

I-ROLE 2023**International Conference of Research on Language Education****NARRATIVE PERSUASION AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT
BY MALAYSIAN SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS**

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Abstract

Influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing that involves endorsements and product placement from influencers. A social media influencer is someone on social media who has established certain credibility in a specific industry. These influencers can increase the influence of the information they receive and transmit to others. Using social media influencers for marketing communication has emerged as an efficient and valuable means for brands. The objectives of the study are to investigate the persuasive techniques used by Malaysian social media influencers to influence their followers' purchasing behaviour and examine how language choice strengthens the persuasive techniques used by social media influencers. This study employed a qualitative content analysis procedure with Aristotle's rhetorical appeals as the underlying theory. The results showed that the influencers' most prominent rhetorical appeal is Logos, as it helps express common sense and refers to the clarity of the argument. The findings also revealed that language choice plays a role in persuasion. The most prominent is using declarative sentences when making statements by providing facts or explanations. Marketers and brands can benefit from this study by developing better marketing strategies when targeting their consumers to approach their brands using the proper persuasive strategies and using more suitable language choices when promoting their products.

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1. Introduction

Language is considered as the dress of thought. It helps us express our emotions and thoughts, thus making it very important when we communicate. The commonsensical goals of communication are to inform or persuade others through the dissemination of information. Different techniques and strategies are employed depending on the speaker's intention to achieve these goals. Persuasive language is used where the speaker intends to convince the audience to take action or simply believe in an idea. Persuasive language, also known as the language of power, can increase people's access to power (To et al., 2020). An educated person with the ability to persuade others is expected to use it to persuade others on important matters, be it on their colleague, bureaucrats, or even the general public (To et al., 2020). Persuasive language helps the speaker shape, reinforce or even change the audience's view simply by utilising the language resource to appeal to the audience. Persuasive language is usually associated with attention-drawing material, catchphrases, and metaphors (Labrador et al., 2014). Moreover, this can be seen in most products or services advertised in the market. Companies use persuasive language to highlight their products and brands so that the general public will more likely choose their brand. Nowadays, persuasive language is so common and is used in various contexts. Persuasive strategies can be seen as heavily used in political campaigns as the ability to use persuasive language in different situations is critical for a politician to succeed (Khajavi & Rasti, 2020). Advertising also uses various persuasive strategies. Advertisers are known to use the rational versus emotional strategy to persuade consumers to buy their products (Bhatia, 2019). The main goal of advertising is to inform and persuade consumers to buy their products. Advertisers nowadays use social media for advertising, making social media influencers valuable to the advertisers' effort to endorse a brand (Lee & Kim, 2020).

How we communicate, connect, and influence one another has changed since the age of social media (Ki et al., 2020). Nowadays, anyone can share their thoughts and feelings online. Social media influencers have a sizeable following that can influence their followers (Ki & Kim, 2019; Ki et al., 2020). This trend led to a new movement of marketing called influencer marketing. Social media influencers usually endorse a brand by promoting it on their social media posts which their followers can see. This endorsement post usually includes captions that help persuade the public to choose a particular brand. Social media influencers today play an important role in Malaysia's marketing landscape. Their opinions are looked upon by their followers. Brands are incorporating more and more Malaysian Instagram influencers in their marketing strategy. Thus, this paper intends to explore how Malaysian social media influencers use persuasive techniques to persuade and shape consumer behaviours.

1.1. Persuasive strategies

Persuasive strategy can be defined as a complex set of linguistic tools that can be used to change the customer's attitudes and receive their response without imposing on them (Romanova & Smirnova, 2019). A persuasive strategy is used when attempting to influence the behaviour or attitude of others. Adaji et al. (2020) argued that a persuasive strategy could change people's behaviour without coercion. Ghasemi (2020) conducted a study that examined persuasive strategies in political discourse. The study examined presidential speeches delivered by Barack Obama and Hassan Rouhani to see the persuasive

aspects used by the two politicians. Persuasive strategies have always been a part of political discourse. The study's findings revealed that the most frequent strategy used by the two presidents was using Logos in their speeches. This is probably because the appeal to logic is very compelling. It is hard to contradict a logical dispute since it conforms to logic. The study results showed that logos and Pathos are commonly found in presidential speeches, and Ethos is rarely utilised. Oeppen-Hill (2019), on the other hand, conducted a study to determine the usage of persuasive language in the marketing of fashion marketing courses for undergraduates from different universities in England. The study focused on the persuasive appeals of Aristotle's triad of logos, Ethos, and Pathos and how the influencers applied them. The results showed that all rhetorical appeals are used in the course pages for all the fashion marketing degrees. The study also revealed that Pathos was the most common way to differentiate courses, even though many offer the same emotional appeals.

