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SUMMARY OF THESES

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THE POWER OF POWERLESS COMMUNICATION

Communicational and Strategic Foundations of Genial Rhetoric and

Its Factors of Success in CSR and Community Facility

Advertisements

Ph.D. dissertation

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Budapest, 2022

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I. PRELIMINARIES AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

The topic of the present dissertation is the conceptualization and foundation of „genial rhetoric”, a phenomenon that describes and introduces an alternative strategy of doing rhetoric in contrast to the classical persuasive method of rhetoric. The aim of this study is then to broaden the field of rhetoric to the context of 21st century communications by re-thinking and extending the conventional idea of persuasion. For this reason, the dissertation aims to introduce the concept of *genial rhetoric* and its strategic method of *non-persuasive persuasion* grounded in the rhetorical situation. The dissertation builds upon the foundations of rhetoric, communication theory, social psychology, marketing and advertising theory in order to create an interdisciplinary framing for the investigation of genial rhetoric. The dissertation uses an open logic context to formulate and continuously tighten the definition of genial rhetoric (depending on a continuous re-interpretation of relevant academic literature) supported by a three phase, mixed method qualitative empirical research. The presented paper is exploratory in every nature: both the theoretical context and the empirical research introduce a novel idea situated in a dynamically evolving environment, the rhetoric of advertising.

The study of rhetorical persuasiveness as a complex phenomenon has now secured a high social relevance, therefore a broadened and deepening knowledge of the topic is required, backed up by the recognition that entirely new expectations ground the field of persuasion in the postmodern age. At the same time, the actual modern consumer deviates from traditional typifications within persuasive strategies presented in advertisements (and all types of human and mediated communications) which leads to an opening for radically new perspectives of communication (while the underlying driving forces can by no means be referred to as new). What makes it especially important to releasing a summary work of an alternative, persuasive method is the idea of the *powerful powerless communication* that helps us describe persuasiveness as a dialectical, dialogical, democratic, non-violent, and content oriented appeal, which has its focus on the understanding of the partner, instead of “winning a deal”.

Traditional rhetoric has always been characterized by the persuasive attempt to win an argument, imagined as a zero-end game (invented tools and methods support opponents in this endeavor) which is closer to the accepted theory of powerful persuasive communication (often associated with the so-called masculine type of communication). In contrast, the concept of genial rhetoric depends on the feminine type of rhetoric (often described as powerless communication), which regards the argument as an invitation for the exchange of views. It aims to get a deeper understanding of the topic and the partner’s ideas in order to reach mutually

accepted and fruitful outcomes. Thus, this novel idea of genial rhetoric aims to synthesize the theories of the selected academic fields on macro level, instead of testing an already existing model or theory. For this reason, the dissertation regards rhetoric as a common ground of interdisciplinary investigation of a non-violent, *powerless powerful persuasive method* and its success factors. **In summary, genial rhetoric is a concept which is involving in its attitude, dialogical in its form, non-persuasive in its intentions (yet still persuasive in its results), non-violent in its procedure and co-operative in its strategy.**

The main focus of the dissertation is thus to closely examine the strategic approach of genial rhetoric and to explore the theoretical and practical opportunities and possibilities of implementation (especially in the ever-changing field of advertising). The dissertation raises the issue that potential advertisers and consumers need to revitalize and revalue advertising techniques and strategies in order to provide methods and practical tools for a more complex rhetorical analysis, to introduce a co-creation oriented understanding of the process of marketing communication planning, and to increase the success of persuasive messages. Based on the grounds of this approach consumers act as *prosumers* and advertisers are able to effectively plan and execute persuasive marketing campaigns relevant to the post-modern environment and customer needs. The dissertation's scientific goal is to contribute to the academic literature on rhetoric and persuasion theory by offering an alternative insight to them, while providing a starting point for further research on the impact of rhetoric in marketing communications.

An important practical significance of the study is to highlight the fact that rhetoric has become extremely present on the interpersonal and also on the social levels of communication nowadays, which is, however, a narrowing of its original idea. In order to return to the genuine understanding of rhetoric, persuasion needs to be redefined from the point of the rhetorical situation. For this reason, the dissertation starts with a historical overview of rhetoric, which is followed by a selection of models and theories of persuasion (involving psychology, sociology, and communication theory). Finally, the theoretical summary takes into account the evolution of advertising and persuasive marketing communication strategies and also manages to point out interesting interrelations between these fields. By this goal, the study aims to draw the attention to the differences between manipulation and persuasion, the significance of feminine rhetoric, conflict management, leadership skills, empathic and non-violent communication methods, emotional intelligence, charisma and other practical implications of the topic. At the same time, the dissertation is a cautionary tale about the dangers related to the using of rhetoric as a manipulative tool.

The following concepts and model have been applied to ground the definition of genial rhetoric: Lunsford and Ede (1984) highlight the importance of focusing on the similarities of classical and modern rhetorical interpretations instead of the accepted method which moves focus to the differences. Crosswhite's (2013) idea is somehow parallel to this when raising attention to the fact that the renaissance of rhetoric cannot be described by building smaller or bigger rhetorics, but by thinking in deep rhetoric. Deep rhetoric is a concept which aims to give voice to the sources and perspectives somehow forgotten throughout the history of rhetoric, but which can successfully support its modern revival and further development. The idea of rhetoric as ingenuity (Grassi, 1980) distinguishes rational and rhetorical language, in which the latter is being derived from life itself and characterized as metaphorical and inductive (similarly to genial rhetoric). Furthermore, Johnstone (2007) highlights that in the center of rhetoric there lie consciousness and consideration, which can be found in Burke's (1967) notion of *dramatism* as well. Based on the above, the concept of genial rhetoric makes a clear distinction between manipulation and persuasion stressing that the perpetual goal and intention of rhetoric is to arouse consciousness. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (2008) work suggests that rhetoric is characterized by the argument (instead of style) and the argumentative process is based on the „meeting of minds” in an intense and personal understanding of the situation.

