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Uses of Rhetorical Reasoning Theories in Business Communication Researches

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Objectives: By literature review, this paper tries to find how rhetorical reasoning models and theories have been used in business communication both in industry and academia and answer the following questions: 1) Is rhetorical reasoning important for persuasion in business? 2) What kinds of rhetorical reasoning methods have been used in business communication?
Methods: Dissertations and journal articles from RISS (Research Information Sharing Service) and Google Scholar were gathered. Academic sources were reviewed based on the basic frame of research: Domain, Method, and Results.
Results: Theories and models of Perelman, Toulmin, and van Eemeren have been used to explain various phenomena in the field of business. Business fields in this paper include advertising, bank annual reports, downsizing reports, and policy decision making processes.
Conclusions: Rhetorical reasoning is a widely used method in business communication. Several suggestions for future researches are: First, more rhetorical theories and models are needed to be used to business communication research. Second, existing rhetorical reasoning models like the argumentation model of Toulmin need to be tested in more diverse fields of business communication. Third, in addition to text, rhetorical, content analysis, other kinds of research methods such as experiments will be useful for expanding the boundaries of business communication research based on rhetorical reasoning theories.

Key Words: Business Communication, Rhetorical Reasoning, Toulmin, Argumentation, Review Paper

Introduction

Persuasion is an essential part of business communication. Rhetoric is the study of finding the best ways of persuasion. Since the time of classical rhetoricians such as Aristotle (1991), rhetoric has only focused on ways of expression in literature and has departed from the field of logical persuasion (Choi, 2013). But since the 1950s, when Perelman (1982) and Toulmin (2003) opened the Neo-Rhetoric age, rhetoric regained a connection with logical persuasion. While the ancient rhetoric basically focused on politics and public speeches, Neo-Rhetoric expanded its boundaries to the daily lives of people such as in debate (Lee, 2018). Advertising goods to customers, justifying a need for downsizing to internal and external members of a company, pitching to get investments, and many other daily practices exist in the field of business communication and persuasion. Persuasion in business communication does not require absolute truth or mathematically perfect logic. Rather, it requires rhetorical reasoning. Since business communication also addresses mass public and diverse groups, so the communicators need to decide what should be explicitly expressed and what is implicitly considered. Without logic, even colorful advertisements and

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beautiful models are not effective because there are no clear messages to persuade customers.

Therefore, So this paper needs to seek a strategically organized way to use logical methods of persuasion. To do this, we consider Toulmin's argument model, as Toulmin's argument model has been considered to be universally applicable for daily persuasion. We consider two more, those of which are Perelman, who started the era of New Rhetoric, and van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Johnson, Plantin, and Williard (1996), who also suggested other universally applicable reasoning models. Although other rhetoricians can potentially contribute to expand the boundaries of rhetoric (Park, 2012), our paper deals with these three rhetoricians. In this paper, we will see how rhetoric has been expanding the boundaries of the very fields of business communication.

Methods

This paper finds rhetorical reasoning theories in business communication research first from RISS (Research Information Sharing Service, www.riss.kr), the Korean government supported academic information service. There are many articles and dissertations for 'business communication' or 'rhetorical reasoning,' but a few articles and dissertations are for 'business communication' and 'rhetorical reasoning.' So we expanded boundaries to Google Scholar and found a few more articles for 'business communication' and 'rhetorical reasoning'.

The combinations of search words were as follows. In RISS, 'Toulmin,' 'Perelman,' 'Eemeren,' 'Rhetoric, business,' and 'Business, communication, and reasoning,' etc. were used in Korean. In RISS Foreign DB Searching Service, 'Toulmin, business,' 'Perelman, business, and communication,' 'Business, communication, rhetoric, reasoning,' and 'Eemeren, business,' etc. were used. In Google Scholar, there were 'Toulmin, business,' 'Perelman, business, and communication,' and 'Business, communication, rhetoric, and reasoning,' etc. were used. In RISS, we found 53 dissertations and 92 journal articles. In RISS Foreign DB Searching Service, we found 341 journal articles. In Google Scholar, we searched from the first to eleventh page of results of Google Scholar about each combination of search words mentioned above. To narrow down the boundaries, only articles mentioning both keywords are excluded.

