

A Rhetorical Analysis of Cosmetic Advertisements: Thinking about Logical Fallacies

Kozmetik Reklamlarına Yönelik Retoriksel Bir Analiz: Mantık Yanlışları Üzerine
Düşünmek

Seçil ASLAN^{ID}
Sema BECERİKLİ^{ID}

Abstract

The rhetoric of advertising, aimed at encouraging consumption, simultaneously seeks to persuade individuals to adopt a particular lifestyle, embrace corresponding values, and think in a certain way. This rhetorical approach primarily relies on exaggerated language that draws on associations, images, and symbols, often incorporating figurative language that creates semantic distortions. Such rhetorical techniques shape ideological connotations within the desired framework. Since advertising constructs pseudo-realities by deviating from truth, it frequently contains informal logical fallacies. This suggests that these fallacies support ideological messaging in advertising. Based on this premise, this study aims to examine the role of logical fallacies in the ideological language and function of advertising by analyzing the rhetoric of cosmetic advertisements. For this purpose, six cosmetic advertisements published in Elle, InStyle, and Vogue magazines between May 2023 and April 2024 were selected as the sample for rhetorical analysis. The study identified numerous informal logical fallacies in relation to the use of persuasive evidence and rhetorical figures in cosmetic advertising. The findings suggest that logical fallacies, with their ability to distort reasoning processes, mislead the mind, and appear valid due to their subtle nature, serve a critical function in supporting the ideological meanings produced through advertising rhetoric.

Keywords: Advertising, Rhetoric, Informal Logic, Logical Fallacies, Cosmetics

- * Corresponding Author, PhD Student, Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Public Relations and Publicity, Ankara, Türkiye, E-mail: keskinsoysecil@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0005-2424-2316
- ** Prof. Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations and Publicity, Ankara, Türkiye, E-mail: becerikli@ankara.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-3253-2365

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Öz

Tüketimi teşvik etmek amacıyla bireyleri aynı zamanda belirli bir yaşam tarzına, buna uygun değerleri benimsemeye, belirli şekilde düşünmeye ikna etmeye yönelik reklam retorikçi çoğunlukla çağrışımlara, imgelere, sembollere dayalı abartılı bir dile dayanmakta, anlamda sapmalar meydana getiren figüratif kullanımlarla ideolojik yan-anlamların istenilen çerçevede üretilmesini sağlamaktadır. Sahte gerçeklikler olarak özetlenebilen söz konusu anlam üretimi gerçeklerden sapmaya dayandığından informal mantık yanlışları içermesi olasılığı yüksek görülmüştür. Bu bağlantı, informal mantık yanlışlarının reklam retorikçindeki ideolojiyi destekleyen niteliğinin değerlendirilmesini mümkün kılmaktadır. Kozmetik reklamlarında iknaya yönelik retorik içindeki mantık yanlışlarının reklamın ideolojik dili ve işlevi kapsamında konumunu ortaya koymayı amaçlayan bu çalışmada örneklem olarak alınan Elle, InStyle ve Vogue dergilerinin Mayıs 2023 – Nisan 2024 tarihleri arasında yayımlanan sayılarında yer alan altı adet kozmetik reklam retoriksel olarak analiz edilmiş, reklamlarda kullanılan ikna kanıtı ve retorik figürlerin kullanımı ile ilişkili çok sayıda informal mantık yanlışları belirlenmiştir. Analiz kapsamında elde edilen bulgularla; mantık yanlışlarının zihni yanıltabilme kapasitesi, fark edilmesi zor yapısıyla doğru gibi görünebilmesi, akıl yürütme sürecinde bozulmalar meydana getirebilmesi gibi içkin nitelikleriyle reklam retorikçi aracılığıyla üretilen anlamların ideolojik işlevini desteklediği değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Reklam, Retorik, İnförmel Mantık, Mantık Yanlışları, Kozmetik

Introduction

Advertisements use ideological language to sustain the dominant economic system and its values by influencing individuals' emotions and thought processes to persuade them to consume. Instead of providing rational, product-based information, advertisements primarily appeal to the mind, senses, and feelings, convincing individuals that beauty, youth, success, happiness, and love can be attained through certain products or services. In this process, various persuasion strategies, wordplay, and figurative language — fundamental elements of rhetorical approaches — are employed to construct false realities. This aspect of advertising rhetoric suggests that numerous informal logical fallacies may exist under the guise of creativity, attention-grabbing techniques, and differentiation. Logical fallacies, which often go unnoticed due to their seemingly rational structure, can distort reasoning processes and mislead perception. When present within the meaning structures of advertisements, these fallacies may contribute to advertising's ideological function. From this perspective, analyzing the meanings produced by advertising rhetoric and evaluating them for informal logical fallacies is of significant importance.

In the literature, it is possible to encounter numerous studies that address advertising as a form of rhetoric (Batı, 2007; Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2006; Evlioğlu Gezer, 2021; Gür, 2025; Keba Ekinci, 2019; Kırklar Barokas, 2011; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Tom & Eves, 1999). In these studies, the relationship between advertising and rhetoric is often examined with a focus on persuasion, explaining the use of rhetorical proofs and figures in advertisements. Additionally, in studies that address the ideological function of advertising rhetoric (Aygün Cengiz, 2009; Barthes, 2017; Dyer, 1982; Papatya & Geniş, 2018; Williamson, 2001), it is generally emphasized that advertisements produce meaning in accordance with their fictional reality through the use of socially and culturally coded language, and that this meaning production can be evaluated within the framework of

dominant ideology. This study aims to examine the role of logical fallacies within the rhetoric of persuasion in cosmetic advertisements, focusing on their position in relation to the ideological language and function of advertising. There are only a limited number of studies in the literature that directly analyze advertisements for logical fallacies (Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2007, 2008; Yılmaztürk, 2012). Büyükkantarcıoğlu (2007, 2008) identified numerous logical fallacies in advertising discourse, arising from insufficient examples, generalizations, emotional appeals, belief-based reasoning, and appealing to false authority. Büyükkantarcıoğlu also states that misleading arguments are frequently used in advertising discourse to persuade consumers, influencing their perceptions and inferences and ultimately shaping their consumption behaviors. Yılmaztürk (2012) identified various logical fallacies in advertisements, such as establishing false or nonexistent causal links, ambiguous statements, selective emphasis on positive aspects, generalizations, and irrelevant similarities in his master's thesis. Based on the premise that conscious consumption can be promoted by distinguishing misleading logical fallacies in advertisements, the study remained within the framework of classical logic.