Rhetoric has always been concentrating on the psychological foundations just as much as on paying attention to the audience of any persuasive communicational attempt (Aristotle, 1999; Campbell, 1989; Aczél, 2009). This became evident in Ehninger's (1992) work, who describes the third period within the universal history of rhetoric as an era of understanding: interpreting rhetoric as an intentional act to reduce the blocks and barriers of communication by addressing people and depending on dialogue. The interpretation of rhetoric as dialogue (Lyotard, 1993; Bahtyin; Aczél, 2009, Adamik, 2005) is strongly reflected in the definition of genial rhetoric describing it as dynamical power which formulates social interactions – contrarily to theories echoing the traditional image of rhetoric as rivalry and competition-oriented. In the center of the approach of rhetoric as dialogue lies the notion of reciprocity, discovery and comprehension, therefore effectiveness cannot be measured in the terms of momentary, relative success.

Genial rhetoric draws from the concept of feminine rhetoric inasmuch as it assimilates the notion of emotional assignments (Campbell, 1989) portrayed as personalized, story and experience-based, audience-oriented and involving the process of communication (Gerzema & D'Antonio, 2013; Lunsford, 1995). The same demand for metaphor-based storytelling and use of inclusive communication can be found in modern leadership studies investigating the

features of charismatic leaders (Antonakis, 2016; 2017; Bakacsi 2015; 2019; Hooijberg et al., 2007). Furthermore, the examination of leaders' communicational style has supported Grant (2013) in concluding that the application of powerless language is more effective than the so-called powerful language.

The phenomena of creativity, openness, and empathy (Buda, 2012; Bagdy, 2011) have already been well examined in academic literature: non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2001), democratic communication approach (Foss & Griffin 1993), and even the novel idea of designcommunication (Cosovan, 2009) have supported the need for co-operation and co-creation. Next to this, the concept of rhetoric as invitation has roots in the Homeric culture of gift giving (Mifsud, 2007) portrayed by the above mentioned openness potential, increasing reciprocity and the notion of rhetoric as intimacy. A few decades before Mifsud, Hart, and Burks (1972) introduced the idea of rhetorical sensitivity embedded in the context of social relations and defined it as a sensitive adjustment towards all kinds and types of interpretations. Rhetorical sensitivity in the sense of preparedness, expertise, and social understanding has become increasingly important in education as well (Aczél, 2016).

Next to this, the sensual approach of rhetoric regards argumentation as a social, practical method turning attention to the very presence, but for Kennedy (1992) the essence of rhetoric is more than that: its rather circumscribed as energy derived from the experience of the rhetorical situation and audience attention. Hawhee (2004; 2015) also describes the phenomena of presence and participation in the context of *kairos* and defines it as rhetorical sensorium which primary goal is to support the flow of rhetoric as energy. Finally, it is worth to mention that many of the 20th century theories take into account ethical values as center parts of rhetoric (Burke, 1945) referring to the ancient concepts of rhetoric and philosophy by revisiting Plato's definition of truth. The goal of this theoretical flashback is to highlight that the ultimate goal and subject of rhetoric have always been the entire human being themselves, such as that the ethical foundations of rhetoric must not simply derive from dialectics solely.

Thanks to this approach, genial rhetoric can build bridges between traditional and modern foundations of rhetoric and also connects the above ideas to the classical concept of oratory excellence. Thanks to this social orientation and powerful powerless directive, genial rhetoric (which does not aim to persuade by defeating the other) can become persuasive for both parties and participants not just in its results, but what is more important, in its process. Therefore, **genial rhetoric is attention-centered, co-operative, and aims to create and share mutual understanding.**

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The empirical part of the dissertation examines the success factors of genial rhetoric in CSR (corporate social responsibility) and Community Facility Advertisement¹, completing the epistemological, conceptual and contextual analysis of effective persuasion (presented in the literature review) with empirical data. The basic question presented in the dissertation is how can one imagine the renewal of the rhetoric idea and, at same time, the reframing of persuasive strategies grounded in the 21st century rhetorical situation? The literature shows that one of the major challenges of post-modern era is to communicate clearly and effectively (persuasiveness) by preserving and presenting the communicator's credibility and genuine attitude at the same time.

The exploratory research aims to test the practical implications and applications of genial rhetoric in order to justify its *raison d'être* with empirical data. The chosen research methods and qualitative analysis are based on the concept of genial rhetoric (defined in chapters 1.3, 2.6, and 3.6.) and are embedded in the framework of the grounded theory approach. The research questions suggest that it is not necessary to use pressing, manipulative, moreover aggressive messages or violent modes of influence in order to become effective and persuasive. On the contrary, the literature reveals that the consumers (already turned into *prosumers*) have got tired of manipulative techniques and there is a heavy resistance towards and even rejection of advertisement because of lacking trustworthiness, credibility and interest. Simultaneously, **the results of the dissertation show that there is an increasing demand for involving, open, co-operative and genial type of communication – even within the field of advertising. Therefore, the dissertation studies a paradigm shift in marketing communications from the perspective of genial rhetoric.**

