SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

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Abstract

One cannot rule out the fact that the world has entered in the phase of global village. The social media is a formidable bridge connecting people of all works and space into a community of equality. Entrepreneurs have maximized the advertising space opportunity offered by social media to sell their goods and services. The innovative window opened through social media has made a conspicuous paradigm shift from the physical market to virtual market for enrepreneurs. The objective of this study is to investigate the rhetorics of social media entrepreneurs to determine how their choice of words, as it relates to their social environment affect their target audience; in other word, how they were used to persuade their target audience of their products. Aristotelian Rhetoric is employed to guide the study. This study made use of both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, 22 short videos from Facebook were randomly selected, and; descriptive analysis carried out to draw inferences on them.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Social Media, Aristotelian rhetorics, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Introduction

The social media is now a platform which has brought everyone into a unified communication community, as such, it has provided individuals space where they can explore their liberty of expression and interaction with a larger population without restrictions to race and nation, so long the language of communication can be comprehended. Apart from the virtual world made possible through the media, it has equally made provision of trade. The internet has become a global market place for people, where the buying and selling of all kinds of commodities and services are made public to its targeted audience. One positive thing about this channel is the chance given for the promotion of any kind of product with or without a formal certification of the credibility of their consumption.

Nevertheless, entrepreneurs have maximize this virtual market place such as Whatsapp, Instagram, You tube and Facebook not just to advertise their products but also sell to those who need those products or services. The Facebook for one is an internet platform through which entrepreneurs have maximized to advertise and market their products. Both registered companies and the unregistered ones use this platform to reach their targeted audience. Entrepreneurs take advantage of the wider users of Facebook to have a wider connection to people and persuade their targeted audience to buy their products.

Although Facebook serve as a platform for advertisement for many entrepreneurs, with little or less attention paid to the credibility of the products and services, these products brandished on the social media platform; both private and public companies still use it as a potential tool for the

advertisement of their products and services. Apart from the ease of interaction and communication between the entrepreneur and their customers, online advertisement technologies give advertisers access to more precise ad targeting capabilities, which are not available for offline advertising. It is also observed that pricing mechanisms of online advertisement are also different (European Commission, 2010) cited in (Ungureanu, A. & Popescu, D., 2022). Facebook as a marketplace for entrepreneurs has a large and growing network community is now a potential tool for a great number of entrepreneurs to reach their targeted audience and create a stronger relationship with them (Jamil, K.Dunnan, L., Gul R.F., Shehzad, M.U., Gillani, S.H.M. & Awan F. H., 2022).

The social media advertising is gaining popularity each passing year because of its ability to bring the real life situation into the virtual world. Apart from that, the social media space creates no boundary for subscribers who wish to get into its site or place advert for its target except which defies the sites terms of service or reported offensive by its users. These features make entrepreneurs to interact with their target audience closely, and easily.

More so, there are features added to the social media app which paves for more complex potentials which aid the users, especially for the entrepreneurs, to create a good package for their products and services. These app features give impressive and greater network possibilities and opportunities for brand awareness.

This work looked into the persuasive language these entrepreneurs employ to market their products and services. The need for the consumption for these products and services may not be the only elements considered in the patronage of products and services but also the way through which these entrepreneurs creatively weave the choice of their language to achieve their aim.

Review of Related Literature

The word entrepreneur originated from a French verb 'entreprendre' which means to supply or create a space to do something basically for profit. An entrepreneur creates an opportunity using the factors available to it. An entrepreneur is the engine head for economic growth and progress of the economy (Henrekson. M. & Stenkula, M., 2016).

The population is fast growing beyond the available resource and this has brought with it competition even in the business world. Everyone tries to find a viable and effective channel to reach a greater population of customers. Entrepreneurs as inventors in a bid to find the best possible way to make profit and solve the needs of the targeted audience has to look for other alternative means which is a sway from the traditional means of advertisement invented a new market space which is social media to reach their customers. The COVID-19 Pandemic also gave this social media market space or digital advertisement helped to give it its popularity and it influential. This new innovation became more popular due to its ease and speed of circulation of information. In this social space, business owners and entrepreneurs found a platform to keep their businesses afloat (Modgil, S. Dwivedi .K., Rana, R.P., Gupta, S., Gamble, S., 2021). The found opportunities in the market space social media was explored created opportunities to reach wider population of targets for their products and services (Verma, M. & Chaurasia A., 2020). Some of

these entrepreneurs created content pages in social media space with either their brand names or a pseudo names.

