

From Rhetorical Figures to Persuasion: A Stylistic Analysis of Bang & Olufsen Advertisement Slogans

Wendi Santani

Bachelor's Programme in English, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries,
Universitas Kristen Maranatha

Jl.. Prof. drg. Surya Sumantri, M.P.H. No. 65, Bandung, West Java

Email: wendisantani3@gmail.com

Abstract

Slogans are usually present in advertisements to capture audience attention and convey persuasive messages through brief and impactful language. This research aims to identify the types of rhetorical figures used in the advertisement slogans of Bang & Olufsen, a luxury audio manufacturer from Denmark. Besides, this study also aims to classify the rhetorical figures identified based on rhetorical operations and figurative modes, and examine how they contribute to influencing potential consumers. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach and applies a library research method to collect and analyze the slogans. The analysis is based on McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) taxonomy of rhetorical figures. The findings show that Bang & Olufsen employs a range of rhetorical figures, including parallelism, epistrophe, hyperbole, ellipsis, pun, alliteration, asyndeton, metaphor, mesodiplosis, and paradox. Among these, parallelism is the most dominant, followed by hyperbole and asyndeton. These figures function to emphasize the products' superior qualities, reinforce the brand's luxury identity, and enhance attention and memorability.

Keywords: advertisement slogan, Bang & Olufsen, rhetorical figures, McQuarrie and Mick, persuasive messages

Introduction

In the digital era, advertising plays a crucial role in determining a product's success. Effective advertisements help brands reach wider audiences and influence consumer preferences and product recognition (Fan, 2022). Advertising can therefore be understood as a strategic communication approach designed to attract, inform, and persuade potential consumers (Shaumiwaty et al., 2024). In modern marketing practice, there are many types of advertisement, such as billboards, radio, television, and social media.

In the last few years, the significant rise in social media users has pushed companies and brands to use many strategies through social media platforms to connect with broader audiences (Sundaram et al., 2020). As a result, each brand must employ a specific linguistic style that differentiates its message from casual daily speech (Septiana et al., 2023). Within this context, one language feature that plays a prominent role is a slogan, which the Oxford University Press (n.d.) defines as “a word or phrase that is easy to remember; to attract people's attention or to suggest an idea quickly.”

A well-crafted slogan is more than a catchy phrase; it is designed to deliver a key message and promote the product as unique and recognizable (Nisa et al., 2024). Thus, a slogan delivers the key qualities of a brand through carefully selected words and expressions, while making the message easier to remember.

To ensure this, advertising language must be persuasive so that the intended message is delivered successfully (Kubro & Suyitno, 2019). One linguistic strategy that strengthens a slogan's memorability and persuasive function is the deliberate use of rhetorical figures. According to Corbett (1990, as cited in McQuarrie & Mick, 1996), a rhetorical figure is usually defined as an "artful deviation" (p. 425). As stated by Kühn et al. (2025), it is a deliberate language structure used to persuade, emphasize ideas, and create emotion.

In linguistics, the use of rhetorical figures belongs to stylistics, which focuses on how writers use language features to create meaning and influence how readers understand a text (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2022). To examine how slogans achieve potential persuasive appeal, this study applies McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) taxonomy of rhetorical figures as the main theory. This taxonomy is widely used because it systematically categorizes rhetorical figures into schemes and tropes. According to McQuarrie and Mick (1996), rhetorical figures can be classified into two figurative modes: scheme and trope. Scheme focuses on regularity, whereas tropes focus on irregularity. Two types of rhetorical operations apply to each mode. Repetition and reversal belong to the schematic mode, while substitution and destabilization are categorized under the tropic mode. Accordingly, scheme is less complex than trope, and the figures vary in their gradient of deviation.

Beyond classification, rhetorical figures are valued for their persuasive functions. In this study, Leech's (1966, as cited in Sun, 2022) view is used to analyze the possible persuasive functions. According to Leech (1966, as cited in Sun, 2022), advertising language functions to persuade the audience. This form employs two key stylistic strategies: parallelism and deviation. Leech stated that these stylistic strategies help improve attractiveness, readability, memorability, and persuasive power. By using these strategies, advertised products become easier to remember, interesting, and clear.

