

Arguments in Advertising

Or, what yoghurt can teach us about sustainable transport

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I present some considerations regarding how we ought to use the tools of argumentation theory in the analysis of persuasive communication material, with implications for the way such material can be modelled for use with persuasive technology or artificial deliberative intelligences. I focus here on how a refined understanding of the underlying argumentative structure of a traditional TV commercial (in particular, the Danone Yoghurt commercial *In Soviet Georgia*, previously discussed by Douglas Walton (2010)), reveals some limitations on how far an argumentative analysis can take us in understanding the persuasive power of advertisements like this. Specifically, I will argue that understanding advertisements as arguments using standard analytical tools fails to capture their motivational force, and hence will fail to predict their effectiveness in achieving behaviour change in their audience. The issues raised, concerned with the way adverts of various kinds engage the *desires* of their audience, turn out to be especially relevant for understanding how advertisements and marketing material function effectively in achieving behaviour change in domains such as encouraging the use of sustainable transport, where persuading people to cut down on personal car use rests largely on making certain altruistic desires more relevant for their decision-making than other desires to, for instance, use the most convenient and efficient means of getting from A to B. If computational models of advertisements as instances of natural argument are to be used as a means of generating arguments to effect behaviour change in domains such as personal transport, it is necessary that they are able to correctly predict behavioural effects. As such, I argue in this paper that there is a need to develop a means to model the non-argumentative features of communication material that make certain desires more or less relevant to individuals' motivational frameworks.

2. Background: The ADAPT project and the Sustainable Transport Communications Dataset (STCD)

We know that the current level of private car use is unsustainable, both in terms of the greenhouse gas emissions due to private car use and the corresponding contribution to climate change, and in terms of the strain the increasing number of private cars on the road places on national infrastructure. There are many current and potential government and non-governmental initiatives intended to address these pressing issues, but the tools available to governments are generally focused on managing the *supply* of unsustainable transport options; that is, government may tax high polluting vehicles more, impose congestion charges, increase fuel taxes and so on, with the intention that the higher costs of using unsustainable transport will result in correspondingly lower private car use. Where such measures have been taken however, particularly in the UK, they have not been effective in cutting private car use to a sustainable level. This is not altogether surprising, since both the

price and income elasticity of demand for private transportation is notoriously low. Additionally, the political pressure against increasing taxes on private motorists are substantial, and as such it would be politically difficult for a UK Government to implement supply side transport policies to an extent that would bring private car use to a sustainable level. In such cases, supply side measures can only be expected to be of a limited effectiveness, and so we are left with the question of what *demand* side measures might be used as well. A demand side measure to decrease private car use could take many forms, but will generally involve an attempt to change the behaviour of transport users on an individual level, such that a particular person will choose not to purchase a private car or not use a private car for reasons other than that these modes of transport are too expensive, or that person's income cannot support private car use (i.e., the reasons ascribable to a purely rationally self-interested economic agent).

The ADAPT project is an attempt to harness the tools of argumentation theory and other interdisciplinary research about the best ways to influence individual behaviour change in order to develop proposals for how we might reduce demand for private car use. A key part of the ADAPT project is the construction of the Sustainable Transport Communications Dataset (STCD), a database consisting of persuasive communication material from local and national Government, private companies, NGOs and other bodies with an interest in persuading people to make more sustainable transport choices (Wells & Pangbourne, 2015). Each entry in the STCD is analysed as a piece of argumentative discourse and diagrammed using the specialist argument diagramming software *Araucaria* (Reed et al., 2004). The STCD will be used during further phases of the ADAPT project, among other things, to analyse trends in communication about sustainable transport and design experiments to test the effectiveness of particular kinds of argument on different kinds of people.

Figure 1 is an example from the STCD: a screengrab of the original communication material from a local Scottish campaign, *Go Smart*, encouraging the audience to take a number of steps to reduce their CO2 emissions with regard to their transport choices. It is accompanied by the diagrammed analyses of the material as an informal argument.