II.1. Methodology: Qualitative Methods

The dissertation aims to gain insight into a radically new perspective of persuasion, and thereby offer theoretical and empirical handholds and foundations for future research. The main studies

¹ Specific of the Hungarian market, Community Facility Advertisement refers to advertisements created by non-profit organizations in order to promote a social cause. *The 2010 media law contains special rules regarding government advertisements in audiovisual media services. The law distinguishes between three different categories of nonbusiness-related advertisements: public-service announcements, community facility advertisements (advertisements that promote a social objective), and political advertisements.* Source: Capturing Them Softly - Soft Censorship and State Capture in Hungarian Media (WAN-IFRA, 2013), https://mertek.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/soft_censorship_2013_2014.03.03.pdf

of the dissertation are qualitative (focus group discussions, content analysis, comparative case study). The primary aim of a qualitative study is to analyze a changing environment, to explore new consumption patterns, consumer opinions and attitudes in order to gain a deeper understanding of events and interactions (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Maxwell, 2010; Fielding, 2012), and also to offer relevant research questions for further studies. In this respect the presented three-phase research is highly exploratory and it is based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006; Bodor, 2013; Mitev, 2015). The presented qualitative analysis also depends on methodological triangulation in order to reach the expected theoretical saturation (Denzin, 2000; Mitev, 2015; Griggs, 1987). Further advantages of mixed-method or multi-method research is that it supports a deeper understanding of the topic by considering different aspects and viewpoints (2013; Bell & Bryman, 2007; Kozinets, 2002). As a consequence, **three different research phases have been applied in the study: (1) focus group interviews** (Vicsek, 2006; 2017; Link & Dinsmore, 2014); **(2) content analysis** (Babbie, 2001; Krippendorff, 1995); **and (3) comparative case study method** (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995; Cowe et al., 2011) altogether with a supplementary researcher self-reflection (Mitev & Horváth, 2016).

II.2. Research Questions

In accordance with the conceptual questions discussed in the literature review, more specific and detailed research questions were set up for the empirical examination: Questions RQ1-RQ2 apply for the focus group interviews (phase 1), RQ3-RQ4 for the content analysis (phase 2), and RQ5 for the comparative case studies (phase 3). The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do Gen-Z consumers relate to advertisements?

- a) What do they regard as the goal of advertising?
- b) How do they perceive their own role (as consumers and proactive participants, designers) in the marketing communication processes?
- c) What do they assume as advantages and disadvantages of advertising, and what kind of attitudes do they have towards commercials² and ads?

RQ2: How (if) Gen-Z consumers recognize persuasive and argumentative techniques in ads?

- a) What do they know about the concept of persuasion and its goals in general?

² Commercials in this context refer to traditional for profit advertisements (whic primary aim is to promote and sell products or services of a specific brand), different catgeory than CSR and Community Facility Advertisements.

- b) How (under what circumstances) do they make distinctions between successful and non-successful ads?
- c) Which features and characteristics do they take into account when considering the persuasive power of advertising messages?

RQ3: How does the rhetoric of CSR and Community Facility Advertisement differ from traditional, Commercial Ads?

- a) Which typical persuasive techniques do CSR and Community Facility Advertisement use?
- b) Is there any difference between CSR / Community Facility Advertisement, and Commercial Ads in persuasive power and the influencing techniques applied? And if yes, how do they differ from each other?
- c) Under which practical conditions can we apply these research results for the rhetorical analysis of commercial ads?

RQ4: Which are the success-factors of genial rhetoric in CSR and Community Facility Advertisements?

- a) How can we plan and design advertising campaigns based on the research results and the perceptions of genial rhetoric?
- b) How can the *non-persuasive persuasion* appeal of genial rhetoric function in an authentic manner in the influence and sales oriented field of advertising?
- c) Is there a possibility for genial rhetoric based advertising campaigns to become efficient, and how can we measure its success factors?

RQ5: In the future, will it be possible for genial rhetoric based advertising campaigns to become more successful than classical commercials (based on traditional persuasive techniques)?

II.3 Data Collection and Sample Properties

The study is composed of three successive research phases: **in the first phase of the research**, two online, semi-structured, synchronous focus group sessions were conducted in order to get a closer insight of Gen-Z consumer attitudes towards advertising and persuasion in ads. Focus group subjects were selected with the filter condition that they be interested in advertising (based on previous class activity and the results of „collage-making” homework exercise). Based on this insight, one group was composed of active, contributing members of the „Creative and Media Planning” class (Corvinus University of Budapest, Marketing MSc Program, Spring

2021 semester), while the other group was filled with more passive students from the same class. Under these circumstances online focus groups were composed of 12 and 13 university students (from the same age range: Gen-Z). Before attending, participants were asked to fill in a preliminary survey (data collected: demographics, previous studies, media consumption preferences, perception of ads etc.). Participating students received no bonus points or any other rewards in their studies for their efforts which was exceptionally important in order not to influence their views and shared opinions. For this reason, a colleague of mine and co-teacher in the above-mentioned class has attended both focus groups as an assistant moderator and observer.

The aim of this first research phase was to gain more ideas and further reflections for the concept of genial rhetoric (until reaching theoretical saturation in accordance with the grounded theory method) and also, to support the development of the codes to be used during the content analysis in the second research phase. Inductive and deductive methods have both been applied in the creation of codes (code book): the given definition of genial rhetoric were completed with the results of the first phase (after a 2-round categorization and recoding process) in order to answer Q1-Q2 the research questions.