Several studies have analyzed rhetorical figures in advertising language. For example, Sani, Suhendra, and Abdussamad (2024) analyzed fifteen biscuit advertisement slogans and found the most dominant figures to be metaphor, hyperbole, and repetition. Another study by Mustansar, Farid, and Hussain (2024) shows hyperbole and metaphor as most frequent, creating a memorable effect. Lastly, Rosli and Azman (2024) also applied McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) taxonomy to analyze slogans from five online Instagram shops and found eleven types of rhetorical figures. However, most previous studies focus only on finding the types and functions of rhetorical figures. This research is therefore extended to analyze rhetorical operations, figurative modes, and their possible persuasive effects on consumers, which provides a deeper understanding of rhetorical figures in luxury brand advertisements.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that none of the previous studies discussed above focus on luxury brand advertisements, which tend to employ more sophisticated and distinctive language compared to other product categories. One luxury brand that employs sophisticated language in its advertisements is Bang & Olufsen, a Danish luxury audio manufacturer. Bang & Olufsen was founded by Peter Bang and Svend Olufsen in November 1925 (Beoworld, n.d.) and is recognized for its high-end speakers, headphones, and home audio products. Bang & Olufsen positions itself as a luxury brand through quality, design, exclusivity, and premium experience.

According to Ko et al. (2019), a brand is considered luxury when perceived as "high quality; authentic" or having "a prestigious image built on artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality" (p. 2). Emil Kuch Jørgensen, Head of Transformation and Strategy, states that Bang & Olufsen must be associated with "luxury experience" when advertised (Columbus, 2025).

In this context, Bang & Olufsen's advertising language offers insight into how luxury brands captivate consumers. Their slogans employ distinctive language that reflects the brand's luxury identity, making them worth examining in terms of the rhetorical figures used to attract and persuade.

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What types of rhetorical figures are identified in Bang & Olufsen advertisement slogans?
2. What are the types of rhetorical operations identified in each rhetorical figure?
3. What are the types of figurative modes that the rhetorical figures belong to?
4. How do the rhetorical figures of Bang & Olufsen advertisement slogans help persuade potential consumers?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to the field of stylistics as this can become a reference for further researchers. Besides, the study can also provide advertisers with a deeper understanding of how to construct catchy and memorable slogans. Furthermore, the findings of this research are also expected to enrich the overall understanding of how rhetorical figures in luxury brand advertisements contribute to possible persuasive appeal on consumers in purchasing their products.

Method

The study uses a qualitative research method. According to Oranga and Matere (2023), this method aims to investigate and provide an in-depth and detailed explanation of a phenomenon using non-numerical data, such as audio, video, text, transcripts, etc. In addition, the research belongs to descriptive research, whose goal is to present a systematic, factual, and accurate explanation of the characteristics, and details of the phenomena being researched (Furidha, 2024). The qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate to apply because this study involves analyzing non-numerical data which are then described in a systematic, factual, and accurate way.

The research employs a library research method, in which the researcher systematically gathers and examines information from different sources, including printed works and internet-based materials, to find answers to the research problems (George, 2008). Library research is suitable for this study since all the data and references are taken and analyzed using search engines and books.

In this study, the data are advertisement slogans from Bang & Olufsen. Slogans that qualify as data are those that specifically contain rhetorical figures. Bang & Olufsen is a luxury audio brand established in Denmark in 1925 by Peter Bang and Svend Olufsen. The brand is widely recognized for its speakers, headphones, televisions, and home audio products. Bang & Olufsen has been well known for its innovation in pioneering universal remote controls and integrated home audio systems for more than a hundred years (Bang & Olufsen, 2025).

In conducting this research, several steps were followed. First, the types of rhetorical figures were identified based on McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) taxonomy of rhetorical figures in advertising. Then, these rhetorical figures were further classified according to the types of rhetorical operation and the types of figurative mode. Finally, each rhetorical figure was analyzed in relation to their persuasive effects on the target audience.

Results and Discussion

In this research, seven slogans are selected from Bang & Olufsen advertisements across different product categories, including speakers, ateliers, and home-theatres. Each slogan emphasizes different core messages that reflect the product's distinctive features and brand identity.

“Looks like nothing else. Sounds like nothing else.” (2025)

The first slogan “Looks like nothing else. Sounds like nothing else.” is taken from Bang & Olufsen speaker product, namely the Beosound A1 3rd Gen, which was released in May 2025. This slogan contains four rhetorical figures; they are parallelism, epistrophe, hyperbole, and ellipsis. Both parallelism and epistrophe are categorized under the rhetorical operation of repetition and belong to scheme, whereas hyperbole and ellipsis belong to the rhetorical operation of substitution and are categorized as the tropic figurative mode.

According to Harris (1997, p. 10), parallelism is the repetition of similar structure in sentences or part of sentences. The slogan “Looks like nothing else. Sounds like nothing else.” contains parallelism because the two sentences share the same construction. The repeated construction is Verb + Preposition + Noun Phrase.

