

# Persuasive language

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**Persuasive language: rhetorical questions**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper aimed to analyse the usage of rhetorical questions in online advertisements for beauty and cosmetic products intended for women. There were total of 37 advertisements collected from the websites of famous brands, magazines and online shops for the purpose of analysis in this paper. Each advertisement was analysed separately followed by a discussion about some common features and patterns that were noticed through the analysis. It was found that the majority of rhetorical questions were found at the beginning of advertisements, while only few of them were placed towards the end. It was also seen that there are some phrases that frequently appeared in rhetorical questions, such as 'Ready', 'Looking for' or 'Did we mention'. They serve as a way of creating an interaction with the customers and make the advertisements seem more informal and friendly. They are also a valuable tool in attracting and keeping the audience's attention. A great number of questions contained the features of the products and the results that the buyers can expect after using the product. It helps in highlighting the good sides of the products and prompting the customers to remember them.*

**Keywords:** rhetorical questions, advertising, online advertisements, persuasive language

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# 1. Introduction

Advertising is one of the most important industries of the modern society and a powerful tool that can influence consumers' behaviour and prompt economic activity. Effective advertising relies on various creative strategies to capture the public's attention and successfully convey messages. Different persuasive techniques are frequently used among these strategies, especially rhetorical questions, which can often be seen or heard in numerous advertisements. Rhetorical question is the one that "suggests a certain response, where the answer is implicit within the question" (Howard, 1991, p. 398). For this reason, rhetorical questions can be very useful in various fields, such as literature, politics, marketing or journalism and even in daily communication. They are not intended to elicit a response, but rather to make a point that, if it were presented as a simple assertion, it would not be as memorable or convincing (Špago, 2016).

Goldfarb (2014) explains how online advertising is becoming an increasingly significant part of the entire advertising market, as people tend to spend more time on the Internet. The aim of this paper is to analyse the use of rhetorical questions in online commercials by observing the examples of advertisements of cosmetic and beauty products for women. Following a review of background and definitions of rhetorical questions, there will be a total of 37 examples of online advertisements taken from the official websites of popular beauty brands (such as *Maybelline*, *L'Oréal Paris*, *Max Factor*, *MAC Cosmetics*, *Dove*, *Garnier*), famous women's magazines (such as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Glamour*) and online shopping sites (such as *Amazon*, *Sephora*). Finally, there will be a discussion about the analysis of the rhetorical question and a conclusion of the overall paper.

This paper will contribute to the broader understanding of advertising strategies by highlighting the role and types of rhetorical questions. Moreover, this analysis can offer insights not only for advertisers but also for scholars and practitioners interested in various manners of persuasive communication.

## 2. Background and definition of rhetorical questions

Frank (1990) highlights that rhetorical questions have been used historically as a powerful tool for persuasion. In ancient Greece and Rome asking questions without expecting an answer was a method employed by important speakers and teachers to attain their communication goals. It persists as an effective method used even today. Language users these days routinely employ rhetorical questions in casual discussions, on social media, and in a variety of professional settings, such as marketing, politics, journalism, and many other spheres of life (Špago, 2020). Therefore, the widespread use of rhetorical questions in advertising is another area where people found them to be extremely effective. The main reason for this is that rhetorical questions do not strive to get an answer like standard questions, but they rather fulfil other communicative tasks, and they are devised in a manner that makes responses to them appear evident to everyone (Špago, 2020).

Wang (2014) presents rhetorical questions as an indirect use of language. As they are interrogative in their form, rhetorical questions are meant to challenge the readers past behaviours. This way, they can influence the customers through advertisements by presenting something new in order to change or improve their previous behaviours. Making statements through rhetorical questions is realized through the act of asking questions (Wang, 2014).

Motivations of a person who frequently uses rhetorical questions are usually “to imply a message and strengthen or mitigate the degree of a statement he previously made” (Ranganath et al., 2018, p. 17:17). Advertisers also employ rhetorical questions for similar reasons, to present their idea and strengthen the extent to which that idea will influence or attract customers. Ranganath et al. (2018) portrayed rhetorical questions as a persuasive tool that people in politics and marketing can use in order to influence the consumers’ opinion. Although there are numerous definitions of rhetorical questions, this one is the most suitable for the purpose of this paper.

Blankenship & Craig (2006) conducted research to examine how the use of rhetorical questions affected the attitudinal resistance. The results of their study have shown that there is a connection between the persuasiveness of rhetorical questions and the participants’ cognitive reactions, which suggests that “attitudes created with rhetorical questions have properties similar to those of strong attitudes” (Blankenship & Craig, 2006, p. 124). This shows how rhetorical questions can have

quite an impact on people's thoughts and therefore can be very useful when aiming to influence them.

Persuasive language in online advertising aims to draw attention of the reader while maximally taking advantage of linguistic resources through catchwords, emotional words, colloquial expressions or powerful metaphors in order to appeal to the readers (Labrador et al., 2014). Machauf (1990) also explains that persuasion pertains to "the language of imagery and idioms that appeals to the emotions of the addressee" (p. 244). In advertising or political speeches and campaigns, rhetorical questions can be effectively used for creating messages that will get people more interested about products or topics being advertised. Rhetorical questions in advertising might be especially helpful when promoting goods or services that consumers may not find very significant to them. For example, educating people about the dangers of high cholesterol before a person really has it might contribute to society's overall wellbeing. Nevertheless, people who are healthy and not at risk of having problems with cholesterol are likely to consider these messages unimportant. In these situations, the effect of the messages might be strengthened by rhetorical questions (Blankenship & Craig, 2006). This is another example of how much influence rhetorical questions can have in advertisements and how they can increase their persuasiveness.