Although this study aligns with previous studies in terms of subject and purpose, it differs from them in terms of theoretical framework. In prior studies, the relationship between persuasion elements in advertisements and logical fallacies has either not been evaluated theoretically or has been predominantly analyzed within a conceptual framework rooted in logic. A more detailed theoretical analysis of persuasion will enhance the understanding of the relationship between logical fallacies and the persuasive function of advertisements. In this regard, this article primarily examines persuasion in advertisements from a rhetorical perspective. Accordingly, the contribution of persuasion to the ideological function of advertising is evaluated by identifying the logical fallacies that emerge from or are embedded in the meaning produced through rhetorical modes of persuasion and figures. In this context, this study, which focuses on the relationship between advertisement and specific rhetoric and informal logical fallacies, establishes a connection between advertising rhetoric and the field of logic. Thus, this article contributes to the existing literature by addressing a relatively underexplored research area and by adopting an interdisciplinary approach.

The Language of Advertising Rhetoric and Its Ideological Function

Studies in communication research focused on ideology examine the social and cultural effects of mass communication and the role of the media in perpetuating injustices within the social structure (Harms & Kellner, 2011; Yurdakul, 2018).

In these studies, ideology, primarily addressed from a Marxist perspective, is explained through the concept of “false consciousness”. Accordingly, ideology is a tool that ensures the ideas aligned with the interests of the ruling class appear natural and normal throughout society (Fiske, 2003; Kocabay Şener, 2019). Althusser, who bases his views on Marx, sees ideology as a social practice and focuses on its role in maintaining the power of the dominant minority through non-repressive apparatuses. In his theory, ideology is defined not as the actual conditions that determine and control individuals’

existence, but rather as the representation of their imaginary relations to those conditions (Althusser, 2006).

Raymond Williams (1977) explains three fundamental uses of ideology. The first is expressed as beliefs belonging to a specific class/group, while the second refers to deceptive beliefs, false ideas, or false consciousness. The third use, which encompasses both definitions, describes the process by which meaning and ideas are produced. According to this usage, ideology explains the social production of meaning. In this context, secondary meanings derive their semantic value from ideology (Fiske, 2003). Given that communication has a very significant ideological impact as a tool, application, or type of ideology (Kazancı, 2002), this article addresses ideology within the framework of this third explanation, which includes the other two uses.

As a part of the culture industry, advertising reproduces meanings to add value to products/services. In this context, advertisements organize, structure, and direct the meanings of products as signs to facilitate the transfer of meaning between systems. In this way, advertising encompasses a system of production of commodity symbols designed to differentiate the meanings associated with each commodity and increase its exchange value (Goldman, 1992). Advertising, as a form of rhetoric pervasively present in culture, shapes not only the symbolic and ideological meanings of culture but also its characteristic features, values, and overall structure. The use of symbols, norms, values, and ideals in advertisements organizes cultural systems, and the way these systems cognitively and emotionally guide individuals structures cultural life (Aygün Cengiz, 2009). Additionally, advertising reinforces culture by disseminating messages that are shaped by the language, visuals, ideas, and values it draws from culture (Dyer, 1982). The relationship between advertising and cultural structure is linked to ideology. Firstly, the ideological messages of advertising permeate culture through their impact on meaning-making (Kocabay Şener, 2019). Furthermore, regardless of the perspective from which it is evaluated, the concept of ideology, in most of its uses, contains the assumption that symbolic and emblematic applications (often used in advertisements) are transformed in accordance with political interests, through which culture and ideology strategically converge (Papatya & Özdemir, 2015).

Advertising generates fictional meanings dictated by the interests of the dominant ideology or reinforces existing ones, positioning the individual as a consumer-subject. It seeks to persuade individuals that their desires are inherently linked to these meanings, thereby shaping their thinking and encouraging them to adopt specific values. In this regard, advertisements primarily function as producers of meaning structures. They achieve this by attributing human expressions to objects and assigning them symbolic exchange values. Through this process, advertisements transform human language into the language of objects or vice versa, either objectifying people or humanizing objects. From the perspective of meaning transfer, this creates a structure in which commodities and individuals become interchangeable. To achieve this, linguistic structures in advertising discourse are ideologically organized, and rhetoric is strategically applied (Papatya & Geniş, 2018; Williamson, 2001). As a rhetorical form ingrained in the culture of societies, advertisements (Aygün Cengiz, 2009) incorporate elements of ethos, pathos, and logos in various ways, which are the methods of persuasion described in rhetoric.

In advertisements, persuasion is achieved by attributing personal traits to the brand or product to implant the desired image in consumers' minds, a technique that involves ethos. Additionally, pathos is used to evoke emotional responses in the advertisement, triggering individuals' imaginations. In the face of these methods, desires can overpower rational decision-making processes, leading individuals to make contradictory decisions (Bakır & Çelik, 2013; Baudrillard, 2011). In this context, meanings such as beauty, success, status, and attractiveness — often presented in advertisements through irrelevant or incorrect associations with the product/brand — emphasize temporary emotions such as happiness, fulfillment, and pleasure, which are not rational in nature (Çelik & Güdekli, 2014). This points to a connection with logos, one of the methods of persuasion in rhetoric. Logos demonstrates the relationship between discourse, rationality, and language in rhetoric; hence, the difference between rational discourse and emotional appeals stems from this relationship. However, ethos and pathos function together with logos (Yaran, 2020a). From the perspective of rhetoric, when a speaker wishes to avoid conflict, they must resort to strategies that deviate from logos (Meyer, 2009). Considering advertising rhetoric, it can be argued that advertisements that aim to persuade consumers through irrational emotions may exclude or distort the logos of their discourse.

