a commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing", i.e. it is a product of human la-

bor and it satisfies human needs by its properties; nevertheless “it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties”. Marx (1982, 164) underlines “the mystical character of the commodity” to mean a fetishistic effect exerted by the commodity, to describe the regulating social power that objectified value relations gain under the capitalist system. This power causes a false belief about social properties ascribed (the fetish-induced illusion). The “fetishism” is a sort of influence or seduction.

In this regard, Baudrillard (1990, 21) characterizes seduction having signs for social relation based on appearances, artifices, meanings connected; a ritual order with peculiar rules; and ways of thought. Masses are psychologized and seduced by media discourses. It is like everything is driven by seduction, ideology, desire, illusion, etc. widespread by advertising messages.

Meaning something in a hidden way is seducing through appearances, artifices, semblances, simulations, illusions. Meaning in a hidden way is also the power to imply, i.e. “saying without saying”. Signs don’t mean only what exists, but also appearances, artifices, semblances, simulations, illusions.

Seduction is an ability to cause affections, a strategical process to lead astray or to reach and lead the seduced to think in a certain way or to take certain actions. Seduction lays in affections, not in reasons. Recalling the distinction between persuading and convincing made clear by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (1991, 27), “to someone concerned with the rational character of adherence to an argument, convincing is more crucial than persuading”. Persuasion is appropriate for emotions (*pathos*) and convincing for reasons (*logos*). Persuasion uses emotive reasons to buy and consume; convincing uses “rational reasons”.

By the rule, advertising messages evoke passionate reactions instead of intellectual and comprehensive reactions. According to Key (1976, xi), advertising messages are designed for emotional or passionate reactions and not for intellectual impact, i.e. for affective and feeling appeals rather than cognitive and thinking appeals, evoking emotions instead of thought. Using hidden meanings or subliminal messages, the perception is conscious or subconscious. In both cases, the message produces effects on people. In the subconscious case, the message produces effects even without people noticing it. The meaning reaches the subconscious without intermediation of the conscious brain, in an inadvertent way to the reason (Grijelmo (2000, 15).

Some words are more powerful in exciting emotions than others. In advertising, this difference between the emotive power of words is more noticeable and, therefore, more decisive and effective in producing persuasive meanings (Ogilvy, 2004, 133) and making the words extremely effective and subtle instruments to provoke or manipulate certain attitudes, behaviours, choices/decisions and feelings. The way words are used or pronounced can further provoke the *pathos* of the audience. Some words are emotive when they are used in a rhetorical way, influencing the way we see, think and feel the reality they represent. According to Macagno & Walton (2014, 5), “emotive words have been regarded as crucial instruments for persuasion and manipn”.

The seductiveness of words is not either in their grammatical function or in the meaning, which must be easily understandable, but in the latent values of their sound and history (Grijelmo 2000, 33). As such, subliminal advertising is a questionable way to manipulate and to transform rational and critical reactions into uncritical buying reactions.

The seductiveness of words and images rhetorically used in advertising is not addressed to rational understanding of the consumers, but to their emotions (Grijelmo 2000, 37). The seduction of signs (words and images) does not need any logic, but the expressive and the implicit. As Grijelmo (2000, 38) notes: “a mathematical proof convinces, but a perfume seduces”. The seduction of words and images cause affective reasons, not rational reasons.

In a deductive reasoning (e.g. “It is convenient to buy an economical car”; “The car model X is economical”; “Therefore, to buy the car model X is convenient”), the understanding is simple and easy; it is based on culture and it doesn’t cause intellectual efforts. Advertising language follows the logic of predicative statements such as “This is X”, meaning “This product is good”. The word “good” has a positive cultural meaning (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 14). The typical use of advertising messages influence and structures the collective thought as well the shared forms of communication, behavior, feeling, attitude, and action. The argument “millions of consumers have already tried the new product X... what about you?...” is simply deductive and direct mainly due to the fallacy *ad populum*.

In a rhetorical perspective, the more successful messages are not those we love or hate (or even those with new or interesting and creative concepts and approaches), but those “that are able to effortlessly slip things under our radar and influence our behavior without us ever really knowing that they have done so” (Heath 2012, 6). These advertising messages seduce the subconscious with creativity, but the paradox is that “the less attention we pay, the more effective the subconscious seduction becomes” (Heath 2012, 10).

