

THE USE OF RATIONAL APPEAL ELEMENTS IN TELEVISION ADVERTISING**Safarov Alisher Yunusaliyevich**

Oriental University

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6326-5821>

ali-1985.05@mail.ru

Abstract

This article analyzes the importance, types, and application of rational appeal elements in television advertising through concrete examples. Rational appeals are classified on the basis of comparative, one-sided, and two-sided messages, and their effectiveness in promoting brand awareness is examined. The study analyzes the advertising strategies of well-known brands such as BMW, Tide, Nestlé, and Oral-B, while also emphasizing the influence of advertising objectives, audience psychology, and product characteristics on the selection of rational appeals.

Keywords

television advertising, rational appeal, comparative message, one-sided message, two-sided message, brand image.

1. INTRODUCTION

Television commercials, by virtue of their visual and auditory characteristics, possess the capacity to embed diverse images and associations into the viewer's mind through the representation of message components. In local television advertising, the primary function is typically informational — oriented toward sales objectives within defined price points and time constraints. Within the boundaries of local broadcasting, advertising is largely perceived as a vehicle for delivering factual information. In national television advertising, on the other hand, emotionally rich messages tend to dominate, as they serve to build or reinforce a brand's distinctive image and recognition [1].

In both cases, the success of television commercials is closely tied to the use of either rational or emotional appeals. If the advertising format is regarded as a medium, then the appeal functions as its fuel. In competitive markets, rational message content proves effective when purchasing decisions are driven by variables such as physical characteristics, perceived benefits, and product guarantees. However, when physical distinctions between competing products are unclear or negligible, dramatic, sensory, or emotional appeals emerge as the preferred tools for gaining competitive advantage [2].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The creative concept of an advertising campaign plays a guiding role in determining the specific type of appeal to be employed. Once the creative concept dictates whether an emotional or rational appeal is to be used, the decision then turns to selecting the appropriate sub-type within that category.

For instance, if the message to be communicated is rational in nature, one or more of the following appeal elements from the rational category may be selected:

- Value for money
- Economy and cost-efficiency
- Convenience and ease of use



- Quality and performance

If the message is to be encoded with emotional content, one or more of the following appeals may be employed:

- Humor
- Love and affection
- Fear
- Shame or guilt
- Happiness and joy

Three key factors are critical in making this decision:

1. Alignment with advertising objectives
2. Psychological characteristics of the target audience
3. Unique attributes of the product or service

This process is fundamental to enhancing advertising effectiveness and achieving meaningful impact on the intended audience. When the creative concept is appropriately selected, the advertising campaign attracts greater attention and improves the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes.

The following three criteria are particularly important in decision-making [3]:

Meaningfulness: the benefits that make the product more attractive or interesting to consumers.

Credibility: convincing consumers that the product or service will deliver the promised benefits.

Distinctiveness: the unique characteristics that allow a product to stand out from competitors both in the marketplace and in the consumer's mind.

This article focuses on rational appeals in television advertising. Specifically, the study examines rational appeal elements in advertising messages primarily from the perspective of their application methods. Drawing on existing literature [4]–[15], a classification based on comparative, one-sided, and two-sided rational appeals is applied, and television commercials are evaluated in terms of usage according to the types generated by their integration.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article employs a semiotic analysis method, examining the types of rational appeals conveyed through advertising messages in concrete television commercials. By analyzing real-world advertising examples, the study identifies and classifies the appeal elements embedded within each message and evaluates their persuasive function within the broader context of the advertising communication.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Comparative Rational Appeals

In comparative appeals, the fundamental premise is a direct or indirect comparison of the advertised product or service with competing brands, based on specific attributes such as price, quality, or size.

Comparative messages are divided into two forms based on whether they express positive or negative outcomes. In a positively framed advertising message, attention is directed toward



the benefits and favorable consequences resulting from purchasing the product. In a negatively framed comparative message, the focus is on the unpleasant consequences that arise from not purchasing the product [16]. In other words, positively framed messages emphasize the benefits gained from taking the recommended action, while negatively framed messages draw attention to the benefits lost when no action is taken [17].