In addition to persuasion, advertisements convey their messages through symbolic language, creating shared meanings among individuals and evoking associations through images. This process allows advertisements to reproduce visual elements in a way that makes them memorable and embeds them into the imagination, forming a rhetoric-based visual structure (Kaplan & Akyol, 2017; Maigret, 2014; Papatya & Özdemir, 2015). Through this approach, ordinary products are often imbued with extraordinary qualities by employing metaphors and other rhetorical figures (Meyer, 2009). The use of rhetorical figures in advertisements conveys connotations rooted in sociocultural values, thereby shifting the focus away from the commercial nature of advertising. The stylistic play within advertising rhetoric functions as the signifier of these connotations (Bati, 2007).

Informal Logical Fallacies and Advertising Rhetoric

Logic is inherently connected to thinking, reasoning, and language, encompassing “thought-based discourse” (Günaydın Asan, 2020; Yaran, 2020a). In rhetoric, one of the three persuasion methods, logos, represents logic itself. Through the principles of *logos*, it is possible to attain accurate, precise, and well-founded knowledge. From this perspective, rhetoric is not merely ordinary speech but rather discourse grounded in reasoning, enabling the establishment of sound causal connections, free from contradictions, and possessing epistemic value, particularly through *logos*. Therefore, rhetoric and logic are intrinsically linked (Baba, 2019). Additionally, in practice, logic seeks to enable individuals to persuade one another on the basis of correct knowledge and belief. A crucial aspect of this goal involves protecting individuals from deception by identifying “false reasoning that appears to be true” (Yaran, 2020b).

Informal logic complements formal logic by expanding its scope and placing greater emphasis on reasoning (Kamer, 2014). It is a branch of logic that develops non-formal standards, criteria, and methods for analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and constructing arguments in everyday discourse

(Johnson & Blair, 2002). The innovation brought by informal logic lies in its focus on natural-language arguments, interpersonal and social discourse, and purposeful reasoning, while expressing skepticism about the use of formal logic as a tool for analyzing and evaluating natural-language arguments (Hitchcock, 2017).

Rhetoric plays a significant role in adapting arguments to everyday discourse within informal logic. Unlike static approaches that separate arguments from the argumentation process, rhetorical argumentation establishes relationships with the debate situation, incorporating internal and external dynamics. It evaluates arguments by considering intent, objectives, and the audience involved in the process (Tindale, 2019). However, rhetoric — since it focuses on persuasion rather than on seeking truth or knowledge — has also been criticized for potentially leading to false beliefs and incorrect perceptions of the world (Bostancı Uzel, 2022).

The concept of “fallacy” constitutes one of the main research topics of informal logic (Hitchcock, 2017). The term “fallacy”, which refers to logical errors or flawed reasoning in argumentation, is used to describe misleading and deceptive arguments that, despite being incorrect, can persuade, often going unnoticed and convincing the mind of false premises (Emiroğlu, 2022). Unlike formal logical fallacies, which stem from the structure of an argument and render it invalid, informal logical fallacies encompass erroneous reasoning that is “non-formal or not characterizable in formal terms”. Informal logic focuses on the meaning of the argument and emphasizes the role of interpretation in the analysis of evidence (Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2008; Yaran, 2017, 2020a). Therefore, informal logical fallacies, which may arise from misuses of language, incorrect expression of ideas, digressions from the topic, or misrepresentations of reality, cannot be reduced to symbolic formulas like formal logical fallacies. The consequences of informal logical fallacies can lead individuals to poor decisions or unexpected beliefs (Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2008). In informal logic, the significance of fallacies lies in their use as a criterion for evaluating evidence. The presence of a logical fallacy in a given argument suggests that the argument is, at best, weak or fails to meet some of the conditions of credibility (Günaydın Asan, 2020). Informal logical fallacies can occur unintentionally without any specific purpose, but they can also be deliberately employed with the intent to deceive (Yaran, 2020b).

From this perspective, it can be argued that advertising rhetoric, while producing false realities and using them as a means of persuasion, employs an associative, imaginative, and symbolic language that is detached from rationality and focused on emotional imagery. This, in turn, hinders rational and logical thinking, fostering a state of “social irrationality” (Çelik & Güdekli, 2014; Harms & Kellner, 2011). However, when Aristotle reconstructed rhetoric in response to the sophists’ deceptive use of it, he criticized its misleading aspects. Instead, he positioned rhetoric as a tool grounded in logic to attain sound knowledge (Baba, 2019). While the goal of rhetoric is persuasion, Aristotle emphasized that achieving this goal requires adherence to the three modes of persuasion (Baba, 2018). When rhetoric is firmly based on *logos* (logic), alongside the other two modes of persuasion, it gains a solid evidential foundation. However, as rhetoric moves away from *logos*, the likelihood of logical fallacies increases. Even without *logos*, rhetoric can persist, but it risks becoming the kind Plato criticized — one defined as an art of deception (Baba, 2019). In this context, it can be suggested that advertising

rhetoric, by employing various techniques to divert individuals from logical thinking, contributes to the emergence of logical fallacies in advertisements.

In summary, the connotative signifiers that are culturally coded are referred to as “connotators” (Barthes, 1993) take a rhetorical form, which in advertising is described as the “rhetoric of advertising” (Kükrer, 2010). The domain signified by these connotative signifiers, or rhetoric, is the domain of ideology. Within this context, it is suggested that advertising rhetoric serves as the “signifying face of ideology” (Barthes, 2017), can lead to or contain logical fallacies. Since advertisements imitate reality (Tuncer, 2021), they may contribute to the misleading nature of logical fallacies, making them appear true (Yaran, 2020b). Therefore, it can be argued that the rhetorical elements present in advertising rhetoric may also reduce the visibility of logical fallacies. This claim is further supported by the view that informal logical fallacies may not always be easily identified due to rhetorical structures and strategies (Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2008).

Method

The population of this study comprises cosmetic product advertisements published in magazines in Türkiye between May 2023 and April 2024. The advertisements to be analyzed were selected from this population using purposive sampling.

The main criterion for selecting the advertisements is that, in the use of rhetorical figures, they include those figures that are considered to produce new meanings by causing deviations and changes in meaning — rather than figures related to order (especially those based on word repetition, such as rhyme, harmony, alliteration, anaphora, parallelism, anadiplosis) in the construction of the elements (Keba Ekinci, 2019).