This paper selected 12 articles satisfying the following conditions (Table 1): First, the papers provide ample explanations of certain rhetorical reasoning models or at least a certain amount of introduction to rhetorical reasoning. Second, the papers use the rhetorical reasoning models as a key tool for researching their domains. This paper emphasizes the importance of logical reasoning in business communication, so it is excludes other elements of persuasion such as ethos and pathos as well as cases in non-business communication fields with rhetorical reasoning models. Based on the twelve articles, the review consists of three parts: domain, method, and results. In domain, we will see what cases, stakeholders, and issues get attention from the re-

Table 1. Classification of rhetorical reasoning uses in business communication researches

Research	Domain category	Specific domain	Method	Method description
Al-Hindawi & Naji (2018)	External communication	Bank's annual report	Toulmin	Claim, data, and warrant
Choi (2013)	Advertising	French ads.	Perelman	
Hossfeld (2018)	Internal communication	Downsizing	Toulmin	Claim, data, and warrant
Hursti (2011)	External communication	Management earning forecasts from German and Swiss-Swedish engineering groups		Claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal and qualifier
Jaganathan et al. (2014)	Advertising	Automobile ads. in English and German		Claim, data, and warrant
Kang (2014)	Advertising	Printed ads.		Claim, data, and warrant, qualifier
Kisicek (2018)	Advertising	Automobile ads.		Claim, data, and warrant
Kim & Benbasat (2006)	Customer communication	e-commerce		Claim, data, and warrant, Backing
Kim & Benbasat (2009)	Customer communication	e-commerce		Claim, data, and backing
Schmidt (1986)	Business related policy	*In vitro* fertilization		Claim, data, and warrant, Backing
Spinuzzi (2014)	Pitching	Pitching competition in Korea		Claim, data, qualifiers, rebuttal
van Werven et al. (2019)	Pitching	Pitching academy in amsterdam	Toulmin Perelman van Eemeren	

searchers. In method, we will analyze what models and theories of rhetoricians are used in the frame of research. In results, we observe what results come out, what limitations are remaining, and what directions for future researches are suggested.

Results

Domain: What kinds of matters are focused on and researched?

Corporations need business communication when dealing with their main stakeholders (e.g., consumers, inner members, investors, societies, government). To consumers, corporations need to sell their products and gain a higher level of trust and loyalty from consumers (Choi, 2013; Jaganathan, Mayr, & Nagaratnam, 2014; Kang, 2014; Kim & Benbasat, 2006; Kisicek, 2018). For example, they need to persuade inner members of the necessity of structural reform of the organization such as downsizing and relieve the dissatisfaction of members for smoother structural reform (Hossfeld, 2018). Corporations also need to get support from investors in two different scenarios; 1) When corporations need to keep and sustain their business, as they need to show how their business is healthy, they need to maintain their trust and loyalty (Al-Hindawi & Naji, 2018), and 2) When corporations need to start their new a project or business, they need to show how their plan is plausible and possible and how they can guarantee profits for investors (Spinuzzi et al., 2014; van Werven, Bouwmeester, & Cornelissen, 2019). Society and governments can implement and abolish laws and policies that can decide the rise and fall of a specific market (Schmidt, 1986). Corporations can support pro-corporation governmental officials, social groups, and opinion leaders to influence laws and policies for them.

Choi (2013), Jaganathan et al. (2014), Kang (2014), Kim and Benbasat (2006, 2009) and Kisicek (2018) focus on consumers. They use printed and textual advertisements because it is easy to find logical relationships among the parts of advertisements. The goods are varied from cars to hairsprays. When advertising their products, advertisers need to consider the differences among the diverse backgrounds of customers. Jaganathan et al. (2014) investigate the differences of emphasis to English and German customers even though corporations run the same automobile advertisements. The focus of Kim and Benbasat (2006) differs from that of others. Their study focuses on Internet stores, which need to seek safety and security in the transaction process. Unlike offline stores, customers cannot see the appearance of goods and the flow of money. Online stores thus need to show policies that will guarantee safe transactions and gain the trust of customers. As the trust of customers in Internet stores is relatively low, these stores need to communicate in a logical and clear manner about how their policies can provide safe and secure transactions. Kim and Benbasat (2009) also focus on the trust from consumers in online stores. But the factors differ from those of the previous paper. This paper picks up high and low prices of products as the factor and stores themselves and the third parties as the interesting groups. Based on this, the paper tries to compare the persuasive power between claim-only arguments and claims with supporting arguments. Hossfeld (2018) focuses on organizational communication. Manuals and rules cannot cover every situation in a certain organization. As uncertainties exist, people communicate and persuade each other to seek the best way to solve the problems. When changes such as downsizing, which aims to reduce their budget by eliminating employees, the uncertainties become bigger. Germany, unlike the United States, pursues more stability in the job market than flexibility, and the efforts of persuading members to accept downsizing should be more serious (p. 13).

Al-Hindawi and Naji (2018) focus on investors, especially in the case of banks. Annual reports are not only for investors, but also for analysts, workers, shareholders, and other parties (p. 212). By publishing annual reports, the bank shows the stability and potential of the firm in order to gain trust and supports. Management earning forecasts also play a similar role to that of annual reports. Hursti (2011) selects the German engineering group Siemens and the Swiss-Swedish engineering group ABB to show what kinds of forecasts from corporations can and cannot gain trust from investors.