The second rhetorical figure identified in the slogan is epistrophe. McQuarrie and Mick (1996) stated that epistrophe is the repetition of words that occurs at the end of phrases (p. 430). It can be seen that in the slogan “Looks like nothing else. Sounds like nothing else.” the phrase “like nothing else” is repeated at the end of the two clauses.

The third rhetorical figure found in the slogan is hyperbole, which refers to an overstatement or an excessive claim (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). The hyperbole in this slogan can be identified in the phrase “like nothing else.” According to Reverso (n.d.), the phrase “nothing else” means “no other thing or item.” This makes the slogan an overstatement because it suggests that no other brands of the same product are comparable to the Beosound A1 3rd Gen, in terms of design and sound quality. Thus, this constructs an exaggerated impression of uniqueness.

The last rhetorical figure identified in this slogan is ellipsis. According to McQuarrie and Mick (1996), ellipsis is “a gap or omission that has to be completed.” In the slogan “Looks like nothing else. Sounds like nothing else.”, ellipsis can be observed in the omission of the subject in the two clauses, which mainly functions to create a concise and impactful slogan, which is typical in advertising language.

“A1 of a kind” (2025)

The next slogan “A1 of a kind” is taken from another advertisement for the same speaker product previously discussed, namely the Beosound A1 3rd Gen, which was released in May 2025. The slogan contains two rhetorical figures, namely pun and hyperbole. Pun uses the destabilization rhetorical operation, whereas hyperbole uses the substitution rhetorical operation. Both rhetorical figures belong to the tropic figurative mode.

The first rhetorical figure found in the slogan is pun. According to McQuarrie and Mick (1996, p. 431), pun is a “substitution based on accidental similarity.” In the slogan “A1 of a kind,” the pun is in the form of a homophone. According to the Literary Devices (n.d.-b), homophone is “is a word that shares the same pronunciation as another word but has a different meaning and usually a different spelling.” The word *A1* in the slogan is pronounced as /eɪ wʌn/, which sounds the same as “a one” /eɪ wʌn/. In the slogan, “A1” refers both to the product name and to the expression “one of a kind,” which means “the only person or thing of a particular type” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a). Thus, Bang & Olufsen uses a pun to emphasize the product’s identity while at the same time constructing an image of exclusivity.

Another rhetorical figure that can be identified in this slogan is hyperbole, specifically in the “one of a kind” interpretation. McQuarrie and Mick (1996) stated that hyperbole is an “exaggerated or extreme claim.” The expression “one of a kind” suggests absolute uniqueness, which functions as a hyperbolic claim that constructs the product as unique and exclusive within its category.

“Small size. Serious sound.” (2025)

The next slogan “Small size. Serious sound.” is also another slogan taken from the advertisement for speaker Beosound A1 3rd Gen, which was released in May 2025. The slogan contains three rhetorical figures, namely alliteration, parallelism, and asyndeton. Both alliteration and parallelism belong to the repetition rhetorical operation and the schematic figurative mode, whereas asyndeton belongs to substitution rhetorical operation and the tropic figurative mode.

The first rhetorical figure identified in the slogan “Small size. Serious sound.” is alliteration. According to Harris (1997, p. 44), alliteration is “the recurrence of initial consonant sounds.” In this slogan, the alliteration can be seen from the consonant /s/ in all the words.

Another rhetorical figure found in the slogan is parallelism. Parallelism is the “recurrent syntactical similarity” (Harris, 1997, p. 10). In the slogan “Small size. Serious sound.”, parallelism can be seen from the two phrases which have the same structure, namely Adjective + Noun.

The last rhetorical figure identified in this slogan is asyndeton, which is an omission of “conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses” (Harris, 1997, p. 6). The slogan can be interpreted as using asyndeton since the two phrases are presented without conjunctions such as “but,” “yet,” or “and” that is usually used when connecting two ideas. As a result, the asyndeton creates a concise and impactful contrast between size and sound quality.

“You dream it. We craft it.” (2025)

The slogan “You dream it. We craft it.” is taken from an advertisement for Atelier Art Deco Limited Edition in May 2025. There are two rhetorical figures found in the slogan, namely parallelism and epistrophe. Both figures are classified under the rhetorical operation of repetition and belong to the schematic figurative mode.

As explained in the previous data, parallelism appears when consecutive sentences or phrases share the same grammatical pattern (Magnusson & Schalkwyk, 2019). In this slogan, the two sentences “You dream it” and “We craft it” repeat the same sentence construction, which follows the structure Pronoun + Verb + Pronoun.