As with many of the entries currently in the STCD, the argumentative structure in this piece of material is very straight forward. This example features an argument from example (such that buying cleaner, more fuel efficient cars, adopting eco driving techniques and using alternative transport are all examples of ways to save energy, carbon and money) and an example of practical reasoning, such that if saving energy, carbon and money is a goal that the audience has, then 'going eco' is a way to achieve it. Finally, the argument engages in prolepsis, by way of pre-empting a critical question (to the effect that reducing fuel consumption is difficult without advice), and answering that question (diagrammed

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Go-Eco


Your local Energy Saving Scotland advice centre can help consumers and small businesses save energy, carbon and money by providing free, impartial, expert advice on all matters related to energy efficiency, small scale renewables and low carbon personal transport.

Why Go-Eco?

Your local Energy Saving Scotland advice centre now offers transport advice to help you reduce your fuel consumption to save money as well as cut down on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

- **Using the car less**
We can help with plan your journey using alternative transport, thus reducing your CO₂ emissions further.
- **Buying cleaner, more fuel efficient cars**
If you are thinking about changing cars we can provide free, impartial advice about the cleanest, most fuel efficient cars in class and what to look for when buying a used car.
- **Eco-driving**
By adopting eco-driving techniques you can save up to 15% on your fuel bills, while also reducing your CO₂ emissions.

Click on the banner below for eco-driving tips and to take the eco-driving test:

 energy saving trust
Learn the top tips for eco-driving at ecodrivescotland.com

Contacts

For personalized advice call the Energy Saving Scotland advice centre South West on freephone **0800 512 012**, Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.

Alternatively, email Abbe Sheddén, Sustainable Transport Advisor, abbe.shedden@sw.energysavingscotland.org.uk.

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Figure 1: Go Smart/Go Eco, Dumfries and Galloway Council (2016)

above by a double-refutation) by noting that advice is available. As has been noted by others (in particular, Walton (2010)), analysing advertisements, marketing material and similar forms of communication which aim at eliciting some kind of behaviour from its audience (often behaviour to the effect that a consumer spends money on this or that product), frequently reveals a pattern of *practical reasoning*; that is to say, reasoning from some existing goal of an agent, to some action which constitutes a means of realising that goal, to a conclusion that those means should be undertaken in order that the goal should be realised. The example from the STCD above includes a form of practical reasoning, as do the majority of entries from the STCD so far analysed (some 70 pieces of communicative material). This is unsurprising: if my aim is to change your behaviour through argument, then my argument is likely to include a normative conclusion (that you *ought to φ*), and the best way to make an inference to a normative conclusion of that kind is to show that it accords with or enables the realisation of some pre-existing goal of yours.

In what follows I will discuss a previously analysed example of practical reasoning drawn from an advertisement, different in form but similar in function to many entries in the STCD (which seek to change behaviour by engaging in practical reasoning), and show

how a peculiar feature of that example (the Danone Yoghurt advert *In Soviet Georgia*) shows us some interesting things about the particular uses, and limitations, of argument analysis when it comes to understanding the argumentative strategies and effects of adverts.

3. Adverts as Argument: Walton's Analysis of *In Soviet Georgia*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, argumentation theorists are often keen to broaden the class of things that can be considered 'arguments'. It has been claimed before that some advertisements, specifically consumer-directed adverts for medications, constitute arguments (Walton 2010), and as such the claim that advertisements should count as arguments will not be a novel one. Indeed, material such as the examples above are among the kinds of marketing and advertising communication which is most amenable to analysis as argumentation, since they are composed of clear linguistic propositions in the form of premises and conclusions, with the aim of persuading their audience to adopt a belief or take some action. When Douglas Walton analysed the successful TV advert for Dannon yoghurt, *In Soviet Georgia*, as an argument, he correctly stated that, analysed as such, this advert followed the practical reasoning scheme (Walton 2010, p. 8). Walton was concerned to