Digital entrepreneurship is said to be generative and this idea fall into the concept of entrepreneurship where "digital infrastructure helps entrepreneurs follow the democratic process of opportunity with consideration given to concept testing, funding, and launch…Digital entrepreneurship has seen a sincere persuasion in recent times due to the availability of technologies such as cloud computing, big data analytics, and market spaces" (Modgil, S. Dwivedi .K., Rana, R.P., Gupta, S., Gamble, S., 2021, p. 3).

Online Social Networks Advertisement Platform

Online social networks are digital platforms created for professional, non-professional, and social and product interaction. People share their opinions, products and services with the global community with the sole intention to influence users. Features of online social platform include: dissemination of engaging content, dialogue, creation, and communication to a broader audience. Essentially, it is a digital space created by people and for people, providing a conducive environment for interactions and networking at different levels (e.g., personal, professional, commercial, marketing, political, and social) (Alemany et al., 2023) cited in (Ju´ arez-Var´ on, D. & Monreal, G.E., 2025).

(Adepotun, 2017) cited in (Olarenwaju, T.P. Whiteside, N., Hossain, M.A.& Mercieca, P., 2018) noted that social media has boosted the market of small and medium scale Enterprises the in Nigeria by around 27% between March and May 2017 due to recognition of new opportunities and enhanced market size of the products and services of entrepreneurs through the ease of interaction with the targeted population or clients. The adoption of social media as a market space is premised on the ease of its usage by entrepreneurs while connecting to their targeted client. The interface of the application of the social media platform is found to be user friendly, such that those not pose a challenge or seem complicated for its users. The non-complicated nature of the social apps encourages users to have such app for ease of connection with people in their internet circle (J.-O. Lee & Kim, 2013) cited in (Shokery, N. H., Nawi, N.B., Nasir, N.B. & Mamun, A.A., 2016). More so, they observed in their review that student entrepreneurs took advantage of the social media influence on people to salvage their connection with a wider population. Having, discovered the attitude or behavior of people in using a particular social app, a lot of entrepreneurs make it their market space and advertisement platform, thus "social influence will be used as one of the factors affecting the adoption of social media as a business platform… social media is one of the main tools for them in operating their online business (p. 46)."

In Social media advertisement, its potency is in its conversational content. The conversational content of the adverts on social media encourages consumers to socialize. As such, the consumers have the chance to discuss with the vendor on the product they want to purchase (Bastos, 2020). The interation between the intended customers with the entrepreneure contributes to one of the reasons people like to make their pirchases through social media platform market space. The customers can ask questions concerning the products they wan to buy

and also view previous conversation of other consumers who had used the products to giving their individual opinions about the product.

The conversational content of the social media platform does not only encourage consumers socialization with these entreprenures but includes assessment avenue for their products and services which they reder to their clients. Initiating crowdsourcing activities, entrepreneures gathers information on the opinion of people towards their products. The entrepreneure engage this strategy to improve their ability to obtain market information, analyze it, and develop responses to attract, satisfy, and retain customers. In addition to this is that companies use social networks for organizational improvement, achieve continuous organizational learning. Adapting and adopting new strategies for the sustenance of their business, make them have edge over others, and increase the need for innovation to improve business competitiveness (Ju´arez-Var´on, D. & Monreal, G.E., 2025).

Use of Language in Online Marketing

The use of language in online marketing has garnered the interests of several researchers and scholars, among whom are (Boja, T.V., & Kaviya, P., 2023).Their study examines the language choices in online marketing and observes that online marketers use words, phrases, and linguistic structures that capture the interest and attention of their audience and further persuade and turn them into customers. For instance, they observe the use of metaphors, storytelling, idioms, and cultural nuances as strategies for attracting their audience engagements and also persuading them to patronise their products. (Edramimath, P. & Patil, P.B., 2025), reveal that the internet is a vast community with people from different socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political backgrounds and, as a result, an inappropriate use of language can prevent online marketers from reaching customers that identify with certain social, cultural, economic, and political groups. This means that they need to be tactical with their use of language in online marketing in order to accommodate every prospective customer.

After examining the persuasive language of online marketing, (Septianasari, L., Baihaqi, Y., abqoriyya, F.H. & Syaputri, W., 2021) observed that digital marketers usually adopt directive illocutionary act, which they use to give guidelines, recommendations, suggestions, advice, and instructions to customers on how, why, when, and where to purchase and use their products. Afrizan and Majid (2023) identify the use of simple, creative, and interesting language in digital marketing to ensure clarity, comprehension, and persuasion. They also observe that online marketers adopt language styles that are suitable for different social media platforms in their marketing communications. They do this because each social media platform has a specific type of audience it targets.