The message elaboration approach, which implies that questions draw the recipient's attention to message arguments and so increase persuasion when argument quality is good, is the most widely accepted explanation for the persuasive effects of rhetorical questions (Ahluwalia & Burnkrant, 2004). People tend to give more attention to advertisements or messages that use rhetorical questions to enhance the quality of their statements. These kinds of advertisements are also likely to appear more interesting than those that only state information about the products without much involving customers. Additionally, these adverts are probably going to appear to be more engaging than ones that only provide product details with little to no interaction with customers.

At the end of this section, it is also important to point out why studying rhetorical questions and their effectiveness can be valuable. Ranganath et al. (2018) provided a good explanation for this matter:

*Studying the effects of rhetorical questions on different sets of users by social media campaigns will throw interesting insights into the ways in which various social media users respond to persuasive techniques. Identifying rhetorical questions also helps to understand and monitor the*

*behavior of campaigners and has applications in research on user privacy in social media (p. 17:17).*

Although their research focused on rhetorical questions on social media, the same interpretation can be used for the online advertisements, since these two areas are closely intertwined. Understanding how consumers or users are influenced by rhetorical questions and how advertisers employ them to seem more convincing is the aim in both situations.



### 3. Method

The method in this paper consists of an analysis of rhetorical questions in advertisements in order to recognize their function in individual examples or how they can affect consumers' purchasing decisions. Each example will be analysed separately and there will be an overall conclusion based on the results of the analysis.

There are 37 advertisements collected for the purpose of analysis in this paper and they are taken from the websites of the following famous beauty brands: *Maybelline*, *Max Factor*, *MAC Cosmetics*, *Dove*, *L'Oréal Paris*, *Active Luxe Cosmetics*, *Avon*, *Head & Shoulders*, *Niche Beauty Lab*, *Rimmel London*, *Revlon*, *Elf Cosmetics*, *Fenty Beauty* and *Garnier*. Among women, these brands are all highly well-liked and profitable. To succeed and attract customers, they must also make significant advertising investments. As a result, they employ a variety of promotional techniques, including the use of rhetorical questions.

Some of the advertisements were found on the websites of the following women's magazines: *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Glamour*. These are among the most famous women's magazines, and they frequently suggest and promote products for women because they are focused on fashion and beauty trends.

A couple examples are taken from online shopping sites *Amazon* and *Sephora*, which are very popular around the world and deliver their products internationally. Various cosmetic brands have their profiles on *Amazon* and use them for promoting and posting news about their products.

The purpose of this analysis is to recognize how different beauty products for women are advertised and how rhetorical questions can contribute to the persuasion and effectiveness of advertisements.

## 4. Analysis

The primary focus of this analysis will be on commercials for women's skin, hair, body, and makeup products. The examples from 1 to 20 are advertisements found on the brands' official websites, those from 21 to 28 are taken from the women's magazines, and lastly the examples after 28 are obtained from the online shopping sites *Amazon* and *Sephora*.

### EXAMPLE 1

#### *READY TO FIREWORK IT?*

*See how lashes instantly go fully flared with 360 lash-by-lash impact. With Firework, say goodbye to a lash routine – one mascara is all you need for an extraordinary lash transformation.*

This is Maybelline's advertisement for a mascara that gives the lashes an effect of a "firework". By posing the question *Ready to firework it?* advertisers are emphasizing the widening effect that this mascara has on the lashes and eyes. This kind of question also prompts the customers to think of an affirmative response. By putting the word *Ready* in the beginning, Maybelline is trying to invite the customers to buy the product and transform or "firework" their lashes. It also makes the customers feel welcome and encouraged to try the product.

### EXAMPLE 2

#### *READY TO BOUNCE?*

#### *GET THE GLOW PLAY LOOKS*

*Get up and Glow Play every day with our NEW PH-activated, shade-shifting lip balm paired with our mega-viral bouncy blush.*

MAC Cosmetics' campaign which combines lip balms and blushes to provide their customers with "glowing" looks also uses a question at the beginning and it starts with *Ready*. The effect of the question *Ready to bounce?* is similar to the one of *Ready to firework it?* from the previous example. It invites buyers to purchase the combination of a lip balm and a blush in order to uplift the appearance of their faces, which is also implied by the word *bounce*. This word helps to convince the public that they can glow and look fresh every day just by using these products.

### EXAMPLE 3

*Body odor control you can count on*

*Ready for full-body freshness? Our whole-body deos work straight away to deliver all-day odor protection and help absorb unwanted moisture.*

This is another example of using the word *Ready* in the beginning of a question. Dove's advertisement for their whole-body deodorants influences the customers by asking *Ready for full-body freshness?* which implies that they are only a step away from *full-body freshness* and that is buying the product. The inviting and welcoming effect of *Ready* is also present here, as in two previous examples.

### EXAMPLE 4

*L'Oréal Paris offers lipstick in every format: liquids, traditional +bullets, and melty balms for maximum color impact. With shade offerings from bold reds to barely-there nudes, and everything else in between, we invite you to find the perfect lipstick shade and +format ++finish for you. What makes you feel WORTH IT?*

L'Oréal Paris advertisement for the range of their lipsticks sends a very strong and influential message by posing the question *What makes you feel WORTH IT?* This question proposes the sense of power and satisfaction that women often feel when they are wearing makeup, and here it is especially focused on lipsticks. It is implied that women should wear lipsticks that make them feel valuable and strong. The effect is enhanced by using capitalized letters when writing the words *WORTH IT*.