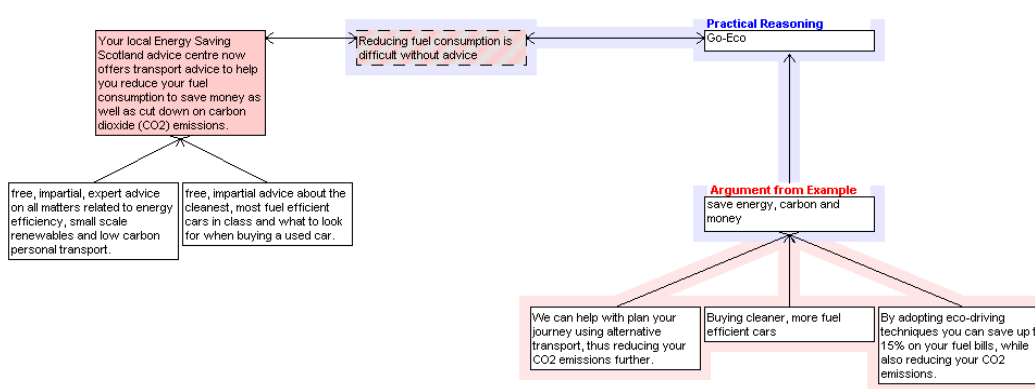


Figure 2: Analysis of Go Smart/Go Eco as Informal Argument, Diagrammed Using Araucaria.

show that analysing adverts such as this (in particular, consumer-targeted health product ads) as instances of practical reasoning was preferable to analysing them as almost invariably fallacious instances of standard deduction (as suggested by Groarke (2009)).

To take *In Soviet Georgia* as an example, if we analyse the content of the ad as following a standard deduction scheme (as per Groarke¹), we come out with the following:

Explicit Premise: Eating a lot of yoghurt causes people to live a very long time.

Implicit Premise: You want to live a very long time.

Conclusion: You should eat a lot of yoghurt

This argument commits the fallacy of *affirming the consequent*, and as such is deductively invalid.

Walton suggests that we are better off analysing ads like this as instances of practical reasoning (in this case, chained with an *argument from correlation to cause*), and offers the following analysis:

Implicit premise 1: The eating of the yogurt is causing the people in Soviet Georgia to live past 100.

Implicit conclusion 1: If you want to live longer, you should eat yogurt.

Implicit premise 2: You want to live longer.

Implicit Conclusion 2: You should eat yogurt.

(Walton 2010, p8)

Walton claims that this kind of analysis is more helpful because, although this ad is in his view still fallacious in the end, it provides a framework according to which the advert *may not* be fallacious. On final analysis, Walton notes that *In Soviet Georgia*, as analysed above, commits the *post hoc* fallacy (presenting an unwarranted inference from correlation to cause), because it falls foul of one of the critical questions appropriate to the argument from correlation to cause implied by implicit premise 1 (specifically, “C5: If there are intervening variables, can it be shown that the causal relationship between A and B is indirect (mediated through other causes)?” (Walton et al. 2008, p174)); put plainly, it is likely that there are factors besides eating a lot of yoghurt that play a, perhaps greater, causal role in the longevity of residents of Soviet Georgia.

4. Adverts as Argument: A Critique of Walton’s Analysis of *In Soviet Georgia*

I agree with Walton that this is a preferable form of analysis to that offered by Groarke. It does greater justice to the likely intentions of the creator of the advert (to persuade the audience to take a certain action, for which purposes practical reasoning is the most obvious scheme to adopt); it better reflects the reasoning process that audiences may go through if they decide to assess the advert as an argument (they will be likely to ask questions about, for instance, how likely it is that the advertised products will meet their needs); and, it is also a far more charitable interpretation, in that whether or not the argument comes out as informally valid will depend on whether the advert provides sufficient information to answer the relevant critical questions, rather than just failing in virtue of its argumentative structure. Indeed, Walton’s main point in his 2010 paper is that, in many cases of advertising and marketing material, since they tend to follow the argumentative scheme of practical reasoning, the major question for both audiences and argument theorists when making judgements on the adverts’ informal validity is in whether they provide sufficient supporting information to answer common Critical Questions appropriate to practical reasoning such as the following:

CQ1: What other goals that I have that might conflict with the [goal at issue,] *G* should be considered?