Indirect comparative messages are based on comparisons with unspecified competing products where the benefit proposition is not explicitly stated. Such messages typically employ phrases like 'other brands' or 'Brand X' and represent the most widely used type. Direct comparative advertisements, by contrast, explicitly attack named competitors or their well-known qualities and advantages. This approach is particularly employed when the advertiser's brand or product is demonstrably superior, more powerful, or otherwise advantaged relative to competitors [9].

A notable example of comparative appeal usage is the BMW i8 Roadster advertisement (Figure 1). The commercial presents the BMW i8 Roadster in comparison with the Mercedes-Benz brand. The narrative follows the retirement of Dieter Zetsche, the CEO of Mercedes-Benz, on his final day at work. After being driven home in the company car, the retired CEO emerges from his garage driving a BMW i8 Roadster for a leisurely ride. The commercial concludes with the message: 'Thank you for years of inspiring competition, Dieter Zetsche.' By showing the CEO of Mercedes-Benz choosing a BMW, the advertisement powerfully underscores the strength and competitive superiority of the BMW brand. In terms of the application of advertising appeals and their classification within the rational message framework, this commercial employs a direct comparative and positively framed message to foreground attributes such as modernity, technological superiority, fuel efficiency, and quality.



Figure 1. BMW i8 Roadster — "Retirement Is About Exploring Your Wide Open Future" Advertisement [18]

An example of the use of indirect comparative messages is provided by the Tide laundry detergent commercial (Figure 2). Although the competing brand being compared is not explicitly named in the commercial, it is represented through a package labeled 'Ordinary Detergent.' While this commercial makes limited use of the humor element from emotional appeals, the core message is grounded in rational appeal. The main character conducts a side-by-side comparison, washing socks with both 'Ordinary Detergent' and the new Tide Aqua Powder to demonstrate the latter's superior cleaning performance. Both socks are equally soiled and placed in separate glass containers with each detergent. The result clearly shows that Tide cleans significantly better. In terms of rational message classification, the advertisement combines a positive outcome with an



indirect comparison, foregrounding attributes such as results, effectiveness, cleanliness, and perfection to position the brand as distinctly superior to its competitors. Furthermore, a negative framing element is also employed, with an implicit message suggesting that not using Tide will result in inadequately cleaned laundry, drawing attention to the negative consequences of forgoing the product.



Figure 2. Tide Laundry Detergent — "Crystal Clean Without Streaks" Advertisement [19]

4.2 One-Sided Rational Appeal Messages

One-sided rational appeal messages present only positive information about products and services. In practice, the vast majority of advertising messages in mass media are one-sided in nature [20].

A representative example of a one-sided rational appeal message is Nestlé's 'Benefits in Every Bowl' commercial (Figure 3). The advertisement communicates positive information about the characteristics of the Nestlé product, specifically enumerating the beneficial properties of the children's porridge for healthy growth and development. These include the vitamins contained in the porridge and an emphasis on BL probiotics for strengthening immunity. Within this rational message framework, additional appeal elements are also discernible, including taste and a reference to partnerships with tested farmers as a guarantee of product quality.





Figure 3. Nestlé Porridge — "Benefits in Every Bowl" Advertisement [21]

4.3 Two-Sided Rational Appeal Messages

Two-sided rational appeal messages present both positive and negative information about a product or service. Two-sided messages are further subdivided into refutational and non-refutational forms.

A refutational two-sided message attempts to counteract opposing arguments in some manner. This involves attacking the credibility of counter-claims, critiquing the logic underlying opposing arguments, and presenting evidence that refutes them.

A non-refutational two-sided message, by contrast, does not aim to directly refute opposing views; rather, it emphasizes the superiority of supporting arguments over counter-arguments [10].

An example of a non-refutational two-sided message is the Oral-B toothbrush advertisement (Figure 4). The commercial states that while Oral-B's bristles have tripled the cleaning surface area, this does not mean teeth will be three times healthier; however, due to the micro-textured bristles, significantly less plaque remains on teeth compared to ordinary flat-bristle brushes, resulting in considerably healthier teeth. Thus, both positive and negative aspects of the toothbrush are presented, delivering a two-sided message. The advertisement acknowledges counter-arguments about the brush's features and performance without attempting to directly refute them with opposing evidence. A comprehensive evaluation of the advertising message reveals that it seeks to create the intended effect through a combination of additional rational appeal elements, including cleanliness, health, and performance efficiency.