In this regard, for analysis purposes, six cosmetic advertisements were selected from Elle, InStyle, and Vogue magazines published between May 2023 and April 2024. These ads were chosen from popular women’s/fashion magazines in Türkiye — taking into account the possibilities of accessing past issues and online issues — because they exhibit a frequent occurrence pattern of rhetorical elements and informal logical fallacies.

This qualitative study employs literature review and rhetorical analysis as its primary methods. Rhetoric, broadly defined as the art of speaking and more narrowly as a system of thought and language, serves as a discipline that can be applied both in the production and analysis of texts (Bahçecioğlu, 2021). Rhetoric, which is understood as the structuring of visual, auditory, or written language in the context of persuasion, is considered an analytical method in the field of communication, aiming to reveal both explicit and implicit meanings in different forms of communication (Coşkun & Köse, 2018). Additionally, rhetoric is associated with argumentation (providing evidence, reasoning, and justification) due to its objective of “uncovering the truth” (Bahçecioğlu, 2021).

Since the primary goal of argumentation in everyday life is persuasion, the ways in which evidence relates to individuals in terms of meaning and usage; hold particular importance. In this context, rhetoric is also used as an evaluative method in the field of logic. This approach primarily

focuses on Aristotle's three modes of persuasion in rhetoric — *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* (Yaran, 2020a). Logical fallacies, especially in informal logic, are considered significant in the evaluation and critique of evidence. They serve as one of the criteria used to determine the quality of argumentation, either in formal or content-based assessments (Yaran, 2020a).

Within this framework, the selected advertisements were first analyzed based on Aristotle's three modes of persuasion in rhetoric to determine the general orientation of persuasive messages in the ads. Following this, rhetorical figures were examined to identify elements aimed at persuasion. For the analysis of rhetorical figures encountered in the advertisements, *Reklam ve Retorik (Advertising and Rhetoric)* book by Kırlar Barokas (2011) was used as a reference, as it provides a comprehensive list of rhetorical figures encompassing both verbal and visual elements.

In the next step, a direct search for previously defined informal logical fallacies was conducted within the identified rhetorical structures and the meanings they generated. For the classification of informal fallacies, the study synthesized the fallacies listed in *Eleştirel Düşünme (Critical Thinking)* by Aydın and Muratoğlu Pehlivan (2019) and those presented in *Safsata Kılavuzu (Fallacy Guide)* by Alev Alatlı (2001), applying them to the selected advertisements in the sample.

This study aims to analyze the linguistic and visual structures used in persuasive messages within cosmetic advertisements in a rhetorical context, examine the meanings that emerge in terms of logical fallacies, and assess the ideological function of advertisements as potentially misleading tools. To achieve this, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the rhetorical persuasion proofs and figurative uses in cosmetic advertisements?

RQ2: Which informal logical fallacies are embedded within the rhetorical persuasion proofs and figurative elements in cosmetic advertisements?

RQ3: What is the relationship between these informal logical fallacies and the ideological function of advertisements?

The primary limitation of the study is its focus on magazine advertisements as a media format and, more specifically, on cosmetic product advertisements within this medium. Additionally, the classification of logical fallacies is confined to the informal logic framework, which constitutes another limitation of the study. This study, conducted using a qualitative method, focuses on advertisements in Türkiye and therefore cannot be generalized to advertisements from all countries. Additionally, since the study analyzes six advertisements as examples, it does not aim to generalize its findings to all cosmetic advertisements or all time periods. Furthermore, as it includes researcher evaluation, it is possible for similar studies conducted by different researchers to yield different findings.

Findings and Analysis

Figure 1

Bergüzar Korel – Yves Rocher Advertisement (Elle)



Table 1

Bergüzar Korel – Yves Rocher Advertisement

Prominent rhetorical persuasion methods	Rhetorical figure(s)	Logical fallacies related to advertising rhetoric
Ethos	Metonymy ¹	Appeal to nature ²
Logos		Appeal to authority ³
		Cherry-picking ⁴
		Burden of proof/Appeal to ignorance ⁵

In this advertisement; the inclusion of ingredients such as niacinamide, hyaluronic acid, lilac bud stem cells, shea butter, and vitamin E — presented as part of the product — indicates a rhetoric primarily based on *logos*. The use of these ingredients, which represent parts or characteristics of a whole, along with the visual of lilac bud stem cells, evokes the naturalness of the entire product,

- 1 Metonymy, which refers to the representation of something by one of its parts or characteristics, enables the creation of new meaning through a real connection (Bıçakcı, 2012).
- 2 In this logic fallacy, the justification for something being harmful or beneficial is not based on knowledge and experience but rather on whether it is seen in nature or considered natural (Uyar, 2022).
- 3 This type of faulty reasoning refers to defending the validity of an idea solely based on what an authority figure says, without any other supporting evidence. In some cases, the authority in question may not be an expert on the topic but rather an expert in a different field (Aydın & Muratoğlu Pehlivan, 2019).
- 4 In this type of faulty reasoning, while defending the truth and validity of a claim, supporting elements are emphasized, whereas contradicting or refuting ones are ignored (Aydın & Muratoğlu Pehlivan, 2019).
- 5 In this type of faulty reasoning, when there are situations with ambiguous questions, the burden of proof is placed on the opposing side (Alpay, 2022).

Table 2*Melisa Sözen-Caudalie Advertisement*

Prominent rhetorical persuasion methods	Rhetorical figure(s)	Logical fallacies related to advertising rhetoric
Ethos	Metonymy	Cherry-picking
Logos	Synecdoche ⁶	The law of small numbers ⁷
		Burden of proof/Appeal to ignorance, Post hoc (Prior logical fallacy) ⁸
		Confusing correlation with causality ⁹
		Appeal to authority

The inclusion of ingredients like vegan collagen and retinol in the advertisement, along with the collaboration with Harvard University and the patent obtained as a result of this collaboration, statistical expressions related to the results, and before-and-after images, as well as the tests mentioned in the footnote, suggest that the logos persuasive method is employed in the advertisement's rhetoric with an appearance of scientific credibility. However, upon closer examination of these elements, it can be said that the logos has been distorted.