CQ2: What alternative actions to my bringing about [suggested action,] *A* that would also bring about *G* should be considered?

CQ3: Among bringing about *A* and these alternative actions, which is arguably the most efficient?

CQ4: What grounds are there for arguing that it is practically possible for me to bring about *A*?

CQ5: What consequences of me bringing about *A* should also be taken into account?

(Walton et al. 2008, p322)

The upshot is that, assessing arguments such as *In Soviet Georgia*, as well as the above examples from the STCD, will often come down to a) deciding what counts as sufficient information for the audience to answer the critical questions appropriate to (for the

¹ It should be noted that Groarke does not offer an analysis of *In Soviet Georgia*, but I am assuming that, given the relevant

similarities in the two cases, he would offer an analysis of *In Soviet Georgia* along the lines I suggest.

most part) practical reasoning and b) deciding whether the adverts in question supply that information.

Although these remarks about the approach we should take to adverts, and the analysis of *In Soviet Georgia* as written are, as far as they go, perfectly reasonable, there is a fascinating discrepancy between the original advert as aired and Walton's analysis. Walton claims that the advert makes an argument from correlation to cause, and that the insufficiency of material provided to answer critical questions concerning the directness of the correlation between eating yoghurt and longevity constitutes a *post hoc* fallacy on the part of the advert. However, if we examine the original advert as it aired, this conclusion becomes suspect. Below is a transcription of the narration of the advert in full:

*In Soviet Georgia, there are two curious things about the people. A large part of their diet is yoghurt, and a large number of them live past a hundred. **Of course, many things affect longevity, and we're not saying Danone yoghurt will help you live longer.** But Danone is a natural, wholesome food that does supply many nutrients. By the way, eighty nine year old Bagrat Tabaghua liked Danone so much, he ate two cups! That pleased his mother very much.*²

The crucial sentence is highlighted in bold. The narrator of the advert states, explicitly, that no causal claim is being made about the connection between eating [Danone] yoghurt and longevity. So, in fact, even though the argument as stated by Walton does indeed commit the *post hoc* fallacy, it is very much open to question whether the advert as aired commits this fallacy, since it explicitly denies that it is making any such claim. In fact, not only the TV commercials, but various print advertisements during the same campaign also made the same refutative point in both banner headlines and small print (Gabrichidze 2015).

There is a simple measure we could take to 'fix' Walton's analysis, noting that although the advert denies that it is making an argument from correlation to cause, it does make claims about the health benefits of Danone yoghurt (that it is a 'natural, wholesome food that does supply many nutrients') and that someone who is in a position to know good yoghurt likes Danone ('eighty nine year old Bagrat Tabaghua [who is from Soviet Georgia, where they eat a lot of yoghurt] liked Danone so much, he ate two cups!'). We could therefore reconstruct the argument in the ad in something like the following way:

Explicit Premise 1: In Soviet Georgia, they eat a lot of yoghurt

Explicit Premise 2: In Soviet Georgia, a large number of people live past a hundred.

Implicit Premise 1: If you eat a lot of yoghurt, you will live past a hundred

Implicit Premise 2: You want to live past a hundred

Explicit Premise 3: We are not saying that eating yoghurt will help you live longer

Implicit conclusion 1: Eating yoghurt is not an optimal means to satisfy the desire of living past a hundred.

Explicit Premise 4: Danone is a natural, wholesome food that does supply many nutrients

Implicit Premise 3: You ought to eat natural, wholesome foods that supply many nutrients

Implicit Premise 4: You ought only eat natural wholesome foods when they are enjoyable.