Seduction is more effective at the subconscious level. The way advertising influence us without our knowledge might be manipulating subconsciously our behavior and this is a worrying matter, because this way has quite possibly much more influence than persuasion. For Heath (2012, xi), “even more worrying is that advertising ability to seduce our subconscious uses elements that are in our full view and easy for us to discern”.

One of the most subconscious seductive strategies is the product placement. This practice is frequent and effective in popular TV programs (e.g. soup operas) and people are not aware about it. For this circumstance, advertisers might prefer “to compel people to buy a product without even knowing why they’re buying it – as a visceral response to a stimulus, not as a conscious decision” and “this is best done through images” (Hill 2008, 37). This situation is more effective in TV commercials that “invade our private space and time and reach us when we tend not to be alert and vigilant” (Blair 2008, 56). Seduction proceeds from double-meanings, from messages between the lines rather than explicit statements.

Advertising is deceptive or malicious when rhetoric is used as a technique to persuade based on illogical or fallacious reasoning, which may be intentional or not intentional. If it is intentional, it is a sophism, i.e. a deliberately invalid argument displaying ingenuity in reasoning in the hope of deceiving someone; if it is not intentional, it is a paralogism, i.e. an unintentionally invalid or wrong argument.

An example of deception and manipulation is the advertisement for Weather-proof, showing the former U.S. President Barack Obama wearing a coat of this brand. The billboard was placed in Times Square, New York, and it is basically a picture of

Obama taken during his visit to the Great Wall of China. The problem is that this image was used without Obama consent or knowledge, remarks *The New York Times* (dated January 7th, 2010).

A rhetorical deception happens when someone is persuaded about something through an opinion based on unreliable reasoning, provoking false beliefs. Considering that seduction is usually regarded as a deception, manipulation or enticement, the rhetoric of seduction in advertising messages plays with polysemy and hidden signs and meanings. The effect is in the strings of words producing intended subliminal meanings. That is why the word “subliminal” means ideas, images, and concepts perceived in the brain below the threshold of consciousness.

Conclusion

Advertising messages require a special ethical caution, because they are public and influential; their commercial ends do not justify their rhetorical means. They have responsibilities about what is communicated, and they must be regulated by codes of ethics and laws.

The function of advertising is not to educate, but to increase the selling of products, goods, services, brands, ideas, concepts. Doing this, advertising may be moral, immoral or amoral. It may follow or not social values or moral principles, as well as tell the truth about what is advertised.

Truth must be always a condition for discourses. If not, they may neglect the principles and values that lead to the fair and accurate use of language. An unethical way to use rhetoric in advertising is to lie, omit or exaggerates about the benefits of the products, goods, services, brands brought by the messages. As Packard (2007, 31) notes in *The Hidden Persuaders*, “many of us are being influenced and manipulated, far more than we realize, in the patterns of our everyday lives”. Following sophisticated and subliminal techniques of persuasion, some advertising messages are impossible to perceive at the conscious level of awareness and people just get the message without realize that it will produce further effects in the decision making in the act of buying the product. There are rational and non-rational or emotional techniques of persuasion. The latter are imperceptible at the conscious level of awareness.

A persuasion that does not embody an appropriate use of argumentation is unethical. The legitimacy of persuasion and rhetoric is determined by how it is used (honestly or deceptively) and for what end it is used (for good or for evil). Ethics follows thoughtfulness and consciousness about what we responsibly do concerning and caring other people. It is an action guidance.

There are seductive, rhetorical, fallacious, deceptive, immoral, and unethical or anti-ethical advertisements. Advertising messages chose specific signs to the understanding of a large amount of people; they are necessarily open to public view, they are public discourses and, therefore, must have restrictions, i.e. they must be conceived by (and show) a careful, virtuous and conscientious use for good purposes and ends.

Advertising explores both rational and emotional arguments, appealing through reasons (*logos*) and emotions (*pathos*). Seduction, for example, is a way to get what is wanted persuading with affections. Emotional arguments are more effective, be-

cause people don't resist to them as much as with rational arguments. As the epigraph from Plato's *Protagoras* (351a) says in the beginning of this article, power derives from passionate emotion, but it is more powerful, and it derives even more from rhetorical emotion.

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