Spinuzzi et al. (2014) and van Werven et al. (2019) focus on investors of start-up companies. Spinuzzi et al. (2014) use the case of Gyeonggi-UT Innovation Program in Korea, the training and competing program for business people to build up their pitch. Their study explores how the preparation of teams has been better following the progress of the program. van Werven et al. (2019) also examine a similar context, the educational environment for start-up businesses, but they use the case of Amsterdam-based business incubator. Schmidt (1986) deals with society and government using the case of *in vitro* fertilization (IVF). Although this paper basically deals with the issues of religion, philosophy, and ethics, allowing or banning IVF has a massive impact on related medical industries. As churches were against IVF, they campaigned to ban IVF. But from the point of view of medical industries, they wanted to pass the policy. These examples show that business communication is not limited only to the business sector. Business communication also needs to consider government regulations and the social atmosphere.

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Model: What rhetorical reasoning models and theories are used?

This paper aims to review how theories have been applied in the field of business communication. As the aim of this paper is not to review what the rhetorical reasoning models are, the basic explanation of reasoning models mentioned in the body was omitted.

Perelman's reasoning schemes are used in Choi (2013). Choi (2013) uses the 'quasi-logical reasoning,' 'reasoning based on already associated,' 'reasoning making new association,' and the 'technique of dissociation' (Park, 2012) suggested by Perelman (1982) and analyzes the reasoning structures of advertisements. Choi (2013) suggests that the 'quasi-logical reasoning' represents enthymeme. Unlike pure logic, this is more flexible in terms of logical structure; some premises can be omitted for the sake of customer persuasion. As reasoning in advertisements demands probabilistic reasoning rather than absolute correctness, some level of overemphasis can be allowed.

The argumentation model of Toulmin is used in Al-Hindawi and Naji (2018), Jaganathan et al. (2014), Hossfeld (2018), Kang (2014), Kim and Benbasat (2006, 2009), Kišiček (2018), Schmidt (1986), and Spinuzzi et al. (2014). Most of them use only claim, data, and warrant and sometimes add backing. It is interesting to see that none of them used all the six elements (Claim, Data, Warrant, Backing, Rebuttal, and Qualifier) of Toulmin's argument model in an explicit manner. The reasons can be explained as follows.

First, it seems that the researchers were unknowingly influenced by the enthymeme of Aristotle, as their background is theoretical. Toulmin's argument model can actually cover reasoning schemes suggested by Aristotle, that is, both inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning (Kang, 2014). Second, the researchers wanted to focus on the explicit parts of reasoning. Backing, Rebuttal, and Qualifiers are neither explicit nor basic parts of Toulmin's argument model from their point of view. Only Jaganathan et al. (2014) mention that backing, rebuttal, and qualifiers are not the ones for the demonstrator, the company in business communication. Rather, as these elements are basically for their opponents and from the advertising industry, according to them, it is unethical to use these strategies (p. 154). But even in an exceptional case such as Hursti (2011) trying to use all the elements of Toulmin, it is quite difficult to reflect on these equally as in the case of unwarranted claims by Siemens (p. 401).

Kišiček (2018) is the perfect example for using only the three basic elements as mentioned above. The starting point of the paper is not reasoning. Instead, the paper introduces simulataneously the basic elements of persuasion such as ethos, pathos, and logos and also incorporates Toulmin's model explaining logos in persuasion. Toulmin's argument model is used to analyze the logical structure of an automobile advertisement (p. 347).

Schmidt (1986) uses claim, data, warrant, backing and omits rebuttals and qualifiers because of the simplicity of the analysis. In the paper, claim and data are explicit, and warrant and backing are implicit. Although warrant and backing are also sometimes explicit, it still depends on the domain and the requirement of certainty. Using the four of the six elements of Toulmin's model, the paper tries to find that both philosophy and theology meaningfully contribute to business ethics.

Kim and Benbasat (2006) also use the same four elements of Toulmin. Their paper sees backing as an element that supports both data and claim while Toulmin originally explains that backing supports warrant and gives grounds on why we can accept warrant as legitimate. As we see in their paper, Toulmin's model can be modified depending on the characteristics of the research object. It shows the flexibility and possibility of expanding the application of Toulmin's Model.

Kim and Benbasat (2009) does not use warrant compared to their previous research, but it make two pairs of comparison in two contrasting situations. The first comparison is between the third party and the store. The second comparison is between claim, data, and backing and claim-only. Combining the previous 4 elements to form 4 pairs, the paper applies the pairs in situations of high and low price product.