Explicit Premise 5: Eighty-nine year old Bagrat Tabaghua [who lives in Soviet Georgia, where they eat a lot of yoghurt], liked Danone so much he ate two cups!

Implicit Premise 5: Somebody in a position to know good yoghurt, thinks Danone is enjoyable.

Implied Conclusion 2: You ought to eat Danone yoghurt.

The above, as a rough outline of the argumentative structure of the advert as aired, seems a) a fair reflection of the literal meaning expressed and implied by the advert and b) informally valid. However, what is fascinating about the case of the *In Soviet Georgia* advert is that Walton is not the only person to have understood this advert as making a (potentially specious) assertion of a causal link between eating yoghurt and longevity. An article in the *Georgian Journal*, for instance, states that "The implied message of the advertisement was clear: Eat yoghurt because it promotes vitality and longevity!"³ Furthermore, the advertising campaign was famously successful, held as being principally responsible for the reversal of fortune of the previously faltering Danone company as well as a precipitous rise in the consumption of yoghurt in the US that lasted until the early 1990s (King, 1998). Taken together, and given that merely mentioning the putative wholesomeness and tastiness of a food is hardly the stuff of groundbreaking advertising, it is *prima facie* plausible that the audience of these adverts *did* in fact take them to be making a claim about the connection between eating yoghurt and longevity, and furthermore that this claim motivated them to eat more yoghurt.

How are we to make sense of this possibility? One potential answer is that the text of the advert *does* in fact make an argument from correlation to cause, but that the argument is not explicit but *implicated*; that is, the advert intends that the audience should understand it to be making that argument, even though that argument is not expressed or entailed by its explicit contents. However, thinking in terms of argumentation theory this would not explain the success of the advert. This is because if *In Soviet Georgia* successfully made the argument from correlation to cause via conversational implicature, the explicit denial of the conclusion of that argument renders the argument as a whole self-refuting. This would not just be a case of an audience being presented with an argument that we, as argumentation theorists, can understand to be fallacious, but which regular audiences may not have the tools to recognise as such. Rather, this would be a case of an audience acceding to a proposition argued for by implicature in the face of an explicit refutation of that argument. This is, firstly, contrary to the way we usually understand implicature of this kind working (conversational implicature is by definition *cancellable*, meaning that proposition is not implicated if it is accompanied by an explicit statement contradicting it (Grice 1989, p. 39)). Secondly, even if

² Marsteller Advertising Agency (1973) "Danone – In Soviet Georgia" [https://youtu.be/J8AK7uX_La0] (accessed 19th April, 2017).

³ Gabrichidze (2015)

the audience didn't reject the implicated argument, they have no reason *given in the text* to reject the explicit refutation of the implicated argument, and so we could still not explain the success of the advert in terms of some feature of the argumentation. These considerations also count against the idea that the refutation of the argument from correlation to cause merely *weakens* that conclusion, rather than denying it completely; the explicit denial that the advert is even making the argument from correlation to cause means that, applying even minimal standards of rationality, an audience would not be licensed to believe that such an argument was being made at all.