### EXAMPLE 5

*Our Revitalift skin care line of creams, treatments, moisturizers, pads and serums help fight the key signs of aging. Repair and replenish with Revitalift eye cream, gently exfoliate with the Revitalift daily cleanser, or add volume to undereye hollows with Revitalift Volume Filler. With the Revitalift skincare line you can add an anti aging benefit to any part of your skincare routine. Still looking for your Beautiful Skin Routine?*

This example shows the L'Oréal Paris campaign for their special brand of beauty products called Revitalift. After the naming of some of products from the brand, the advertisement ends with a question *Still looking for your Beautiful Skin Routine?*. It sways the users to stop looking anywhere else and try the Revitalift products. There is also an emphasis on *Beautiful Skin* in this question which guides the users to the conclusion that they should use these products in order to achieve

the beautiful looking skin. The phrase *Still looking for* also gives a sense of encouragement for users to buy and try the products as soon as possible.

#### EXAMPLE 6

*Looking for extra coverage? Say goodbye to dark circles, blemishes and pigmentation with a skin-perfecting concealer.*

Max Factor's promotion of their line of concealers starts with a question *Looking for extra coverage?* which has the identical implication as the question *Still looking for your Beautiful Skin Routine?* from an earlier advertisement. It conveys the message to the customers that they should look no further for concealers because Max Factor's concealer can provide all the *extra coverage* and skin-perfecting effect they need. It is also important to notice that by asking *Looking for*, advertisers are attempting to persuade the customers that they know exactly what they need and offer it to them.

#### EXAMPLE 7

##### *MIRACLE TOUCH CREAMY BLUSH*

*The answer to a fresh-faced, healthy glow? Miracle Touch Creamy Blush. The finishing touch in your go-to base routine, dot and blend this complexion-boosting blusher cream onto apples of cheeks for instant, natural-looking radiance. Dull skin is no match for this lustrous, sheer cream blush.*

This is Max Factor's advert for the Miracle Touch Creamy Blush which gives the skin a healthy glow and natural radiance. By asking for the answer *to a fresh-faced, healthy glow* the advertisers are making it obvious that it is their Miracle Blush. In the question itself, the main benefits of the product, fresh face and healthy glow, are already pointed out. This leads the customers to a quick conclusion that if they want to achieve those benefits, they should just purchase the product.

#### EXAMPLE 8

*Do you want longer, thicker, and stronger eyelashes in just a few weeks?*

*If you are among those who want to grow natural eyelashes and try different mascaras again and again in the hope of creating strong, thick and long eyelashes, we recommend the innovative Active Luxe Lash serum for natural eyelash growth.*

The Active Luxe Cosmetics advertisement for a lash serum begins with a very straightforward question *Do you want longer, thicker, and stronger eyelashes in just a few weeks?* The question seems to offer a simple problem-solution situation. If buyers do want longer, thicker, and stronger

eyelashes, they should just try the Active Luxe Lash serum. The convincing tone of the question and solution proposed afterwards, makes the customers feel like it is very easy to get the longer lashes in a short amount of time.

#### EXAMPLE 9

*Ever had to decide between removing wrinkles or plumping your skin? Get the best of both worlds with Anew Clinical Advanced Wrinkle Corrector. 4D Wrinkle-Reverse Technology visibly improves skin's appearance and life by increasing elasticity. With alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) to reveal the look of a smoother, brighter complexion. Get skin's youthfulness with this facial cream's plumping formula. Results have shown improvement of fine lines and wrinkles by 28% over time.*

This is Avon's advertisement for Anew Clinical Advanced Wrinkle Corrector. It begins with a question *Ever had to decide between removing wrinkles or plumping your skin?* which addresses the doubt that majority of their customers might have. After pointing out both sides of the doubt, which is a decision between removing wrinkles or plumping skin, Avon provides a simple solution in their product. Also, by starting the question with *Ever had to decide between*, customers are likely to get the feeling that they are understood. It seems as if they are putting themselves in a position of their customers, which might make them feel included and reassured about the solution to their problems.

#### EXAMPLE 10

*Looking for a shampoo that leaves your hair smooth and up to 100% flake-free? Look no further than Head and Shoulders Smooth and Silky Shampoo. With rich and creamy lather, Head and Shoulders Smooth and Silky Shampoo nourishes hair with intense moisture and leaves hair sleek, shining and free of frizz for 24 hours. Plus, Head and Shoulders is the number one anti-dandruff shampoo recommended by dermatologists, so you know your hair will be up to 100% flake-free.*

Head and Shoulders ad for a shampoo that makes the hair silky and smooth is another example of a *Looking for* question. This kind of advertising is similar to the one in Examples 5 and 6. The difference is that the question already contains and highlights the results of using the Head and Shoulders Shampoo. By emphasizing that this shampoo *leaves your hair smooth and up to 100% flake-free* in the question that stands at the very beginning of an advertisement, advertisers show the results they assume their customers are looking for. Then they state *Look no further* which was already implied by the question itself, but this statement makes it even more convincing. It seems as if they are getting ahead of the customers' needs and telling them to trust only their products.