Objectives of research phase 1.: mapping the persuasive power and influencing techniques of ads between selected Gen-Z consumers; getting insight into Gen-Z consumers attitudes towards ads; determining characteristics of persuasive ads in all categories (CSR and Community Facility Ads, Commercials); understanding the difference between manipulation and persuasion (especially in the advertising context); creating the code book.

In the second research phase CSR and Community Facility Advertisements were selected from well-known global brands, based on the “Forbes 100 list of the most valuable brands in 2020” and internet availability of these ads. The aim of this phase was to closely examine the persuasive strategies of the selected ads based on the codes from the first phase (reflecting the conceptual definition of genial rhetoric). The code book has been recoded and tested by myself and two other researchers before the content analysis phase. Ads were categorized according to genres and platforms: 20 online/TV advertising CSR films (aired between 2017-2021) and 25 print or outdoor poster Community Facility Advertisements have been selected (published between 2010-2021). For this reason, the diversity of genres and types of advertising were secured and organized into specific categories of investigation. CSR ads were arranged into five categories (with five examples in each category) based on the topics mentioned by focus group participants in the first phase: (1) protecting the environment and wildlife; (2) climate change;

(3) health maintenance; (4) violence within the family; and (5) social responsibility. The aim of this phase was to create a clear distinction between traditional influencing methods and genial rhetoric's *non-persuasive persuasion* method in order to recognize the success-factors of the latter in selected ads.

Objectives of research phase 2.: fine tuning and testing of codes and code categories (code book); genre-specific exploration of CSR and Community Facility Advertisements' persuasive strategy; recognition of the success-factors of genial rhetoric in ads.

The aim of the third research phase was to fine-tune and test previous results, but this time it was carried out in the focal context of CSR and Commercial Ads depending on the definition and objectives of genial rhetoric. A comparative case study method was chosen in favor of simultaneous analysis and sequential comparison of the selected cases. Cases were selected on the basis of quantitative and qualitative aspects supporting methodological triangulation (internal validity). The cases represented different brands, but were identical in the key features: all cases were published between 2011-2021, the basis of selection echoed the five main topics mentioned in focus group discussions and also depended on internet availability. five brands and two respective ads from each brand have been chosen (depending on previous results and codes) from which the first case was a CSR ad and the second was a commercial ad. The CSR and commercial ad cases somewhat represented dialectical pairs, advertised similar products and were published in subsequent years as other main criteria of research design. The aim of the comparative analysis was then to confront the CSR and commercial ads' persuasive strategies, therefore results naturally led to the strengthening of genial rhetoric's concept.

Objectives of research phase 3.: identifying persuasive techniques and tools in CSR and commercial ads; contrasting CSR and commercials ads' persuasiveness; determining the success-factors of genial rhetoric based on research results of phases 1-3; creating methodological recommendation for the genial rhetoric based advertising campaigns; unfolding further viewpoints for future research.

III. RESULTS

III.1 Research Results: Focus Groups

After data processing and of focus group answers (including the preliminary survey) open and axial coding were adopted in order to retrieve and categorize codes for the following phases. Outcomes of the first phase were based on the comparison of results retrieved from the focus

group discussions themselves (primary research) and the literature review (secondary research), which led to the creation and cleansing of codes, highlighting the key code categories for further research phases. The results of the focus group sessions supported that the *non-persuasive persuasion* method of genial rhetoric can be caught in Gen-Z consumers' expectations and experiences of ads and advertising strategies (notwithstanding that selected participants were presumably under-represented in their age group because of the fact that they had previous marketing knowledge and interest in the field).

Main findings of phase 1.: Gen-Z participants preferred ads that depended on dialogue and empathic communication cues, showed inclusive pursuits, had non-violent intent, based on values and exhibited openness potential and credibility – all which have been circumscribed in the notion of genial rhetoric. **As a consequence, ten major code categories were created which refer to substantial attributes of genial rhetoric in advertising:** quality and design; consonance and congruency; creativity and uniqueness; familiarity and distinctness; credibility and connection building; empathy and social compassion; personal benefit; emotional persuasion; rational persuasion; adjustment to target group(s). As a result, code categories were set (data clearance in 2 rounds been made also) and tested in the next research phase of content analysis of CSR and Community Facility Advertisements.

Phase 1 also pointed out that focus group attendees share the same expectations towards persuasive individuals and persuasive advertisement: factors of successful communication are identical in both cases, moreover many of these fall under the domain of genial rhetoric. **As a result, it became apparent that the persuasive feature of ads cannot be found in manipulative techniques or violent, pressing messages, but in the powerless quality which formulates dimensions of trust, co-working and mutual understanding.** For this reason, **the novelty, inherent involving capacity and authenticity of genial rhetoric and non-persuasive persuasion lead to a higher acceptance of persuasive messages on the customer side.**

III.2 Research Results: Content Analysis

Codes from the first phase were applied to CSR and Community Facility Advertisements in the content analysis of the second phase in order to distinguish special features of genial rhetoric. As a result, it turned out that CSR ads share some similarities with commercials regarding main features of the genre (e.g. audiovisual elements, joint application of rational and emotional persuasion techniques, storytelling narratives etc.), but at first place CSR ads' success is characterized by credibility and the genuine communication of corporate social activities.

The content analysis revealed that selected **CSR advertisements** successfully addressed the target group by applying creative design and easily understandable messages, of which the latter

is incredibly important for CSR campaigns and advertising messages in general (but does not apply for Community Facility Advertisements). Specific to the CSR genre is to raise attention to environmental, communal or social values, but according to research results this is made by stressing empathy, sympathy, solidarity, happiness, supportive incentives, goodwill, and other positive feelings in the ads. Next to the above, other techniques were observed in the CSR ads such as indirect addressing of customers, presenting preparedness and knowledge in the topic supported by audiovisual elements that create a positive atmosphere while watching (e.g. pleasant and soft background music, happy and cheerful images of people, altogether with well-chosen rational and/ or emotional persuasion techniques).