Of course, there is more to most adverts than text, and the propositions explicitly expressed or implicated by it. Some theorists have argued that even those adverts featuring no linguistic elements (such as adverts which are purely pictorial), or no obvious argumentative structure (such as those featuring a picture with only a single line of writing attached to it) can still be understood as arguments (Birdsell and Groarke 1996). Although it is obviously true that some adverts are wholly constituted by pictures, that many others are largely pictorial, and that a great deal of communication material that is not strictly advertisement relies on pictures for their effects in the same way, I am very sceptical that the best way to characterise the contribution of pictures is to claim that they function as arguments. Absent a radical revision of what the basic features of argument are (premise, inference and conclusion), it seems clear that whether or not pictures can constitute arguments will depend on whether pictures have propositional content, and have propositional content that can be harnessed for argumentative purposes. While there are some philosophers of pictures who defend the former (Grzanowski 2014 is one of few examples), nobody has, as far as I'm aware, established the latter. Indeed, one of the areas of common ground in the debate about whether pictorial content is propositional is the acceptance that there is no pictorial way to represent negation (although there are of course conventional and symbolic ways to approximate the effect of a negation operator on depicted content, that does not mean that a picture itself is capable of expressing a negated proposition) (Sainsbury 2005). While this does not, by itself, establish that pictures cannot avail themselves of a familiar argumentative structure, it does mean that they could not express any argument involving negation, which is a severe limitation. The same observation may well go for other logical operators too, particular examples that spring to mind are disjunction, identity and counterfactuals (how can a picture express a counterfactual proposition?). Even if we believed that pictorial content was propositional it would be very difficult to suggest that pictures could express *arguments* while accepting that they could not avail themselves of so many familiar argumentative structures that require the use of these operators. It might be plausible to suggest that many adverts make use of non-pictorial, but still non-linguistic features and techniques that have the same function as those operators in a lot of cases (the familiar red circle with a line through it, laid over the top of a picture, may well function as a negation operator on the supposed propositional content of a picture). However, this can hardly account for all instances of pictures in advertising, and there is no evidence that such techniques are at play in the case at hand.

None of this is to say that pictures don't make an important contribution to the arguments made by advertisements, marketing and other kinds of communication material, only to say that we might be better off understanding the contributions of pictures to these arguments as non-argumentative, but instead merely rhetorical. Some might wish to deny that there is a hard line

between what counts as argument and what counts as rhetoric, and I wouldn't necessarily disagree. However, for our purposes, it is beneficial to limit our sense of what counts as argumentation only to that which we can understand and diagram using the tools of informal logic, and thereby those which express premises and conclusions as propositions, and plausibly imply the validity of inferences from one to the other.

A further possible explanation is that the context of the statements in adverts, presented as they are as a part of advertising campaigns, which consumers know full well are designed to try to sell them things, has a dramatic effect on the way they are taken up by the audience (Walton 2010, p. 11). Making explicitly contradictory or absurd claims is a not infrequent advertising tactic, using such claims as an instrument for humour (as in the famous claim from Carlsberg lager that they make "probably the best lager in the world"). It is possible that *In Soviet Georgia* could have been constructed so as to make use of this technique (by having the voiceover read their lines in a sarcastic tone, for instance), but there is little in the campaign that suggests that this was the aim. What humour *is* in the advert consists largely of a somewhat patronising wryness targeted at the simplicity and joy of its subjects which, if anything, would seem to support the alternative reading of the advert that I proposed above, and would not obviously do anything to suggest to the audience that they should not take their avowed denial of making a causal claim at face value.

If we are to be sceptical that the pictorial, humorous or other contextual elements of the advert make supplementary arguments that might serve to refute the refutation of the argument from correlation to cause, then does there remain a way to understand the non-linguistic elements of the advert as contributing to its success? I think there does, and in a way which helpfully illuminates the role that argumentation theory ought to play in understanding the mechanisms at play and the effectiveness of advertisements, particularly for those comprising the STCD. I will explore this more fully in the next section, but in brief my proposal is that although we can fruitfully understand the majority of arguments as exhibiting an argumentative structure, to account for the *effectiveness* of advertisements, because of the kinds of argumentative structure they typically exhibit, we must appeal to criteria beyond the scope of traditional argumentation theory.