#### EXAMPLE 11

##### *Back To Basics Kit*

##### *Acnemy essentials pack for acne-prone skin*

*Ready to say goodbye to acne? Discover the skincare routine specifically made for oily and acne-prone skin, oil-free and non-comedogenic to effectively combat acne!*

Niche Beauty Lab is famous for their skincare products, and this is their campaign for Acnemy, their line of products dedicated to problems with acne. The question *Ready to say goodbye to acne?* has identical effect as those in the first three examples of this analysis. However, this one leaves a stronger effect on the consumers and has a more convincing tone because it uses the phrase *ready to say goodbye*. This can also have quite an impact on people, especially on the ones who are struggling with acne for a long time. The main purpose of this rhetorical questions is inviting consumers to buy the product and delivering the message that they will never have to deal with acne again.

#### EXAMPLE 12

##### *Transparent Lab*

##### *ACIDS? WITH TRANSPARENT LAB YOU CAN...*

*Discover how our technology, even including ingredients that typically show side effects for those with sensitive skin, can become your new best friend.*

This is another advertisement by Niche Beauty Lab for their range of cosmetic products called Transparent Lab. It begins with a short question *Acids?* which implies that if customers want to use products with acids, they should try the products from Transparent Lab. It also indicates that people usually refrain from using products with acids because they tend to damage sensitive skin. However, advertisers are simply trying to say that should not be a concern for those who use their products and all of that is contained in a short, straightforward questions *Acids?*

#### EXAMPLE 13

##### *THERAMID*

##### *VITAMIN C? THIS IS FAR FROM ORDINARY.*

*An exclusive combination with 20% Vitamin C in its 3 most effective forms, for a young, radiant and protected skin.*

This is also an advertisement from Niche Beauty Lab for their products named Theramid. Similar to the previous example, it starts with a short and direct question *Vitamin C?* The meaning of this question for the buyers is that if they are looking for quality products with vitamin C, the best choice would be to try Theramid products and achieve that young and radiant skin they want.

#### EXAMPLE 14

*Acnemy*

*STRUGGLE WITH ACNE? NOT ANYMORE.*

*Discover how our exclusive technology has helped to stop acne from being a problem for thousands of people.*

Another example from Niche Beauty Lab's campaign for their brand Acnemy begins with a question *Struggle with acne?* It asserts that, if someone is having problems with acne, they are here to understand it and give a solution. The question has a calming tone and an effect, as it gives people the hope that their struggle will be over. This is even more enhanced by declaring *Not anymore* immediately after the question.

#### EXAMPLE 15

*Acnemy*

*TO UNDERSTAND, IS TO CONQUER*

*Acne can be complicated. Don't know what type of acne you have? Lots of words you don't even understand? Maybe you can't tell the difference between what's real and what's fake. Check out Zitguide, Acnemy's tool to help you better understand what really goes on with acne.*

In this advertisement from Acnemy campaign, there are two examples of rhetorical questions, posed one after another: *Don't know what type of acne you have? Lots of words you don't even understand?*. Their purpose here is to address the issues people might have when trying to find the right products for acne treatment. They listed two of those issues which are concerned with the type of acne and a lot of unfamiliar words. Advertisers are showing their users that aside from products they offer to them, Acnemy will also help them to understand everything they have to know about dealing with acne.

## EXAMPLE 16

### *Firm & Hydrate Trio*

*Dull and dehydrated skin? Improve your skin's hydration, texture and firmness in 3 steps. Thanks to the combination of these three products that combine Glycerin, Hyaluronic Acid and encapsulated Retinol. The result? Deeply hydrated, bright, and youthful skin.*

This is an advert for a Firm & Hydrate Trio from Niche Beauty Lab. The question *Dull and dehydrated skin?* directly confronts and addresses the problem. It makes the customers think they are noticed, and their skin problem is not that serious because there is a simple solution for it in these products. Towards the end of an adverts, there is another short question *The result?* which offers an outcome with *deeply hydrated, bright, and youthful skin* as opposed to the problem addressed in the first question *dull and dehydrated skin*.

## EXAMPLE 17

### *WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF WONDER*

*Ready to take your eye makeup to the next level?*

*Meet the new additions to Rimmel London's Wonder family: Wonder'Extension Mascara, Wonder'Cloud Eyeshadow and Wonder'Last Brow.*

Rimmel's commercial for their Wonder collection's mascara, eyeshadow and brow tint begins by asking *Ready to take your eye makeup to the next level?* This question prompts the users to dare and try their new products in order to enhance their eye makeup. By mentioning *the next level*, the advert is sending a powerful message to the users to be brave and try something new that will make them appear beautiful and bold.

## EXAMPLE 18

*ARE YOU JELLY? NEW Revlon® Dual Ended Jelly Makeup Blender is the first dual-ended makeup blender\* that applies, blends and diffuses all makeup. Soft, jelly-like silicone tips mimic the natural feel of your own fingertips, for precise blending and makeup application. Easy to clean and more hygienic—it's the cleaner, better makeup blender.*

This Revlon advertisement for a makeup blender proposes a very unusual question at the very beginning which reads *Are you jelly?* The appearance of the question is intensified by putting it in the capital letters, making it more visible and noticeable. This question might be confusing to the consumers as it is hard to understand what it means to be jelly, but the real purpose is to attract



their attention. Although the question is strange, it also seems interesting, and it persuades consumers to discover more about the product.

#### EXAMPLE 19

##### *MEET THE FENTY HAIR LINEUP*

*Your hair on Fenty? It's stronger by the style.*

Fenty Beauty advertising strategy for their hair products proposes a simple question *Your hair on Fenty?* which addresses all the doubts consumers might have about Fenty products. The question is followed by a short, but powerful statement *It's stronger by the style.* and it serves as an answer to the doubts implied by the question. It helps to convince consumers in the security and effectiveness of their hair products.

