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# **Digital Humanism Combines Rhetoric and Modern Marketing**

*Ilkka Kurkela*

*Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Metsänpojankuja 3, 02130 Espoo, FINLAND*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this paper I propose that there is a similarity between the rhetoric theory by Aristotle and modern marketing communication. Aristotle formulated the art of rhetoric into three simple devices: *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. Speakers needed to be logical, emotional, and morally credible in order to influence others. Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan have stated that in the modern digital era marketers should see and target consumer as a whole human who consists of *mind*, *heart*, and *spirit*. Consumers expect digital marketing communication to be rationally appealing, increasingly personalized and ethical. We operate in a highly digitalized world that is connected across cultures. When the Internet makes all communication global, brands are being evaluated by consumer experience. Businesses should focus on quality and operate with testimonials. The similarities in classic rhetoric theory and the principles of modern marketing can be combined with digital humanism.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The world is highly digitalized and connected across cultures. The number of smartphone users worldwide will surpass two billion in 2016 - after nearly getting there in 2015 (eMarketer, 2014). People are just a click away from each other and the possibilities to communicate across cultures globally are never-before-seen. Over three billion people will have access to the Internet in 2015. (eMarketer, 2014) In the U.S. for example, average person spends 11 hours per day with digital media. (Mashable, 2014) The Internet allows individuals to form communities based on common interests that cut across geographies. These communities enable sharing of information, and much more. (Hollis, 2008) This creates challenges and opportunities to build good customer relationships. Our cultures are intertwined like never before.

Building good business and customer relationships calls for more than just developing a good product or service, pricing it and making it available. Companies must also communicate their value propositions to customers. That is a critical element in a company's efforts to build profitable customer relationships. (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, Saunders, 2008) Gummesson has further stated that customer satisfaction can be achieved best by co-creating services with customers. Marketing must understand the complexity of reality and take networks into account: the network-based many-to-many marketing theory gives tools in the rapidly changing world. Change is a natural state of affairs, and processes are iterative rather than linear. (Gummesson, 2008) We must allow customers and their networks to take part in the development of products and services. The wall between company and customer must be taken apart.

In the digital era, the transformation of communication channels is challenging for all industries, but particularly for the marketing industries. Digital Marketing and social media need to be central to any marketing approach, rather than an 'add-on'. (Royle and Laing, 2014) Companies need to learn how to use digital media channels such as search engine marketing, online public relations, interactive display advertising, e-mail marketing and text messaging, social media and viral marketing among the traditional offline promotion techniques. (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 2012) Royle & Laing have stated that there are notable skill gaps that companies' marketers have while trying to adapt to these needs. (Royle, Laing, 2014)

## 2 LOGOS: RATIONAL APPEAL

The term *logos* is described as a logical appeal in Aristotle's rhetoric theory. Speakers try to convince others using rational arguments. Businesses all have a common goal when they create advertisements, which is to convince consumers to purchase a specific product or service. In marketing the rational appeal -method attempts to prove the product's quality and usefulness to the consumer. The forms of proof may include stating the product's benefits, performing a product demonstration or citing facts or statistics. When the advertiser uses rational appeal, it is also appealing to the consumer's logic, persuading the consumer to choose the result it desires. (Rawes, 2015) In Marketing 3.0 theory marketers seek to satisfy the whole person - mind, body and soul. The rational appeal is the first aspect. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010).

Humans spend more and more time with digital devices. This brings a new opportunity to collect an enormous amount of data, which can be refined into better understanding of customer needs, and a more rational appeal in marketing. It has been said, that data is the new oil. (Toonders, 2014)

The possibility to collect and analyze data using the digital technologies has been considered one of the clearest advantages of digital marketing. It is extremely important to analytically measure data about consumer behavior online using the latest technologies. Google Analytics is a good starting point for any business. It will provide information about companies' website usability, where to focus resources and which channels to be active at (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn).

Digital marketing communication primarily focuses on the analytical possibilities of digital technologies. It is believed that by collecting and analyzing data we can learn to understand deeply the online behavior of our consumers. This is supposed to help companies target their marketing activities more precisely. In digital world it is easier to measure consumer behavior accurately and thus possible to personalize the Internet shopping experience to each customer individually. This is considered to be a clear advantage over the traditional shops.

The rational arguments for the importance of "Big Data" are undeniable: collect data, analyze it, use it for marketing, and success will follow. The tools and techniques to reach existing and potential customers and to personalize the shopping experience are available. (Mayer-Schonberger, Cukier, 2013) However, if it is supposed to be this easy, why do we not see more successful companies using this method? Are we thinking too analytically?

The rational appeal method is important but there is a danger that marketers will forget the emotional side of marketing. Digital humanism combines the rational and emotional method.

### **3 PATHOS: EMOTIONAL APPEAL**

*Pathos* is an appeal to the audience's emotions in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, and the terms pathetic and empathy are derived from it. By nature, human beings are emotional creatures. Businesses use a variety of techniques to appeal to consumer emotions. Advertisers take the time to carefully choose every detail in their advertisement. (Rawes, 2015)

Humans make most of their decisions based on feelings, intuition and emotions. Family, friends and networks are more likely trusted than faceless companies: 90 % of consumers trust peer recommendations while only 14 % trust advertisements. (Qualman, 2012) By using emotional marketing marketers are trying to win the consumer's heart. This is the second aspect of Marketing 3.0 theory. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010).