5. Argument and Motivation

To explain, let me first point to some obvious things about arguments and their ultimate and proximate goals. Argumentation in general can be undertaken with several different kinds of ultimate goal: I can make an argument with the aim of getting you to *believe* a proposition, to *desire* a state of affairs, to *commit* to doing something or even with the aim of having you take some action in the world. Importantly, while the *proximate goal* of somebody making an argument (if we understand arguments in the traditional way) will always be to have their interlocutor accede to some proposition (if we are following the highest epistemic standards of rational argument, then the aim will be to have their interlocutor accede to a proposition *because* it follows from valid inferences connecting true premises), the *ultimate goal* of making an argument will in many circumstances be broader than merely having somebody accede to a proposition for the right reasons. If I make a legal argument, it is because I want the judge to rule in my favour; if I present an argument to my boss to the effect that I ought to be able to take a week off, I want her to give me the week off (not just accede to the proposition that I *ought* to have the week off). Similarly, if we are to understand advertisements and marketing as a form of argument, then we ought to understand the

aims of such argument not merely as having an interlocutor accede to a proposition, but having the interlocutor (usually) *behave* in a certain way. In particular, the examples found in the STCD aim at achieving a substantial and long lasting change in the behaviour of their audience; specifically, a change in their preferred modes of transportation.

Understanding that the goals of an argument might be ultimately to do with something other than merely having an audience accede to a proposition necessitates that we consider the link between rational persuasion and motivation to act, and also that we re-evaluate some of the traditional aims and methods of argumentation theory in order to make the approach maximally beneficial to us here. The still dominant philosophical account of the way rationality interacts with motivation is owed to David Hume. According to the Humean picture of motivation, belief is insufficient for motivation, which always requires the presence of a desire. Thus, it is insufficient to explain my eating yoghurt just in terms of the relevant beliefs I have (that there is yoghurt in the fridge, that I am hungry, that eating yoghurt will satisfy my hunger, etc.). An explanation of why I ate the yoghurt must also include some desire on my part, to the effect that, for instance, I desired to sate my hunger.

While arguments made in law courts or to employers take place in a context wherein the audience can be expected to hold some quite specific background desires (the judge: a desire to act in accordance with principles of law and justice; the employer; a desire to act in accordance with the best interests of the company, etc.), and within a framework where the specific beliefs that the argument aims at producing in the audience are closely connected with the desired action. This means that, in the legal case for instance, we have every reason to expect that once I have persuaded the judge that my case is supported by the law, the judge will rule in my favour, with very little possibility of any countervailing desires acting on their motivation. Adverts, on the other hand, can operate with no such certainty. This is partly because, to a large extent, advertisers cannot predict what countervailing desires may weigh upon the motivational framework of the audience such that, even if they accede to the conclusion of the argument presented, they will be motivated to act on it.

What is interesting about many adverts is that the practical reasoning employed assumes goals and values broad enough that the vast majority of their potential audience will share them to some degree. A huge majority of us desire to be healthy, to save money, to eat good food, to live long lives and to not cause more damage to the world than necessary. Why then do these arguments not all work on all of us all the time? Simply put, it is because the desires invoked by the adverts in question do not turn out to be the one that, for whatever reason, is currently the most effective in forming motivations to act. Indeed, although Walton notes that for success in advertising, the designer of an advert using practical reasoning “needs to base it on what he takes to be the commitments of the reader, including the reader’s presumed goals and values.” (Walton 2010, p6), the larger question is, having established that the goals presumed by the advert are likely to be ones shared by the audience, how can the designer of an advert ensure that the desires assumed by the advert will be prominent enough in the audience’s motivational framework to make it likely that the audience will act as the advert intends? This is particularly relevant for understanding the success and failure of advertising campaigns such as those featuring in the STCD, where the more altruistic desires that may prompt one to live a more eco-friendly lifestyle often take a backseat to desires for convenient, cheap and efficient transport.