#### EXAMPLE 20

##### *Sleek & Shine*

*What do we say to frizzy hair? Not today! With Fructis Sleek & Shine, you can get instantly smooth hair and up to 72 hours of frizz control.*

This a Garnier's commercial for their Fructis Sleek & Shine line of products which helps to deal with the frizzy hair. By asking *What do we say to frizzy hair?* advertisers are sympathizing with the customers as they are using the pronoun *we*. They are also implying the solution for frizzy hair and after the question they are asserting *Not today!*, which gives customers even more reason to believe them.

#### EXAMPLE 21

##### *Max Factor 2000 Calorie Lip Glaze*

*The easy way to add luminosity to winter skin? A glaze of high-shine lip gloss – we love this one.*

Vogue advertised and recommended the Max Factor's lip gloss to their readers. The advertisement opens with a question for *the easy way to add luminosity to winter skin?* It is highlighting the dull and dreary looks that often appear in cold months. It is showing the readers that they can uplift that look by simply adding a bit of Max Factor's lip gloss. This can also give their audience the assurance that they will always find and recommend the best products for them.

## EXAMPLE 22

*Best shampoo for hair growth*

*Dr. Barbara Sturm Anti Hair Fall Shampoo*

*Struggling with shed hair and perpetual split ends? Dr. Barbara Sturm's shampoo is a veritable saving grace. In a science-driven formula, it uses camellia and larch extract to strengthen the hair follicle, plus vitamin B5 to repair unravelling hair shafts and reduce further breakage. The result is a nourishing cleanser that fortifies weakened hair, supplemented with cationic hyaluronic acid to keep strands hydrated and healthy.*

This is another example from Vogue suggesting a product to their readers. They recommend the best shampoo for hair growth and begin with asking *Struggling with shed hair and perpetual split ends?* It indicates that they are recognizing the problems their audience might have and providing solutions for them. Within the question they are stating those problems in order to gain the trust of their readers. In this example, they are recommending Dr Barbara Sturm Anti Hair Fall Shampoo and, at the same time, promoting it.

## EXAMPLE 23

*Peach & Lily Retinal For All Renewing Serum*

*Anyone with red, inflamed, or often-irritated skin will find much to love about Peach & Lily's Retinal For All Renewing Serum. "It uses retinal, which only needs one step conversion to the active form of retinoic acid," Libby says. "So while it is the most potent retinol, it's combined with ceramides and ectoin, an anti-inflammatory compound that helps minimize the usual burning, itching or peeling." Oh, and did we mention the formula is fragrance-free, vegan, and made with clean ingredients?*

Harper's Bazaar often makes lists and recommendations for their public and therefore promotes a lot of beauty products. This is one of their choices for the best products with retinol. After the description of the product there is a question at the end that reads *Oh, and did we mention the formula is fragrance-free, vegan, and made with clean ingredients?* The purpose of this question is to provide additional information about the product in a way that makes it seem even better in the eyes of the public. All the features mentioned in the question are adding up to the quality and estimation of the product described.

## EXAMPLE 24

*L'Oréal Paris Elvive Hyaluron Plump Shampoo and Conditioner Set*

*Hair feeling dry? Switch your shower routine to this ultra-hydrating shampoo and conditioner. It plumps, adds shine, detangles, and boosts hydration with hyaluronic acid.*

Harper's Bazaar advertise L'Oréal Paris shampoo and conditioner set starting with the question *Hair feeling dry?* It seems as if they know someone has dry hair and they are trying to help them by recommending L'Oréal Paris products. They are also convincing their readers that they are always here for them with their advice and solutions.

#### EXAMPLE 25

*Secret Dry Spray Aluminum-Free Deodorant*

*What's even easier to apply than a standard roll-on? This fresh, lavender-scented deodorant spray from Secret, which nicely guards against sweat and odor for up to 48 hours.*

This is another advertisement from Harper's Bazaar for a Secret deodorant. Once again, they begin with a question which reads *What's even easier to apply than a standard roll-on?* They are pointing out the effortlessness of using this product by comparing it to something well-known to people, in this case a standard roll-on deodorant. By asking this kind of question they are not expecting an answer from their readers but making them feel included and then providing an answer and suggesting a product.

#### EXAMPLE 26

*Hero Cosmetics Mighty Patch for Fine Lines*

*Hero Cosmetics channeled the technology of its beloved acne patches into these curved versions that target crow's feet and frown lines. In addition to 1,390 dissolving micropoints, the overnight patches also feature retinol and adenosine to renew skin, niacinimide to brighten, and sodium hyaluroate to help keep it hydrated. And did we mention they stay on all night?*

This is an example of advertising from Harper's Bazaar for Hero Cosmetics night patches. Just as in the Example 23, the question is found at the end of the advertisement. The question *And did we mention they stay on all night?* has the intention of providing more information about the product. After all the benefits mentioned earlier in the text, this question is pointing out one more benefit and assures that the readers are convinced in the quality of the product. This makes the readers feel like they can expect and get a lot from buying these patches.

#### EXAMPLE 27

*e.l.f. Cosmetics Big Mood Mascara*

*Are little mascara crumbles your enemy? This tube may be your solution, as it's long-lasting while still being smudge- and flake-resistant. The large wand is ideal for volume, not curl.*

Harper's Bazaar promotion of e.l.f. Cosmetics mascara opens with a question *Are little mascara crumbles your enemy?* Since this a problem well-known to everyone who use mascara, it is likely that this question will immediately attract attention of the readers. In belief that they can finally solve this problem, the readers will want to try out the product that is recommended to them. This question also has an assuring tone, which shows the readers that they are not the only ones who are dealing with this problem.