Figure 4. Oral-B Toothbrush Advertisement [22]

The ABC brand's 'New Generation Gel' commercial (Figure 5) illustrates a refutational two-sided message. In this case, the appeal is constructed not by presenting the positive and negative aspects of the product itself, but by contrasting the negative aspects of competitors (possibly including earlier generations of ABC's own products) with the positive aspects of the new ABC gel. In other words, the commercial first explains the shortcomings of competitor cleaning gels, then presents the advantages of the new ABC gel. Competitors are shown indirectly under the label 'Other Cleaning Gel,' and the comparison is ultimately left to the viewer's judgment. At the same time, the commercial attempts to refute claims made against cleaning agents using results from tests conducted by an independent organization, thereby substantiating the effectiveness of the new ABC gel with documented evidence — a characteristic feature of a refutational two-sided message.

The voiceover in the commercial states:

"Even though we are living in 2019, look what we are still dealing with! (a reference to the practice of opening clogged gel caps with a stick). But now it is time for a change. Introducing the ABC New Generation Gel with quadruple-effect polymer technology. The first and only of its kind in Turkey. Turkey loves it. No more scratched surfaces during cleaning, no residue that won't come off, no more lengthy rinsing, and no more broken or stuck caps. With ABC New Generation Gel, everything starts fresh."

Taking this advertising message text into account, an analysis of rational appeals by usage type reveals that the commercial places particular emphasis on the following appeal elements: modernity, cleanliness, convenience, performance efficiency, and quality.





Figure 5. ABC New Generation Gel Advertisement [23]

Based on the scientific literature and the examples analyzed above, rational advertising appeals and their constituent elements can be classified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Rational Appeals and Their Elements by Type of Application

Type of Rational Appeal	Appeal Elements
Comparative	Comparison with competing products; direct comparison; indirect comparison; positively framed outcome; negatively framed outcome
One-sided	Presenting only positive information; communicating key brand attributes; claims supporting the product or service
Two-sided	Presenting both positive and negative information; showing both sides of the offer; refutational messages; non-refutational messages

Drawing on the findings of the study titled 'The Secret of Television's Success: Emotional Content or Rational Information? After Fifty Years the Debate Continues,' the following conclusions emerge: in the future, television commercials will be less capable of persuading viewers through the direct delivery of precise brand information, and less effective at capturing attention or ensuring better recall of advertisements. In the contemporary media landscape, creativity is paramount in television advertising, and in this context, the indirect embedding of compelling emotional ideas into consumer consciousness will increasingly take precedence in advertising messages. At the heart of this creativity lies the linking of these ideas to the brand.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of rational appeal elements in television advertising is oriented toward presenting the advantages of a product or service through logical and evidence-based arguments. In this article, rational appeals have been classified on the basis of comparative, one-sided, and two-sided messages, and their application in television commercials has been illustrated through



concrete examples.

1. **Comparative appeals** are based on emphasizing a product's superiority over competitors. These involve direct or indirect comparisons, as well as methods that focus on positive or negative outcomes (e.g., BMW and Tide commercials).

2. **One-sided appeals** are directed at showcasing only the positive aspects of the product (e.g., Nestlé porridge commercial).

3. **Two-sided appeals** reflect both positive and negative dimensions of the product, leaving an impression of credibility and trustworthiness in the consumer's mind (e.g., Oral-B and ABC gel commercials).

The primary factors in selecting rational appeals are advertising objectives, audience psychology, and the unique characteristics of the product. Furthermore, aligning appeal elements with the creative concept is essential for maximizing advertising effectiveness.

In the future, the integration of rational and emotional appeals in television advertising will become increasingly important, as consumers increasingly prefer to connect with brands not only on a logical but also on an emotional level. Applying innovative methods even in the use of rational elements remains the key to enhancing advertising effectiveness.

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