The phrase "Vegan Collagen 1+ Patent" serves as a metonym for the scientific nature of the entire product's composition. Emphasizing these expressions while overlooking the other ingredients of the product leads to the Cherry-Picking Fallacy. The phrase "Olağanüstü sonuçlar" ("extraordinary results") can essentially be regarded as an expression that acknowledges the possibility of a limited level of expected impact. The meaning produced here is that the product formula is strong enough to dismantle this perception. In addition, the claim of "extraordinary results", presented as a firming and tightening effect with a 98% rate, can also be seen as a Law of Small Numbers fallacy because, upon checking the footnote that the statement directs to, it reveals that the 98% is the satisfaction rate based on 42 people. However, since the advertisement does not provide information about the sampling method, the population represented by the sample, or the ratios between them, and given that it makes a general claim, the 42 participants constitute a small sample. In this regard, the advertisement rhetoric contains the Law of Small Numbers Fallacy.

The before-and-after visuals, focusing on the nasolabial fold, are used as a synecdoche to represent the skin that is claimed to be firmed and tightened. According to the footnote, the images are unretouched consumer photos showing the result after 56 days of using the product. The reduction in the prominence of the line is attributed to the product, without considering factors such as water intake, sleep, nutrition, and exercise (Karaca, 2021), which can also affect the skin. By basing the argument solely on the chronology of the product use and the reduction in the line's appearance,

6 Synecdoche, a subcategory of metonymy, refers to the use of a part to represent the whole or the whole to represent a part (Berger, 2016).

7 This is a type of fallacious reasoning based on reaching statistical conclusions and making generalizations from a small number of examples to support a claim (Aydın & Muratoğlu Pehlivan, 2019).

8 Post Hoc arises from establishing a causal relationship between two events that occur sequentially based solely on their order of occurrence, without any data, evidence, or reasoning (Uyar, 2022).

9 It is the fallacious reasoning of concluding a causal relationship between two variables when the only available data is correlation, and there is no data indicating a cause-and-effect relationship (Aydın & Muratoğlu Pehlivan, 2019).

the Post Hoc logical fallacy is created. If there is a statistically significant correlation between the product's use and the reduction of the line's appearance, but other factors influencing the process are excluded from the analysis, a causal relationship cannot be established between the two events. In this context, the advertisement's rhetoric, using a synecdochic before-and-after representation to establish a causal connection, falls into the logical fallacy of Confusing Correlation with Causality.

Additionally, the technical terms in the advertising rhetoric, along with the names of tests mentioned in the footnotes but without explanations, create a rhetoric based on logos that gives the impression of scientific credibility to individuals unfamiliar with the topic. This ambiguous situation leaves the responsibility of providing evidence to these individuals. In this case, the logical fallacy of Burden of Proof/Appeal to Ignorance occurs.

Melisa Sözen is positioned as a "reflective ethos" in the advertisement (Meyer, 2009). The connection established between the anti-aging product and the actor's younger appearance in comparison to her age enhances the ethos of the product by making Sözen a metonym for youthful appearance. However, despite Sözen being recognized in the field of acting rather than the cosmetics industry, and the lack of evidence suggesting that she is a user of the product, her presentation in the ethos role leads to a logical fallacy of Appeal to Authority in the advertisement's rhetoric.

Figure 3

Clinique Mascara Advertisement (Vogue)



Table 3*Clinique Mascara Advertisement (Vogue)*

Prominent rhetorical persuasion methods	Rhetorical figure(s)	Logical fallacies related to advertising rhetoric
Pathos Logos	Metaphor ¹⁰ Exaggeration ¹¹	Prejudiced language ¹² Irrelevant reason ¹³ The law of small numbers

The phrase “ses getiren cesur bakışlar” (“bold looks that make a statement”) in the advertisement actually emphasizes the product’s effect on others. The meaning here is that applying the product will give the eyelashes a striking, captivating effect on others. In addition, with the phrase “*bold looks that make a statement*”, a connection is established between looks and lashes through the words “*make a statement*” and “*bold*” and the image of the product applied to the lashes. This rhetoric relies on a metaphorical usage that transfers the meaning of “*providing boldness*” to the product.

First and foremost, courage is an emotion that can emerge in situations involving challenges. In the context of the advertisement, there is no information about what kind of challenge is being referred to. Therefore, even if it is possible for the ability to cope with challenges to be reflected through one’s looks, there is no logical connection that can be reasonably established between this and the lashes appearing darker or more voluminous. In this regard, the advertisement’s rhetoric contains the logical fallacy of Irrelevant Reason. This irrelevance also allows the use of emotionally charged expressions such as “*make a statement*” and “*boldness*”, which serve a pathos function, to be evaluated as an example of the rhetorical device of exaggeration. This exaggerated use of meaning and emotion, again due to its irrelevance, gives rise to the Prejudiced Language Fallacy.

In addition, the text “ANINDA %230 DAHA HACİMLİ KİRPİKLER” (“*INSTANTLY 230% MORE VOLUME IN LASHES*”) includes the explanation “*clinical test conducted with 31 participants*”. These proportional and numerical statements lend weight to the advertisement’s *logos*. However, the 31 participants constitute a small sample. In this respect, the distortion of *logos* in this case results in the Law of Small Numbers Fallacy.

10 Metaphor refers to comparisons that aim to transfer meaning by using words beyond their literal meanings (Bıçakçı, 2012). The similarity in a metaphor does not actually exist; rather, meaning is constructed through the relationship established between the compared elements (Yengin, 2012).

11 Exaggeration is defined as an overstatement when expressing the positivity or negativity of a situation, action, or quality (Saraç, 2019).

12 The Prejudiced Language fallacy, which appeals to emotions, involves the use of emotionally charged and intense terms to persuade an audience to accept a particular idea (Alatlı, 2001).

13 This type of faulty reasoning refers to presenting arguments that may be independently valid but are either irrelevant to the subject of discussion or insufficient to support the claim being defended (Aydn & Muratoğlu Pehlivan, 2019).