To align with the submission of (Afrizan, D.E. &Majid, N., 2023), (Ghosh, 2022) maintains that the language styles of every marketing material, including online marketing videos, must suit the culture of the target audience. (Alnassai, J.M.I.A.A. & Roze, S.S.S., 2024), opine that adopting simple, clear, and culturally sensitive language is the key to a successful online marketing, especially when done on social media. In addition to that, (Ghedeir, 2021) states that the use of foreign language, irrespectively of how sparingly, can also play a key role in effective

communication and persuasion because it will influence a certain target group to identify with the product as belonging or respecting their culture. Such linguistic strategy can also be used by marketers to reveal the origin of their products.

In summary, the language of online marketing is designed to be persuasive, engaging, and accommodating. Marketers need to consider the background of their target audience as well as the culture of the social media platform they are using as outlets while constructing their marketing materials. The ability of the marketers to use language effectively determines the success of their efforts.

Language of Persuasion in Social Media Advertisement

Language is a tool for communication which one uses to express one's inner thought. Language is giving voice to that voiceless thoughts and ideas, and giving them a concrete quality; an evidence that can be analyzed linguistically. Social media entrepreneurs use language to reach their audience and present to the general public their products and services in an exclusive way. The language of advertisement is created to persuade. The aim of using well-crafted language in advertisement by entrepreneurs are to assert their opinion, captivate, entice, and convince the customers to change their behavior and accept the former's opinion (Yousaf, M.S., Akram,W, & Shahid, S., 2025).

Gillopie, (2013) cited in (Okey-Kalu, O.J., Abana, C.O.H. & Nweke, N.U, 2022), states that persuasion is the type of communication which sways people's opinion and perception to make them change their attitude towards accepting the convincing message. Searle (1969) and Lakoff (1982) cited in (Momayezalashjar, E. & Farah, S., 2022) see persuasion a communicative technique created to convince, for the former using an instructive speech act while the later posits the persuasion is a speech act, which Brown & Levinson (1987) calls Face Threatening Act (FTA) in their Politeness theory, cited in (Momayezalashjar, E. & Farah, S., 2022)

Entrepreneurs are careful with the choice of words in their adverts because the main aim of these adverts is to change the opinion of people, and make their targeted audience accept the products offered to them. As such, they choose the word that appeals to the taste and psychology of the age and culture of the target audience. (Oyedapo, O. & Orji, R., 2022), noted that persuasion is meant to change people's behavior or attitude should not be by coercion or deception, rather choosing linguistic items that appeals to the target audience, such as personal markers and endophoric markers. The personal markers, hedges and emphatic adjectives are to ensure that the targeted audience interpret the advert as expected (Hidarto, 2021).

Apart from the endophoric markers which contribute to the persuasive strength in advertisement, there are also the identification of specific linguistic features that are consistently employed to convey persuasive messages in social media advertisements. The analysis of Instagram advertisements, for example, reveals that the prevalent use of colloquial and informal language is intended to foster closeness and mutual relationship between influencers and their target audience (De Veirman, M., hudders, L.,& Nelson, M. R., 2019). The integration of everyday language helps dismantle formal barriers and enhances the perceived authenticity of the message.

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(Momayezalashjar, E. & Farah, S., 2022), identified five recurring linguistic features in social media advertising, particularly in the context of language learning posts in Iran. These features include: hyperbole, exaggerated expressions which are intended to captivate the attention and interest of the audience, weasel words, an ambiguous or non-committal language that softens the impact of claims, familiar language, that is, the use of common and simple conversational vocabulary, the imperative forms, which is meant to get an immediate reaction from the consumer and the potency which lays emphasis on the strength and effectiveness of the product or service.

These linguistic features are creatively woven or created to appeal to the emotions of the targeted audience and influence the behaviors of the targeted audience and sustain the engagement by establishing a strong emotional connection with the target audience.

Theoretical Framework

This research work adopted Aristotelian Rhetorics to guide its study. The Aristotelian rhetoric will help to understand persuasion in communication, especially in social media advertisement. The Greek philosopher identified three primary modes of persuasion which are: ethos, pathos and logos. He opined that speakers can influence his listeners if he can employ the three persuasion modes.