The answer to this question is complex, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide any detailed account (I am rather concerned to instead spell out how investigation of this issue relates to the analysis of the argumentative strategies of advertisements). I can, however, offer some considerations on how we might begin to approach the issue. The question is best expressed, I think, as one of *salience*; that is, how does an advert make certain background desires salient (i.e. relevant, prominent or important) for an agent in forming motivations to act? There will certainly be many features in advertising that contribute to this, but I would suggest that vanishingly few of them will be revealed through the analysis of those adverts’ argumentative structures. To reiterate, this is not to say that there is no value in analysing the argumentative structure of adverts such as *In Soviet Georgia* and those found in the STCD; there is enormous value in that enterprise. Firstly, because enormous quantities of adverts clearly adopt the rhetorical form of arguments, whether to providing genuine rational support for their aims, or to add the illusion of rational support with the rhetorical trappings of argumentation. In such cases it is very valuable to be able to adjudicate on whether those adverts actually provide the rational support for their aims that they might appear to. Secondly, argumentative analysis provides a powerful, standardised form of analysis that can be helpful in designing and implementing deliberative Artificial Intelligences (Bratman, Israel and Pollack, 1988), although as I have illustrated, those Artificial Intelligences will be unable to accurately account for the behavioural effects of those arguments unless they can determine the ways those arguments make specific background desires salient for motivation to act.

One of the principal observations I want to make here is that just because advertisements can be fruitfully *analysed* as arguments, that does not mean that they necessarily *function* as arguments to their audience. As such, if we are concerned to investigate the *effectiveness* of different kinds of argument in advertising we may not need to be overly concerned with establishing the fallaciousness or validity of any particular example of argument. As we saw in the *In Soviet Georgia* example, the argument expressed by the advert is at best fallacious, and at worst self-refuting, but the advert itself is famously successful in its aim of achieving changes in behaviour. It is highly likely, therefore, that the persuasive force of adverts such as *In Soviet Georgia* is located in places other than the strength of the argument presented.

As mentioned, I suggest that one of the principle places we might look for the success of adverts such as these is in how they make common background desires salient for motivation to act. It has been suggested that this can be achieved through further iterations of modelling practical reasoning (Atkinson et. al , 2006 p.186). This is certainly a potentially powerful method for modelling the way an ideal epistemic agent might order their preferences (and so decide which desires ought to be prioritised in forming motivations to act), but this is another case where it is unclear how much help that would be in predicting the behavioural responses of agents in the real world. Advertisers do not often introduce iterative chains of practical reasoning intended to rationally persuade consumers, but rather make use of emotive devices to help their advertisement, and by proxy the product advertised, remain relevant to the consumer long after the advert has aired (Mehta and Purvis, 2006, Gordon 2006). Such emotional responses, if primed in the audience, are a way of enabling the audience to directly perceive the contents of the advert to be valuable to them; such is the role of emotion in practical reasoning according to a dominant view of emotions in philosophy (Helm 2010). This is plausibly a role that pictures, and other non-argumentative rhetorical features of

advertisements frequently play in the way advertisements are received by audiences. Pictures of smiling, happy centenarians featuring throughout the *In Soviet Georgia* advert, for instance, plausibly dispose their audiences to perceive those scenarios as valuable, and thereby make salient the desire in audiences to be *like those people* in certain respects (healthy, happy, living simple fulfilling lives), and thereby making their recommendations (on things like what kinds of food to eat) more relevant in forming subsequent desires about food purchases. These suggestions are supported by research into the persuasive power of fictional stories, which show how argumentatively irrelevant features of a story, such as how absorbing or immersive the story is, can enable a change in both professed beliefs and measurable behaviour more effectively than traditional argument (Green and Brock 2000). Those who want to use the tools of argumentation theory to understand the persuasive power of advertising should be mindful of the fact that, although revealing the argumentative structure of adverts can reveal very interesting features of those adverts, non-argumentative elements of adverts, those which make certain desires salient for motivation in the audience, are likely to be significantly more important in explaining their behavioural effects than the validity or fallaciousness of the arguments themselves. It would certainly be a useful endeavour in argumentation theory to attempt to formalise those motivation-enabling features of arguments such as those found in advertisements, perhaps enabling them to be integrated into the diagrams commonly used in the field to describe how arguments function. Models which admitted inclusion of such factors would, furthermore, greatly improve the utility of datasets such as the STCD, allowing greater understanding of how and why the included material succeeds or fails in achieving behaviour change.

6. REFERENCES

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