Figure 4*Zendaya-Lancome Advertisement (Vogue)***Table 4***Zendaya-Lancome Advertisement*

Prominent rhetorical persuasion methods	Rhetorical figure(s)	Logical fallacies related to advertising rhetoric
Pathos	Ellipsis ¹⁴	False analogy ¹⁵
Ethos	Metaphor	Appeal to authority

In the advertisement, the ellipsis rhetorical figure is used to omit one wing of the Winged Victory of Samothrace statue (Louvre Museum), which in reality has both wings. However, Zendaya is introduced into the process of mentally completing the statue. Part of Zendaya's outfit is shaped into a wing, while another part conceals the areas of her body corresponding to the statue's visible sections. In this way, the statue is completed seamlessly. In this regard, the perceptual process of moving from a part to the whole — a metonymic process — is utilized. However, the whole is constructed through the complementary function of a different image. Thus, while creating a strong perceptual connection between the two images, the visual rhetoric employs a metaphor by combining them to establish a similarity. Through this metaphorical figure, the artwork's values are transferred to Zendaya, who represents the brand's "reflective ethos" (Meyer, 2009). The text "BEAUTY IS A

14 Ellipsis can be said that the removal of certain elements from the advertisement design without distorting the meaning constitutes the use of ellipsis (Kırlar Barokas, 2011).

15 False Analogy involves establishing a similarity between two elements and then making an incorrect inference that the characteristics of the first element must also apply to the second based on this similarity (Alatlı, 2001).

LIVING ART” in the advertisement produces a meaning that emphasizes the importance of beauty as a quality that has an awe-inspiring effect on human life, similar to art. The text also supports this metaphor by pointing to Zendaya as the living art, in other words, the brand’s ethos associated with beauty. This conveys the message that individuals who use the brand’s products can become “a superior and valuable masterpiece like Zendaya”. In this sense, the metaphor also generates meaning that appeals to *pathos*. However, from the perspective of informal logic, the reasoning leading to this conclusion is flawed.

The metaphor based on comparison contains the False Analogy because it implies that the qualities of artistic works — which are expressions of creativity, emotions, and ideas — should also be found in the results achieved with cosmetic products. Additionally, in the context of the cosmetics industry, Zendaya, as a singer and actor, is used as an incorrect authority figure. In this regard, the logical fallacy of Appeal to Authority occurs.

Figure 5

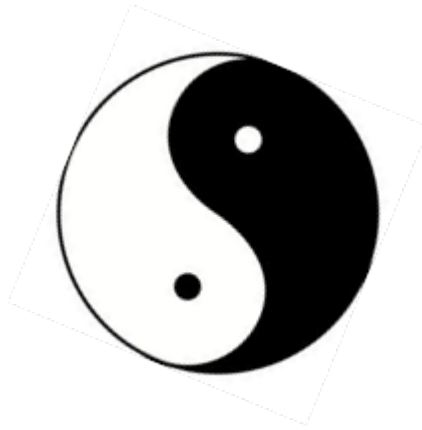
New Well Advertisement (Vogue)



Table 5*New Well Advertisement*

Prominent rhetorical persuasion methods	Rhetorical figure(s)	Logical fallacies related to advertising rhetoric
Ethos	Metaphor Counter-argument ¹⁶	Appeal to the majority ¹⁷ False analogy

In the advertisement, the white shape, presumably made of cream, is used as a metaphor for the white side of the Yin-Yang symbol, particularly with its ‘S’ shape and the point at the top.

Figure 6*Yin-Yang Symbol*

The supporting element for this interpretation is the text “#iyihissedincegüzel” (“#feelinggoodisbeautiful”). Although the Yin-Yang philosophy (Bidav, 2020) is a broad concept beyond the scope of this study; it is most commonly understood as “the good within the bad and the bad within the good” (İnci Kuzu et al., 2017). With the support of the phrase “#feelinggoodisbeautiful”, the white shape in the advertisement, representing the cream, becomes a metaphor for the “goodness” of the Yin-Yang symbol. However, Yang is associated with masculinity, heat, fire, odd numbers, and even the sun—an element that the advertised product claims to protect against (Cartwright, 2018). Thus, reducing this broad philosophy to its most well-known “goodness” meaning through metaphor results in the Appeal to the Majority Fallacy.

This metaphor, at the perceptual level, also implies a part-whole relationship by pointing to the black Yin side of the symbol. According to the advertisement’s rhetoric, if the cream is associated with goodness, then, based on the contrast inherent in the Yin-Yang symbol, the black side must represent evil. Given that the cream is advertised as an “Anti-Spot” product, the spot within this

¹⁶ Counter-Argument is defined as the use of contrasts or the bringing together of opposing ideas (Berger, 2016).

¹⁷ This type of faulty reasoning refers to appealing to the opinions of the majority rather than proving or disproving an idea with evidence (Uyar, 2022).

rhetorical structure is equated with evil. In this sense, emphasizing the white side of the Yin-Yang symbol, which is commonly associated with goodness, is meaningful, as there should be no place for spots in the advertisement in line with the product's function. In this case, since the unseen “evil” still exists as an implicit meaning, it can be argued that the rhetorical figure of counter-argument is used in the advertisement. However, because this rhetorical structure equates the cream with goodness and the spot with evil, it leads to the logical fallacy of False Analogy.

Figure 7

M.A.C Advertisement (Elle)

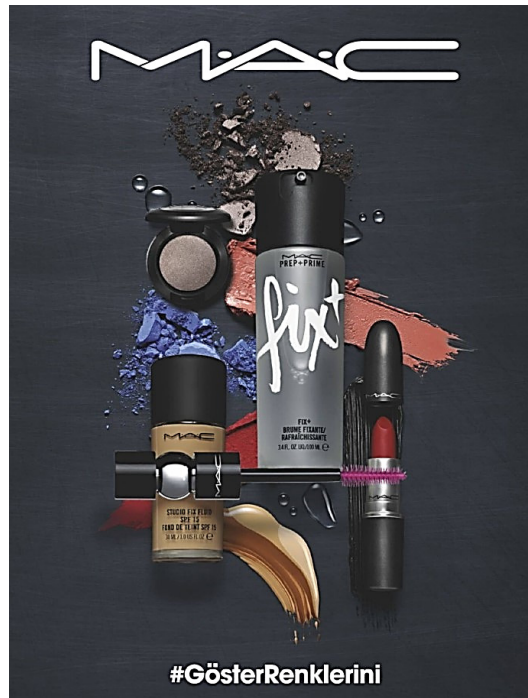


Table 6

M.A.C Advertisement

Prominent rhetorical methods	persuasion	Rhetorical figure(s)	Logical fallacies related to advertising rhetoric
Pathos		Metaphor	False analogy

The advertisement features colors and shapes that appear to be created using the products. By positioning the products over this background, a connection is established through integration. This visual rhetoric creates a holistic appearance, which, with its black background as the base layer, evokes associations with works produced in the approach of abstract painting. In abstract art, which rejects societal and knowledge-based approaches, compositions consist of colors, volumes, lines, and

forms (Atalay, 2023). Since the advertisement poster shares similarities in composition, shape, and color usage with abstract painting, an example of an artwork is provided in Figure 8. In this sense, the visual rhetoric in the advertisement can be seen as a metaphor referring to art.