Ethos means credulity, if the speaker can prove his trustworthiness of his speech, it can get people to accept his opinion and get the targeted or desired response Moliner & Spicer (2004) and Rapp, (2022) cited in (Okey-Kalu, O.J., Abana, C.O.H. & Nweke, N.U, 2022). Pathos involves appealing to the emotions of the listeners to persuade them to accept the opinion or line of thought of the speaker. The speaker incites certain feelings in the mind of his audience. The logos refers to the use of logical reasoning to persuade the audience to accept the speaker's idea. The three modes of rhetoric are used to incite the audience, "convey favourable impression on your own character and intentions, and in inspiring the listeners with such feelings and sentiments as desirable for yourself and your own case, and adverse to your opponent." (Cope, 2022, p. 6).

In this paper, the Aristotelian Rhetoric three modes of persuasion are applied by in the analysis of the data collected for this work. As such, we were able to analyze how English language is used by the selected social media entrepreneurs in their advertisement for the persuasion and conviction of their targeted audience.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The data are broadly categorised into four – ethos, logos, pathos, and overlaps – to capture the rhetoric in the selected videos. The utterances used to construct each rhetoric are presented and discussed to reveal the use of registers by the marketers to achieve persuasion.

Ethos

Some of the marketers adopted ethos as their persuasive device. In some cases, marketers adopt this device by persuading their audience to purchase the products they are selling because of their

(the products') reliability. Examples of utterances used to construct this rhetoric are presented as extracts 1 to 7.

Extract 1

I spent over 100,000 pennies and I glued them to the floor in my house. (Gorilla Super Glue marketing)

Extract 2

Never moving within seconds because of Gorilla Super Glue (Gorilla Super Glue marketing)

Extract 3

But it's not just an ordinary backpack. It has a simple design yet incredibly powerful functions (Japanese school bag marketing)

Extract 4

And if you're running schools, this is actually very important for you because it helps you collect school fees straight from parents' accounts. (Payment app marketing)

Extract 5

You can watch the entire finale in one go. (Melo TV app marketing 1)

Extract 6

Whether they are of intense plots or peaceful ending types, whatever you want, it's all there (Melo TV app marketing 2)

Extract 7

It is available and affordable (construction product marketing)

Extracts 1 and 2 present the high quality of the product (a brand of super glue) by giving a tangible example of what it can do. Extract 3 attempts to persuade by stating that the product has other important functions besides its primary purpose. Extracts 4 and 5 present the credibility of the products by stating that they (the products) can help the viewer solve specified problems. Extracts 6 and 7 further construct ethos by revealing some of the special features the marketed products.

Furthermore, the marketers use terms that are related to the products they are marketing to construct ethos. For example, "glued" (extract 1), "backpack" (extract 3), "school fees" (extract 4), and "plots" (extract 6) can tell the purpose of the products to the audience because they are related to the specialisation of the items. This strategy does not imply professionalism and a deeper knowledge of the field but also informs the audience about the usefulness of the items in solving their problems.

In some instances, ethos is achieved when speakers express the credibility of the marketer, the producer of the product or the individuals offering the advertised services. An example of this kind of expression is presented in extract 8, where the speaker reveals her ability to offer soothsaying services to the listener.

Extracts 8

I am about to reveal his face to you. (soothsaying marketing)

Logos

Some expressions in the marketing videos persuade viewers to purchase the products and services because of the logical reasons presented. Extracts 9 to 14 are examples of the expressions that construct logos in the videos.

Extract 9

My people, with this {product} you don't need cement. (construction product marketing)

Extract 10

Temu is having a flash sale. New users can get it for only N999.

Extract 11

But look, it's not supposed to be hard like this. Yes, there's working hard, there's working smart. (Payment app marketing)

Extract 12

Although pricey, almost every Japanese elementary student has one. (School bag marketing)

Extract 13

Whether you're feeling fun or formal, these two path designs blend luxury with whimsy. (Architectural design marketing)

Extract 14

Why settle for just stairs when you can have both? (Architectural design marketing)

Extracts 9 to 14 present the reasons the viewers should purchase the marketed products. For example, extract 9 captures where a speaker reveals that the product is an improved innovation that can save the viewer the cost of cement while extract 10 explains why the concerned product is sold at a discount (to reveal it genuineness). Extract 11 implies that the product offers a smarter way to complete tasks and extract 12 builds its logic on the premise that the high cost of the product did not prevent its high demand (to indicate that the high price matches the worth). Finally, the reasons presented in extracts 13 and 14 reflect on the dual purpose of the product. These reasons are used by the marketers to convince their audience of the logicality of purchasing the concerned products.