The next rhetorical figure found in the slogan is epistrophe. According to Literary Devices (n.d.-a), epistrophe refers to the repetition of words or phrases at the end of sentences. In the slogan “You dream it. We craft it.”, the epistrophe can be seen where “it” is repeated at the end of the two clauses.

“Pinnacle of audio. Floor standing speakers perfected.” (2015)

The slogan “Pinnacle of audio. Floor standing speakers perfected.” is taken from Bang & Olufsen’s Beolab 90, a floor-standing speaker released in November 2015. This slogan contains three rhetorical figures; they are metaphor, hyperbole, and asyndeton. Metaphor employs the destabilization rhetorical operation, while hyperbole and asyndeton use the substitution rhetorical operation. All three rhetorical figures are classified under the figurative mode of trope.

The first rhetorical figure identified in this slogan is metaphor. According to Harris (1997), metaphor can be defined as a rhetorical figure that describes one thing as if it were another to show a comparison between them. In the slogan “Pinnacle of audio. Floor standing speakers perfected.”, the metaphor is found in the word *pinnacle*. The word *pinnacle* literally means “a towering peak, as of a mountain” (Collins Dictionary, n.d.-b). The word is used metaphorically because the slogan compares the idea of reaching a mountain’s peak with achieving the highest possible level of sound quality. Thus, the physical height of a mountain is used to represent excellence in audio.

The second rhetorical figure identified in the slogan is hyperbole, which is an intentional exaggeration (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). The hyperbole is shown in the keywords *pinnacle* and *perfected*. In the slogan “Pinnacle of audio. Floor standing speakers perfected.”, the word *pinnacle* can be defined as “the highest point of development or achievement” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Moreover, this exaggeration is further supported by the definition of the word *perfected* in “Floor standing speakers perfected.”, which is “to make something free from faults” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-b) or “to make fully accomplished” (Collins Dictionary, n.d.-a). Both definitions express an extreme claim, which constructs an exaggerated impression that the product has reached the highest level of quality and refinement. Bang & Olufsen wants to claim that this product is presented as fully perfected and has no more mistakes or weaknesses to fix. Since no product can literally be free from faults and achieve perfections, these statements are forms of exaggeration.

The last rhetorical figure found in the slogan is asyndeton, which is an omission of “conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses” (Harris, 1997, p. 6). In the slogan “Pinnacle of audio. Floor standing speakers perfected.”, asyndeton can be identified as the two ideas are presented without conjunctions, which creates a concise and emphatic structure.

“Thrill meets throttle. Vision meets velocity.” (2024)

The slogan “Thrill meets throttle. Vision meets velocity.” comes from an advertisement of the Beovision Theatre Ferrari Edition announced in October 2024. There are three rhetorical figures identified in the slogan, which are alliteration, mesodiplosis, and parallelism. All of the rhetorical figures employ the repetition rhetorical operation and belong to the schematic figurative mode.

The first rhetorical figure found in this slogan is alliteration. According to Harris (1997), alliteration is “the recurrence of initial consonant sounds” (p. 44). In the slogan “Thrill meets throttle. Vision meets velocity.”, it can be seen that the initial consonant sounds /θr/ are repeated in the words *thrill* /θrɪl/ and *throttle* /θrɒtl/. Moreover, the same initial sound /v/ in *vision* /ˈvɪʒn/ and *velocity* /vəˈlɒsəti/ is also repeated.

The next rhetorical figure found is mesodiplosis. Mesodiplosis is “repetition of the same word or words in the middle of successive sentences” (Silva Rhetoricae, n.d.). In the slogan “Thrill meets throttle. Vision meets velocity.”, it can be seen that the word “meets” is located in the middle of successive sentences and is repeated.

The last rhetorical figure identified is parallelism, which occurs when the structure of phrases or sentences is written similarly (Harris, 1997, p. 10). In the slogan “Thrill meets throttle. Vision meets velocity.”, both sentences share the same sentence structure, which is Noun + Verb + Noun.

“Big, crowd-pleasing sound. Deceptively versatile design.” (2020)

The last slogan “Big, crowd-pleasing sound. Deceptively versatile design.” comes from an advertisement for the Beolit 20 Bluetooth speaker in October 2020. There are two rhetorical figures in this slogan, which are asyndeton and paradox. Asyndeton belongs to the substitution rhetorical operation, while paradox belongs to the destabilization rhetorical operation. Asyndeton and paradox use the tropic figurative mode.