CSR ads' narratives were mostly descriptive and informative and regularly depended on storytelling or customer education, which lead to a conclusion that brands turn their attention to building trust and also to representing their social work, with which they aspire to create dialogical communication. Another sensitive question of CSR ad design is the presentation of the brand name and/or logo: it should be evident who is behind the message, but the ad should not put too much emphasis on the brand itself that would distract the attention from the major purpose of the communication. This is a fundamental difference between CSR and commercial ads, where the latter is generally recognizable of frequent repetition of brand name/logo/slogan, introduction of brand images or ambassadors, discreditation of competitors or rival products, and other manipulative techniques. In contrast, a CSR ad does not speak against something, but rather stands out for a *pro bono* cause underlining the common goal in its communication. Therefore, the product, the brand itself is under-communicated and generally the advertiser is presented implicitly or at the very end of the ad (including the risk that this way the company has less power to control brand image and consumer perception than in classic commercials). As a summary, CSR ads require attention, invitation and a dialogical approach on both sides (company and customer), altogether with a closer understanding and involvement based on customer insight and equal partnership – all can be found in the definition of genial rhetoric.

The examination of **Community Facility Advertisements** led to a different conclusion, but at the same time contributed to the idea of genial rhetoric from a different point of view. According to research results, Community Facility Advertisements were characterized by powerful persuasive techniques (sometimes with even extreme ideas) and as a contrast to CSR, these heavily depended on evoking negative feelings in order to emphasize the importance of the cause. Community Facility Advertisements were more likely to employ dark, naturalistic, moreover shocking images and provocative messages in order to gain attention and were not

afraid to add irony or confrontation to these ads. Surprisingly, these dividing techniques supported to create an open and transparent atmosphere which made bed for dialogue as well (instead of presenting its own viewpoint). Successful Community Facility Advertisements are thought-provoking, remain memorable for longer period of time and what is more important; create customer commitment without being manipulative, aggressive or violent when asking for agreement or calling into action.

Community Facility Advertisements offered a good cause or a social benefit for the customer (asoperating principles of dialogical communication) supporting the appearance of various views. However, in these cases the advertiser's opinion was more expressed and recognizable then in CSR campaigns. Thanks to the above characteristics one might think that genial rhetoric cannot be easily applied to Community Facility Advertisements, but that's not the case: the focus group results revealed that there are two extreme approaches to these ads.

Half of the participants in both focus groups reported that the images, the textual messages and the content itself was too powerful for them, therefore these ads created aversion and antipathy on their side. On the other hand, half of the participants mentioned that these ads were more creative, interesting, inviting and genuine than other („conventional”, „boring”, and „schematic”) commercials and felt more sympathy for these topics. In this case, it was justified that the key to understanding is authenticity which in some cases support dialogical communication, but in other cases generate opposite effects. This dichotomy effectively represented the controversy of Community Facility Advertisements: these ads are more characteristic and ambiguous than CSR or commercial ads, therefore less successful in the entire society. Nevertheless, if Community Facility Advertisements manage to create commitment in smaller, more specific target groups, it is expected that these ads become more effective than others and can build long-term relationships with customers.

Main findings of phase 2.: While CSR ads speak to and for everyone (targeting the entire society), Community Facility Advertisements create smaller, but more committed communities around their messages. While CSR ads are more likely to be based on accepted methods and less creative techniques, Community Facility Advertisements use radical persuasive techniques and might become provocative, shocking and challenging in the eyes of consumers. While CSR ads focus on present and past activities and depend on descriptive narratives when presenting company activities, Community Facility Advertisements mostly future-oriented and centered around customer education and activism.

The second research phase highlighted that CSR and Community Facility Advertisements are different in genre, but share common goals and characteristics, which all add up to

concept of genial rhetoric. Therefore, research results showed that *non-persuasive persuasion* techniques can be found in both types of ads and these characteristics make these advertisements successful and persuasive according to the conclusions of content analysis.

III.3 Research Results: Comparative Case Study

Comparative analysis of the chosen case studies in the third phase revealed that features of genial rhetoric can be found not just in CSR or Community Facility Advertisements, but in successful commercials as well. Each of the selected pairs of cases were different and added new shades and aspects to research results. In the first pair of cases we found differences in authenticity, trustworthiness and individual interest between CSR and commercial ads which gained significance when contrasting the two cases and showed that the CSR ad contained more elements of genial rhetoric. In the second case, both the explicit and implicit messages were well-designed and connected to a shared experience which aimed to evoke positive feelings in customers creating higher involvement. In this case it became evident that the intention of the brand was to understand its customers by building and strengthening connections, applying easily comprehensible verbal and visual messages in accordance with creative design. Furthermore, the third pair of cases were built up on even more genuine insights, providing novel and original ideas in a clear-cut design, overjoying customers with added humor, playfulness and vulnerability for a more memorable, thought-provoking effect. These cases also represent an excellent mix of rational (price of the product) and emotional (future possibilities) persuasion, but the elaboration of the messages takes only a few seconds not to over-stretch cognitive capacity.