Figure 8

Meeting Point (Treffpunkt), (Kandinsky, 1928)



Through this metaphorical usage, artistic qualities are attributed to the product, suggesting that using the product is an act of artistic value. Consequently, individuals applying these products will appear like works of art, thereby enhancing the pathos element. The phrase “GösterRenklerini” (Show Your Colors) at the bottom of the advertisement functions as a verbal metaphor, as it can be interpreted as “Show the qualities you add to yourself (color — as a metaphorical meaning)” (Türk Dil Kurumu), reinforcing this meaning.

However, the relationship between applying makeup and artistic value does not provide a logically sound basis for meaning transfer. Elements such as originality, uniqueness, style, form, subject matter, and interpretation are defining aspects of art and artistic works (Uğurlu, 2008). In this regard, attributing an artistic quality to the products merely due to the implied similarity of paint/painting leads to a False Analogy Fallacy, which assumes that because two things share one characteristic, they must share others as well.

Discussion and Conclusion

As emphasized by most studies in the literature (Bati, 2007; Keba Ekinci, 2019; Kırlar Barokas, 2011; Evlioğlu Gezer, 2021; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Gür, 2025; Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2006; Tom & Eves, 1999), the foundation of the relationship between advertising and rhetoric is formed by the element of persuasion. However, rhetoric has evolved to encompass not only persuasion but also influence and the ability to provoke passion. It can be found in literature, politics, legal discourse, natural language, implicit meaning, thought, and figurative expression, among others. This broad field encompasses legal argumentation and advertising rhetoric, as well as ideologically driven principles of argumentation and various forms of reasoning (Meyer, 2009).

Advertising rhetoric both produces and shapes connotations through dominant values. In doing so, it constructs the relationship between the created meanings and the product using irrelevant associations, false analogies, nonexistent connections, exaggerations, and multiple meanings. In this regard, given that advertisements are designed to perpetuate consumption in line with the interests of dominant ideologies, the presence of informal logical fallacies is highly probable. Due to the proximity of advertisements to everyday language, this study, which remains within the framework of informal logic, has conducted an analysis that, in its findings, supports this perspective.

In response to the first research question — “What are the rhetorical persuasion proofs and figurative uses in cosmetic advertisements?” — it has been observed that the sampled cosmetic advertisements predominantly employ one or two of the rhetorical persuasion methods.

In the examined advertisements, the predominance of ethos is primarily attributed to the use of celebrities. The celebrities featured in the advertisements often serve as embodiments of the product's ethos, conveying the product's image to consumers and assuming the authority of that ethos. This implies that consumers can resemble the celebrity by using the product. In this context, the analyzed advertisements reveal that celebrities are often employed metonymically, symbolizing broader meanings and values through their appearance. In the first advertisement, with strong emphasis on ethos, the product was associated with naturalness. This was achieved through both linguistic and visual elements, incorporating imagery of nature and botanical elements. These elements, used as metonymy, invoked an association with nature as a whole, reinforcing the perception that the product was natural or part of nature itself. The analysis also indicated that ethos was reinforced through the attribution of artistic qualities to the product. In these advertisements, metaphors were used to establish a superficial association between the product and art, thereby transferring artistic value to the product. This rhetorical strategy implies that using the product reflects a refined sense of aesthetics and taste, positioning it as a tool for achieving artistic value. Additionally, the counter-argument rhetorical figure was identified, subtly highlighting the negativity of an opposing concept to enhance the product's positive attributes. This figure used contrasts to construct metaphors that reinforced the product's desirability.

In advertisements where pathos was predominant, emotions were primarily appealed to through the concept of beauty. In the analyzed advertisements, beauty and attractiveness were often emphasized through the metonymic representation of celebrities, who were positioned as symbols of

ethos. Additionally, metaphors were used to transfer the meanings of beauty and attractiveness onto the product itself. Beyond beauty, other pathos-driven themes were identified, often relying on widely recognized knowledge through metaphorical usage or using a well-known element in a metonymic way. This was evident in the creation of meanings related to youthful appearance, goodness, and courage. Furthermore, the metaphorical attribution of artistic meaning and value to the product was also considered an appeal to pathos. This rhetorical strategy engages emotions by associating the product with higher aesthetic and cultural values that consumers admire. Additionally, exaggeration was employed by using excessively meaningful words out of context, exaggerating the product's impact. Another rhetorical figure observed was counter-argument, which constructs meaning through contrasts—for example, the good vs. bad opposition. In this technique, only positive expressions directly related to the product were explicitly used, while potential counterarguments were subtly negated or given a negative connotation, thereby reinforcing the product's desirability.

Overall, the analysis reveals that ethos and pathos can generate meaning independently or collaboratively to produce a single meaning. On the other hand, logos alone is not the dominant persuasive method in any of the analyzed advertisements. Instead, it is used either to create an additional meaning or to justify another persuasive strategy. In this regard, the study suggests that logos is generally not employed as an independent persuasive method in cosmetic advertisements; when used alongside other strategies, it tends to be distorted. This distortion can lead to a departure from logical reasoning.