#### EXAMPLE 28

*CeraVe Hydrating Mineral Sunscreen Face Sheer Tint (SPF 30)*

*Want a hardworking drugstore sunscreen pick? Marisa Garshick, MD, a board-certified dermatologist at MDCS Dermatology in New York City recommends this physical sunscreen for all skin types. It offers broad-spectrum SPF 30 protection and hydrating ingredients like ceramides, niacinamide, and hyaluronic acid to help moisturize the skin barrier. It's lightweight, noncomedogenic, and formulated with sensitive skin in mind.*

This is a recommendation from *Glamour* for a CeraVe sunscreen. The question *Want a hardworking drugstore sunscreen pick?* has an important effect in this text. Since products in drugstores are often cheaper and found more easily, the audience will be interested when the word *drugstore* is mentioned. By using an adjective *hardworking*, the readers might be even more encouraged to buy this product because it means that it is of quality and is worth to try. Furthermore, the question starts with the verb *want*, which makes it seem that the advertisers know what the users want and provide it to them.

#### EXAMPLE 29

*GLOW PLAY CUSHIONY BLUSH*

*Bounce from cheeks to lips! MAC's beloved bouncy blush got a good-for-skin glow up – now with skin-conditioning ingredients, including jojoba and grape seed oils, along with vitamin E for a comfortable and oh-so-smooth application.*

*Tap, build, blend and get tempted to touch all natural-looking, glowy shades that provide a cheeky rush of customisable colour – no mirror needed!*

*Did we mention this fingertip-friendly formula blurs the look of pores?*

*Plus, this blush is free of the stuff you don't want, including animal-derived ingredients. Packaging is crafted with sustainability top of mind – with a compact featuring at least 44% PCR material and a recyclable carton. Ready to glow? Let's bounce!*

This MAC Cosmetics blush is advertised and described on Sephora. It comprises two questions found towards the end of the text. The first question reads *Did we mention this fingertip-friendly formula blurs the look of pores?* Its purpose is to provide more “unexpected” information about the product, and therefore enhance its value. The second question, *Ready to glow?*, serves as a kind of conclusion and invitation to the buyers to purchase the product. After praising the product and highlighting all its strengths, this question sends the message to get this product and enjoy it in the best way.

#### EXAMPLE 30

*L’Oréal Paris Infallible Up To 24H Wear Brow Lamination, Water-Resistant Longwear Eyebrow Gel Make Up*

*Why settle for ordinary when you can have extraordinary brows? L’Oréal Paris Infallible gives you that lifted brow look for 24 hours with no residue or flakes. Effortless beauty at your fingertips! Get flawless brows today!*

This is an advertisement for L’Oréal Paris eyebrow gel found in their posts on Amazon. The question at the beginning sends a very powerful message, as it was previously seen in their advertisements (Example 4). It is written in form “Why settle for less when you can have more?”. It serves as a reminder for their customers to always remember their worth and choose only the best for themselves. Also, it points out that L’Oréal Paris is the one that can give them the best they deserve. This convinces the users that they are considered and valued, and therefore prompts them to purchase the product.

#### EXAMPLE 31

*L’Oréal Paris Voluminous Panorama Mascara*

*Dreaming of full, voluminous lashes? Voluminous Panorama Mascara creates corner-to-corner volume with a unique multi-level bristle brush. Tested for sensitive eyes, it resists clumping, flaking, and smudging for all-day wear.*

L’Oréal Paris advertisement for their mascara on Amazon starts with a question *Dreaming of full, voluminous lashes?*. The emphasis here is on the verb ‘dreaming’ because it is sending a message to the buyers that they do not have to only dream about voluminous lashes but can get them if they only try the L’Oréal Paris Voluminous Panorama Mascara. This gives buyers the hope that what they want, or ‘dream’ about, can come true by using this product and therefore enhance their makeup look.

## EXAMPLE 32

### *MAYBELLINE Master Precise All Day Liquid Eyeliner*

*Looking to mix up your liner look? Our Master Liquid Eyeliner in shades Cobalt Blue and Emerald Green is all you need to create a vibrant, colorful look!*

This is a post by Maybelline on their Amazon page where they advertise the liquid eyeliner. The question *Looking to mix up your liner look?* implies that they can offer their customer what they are searching for. They are suggesting the customers to try their liquid eyeliners in blue and green shades if they want to ‘mix up’ or make a change in the liner look. By asking a question in the beginning, advertisers are recommending something that will give them a new and fresh makeup look to their customers and prompting them to buy it.

## EXAMPLE 33

### *Dove Plant Milk Cleansing Bar Soap*

*Ready to elevate every shower and feel oh-so-soft all day long? Shop plant milk-infused body bars in four delicious scents.*

A post on Amazon by Dove also begins with a question which reads *Ready to elevate every shower and feel oh-so-soft all day long?*. As stated in previous examples with similar questions, it serves as an invitation to the customers to purchase the product but also has a convincing tone. It sends a message that the product will really work and so the customers should be ‘ready’ and prepared for all the benefits and changes that will come. Something that might further interest the customers is the wordplay used in *feel oh-so-soft all day long* because it is not heard or seen often but the meaning of it is very obvious.