The slogan “Big, crowd-pleasing sound. Deceptively versatile design.” contains asyndeton, which is an omission of “conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses” (Harris, 1997, p. 6). In the slogan, the two phrases are separated by a full stop and remove conjunctions such as “and” or “but.”

The next rhetorical figure identified in the slogan is paradox. According to McQuarrie and Mick (1996), a paradox is “a self-contradictory, false, or impossible statement.” In the slogan “Big, crowd-pleasing sound. Deceptively versatile design.”, the paradox can be seen in the phrase “deceptively versatile.” The word “deceptively” suggests that the design may appear simple or limited at first glance, but in reality, it is highly versatile (Dictionary.com, n.d.). This creates a clear contradiction between expectation and reality, which draws attention to the product’s hidden capabilities of producing powerful and crowd-pleasing sound.

Overall, the use of rhetorical figures in these slogans collectively contributes to constructing a strong luxury brand image for Bang & Olufsen. According to Harris (1997), parallelism presents two ideas of equal importance while improving balance, rhythm, and clarity, and epistrophe reinforces key ideas by placing emphasis through repetition at the end of clauses. Together, these two figures enhance the memorability and rhythm of the slogans, making them more engaging to the audience. Harris (1997) further explains that repetition at the structural level creates smoothness and proportion, making slogans easier to grasp and more memorable.

Hyperbole amplifies a message by making exaggerated claims that capture attention, while metaphor makes abstract or complex ideas more accessible through concrete comparisons. Both figures work together to construct an exaggerated impression of superior quality and excellence, which is essential in luxury branding. Alliteration further supports this by drawing attention to key phrases and fixing them in the reader’s memory, while asyndeton produces conciseness and immediacy, giving the slogans a sharp and impactful quality. Mesodiplosis similarly reinforces central messages through medial repetition, and ellipsis invites deeper engagement by leaving elements deliberately unstated.

Pun and paradox, on the other hand, stimulate thinking and imagination engagement. Pun generates two simultaneous interpretations from a single word or phrase, while paradox reveals an unexpected or contradictory relationship, both of which encourage the audience to interpret the slogan more deeply. All of these functions align with Leech’s (1966, as cited in Sun, 2022) argument that effective advertising must capture attention, be easy to understand, and remain memorable. Together, these rhetorical strategies ensure that Bang & Olufsen products are not only perceived as functional, but also as symbols of exclusivity and high performance, reinforcing the brand’s identity in luxury audio and home entertainment.

Conclusion

This research aims to identify and classify the rhetorical figures found in Bang & Olufsen’s advertisement slogans based on McQuarrie and Mick’s (1996) taxonomy of rhetorical figures in advertising. In total, there are ten types of rhetorical figures found; they are parallelism (21%), hyperbole (16%), asyndeton (16%), epistrophe (11%), alliteration (11%), ellipsis (5%), pun (5%), metaphor (5%), mesodiplosis (5%), and paradox (5%). In terms of rhetorical operations, three types are identified; they are repetition (47%), substitution (37%), and destabilization (16%). No rhetorical figure using the reversal rhetorical operation is found. Regarding the figurative modes, both schematic (47%) and tropic (53%) figurative modes are identified, with the tropic mode being slightly more dominant.

Regarding the possible persuasive contribution of the rhetorical figures, all the rhetorical figures found in Bang & Olufsen's advertisement slogans generally function to make the messages clearer, more engaging, and more memorable, which contributes to constructing a strong luxury brand image. Parallelism and epistrophe improve rhythm and memorability, making the slogans easier to grasp. Hyperbole and metaphor help construct an exaggerated impression of superior quality and excellence, which is particularly important for a luxury brand. Furthermore, alliteration and asyndeton help emphasize the main message while also creating a direct and impactful impression. Lastly, pun and paradox encourage deeper interpretation, which reflects the values the brand is built upon, namely exclusivity, craftsmanship, and refinement. It can be concluded that the use of rhetorical figures in Bang & Olufsen's slogans contributes to stronger brand recall and helps establish a stronger connection between the consumer and the advertised product.

Despite these contributions, this research has several limitations that should be noted. This research only focuses on a single luxury audio brand, which means that the findings cannot be generalized to all luxury audio brands or products. Thus, future research may consider including a wider range of brands in order to obtain a more balanced and comprehensive perspective. Besides, this research only applies a single theoretical framework, namely McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) taxonomy. Future research may consider integrating alternative theoretical approaches in order to gain additional perspectives and further enrich the overall understanding of the topic.

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