In the analysis, it was observed that some aspects within the advertisements could be categorized under logos. Specifically, certain product ingredients were used metonymically to evoke associations with scientific credibility or natural qualities. Additionally, technical terms that were likely unfamiliar to the general audience were used, enhancing the logos appeal by lending an air of expertise or authority to the advertisement. Moreover, the use of proportional and statistical expressions was noted, but these expressions also laid the groundwork for the rhetorical figure of exaggeration. Consequently, the advertisement conveyed the idea that the product has scientific value, is natural, and that data and statistics validate its function. Furthermore, in an advertisement that prominently used logos, the before-and-after visuals were accompanied by a synecdoche. By focusing on a small area of the skin, the ad gave the impression that using the product would lead to noticeable changes in the individual's appearance. This rhetorical device produced the meaning that product usage would result in a visible transformation.

In addition, the analyzed advertisements predominantly used the rhetorical figures of metaphor and metonymy, and the most common logical fallacies associated with this were False Analogy and Appeal to Authority.

The second research question of the study is: "Which informal logical fallacies are present in the rhetorical persuasive evidence and figurative uses in cosmetic advertisements?"

In the analysis of the advertisements, it was observed that in ethos-oriented advertisements, the celebrities featured were portrayed as metonyms symbolizing specific values or groups, or their values were transferred through metaphors, such as those related to artistic traits. In these cases,

meaning transfer occurred between the product and these celebrities. However, it was noted that these celebrities did not have the authority in either the cosmetic sector or regarding the messages conveyed in the advertisement. This led to the Appeal to Authority logical fallacy. Additionally, the advertising rhetoric, which evoked nature through metonymy by presenting specific herbal or natural ingredients, was found to harbor several logical fallacies. The promotion of these ingredients without supporting data led to the Appeal to Nature and Appeal to Ignorance fallacies, as no verifiable information about these ingredients was provided. Moreover, in some ads, a similarity was established based on a single element, and an attempt was made to identify that element in full, including all its attributes. This resulted in the False Analogy fallacy. In advertisements that linked the product and its use to art, the connections were based on irrelevant grounds or artificial similarities, attributing general artistic qualities to the product or its use. This type of meaning generation involved the logical fallacies of Irrelevant Reasoning and False Analogy. Furthermore, the metaphors used in the examined advertisements employed well-known meanings. However, these meanings were used in ways unrelated to the topic at hand within the advertising rhetoric. The use of invalid causal links, false similarities, and illogical connections led to the Appeal to the Majority.

In the analyzed advertisements, pathos was emphasized by evoking emotions, primarily through metaphors that conveyed meaning about the product or its use. However, these attributions of meaning were often based on irrelevant connections or artificial similarities, leading to the Irrelevant Reasoning Fallacy and the False Analogy Fallacy. Additionally, the rhetorical figure of exaggeration was frequently employed, in which certain elements were given excessive or unrelated meanings to heighten emotional appeal. This resulted in the Prejudicial Language Fallacy, as the wording was loaded with biased implications meant to influence perception without providing substantive evidence.

In advertisements that aim to attribute a scientific quality to the product, it was observed that logos elements were used through metonymy, invoking a sense of scientific credibility. However, certain ingredients in the product, along with statistical expressions, were selectively highlighted while other relevant details were omitted. Since it is impossible to determine whether the omitted parts contradict the implied scientific nature or any other claim in the advertisement, this results in the Cherry-Picking Fallacy. Additionally, advertisements often included specialized terminology related to product ingredients, tests, or functions—terms that consumers are unlikely to be familiar with. These terms were not explained, leaving consumers to interpret their meanings themselves. This led to the Appeal to Ignorance Fallacy, as consumers were left to assume the product's scientific claims were valid without any actual proof. Furthermore, numerical or statistical expressions categorized under logos were found to contain logical fallacies when evaluated alongside the small-font disclaimers in the background. The lack of information on sample sizes, sample groups, and measurement criteria allowed the advertisement to imply that the results applied to a broad audience, even though the data might not support such a generalization. This led to the Law of Small Numbers Fallacy. The before-and-after images used in these advertisements, a synecdoche, were also classified under logos. However, the claimed transformation was only based on chronology, ignoring other potential influencing factors and failing to validate the causality of the product's effects. Since the

advertisements assumed a causal relationship based solely on temporal order, they resulted in both the Post Hoc Fallacy and the Confusing Correlation with Causation Fallacy. Ultimately, the identified logical fallacies indicate that the logos strategy was distorted in these advertisements due to selective representation and misleading rhetoric.

The third research question is: “What is the relationship between these informal logical fallacies and the ideological function of advertising?”

Logical fallacies can lead the mind to incorrect conclusions and faulty reasoning that may have high persuasive power (Alpay, 2022). Thus, it can be stated that the logical fallacies that emerge during the process of constructing meaning in advertisements through rhetorical elements reveal how advertising rhetoric, by leveraging the power of images, influences cognitive processes, maintains an irrational structure, and directs thinking and value judgments, potentially misleading individuals’ reasoning.

The analysis of logical fallacies identified in the examined advertising rhetoric reveals their role in various aspects: positioning individuals as objects of desire, legitimizing consumption by naturalizing the product, shifting the focus from acquiring information about the product to captivating images and symbolically conveyed fantasies such as enchanting beauty and rejuvenation. Even when a strategy of providing information about the product’s functions is employed, real data is often relegated to the background or concealed, distorting reality and creating false truths. Additionally, advertising seeks to instill specific lifestyles and perspectives associated with the product. In this context, the subtle nature of logical fallacies can distort individuals’ reasoning processes, leading them to be persuaded. Consequently, these fallacies contribute to manipulating individuals in line with the values that sustain the dominant system, ultimately reinforcing advertising’s ideological function. Ultimately, the presence of logical fallacies in advertising, when unnoticed, serves the dominant ideology. However, when recognized, it opens the way for the ideological dimension of advertising discourse to be critically examined.

Unlike the few studies in the literature on logical fallacies in advertisements, this article contributes theoretically to the field by evaluating the relationship between rhetoric and logic in terms of the ideological function of advertising. It is considered pioneering and beneficial for similar studies in the future. This interdisciplinary study, which examines the relationship between advertisement and specific rhetoric and informal logical fallacies, is limited to the cosmetics sector and magazine advertisements. In this respect, analyzing the rhetoric of product advertisements across sectors in various mass media in terms of informal logic fallacies is expected to contribute academically to the field of advertising.

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