## EXAMPLE 34

### *CeraVe Hydrating Cream To Foam Cleanser*

*Looking for an all-in-one cleanser that removes makeup and cleanses your skin? Try the CeraVe Hydrating Cream-to-Foam Cleanser. This one step cleanser begins as a cream before transforming to a soft foam when you begin to lather it on the skin with water, and effectively removes dirt and makeup without stripping the skin’s natural moisture or leaving it feeling tight and dry.*

This is a post by CeraVe on Amazon for their makeup cleanser. By asking *Looking for an all-in-one cleanser that removes makeup and cleanses your skin?* they are highlighting the benefits of their products and detailing its use. Since this question is very specifying, it might not attract a lot of attention, but to those who are searching for a perfect cleanser or makeup remover it might be

highly influential for their decision. It is especially important because it points out that this is an all-in-one product, and the users should stop looking for another solution and purchase this CeraVe cleanser.

#### EXAMPLE 35

*Makeup Revolution, Extra Hold Brow Glue, Longlasting Hold, 3ml*

*Want to get a fluffy and feathered brow that remains budge-proof all day long? Look no further! Our Extra Hold Brow Glue is the perfect Brow Gel to give you an at-home brow lift and keep those stubborn brow hairs locked in place throughout the day.*

A post on Amazon by Revolution for the brow glue opens with a question *Want to get a fluffy and feathered brow that remains budge-proof all day long?*. It is once again emphasizing all the good sides and results of the product such as ‘fluffy and feathered brow’ and ‘budge-proof all day long’. The question is saying to the consumers that if this is what they ‘want’, Revolution’s Extra Hold Brow Glue can provide it with all of its features. It leads the consumers to the conclusion that it is easy achieve perfect brows by buying this product.

#### EXAMPLE 36

*Neutrogena Hydro Boost Facial Cleansing Towelettes + Hyaluronic Acid*

*Feeling lazy? Reach for hydro boost wipes to take the day off. Unlike other drying, skin stripping wipes, these wipes are super hydrating & gentle. Ophthalmologist & dermatologist-tested - these are gentle enough for use even on the delicate eye area.*

This is another post on Amazon, this time by Neutrogena. They start with a short question *Feeling lazy?* as if they can assume how their customers feel when they need to take their makeup off after a long day. Therefore, they offer them a simple solution in their Hydro Boost Facial Cleansing Towelettes. This can make the customers feel like their needs are recognized and now they can easily *take the day off* with this product.

#### EXAMPLE 37

*Garnier Whole Blends Hydrating Shampoo Bar for Normal Hair*

*Looking for a more sustainable solution to wash your hair? NEW Whole Blends Hydrating Coco & Aloe Sulfate Free Shampoo Bar 🌱 lathers up to wash away product build-up and oils for a nice, deep clean 🧑🏻‍🧼 ✨ without plastic packaging!*

The last example is a post by Garnier on Amazon for their shampoo bar. The question *Looking for a more sustainable solution to wash your hair?* suggests to the consumers to find that sustainable solution in the *Garnier Whole Blends Hydrating Shampoo Bar*. It is offering something new and aims at the conscience of their consumers by pointing out the ecological aspect of the product which is in packaging without plastic. This might persuade the consumers to buy the product, especially if they care about the environment.



## 5. Discussion

Before concluding the paper, there are a few observations about rhetorical question in advertising that will be listed here. Firstly, considering all of the examples, it can be seen that they tend to appear at the beginning more often than at the end of the advertisements and posts. Out of 37 examples, there were only 5 which had the rhetorical questions placed towards the end, and only one where the questions were in the middle of the text. A possible explanation for such placement of questions might be that the advertisers aim to attract the audience's attention from the very beginning. If they succeeded, it is more likely that the consumers will read or watch the advertisement until the end. On the other hand, rhetorical questions at the end of advertisements usually provide some additional information about the product or highlight its most important features, in order to give the consumers more reasons to buy the product.

Secondly, there are some patterns that are followed when advertisers use rhetorical questions as a manner of persuasion. For instance, a lot of questions began with the word 'Ready' such as: *Ready to firework it?*, *Ready to bounce?*, *Ready for full-body freshness?*, *Ready to say goodbye to acne?*, *Ready to take your eye makeup to the next level?*, *Ready to glow?* and *Ready to elevate every shower and feel oh-so-soft all day long?*. These kinds of rhetorical questions are used when advertisers want to point out that the products will surely be successful and provide an immediate benefit or transformation to the users. By using the word 'ready' at the beginning of the questions, the advertisers are trying to create a sense of readiness or eagerness in the audience. The function of the word is to tell the users to be prepared for the benefits they will get from buying and using the products. By asking if the audience is 'ready', the advertisements indirectly encourage action. The underlying message is that if the users are ready, they should take the next step, which is to purchase the product and try it out. The word 'ready' can also be observed as 'get ready to' or 'prepare to' in order to notice and understand its function even better.

Then, there were many rhetorical questions starting with 'Looking for', for example: *Looking for extra coverage?*, *Still looking for your Beautiful Skin Routine?*, *Looking for a shampoo that leaves your hair smooth and up to 100% flake-free?*, *Looking for an all-in-one cleanser that removes makeup and cleanses your skin?* and *Looking for a more sustainable solution to wash your hair?*. Advertisements with these questions tend to send a message that the brand or a company has the

exact product the consumers are ‘looking for’ or which will give the consumers benefits they are ‘looking for’. The phrase ‘looking for’ directly addresses the users’ potential desires or problems. It assumes that they are actively seeking a solution, making the advertisement feel more personal and relevant. Rhetorical questions with this phrase nudge the consumers to consider whether they have found what they are seeking, therefore setting the stage for the product to be presented as an obvious answer.