Spinuzzi et al. (2014) uses not only claim and data, but also rebuttal and qualifiers to explain the logical elements of pitching decks. It explains rebuttal as a tool for mitigation from possible comments of judges and qualifiers as a tool for making limitations how much boundaries their arguments can apply (p. 16). Using rebuttals and qualifiers are important because arguments made by the recognition of possible rebuttals and own limitations have a higher plausibility than arguments without any consideration of these elements. Omitting 'warrant' and 'backing' makes additional limitations of the research although the authors do not mention this as its own limitation.

In terms of using Toulmin's Argument Model holistically, Hursti (2011) cannot be excluded. Starting by introducing all 6 elements of Toulmin's Model, the paper compares two randomly selected management earnings forecasts from the groups mentioned in the 'II. Domain' section for analyzing their plausibility (p. 399). Although some of six elements such as warrant and backing are not clearly shown in the results section, the paper tried to make the link between all the elements of Toulmin's Model in the interpretation of the results.

van Werven et al. (2019) mentions Perelman, Toulmin, and van Eemeren at the same time and analyzes the structure of

argumentation at the micro level. When their paper mentions Toulmin, it emphasizes 'arguments' and 'grounds.' The paper tries to figure out which kinds of arguments were made by new ventures and what kinds of data supported their arguments. In its mention of van Eemeren, it shows the two kinds of argumentation: explicit and implicit. It tries to use these criteria to compare pre-launch entrepreneurs and post-launch entrepreneurs.

Discussion

According to Hossfeld (2018), the best situation is one in which only arguments and assertions are explicitly expressed and which persuade effectively. But in most of our daily lives, there are many situations in which stakeholders do not agree on certain arguments but rather demand further support to judge the arguments. In this situation, arguments should be supported by plausible warrants and solid data. Kim and Benbasat (2006) show that claims with supporting materials can gain higher trust from customers. To prove this, Kim and Benbasat (2006) also consider the possible use of 'rebuttal' and explain this successfully through further analysis.

As many uncertainties and problems exist in business communication, persuaders need to prepare possible rebuttals and know whether or not their plan will work. The general tendency is maintained in the experiment of Kim and Benbasat (2009) without exception. According to Kim and Benbasat (2009, p. 200), claim-only arguments from the 3rd party have higher credibility from the perspective of consumers than claims with supporting materials from the store in the case of low-price products. Even in the previous situation, claims with supporting materials of each party still have higher credibility than their claim-only materials, but we also need to consider the non-content factor when we apply reasoning models in business communication.

Most of research we review are the qualitative analysis of texts, contents, and cases. A few of them go further to analyze the relationship between the type of contents and responses of consumers by experiments (Kim & Benbasat, 2006, 2009). Hossfeld (2018) analyzes media and workers who oppose downsizing and how they hinder corporate efforts to justify downsizing.

Pitchers modify their decks based on the possible rebuttal from the market. But the way they do so is basically based on experience rather than a systematic approach (Spinuzzi et al., 2014). The authors claim that education based on a systematic approach is necessary. Pitchers who confront journalists, investors, judges, the public, and senior entrepreneurs try to argue that there is a well-prepared team and that customers and environments that are hospitable for the team and its performance can bring be beneficial, so investors must invest in the venture (van Werven et al., 2019). To support these kinds of claims, explicit arguments and data are not always better than their implicit counterparts (van Werven et al., 2019). Although it looks more like back-up and clarity make arguments more plausible, more materials often make room for audiences to find their weaknesses. The rhetorical reasoning model does not only find a way of persuasion. It can be the bridge for business people to reach business ethics originating from philosophy and theology (Schmidt, 1986). Formal logic, which was developed by moral philosophers in the isolation of the ivory tower has made the wall between theory and practice (Schmidt, 1986).

Conclusion

It was found that rhetorical reasoning has already been in use in business communication. Most papers deal with Toulmin's, but we also found the research addressing Perelman's and van Eemeren's. Corporations make various efforts to persuade various stakeholders such as customers, investors, journalists, and workers. One limitation of our research stems from the result of reviewing only 12 articles. If we had access to more research, we could have acknowledged that rhetorical reasoning is not limited to Aristotle and academia but has a strong impact on the larger field of business communication regardless of time and space.

There are a few suggestions for future research. First, this review just found the influence of Toulmin, Perelman, and van Eemeren. As there are numerous other rhetoricians and rhetorical reasoning theories yet untouched, future researches needs to use them to test the explanatory power of these theories in the field of business communication. Second, although this paper found diverse stakeholders already influenced by rhetorical reasoning, future researchers will be able to divide each stakeholder group to sub-groups and find untouched stakeholders to expand the boundaries of rhetorical reasoning application. Third, text, case, and content analysis are the traditional research methods for the application of rhetorical reasoning models and theories. But the usage of various research methods such as the experiments done by Kim and Benbasat (2006, 2009) will open new possibilities of rhetorical reasoning applied to business communication research.

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