When the Internet makes all communication global, brands are being evaluated by customer experience. They are not only what brand managers and marketers want them to be, but tend to develop on their own over time. Word-of-Mouth marketing can have tremendous power. The most important aspect of word-of-mouth is to control the bad "buzz" and try to create positive attention instead. Businesses should operate with testimonials. (Kotler and Pfoertsch, 2010)

In order to truly show the consumers that a company cares about their emotions is to genuinely collaborate with them. Vargo and Lusch anticipated correctly in 2004 that the emerging service-centered dominant logic of marketing will have a substantial role in marketing thought. It had the potential to replace the traditional goods-centered paradigm. (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) Later on Kotler agreed and further stated that consumers play the key role in creating the value through co-creation of service. Companies should always target the consumers as human beings. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010)

The best way to win a customer's heart is to fulfil the promises given in marketing. Companies need to identify their most satisfied customers and create (digital) testimonials with them. These can be anything from simple recommendations to video testimonials or customer blogs.

It is crucial to focus on quality in any business. People trust peer reviews and that is the way to win a customer's heart. Although consumer behavior has strong universal components, its cultural variations cannot be ignored. As the Internet is global, companies need to understand the cultural variations in their marketing campaigns. (Usunier, 2000) Respect yourself, your colleagues and customers and be transparent in doing so. What is good for people is also good for business. (Lahti, 2014)

### **4 ETHOS: ETHICAL APPEAL**

*Ethos* is an appeal to the authority or credibility of the presenter in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric. The Greek word "ethos" means "character" that is used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterize a community, nation, or ideology. Ethos has a strong connection to moral and ethics and therefore to the spiritual side of human.

Globalization brings greater awareness about ethical issues. The concerns about environmental sustainability, poverty and injustice among other problems in societies are increasing. This awareness boosts people's desire and dream to make the world a better place. Companies must understand these anxieties and desires of people. The business must be ethical. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010)

Every company should be able to answer the question: why does this company exist and how does it make the world a better place? To marketers this means that “spiritual meaning” must be included in the value proposition in marketing. It is suggested that companies should focus more on the ethical side of marketing. This is the aspect to take into consideration in marketing according to Marketing 3.0 theory. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010)

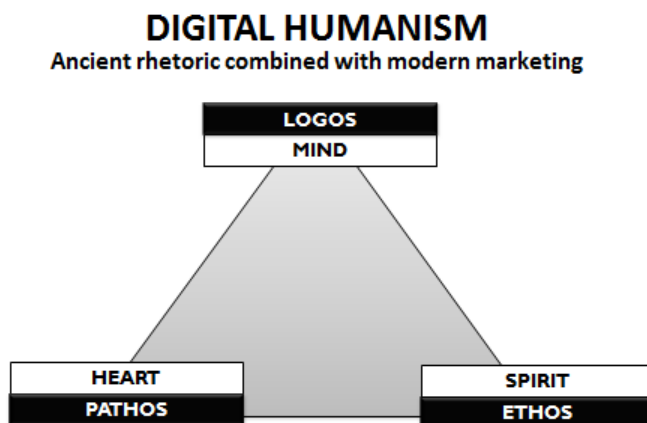
It is always a human who reacts to any marketing activity whether it is an email, social media post, blog, or any traditional way to reach consumers. Every (purchasing) decision is made by a human, no matter what the technological device is that is being used. Whether your company is on B2C or B2B markets, it is always about Human-to-Human (H2H).

People believe in stories, especially ethical stories. That is built in our DNA. Therefore, companies should put most of their marketing effort in telling stories – preferably in a transparent and honest way. These stories should include information why the company exists and what the higher moral purpose of the company is. Humans are very capable of identifying whether the company is “good or bad”. Always start with why. This important theme and storytelling is directly connected to corporate social responsibility (CSR). (Torkki, 2014)

The emphasis of CSR is moving from corporate social responsibility to brand integrity. A link is made between business profitability and global social progress. (Mcintosh, 2007) People want to be part of something valuable, noble, and something that makes the world a better place. Marketers should see and target consumer as a whole human who consists of mind, heart and spirit. (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010)

Traditional marketing will be less effective and marketing budgets lower in the next few years. Companies want marketers to do more with less. Social media networks play an increasingly influential role in shaping brand evaluations. The word-of-mouth becomes the new advertising medium and therefore there is no chance for inauthentic brands to survive. The shift is from products to customers and finally to the human spirit that matters (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan 2010).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS



**Figure 1.** Digital Humanism. Classic rhetoric combined with modern marketing.  
Constructed by Kurkela 2015 (combining Aristotle Rhetoric theory & Kotler’s Marketing 3.0 theory.)

The similarities in the rhetoric theory by Aristotle and Kotler's modern marketing theory are described in Figure 1. As speakers used to utilize logos, pathos and ethos to convince people already over two thousand years ago, so should companies today utilize mind, heart and spiritual points of view when targeting consumers in marketing.

Companies often use rational arguments when trying to convince consumers to buy. However, emotional arguments are even more important. Consumers trust peer recommendations and they also evaluate companies' ethical appeal daily. Although it is important to collect and analyze data and use rational arguments, emotional and ethical appeal must not be forgotten.

Digital humanism combines the analytical, emotional and spiritual sides of marketing and rhetoric. It withholds an ethical aspect of respecting people and diversity. It focuses on quality and highly on consumer satisfaction. Focusing on these themes will be the key to successful marketing in the future – especially in the online environment where most focus tends to lean towards data-analytics. Companies should strive to occupy the minds, hearts and spirits of current and future customers.

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