There were also three similar examples: *Oh, and did we mention the formula is fragrance-free, vegan, and made with clean ingredients?*, *And did we mention they stay on all night?* and *Did we mention this fingertip-friendly formula blurs the look of pores?*. Rhetorical questions with phrases ‘Did we mention?’ were usually found towards the end of advertisements because they serve as a method of adding important information about the product in an interesting and engaging way. It suggests that there are even more advantages to the product than initially mentioned, which can make the offer more appealing. This phrase also engages the reader in a friendly and informal way, making the information seem like a pleasant bonus or reminder rather than a manner of persuasion. By repeating or adding new information with ‘Did we mention’, the advertisement reinforces the product's most attractive features. It helps to ensure that these features remain in the users’ mind, making them more likely to remember and consider the product.

Furthermore, a lot of questions were written in short forms, such as: *Acids?*, *Vitamin C?*, *The result?*, *Feeling lazy?*, *Struggle with acne?*, *Dull and dehydrated skin?* or *Hair feeling dry?*. They are used to immediately highlight the theme of the advert or address the problems that will be solved by using the advertised product. Since they are usually used in the beginning, they can serve as short introductions to the advertisements. These questions are typically short and direct, which enables them to attract the consumers’ attention quickly. The abruptness or simplicity of the question draws the consumers in, making them want to know more. Short questions can also attract attention of the younger generations since they are accustomed to abbreviations or shortenings as they frequently use them in communication. Moreover, short questions are more informal, which can contribute to creating a closer connection with the readers, especially when they highlight the typical problems, such as *Feeling lazy?* or *Hair feeling dry?*.

Certainly, there are numerous types and shapes in which rhetorical questions can appear as it can be seen in the analysis itself, but these were some of the patterns that appeared most frequently throughout the analysis.

Thirdly, it was noticed that many questions in the examples contained the main functions of the products, their benefits or the results that come after using them. Some of them are: *Ready for full-body freshness?*, *Do you want longer, thicker, and stronger eyelashes in just a few weeks?*, *Looking for a shampoo that leaves your hair smooth and up to 100% flake-free?*, *Oh, and did we mention the formula is fragrance-free, vegan, and made with clean ingredients?*, *Ready to elevate every shower and feel oh-so-soft all day long?* and *Looking for an all-in-one cleanser that removes makeup and cleanses your skin?*. The main reason for this is to show the customers what they can expect and to attract their attention by listing all the good sides of the products. All these questions engage the readers directly, making the advertisements feel more personal and interactive. They also target specific desires or problems, whether it is the freshness, beauty enhancement, or an improved daily experience. Each question strategically positions the product as the ideal solution for those problems, enhancing its appeal and making it more likely that the customers will consider purchasing it.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, rhetorical questions are the ones that do not search for an answer, but they can imply a certain reply, which is often suggested within the question itself. They are devised in a manner that makes responses to them appear evident to everyone. Therefore, they are a good persuasive tool for influencing a large number of people. They can be used in various environments and advertising is one of the areas where they frequently appear.

The aim of this paper was to analyse the use of rhetorical questions in online commercials by observing the examples of advertisements of cosmetic and beauty products for women. An analysis of 37 online advertisements showed some interesting patterns and functions of rhetorical questions in them. Rhetorical questions tend to appear at the beginning of advertisements more frequently than at the end. The reason for this placement is to attract the audience's attention more easily and hold it until the end. However, when rhetorical questions stand at the end of advertisements, they usually serve as a way of providing more information about the product and motivate customers to buy the product.

There are some patterns in the forms of rhetorical questions. Most of the rhetorical questions from the analysis were formed with the word 'Ready' at the beginning (Ready for full-body freshness?). Its function is to encourage action among the users and tell them to be prepared for all the benefits they will gain with the product. There were also many examples of rhetorical questions beginning with the phrase 'Looking for' (Looking for extra coverage?). This phrase addresses the customers' active search for solutions and presents the product as the best way to end their search. Another pattern was noticed in the rhetorical questions containing the phrase 'Did we mention' (And did we mention they stay on all night?). These are the examples of questions mostly found at the end of advertisements and they serve to highlight even more benefits of the product, that were not previously mentioned. This way they can stay in the users' mind more effectively. Throughout the analysis, it was seen that rhetorical questions often appear in short forms, sometimes even containing only one word. Short questions are able to quickly attract the audience's attention, especially of the younger generations that are accustomed to the usage of shorter forms. These questions do not reveal much about the product which is what prompts the readers to find out more through the advertisement.

Rhetorical questions in online advertising often contain the main functions of the products and the results that consumers can expect from using them (Looking for a shampoo that leaves your hair smooth and up to 100% flake-free?). With these types of questions, advertisers are trying to directly engage the readers and appeal to them by posing the products as ideal solutions to the problems described throughout the questions.

Overall, the common aim of rhetorical questions in beauty advertisements is to influence the customer's final decision, which is whether to purchase the product or not. Different forms and placement of rhetorical questions all have the function of persuading the buyers and earn their trust by making the advertisement feel more personal and interactive. It is important to note that this analysis was focused only on rhetorical question found in online advertisements of beauty and cosmetic products intended for women, which leaves a lot of space for further research on rhetorical questions in other areas of advertising.

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