Contrary to this, the fourth and fifth pair of cases failed to employ enough persuasive power for which all of these remained too general, meaningless and stereotypical. As it was reported by focus group members, these types of ads are blamed to be responsible for the misunderstanding, aversion and avoidance of ads between many of the customers (not just members of Gen-Z) – besides, literature confirms also that regaining customer trust is not as easy as it seems. Furthermore, focus group participants highlighted that knowing the target group and designing creative ads is not enough if the advertisers fails to show expertise in the field: the lack of preparedness or imperfect knowledge can become a barrier to persuasive communication by giving room for ambiguous or defective messages – as it became apparent in the last two pairs of cases. These results strengthen the idea that the (post-)modern customer expects ads to be informative, entertaining and effective at the same time, in addition anticipates that ads stand

out for a good cause and represent the brand authentically not forgetting to involve customers (as designers in a broader sense) into the making of ads. Finally, results confirmed that it is expected to fulfill these requirements more successfully when adopting the standards of genial rhetoric – within and out of the field of advertising.

III.4 Main Conclusions of the Study

Focus group results (phase 1) shed light upon that selected members of Gen-Z have determined opinions of ads and these could be easily associated with the main characteristics of genial rhetoric. Participants were aware of the fact the ads aim to sell, but they expected ads to create added value as well. When describing persuasiveness they compared manipulation to persuasion (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1992; Cialdini, 1999; Steel, 2002; Bárházi, 2008; Síklaki, 1994; Árvay, 2003; Chilton, 2002; Aczél, 2005b; Aczél & Bencze, 2007; Bettinghaus, 2003; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and decided that **fundamental criteria of successful ads are the following: creativity, strong and appealing audiovisual messages (Szabó, 2016) compared with humor (Nagyné Paksi, 2012), the role of storytelling (Fisher, 1987; Mitev, 2015) and the importance of awaking positive attitudes and feelings toward the brand (Heath, 2007).** Participants also reported that it's important on advertisers' side to be fully-prepared and have a specific knowledge of the field, to apply argumentation properly, to share awareness-raising and to add creativity, empathy and caring attentiveness to the process. **The persuasive ad is also ethical, plan for a long-term relationship, and was described as co-operative process.** According to them, in the post-modern age advertising products are content-driven, focus on customer experience (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2008), represent added value, uniqueness, and creativity (Till & Baack, 2005; Fehér, 2008), and build rapport and dialogue.

All of the above is listed in the definition of genial rhetoric altogether with a non-violent attitude (Rosenberg, 2001), charisma (Antonakis, 2016) and emotional intelligence (Cobb & Mayer, 2000; Hill & Mazis, 1986; Goleman, 1995). **Furthermore, participants regarded the so-called powerless qualities (Hosman, 2015; Hosman & Siltanen, 2006; Fragale, 2006; Gibbons & Busch & Bradac, 1991; Gerzema, & D'Antonio, 2013; Grant, 2013; Lunsford, 1995) as powerful techniques and advantages of persuasive ads.** The discussion sessions resulted in the definition of the role of the customer as an active content-creator (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014; Nyiró et al., 2012). All in all, focus group participants managed to recognize and identify argumentative elements of ads (Lózsi, 2012; Molnár, 2008; Sas, 2018) and linked these to the standards of genial rhetoric and it's potential in advertising.

The content analysis (phase 2) confirmed that CSR ads stand closer to traditional commercials and differed more from Community Facility Advertisements (Ásványi & Áncsán, 2019; Győry, 2010). **CSR ads presented company achievements in a descriptive, narrative language, primarily focusing on the creation of positive atmosphere and attitudes. By contrast, Community Facility Advertisements apply strong, provocative, though-provoking, warning verbal cues and visual images and put the good cause in the center of attention** (Balázs & Barkó & Vancza, 2012; Sas, 2010). In case of the latter, the goal is to motivate customers by awakening positive and even more so, negative feelings in people (e.g. aversion, self-reflection, fear, etc.). Therefore, Community Facility Advertisements depend on even more various rhetorical tools and techniques such as displacement and replacement, analogical and controversial structures, visual metaphors etc. (McQuarrie & Mick 1996; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005; Kövecses, 2005; Csordás, 2015; Leigh, 1994).

Finally, the results of the comparative case study method (phase 3) underlined that some of the listed rhetorical techniques can be found in traditional commercials as well, but the usage thereof is more limited and presumably less successful. Qualitative analysis of the selected sample (five pairs of cases) supported previous results: the rhetorical toolbars, persuasive techniques and even the general intentions behind of CSR and Community Facility Advertisements are closer to the idea of genial rhetoric than average commercials, consequently *non-persuasive persuasion* elements can be detected in these genres of ads. This conclusion led to the determination of success factors of genial rhetoric and underlined its importance in advertising, while results cast light upon the significance of measuring its effectiveness and usefulness in ads.

Recent academic literature suggests (and even more in the case of Gen-Z) that customers are willing to stand out for social causes and they are capable of providing valuable contributions in all stages of the advertising process as brand ambassadors, opinion leaders, co-creators, and actives members of customer experience communities (Cosovan & Horváth, 2016; Nyirő et al., 2012; Horváth & Mitev, 2015; Gellén, 2016; Horváth & Komár, 2020). Supported by the dissertation's research results, the *non-persuasive persuasion* method is connected to customer empowerment and possesses the potential to persuade stakeholders in the profit-oriented environment of advertising.