To construct logos, the marketers adopted terms that show field. For instance, terms related to the marketed products are found in extracts 9 (cement), 12 (elementary school), and 13 (stairs, design). Furthermore, business-related terms are found in extracts 10 (sale), 12 (pricey), and 13 (luxury). The use of registers that show field reflect the professionalism and purpose of the communication. Such terms can appeal to the audience reasoning and encourage them to follow the marketers' lines of thought.

Pathos

In some cases, the marketers appeal to the emotions of their audience as a means of persuading to purchase the advertised item. Examples of the utterances used to express this appeal are presented in extracts 15 to 19.

Extract 15
See, you love the children you're teaching, you show up everyday, but somehow, you're doing everything. (Payment app marketing)

Extract 16
Enjoy your shows anytime anywhere with ease. (Melo Short TV app marketing 2)

Extract 17
Only one of them is truly focused on winning your heart. (Soothsaying marketing)

Extract 18
If you enjoy watching short dramas, you only need to download this app to watch all episodes. (Meloshort marketing 1)

Extract 19
Charley, believe in whatever you dey do. (construction school marketing)

Extracts 15 to 19 are constructed to evoke different kinds of emotions in the viewers. Extract 15 is designed to evoke love (for the children and the job) and sadness (for being overburdened) while extracts 16 and 18 are designed to evoke excitement (to see movies with the app). Extract 17 is constructed to elicit desire and curiosity (to see the divine soul mate) while extract 19 is meant to evoke courage. The speakers adopted emotive words to construct their utterances and, hence, elicit desired emotions. These terms are found in extracts 15 (love), 16 (enjoy), 17 (winning, heart), 18 (enjoy), and 19 (believe). The emotions evoked with these utterances are mainly positive emotions, which can have a positive influence on the viewers and persuade them to purchase the items being marketed.

Rhetoric Overlap

Some of the expressions capture where there is an overlap in the rhetorical device used to persuade the audience. For instance, extracts 20 and 21 feature the overlap of ethos and logos, while extract 22 presents an example of an overlap between ethos and pathos.

Extract 20
If you want to try something like this, I used Gorilla Super Glue because that meant that every penny was stuck solid. (Gorilla Super Glue marketing)

Extract 21
So, with the advancement of technology, actors can now work with cameras around their bodies to stimulate the real perspectives of a first-person point of view. (camera marketing).

Extract 22

Not only can it serve as a helmet to protect a child's head during earthquake but it can also float and act as a life-saving floatation device if the child falls into the water. (school bag marketing)

Extracts 20 and 21 provides the credibility of the marketed products by giving examples of their real-life usages, which also act as the reasons for purchasing the products. In extract 22, the speaker, while expressing the reliability of the product, describes life-threatening situations (such as the child's head being hit during an earthquake and the child falling into the water) and used terms (such as "protect", "earthquake", "life-saving", and "falls") that can evoke fear in the viewers. These instances reflect situations of rhetorical overlap in marketing discourse.

Findings

The analysis of the marketing videos reveals that the marketers employ various rhetorical devices to persuade their audience, which are:

Ethos

The marketers use ethos to establish credibility and trust by highlighting the quality, reliability, and special features of their products. They achieve this through tangible examples; providing concrete examples of the product's capabilities (e.g., Gorilla Super Glue).Also, the use of product-related terms: Using terms related to the product's specialization to inform the audience about its usefulness. Credibility expressions: Expressing the credibility of the marketer, producer, or service provider.

Logos

The marketers use logos to present logical reasons for purchasing the products, including: Problem-solving; highlighting how the product can solve specific problems (e.g., payment app). Innovation: Presenting the product as an improved innovation (e.g., construction product). Dual purpose: Highlighting the product's multiple benefits (e.g., architectural design). Field-related terms: Using terms that show field to reflect professionalism and purpose.

Pathos

The marketers use pathos to appeal to the audience's emotions, including: Emotive words, words that evoke emotions such as love, excitement, desire, and courage. Positive emotions, eliciting positive emotions to create a favorable impression of the product.

Rhetoric Overlap

The analysis also reveals instances of rhetorical overlap, where multiple devices are used simultaneously, such as: Ethos and logos, combining credibility and logical reasons to persuade the audience. Ethos and pathos; combining credibility and emotional appeal to persuade the audience.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that marketers employ a range of rhetorical devices to persuade their audience, including ethos, logos, pathos, and rhetorical overlap. By using these devices, marketers can create effective marketing strategies that appeal to their target audience's credibility, logic,

and emotions. The findings of this study can inform marketing practices and provide insights into the ways marketers use language to persuade their audience.

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