The research also suggests that not just customers, but advertisers benefit from the practical implementation of genial rhetoric by becoming more successful and less discredited. The key to regaining customers' attention and trust lies no longer in traditional methods of persuasion, but rather in the surpassing of run-down strategies and a shift towards alternative types of

understanding and co-creation. Actual marketing trends (Pelsmacker & Neijens, 2012; Cova & Cova, 2002; Sas, 2018; Csordás et al., 2013; Totth, 2013) centered around content, exploration, experience, community-belonging, and involvement opens up for radically new ideas of customer empowerment and communication strategies. Many examples from the last decade show that a handful of advertisers already recognized the potentials of the new marketing environment, but somehow still hesitating to opt for a suitable alternative when re-designing advertising messages. But genial rhetoric may have an answer.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS

In sum, the concept of genial rhetoric depends on a two-fold basis: it serves as a theoretical concept and also a practical tool for present and future communicators. As the dissertation's exploratory research suggests, genial rhetoric and the *non-persuasive persuasion* method proved to be successful in CSR and Community Facility Advertisements if it meets true commitment on both customer and company sides (but it fails to be successful when applied with a manipulative intent or appear as a mere framework without authentic understanding and involvement).

One scientific significance of the dissertation is the application of powerless qualities in persuasive context, anchored in the rhetorical situation, combined with the non-violent, dialogical communication methods. The significance of the concept has been tested in the advertising environment (with a 3-step QUAL-qual mixed method research design), building bridges between communication, rhetoric and marketing disciplines as another scientific result of the dissertation. Its results also cast light upon the necessity of the re-imagination, re-interpretation and re-design of advertising strategies and techniques both in theoretical and practical contexts (so as rhetoric has always been defined as *theory* and *praxis* at the same time). In addition, Gen-Z participants' reports supported the immediate need for conceptual and strategical changes in advertising in order to build ground for a more ethical, responsible, and caring communication between brands and customers – in accordance with the foundations of genial rhetoric.

Furthermore, the dissertation aimed to increase the number of academic papers in the field and to deepen the domain of persuasion in the 21st century context by broadening the horizon of the rhetorical thought and application of genial rhetoric. Research results show that similar approaches can be justified in marketing research (e.g. in connection with communication and

rhetorical theory research), in verifying related advertising models and strategies and observing latent or manifest consumer brand attitudes.

As the dissertation reports, we have arrived to a turbulent advertising era, in which principles are facing novel challenges, questioning approved methods and techniques (Bender & Wellbery 2000; Hood, 2006; Lyotard, 1993; Adamik & Aczél, 2003; Arens, 2006). Parallel to this, the discipline of rhetoric faces an essential shift in its position, methods and applications. By this reason, genial rhetoric is grounded in a cross-section of changing disciplines, which makes it even more apparent to re-shape communicational culture, not just in advertising, but also in interpersonal and mediated communication contexts. One of the dissertation's major goal was then to emphasize how society can profit from the emergence of genial rhetoric (e.g. re-shaping the genre of advertisements may lead to a more responsible and ethical marketing communication, depending on value-creation by keeping its sales potential at the same time). Finally, the research has equally been conducted in the aim of supporting science communication activities, introducing genial rhetoric to larger audiences and support public discussions, presentations and educational purposes in the long run. Moreover, the foundation of genial rhetoric aims to introduce and strengthen leadership skills in communication, inside (leader-employee) and outside (brand-customer) the company. All of which the above research directions are to be considered in further researches mapping synergies and broadening the potential application and understanding of genial rhetoric.

V. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The persuasive power, rhetorical potential, customer-brand attitudes and related qualities (those of all forms of persuasion) are generally hard to identify. Therefore, in this study we can only make indirect assumptions as to the practical implications of persuasion, Gen-Z members motivations, etc. For this reason, (as in similar qualitative studies), it is important here to avoid setting up immovable conclusions: while the implementation of genial rhetoric standards in ads may have led selected Gen-Z users becoming more satisfied, activated and motivated by advertisements, the phenomenon only touches a given segment of society (and thus consumers). For this reason, customers, brand stakeholders and advertisers will still face the task to re-think persuasive strategies in their communication based on the insights of novel pieces of research. Therefore, the results of the present dissertation can only be interpreted in the given context. The present study suffers from the customary flaws of qualitative research, thus in spite of the methodological triangulation carried out throughout all research phases, its results cannot be

generalized. Even though, the detailed description of the research design and sampling processes enables further research to repeat the inquiry and to extend it to other fields and contexts. Subjective interpretations may have appeared during the two-step coding process, however, research results may serve as a basic ground for further qualitative and even quantitative research in the area (e.g. CSR, Community Facility Advertisements and Commercials). Besides, the limited number of executed case studies was enough for an exploratory research, but would require to select more cases from different fields and to add other viewpoints to the examination of commercial case studies. Also, the first research phase was executed during the pandemic which have led to online conducted focus group sessions, setting barriers to a more proper examination of verbal/ non-verbal clues and made it harder to create group cohesion.

Additionally, the study is limited to examining consumer experiences and opinions: this operationalization of the empirical work is associated with a more specialized circle of participants within Gen-Z, as members of the focus groups can be assumed to be more experienced and better educated than the average (university students with an interest and knowledge of marketing), therefore socio-demographic characteristics may have distorted the results. For this reason, following research phases were carried out to strengthen these results, however it is recommended that the investigation be extended as to include a wider range of society members from all generations, and notably non-professionals of the field. Furthermore, an extended research framework would enable the preparation of interviews with professionals of the field of marketing (advertising specialists, brand managers, company leaders and stakeholders) in order the get a closer insight of the current strategical marketing planning process. Another proposed future research direction is the more in-depth study of advertising and media cases, for which the present study failed to provide a proper framework.

Finally, the present exploratory study suffered from the lack of already existing theoretical frameworks within this specific field, therefore it was essential to gather data (grounded theory method) and build up a novel and authentic working definition of genial rhetoric. According to the results, the dissertation managed to reach this goal, but still there is room for conceptual fine-tuning, in accordance with the deliberately open and flexible concept of the idea. Finally, research on genial rhetoric and its *non-persuasive persuasion* method is a novel and promising field of research. To complete the findings of the study in this area, it's recommend to acquire an interdisciplinary approach with the integration of rhetoric and persuasion models and theories.

VI. REFERENCES

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VII. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS BY THE AUTHOR IN THE DISSERTATION'S TOPIC

I. Refereed Journal Articles

A) Refereed Journal Articles (in English)

- Horváth D. et al. (2022). Online only: Future outlooks of post-pandemic education based on student experiences of the virtual university, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY: online first. online elérhetőség: <https://akjournals.com/view/journals/204/aop/article-10.1556-204.2021.00026/article-10.1556-204.2021.00026.xml> (letöltés dátuma: 2022.02.15.)
- Horváth D. et al. (2021). Will interfaces take over the physical workplace in higher education? A pessimistic view of the future Journal of Corporate Real Estate Paper: ahead-of-print. online elérhetőség: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JCRE-10-2020-0052/full/html> (letöltés dátuma: 2022.02.15.)
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B) Refereed Journal Articles (in English)

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- Komár, Z. (2018). A veszélyes másik: A modern, diplomás nő eszményképének megjelenése és elterjedése a magyarországi nőemancipáció történeti perspektívájába ágyazva. *Századvég*, Vol. 23. No. 87., pp. 181-185.

- Komár, Z. (2018). Re-, de- és intergeneráció: A commonikáció, innováció és cooltura vizsgálata hagyományos és rendhagyó modorban. *Kortárs: Irodalmi és kritikai folyóirat*, Vol 62. No. 4., pp. 80-90.
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II. Book Chapters

A) Book Chapters (in English)

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- Horváth, D. & Cosovan, A. & Komár, Z. (2019). #Visual #Communication #Development: Designcommunication Projects Integrated into the Education of Future Economists. In: Benedek, A. & Nyíri, K. (szerk.) *Learning and Technology in Historical Perspective*. Budapest: Budapest University of Technology and Economics, pp. 139-149.
- Komár, Z. (2017). The Art of Teaching: Education in Action. In: András, H. (szerk.) *Kommunikációs terek 2017*. Budapest - Sepsiszentgyörgy: T3 Kiadó, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége (DOSZ), pp. 110-121.
- Komár, Z. (2017). Smart Education: How to grab their attention and make them become „edu-fans”? In: Barkóczi, J. & Uhl, G. & Túry, Gy. (szerk.) *Managing the Arts and Creative Sectors: Open Educational Resources*. Varna: International Management Institute (online paper)

B) Book Chapters (in Hungarian)

- Horváth, D. et al. (2020). Együtt, egymástól távol – távolsági munkakapcsolat, avagy egy tanszék naplóbejegyzései. In: Fokasz, N. & Kiss, Zs. & Vajda, J. (szerk.) *Koronavírus idején*. Budapest: Replika Alapítvány, pp. 39-49.
- Horváth, D. & Komár, Z. (2020). A reklám és a média kölcsönhatása. In: Gálik, M. & Csordás, T. (szerk.) *A média gazdaságtanának kézikönyve*. Budapest: Nemzeti Média- és Hírközlési Hatóság, pp. 275-289.
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III. Conference Presentation and/or Appearance in Book of Proceedings

A) Conference Presentation and/or Appearance in Book of Proceedings (in English)

- Horváth D. & Cosovan A. & Komár Z. (2021). Reflexiók az emberi kapcsolattartás és kapcsolatteremtés jelenéről és jövőjéről – egy participatív videóprodukciós online oktatási projekt tanulságai. In: Mitev, Ariel et al. (szerk.) “*Post-traumatic marketing: virtuality and reality*” – *Proceedings of the EMOK 2021 International Conference*, Budapest: Corvinus University of Budapest, pp. 551-552.
- Bokor, T. & Komár, Z. & Pelle, V. (2018). Powerful Personality = Persuasive Presentation? – Introducing an ICT-based methodology for measuring the effectiveness of presentations In: Beseda, J & Rohlíková, L. (szerk.) *DisCo 2018: Overcoming the Challenges and the Barriers in Open Education, Conference Reader*. Prága: Centre for Higher Education Studies, pp. 30-40.
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B) Conference Presentation and/or Appearance in Book of Proceedings (in Hungarian)

- Horváth D. & Cosovan A. & Komár Z. (2021). Reflexiók az emberi kapcsolattartás és kapcsolatteremtés jelenéről és jövőjéről – egy participatív videóprodukciós online oktatási projekt tanulságai. In: Mitev, Ariel & Csordás, Tamás & Horváth, Dóra & Boros, Kitti (szerk.) *“Post-traumatic marketing: virtuality and reality” – Proceedings of the EMOK 2021 International Conference*, Budapest: Corvinus University of Budapest, pp. 551-552.
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- Komár, Z. & Markos-Kujbus, É. (2017). „I get cranky pants”: Az online szájreklám és netorika vizsgálata egy márkaközösség kommunikációjában In: Bányai, E. & Lányi, B. & Töröcsik, M. (szerk.) *Tükröződés, társtudományok, trendek, fogyasztás: EMOK XXIII. országos konferencia előadásai*. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem, pp. 339-349.
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