Aristotle introduced rhetoric to see the available means of persuasion. Aristotle's rhetorical proof focuses on how language and other symbolic forms are applied to influence the audience. Bangstad and Helland (2019) stated that Aristotle refers to rhetoric as the three means of persuasion available to the speaker: Ethos, Logos and Pathos. Aristotle's rhetorical theory represents three types of persuasion between speaker and listener as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Aristotle's Rhetorical Proof

Ethos	The art of convincing by the character of an author is referred to as Ethos (i.e. credibility), or ethical appeal. There is a tendency of believing people whom we respect. Projecting an impression to the reader that you are someone worth listening to is one of the central problems of argumentation, in other terms placing yourself as an author of an authority on the paper's subject, as well as a person who is both worthy of respect and likable.
Pathos	The art of persuading by means of appealing to the emotions of readers is referred to as Pathos (i.e. emotional). Seeing how pathos, emotional appeals, are used to persuade can be based on texts ranging from classic essays to contemporary advertisements. An audience's emotional response can be affected by the choice of language, and an argument can be enhanced through the use of an effective emotional appeal.
Logos	Logos (i.e. logical) refers to a reasoning-based persuading. Deductive and inductive reasoning shall also be considered, as well as the discussion of what leads to a persuasive as well as an effective reason for the backup of claims. The heart of argumentation is based on 'giving reasons', and it cannot be over-emphasised. Kinds of support that could be used to authenticate a thesis shall be studied, as well as consideration of some logical fallacies that are common, in order to avoid them while writing

Source: Aristotle's Rhetoric (1959)

Ethos is an argument that appeals to the audience by emphasising the speaker's credibility and authority. Oeppen-Hill (2019) stated that Ethos establishes the communicator's credibility. Ethos symbolises the message sender's credibility. Saaty (2020) noted that Ethos focuses on appealing to the readers' belief system to convince them and change their thinking. The speaker develops Ethos by making himself credible and making the audience feel like it is worth listening to them.

Pathos, on the other hand, is the use of emotional appeals. Robinson (2018) stated that Pathos relates to an emotional appeal by invoking sympathy, fear, and anger and that the message must carry emotional resonance. It is a powerful appeal based on emotions. An excellent persuasive writer should know which emotion to tap into

Logos, also known as a rational appeal, is synonymous with the appeal to logic. Isai et al. (2020) stated that using argumentation, logic, justification, claims, and evidence could be identified as an appeal toward logos. It is a logical element of rhetoric based on fact and persuasion. According to Ball and Loewe (2017), logos is defined as a set of logical (and therefore inevitable) conclusions drawn from assertions or claims.

2. Research Methods

This study aims to (1) investigate the persuasive techniques used by Malaysian social media influencers to influence their followers' purchasing behaviour and (2) examine how language strengthens the persuasive techniques used by social media influencers. This study used the qualitative approach to content analysis. The data of this study was analysed based on Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) qualitative content analysis method as it is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The sample for this study is taken from Instagram postings of Malaysian social media influencers. Their brand-related postings are assumed to be analysed. This is because Instagram is the most popular social media choice for influencers to upload brand-related posts (Lee & Kim, 2020). This study used the purposive sampling technique as it matched the samples to the aims and objectives of the research. The sampling process was done by seeking potential influencers that meet the study's requirement, Malaysian Instagram influencers with brand-related postings.

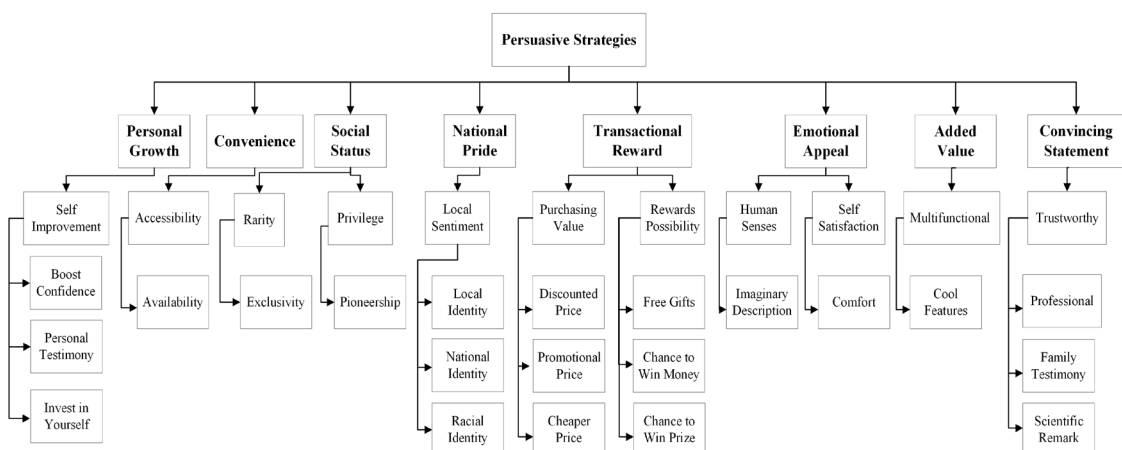


Figure 1. Thematic diagram for the persuasive strategies used by the influencers

Data was collected from relevant influencers' Instagram pages and postings. The researchers looked for Instagram influencers on the brands' pages and chose influencers related to the brands. The researchers also looked for the influencers by recommendations shown on the 'explore' page. The

researchers then determined whether the posts were suitable to be used as data for the research. The brand-related postings of the influencers were collected and sorted. These postings' captions were later coded for further analysis.

The data analysis was done using persuasive strategies (Aristotle's rhetorical appeal). The data was extracted from the samples and later analysed following Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) qualitative content analysis procedures. The code, category, and theme for each posting were then determined. After coding, it was then put into a thematic diagram to understand the themes better.

3. Findings

The data analysis identified an emerging pattern in the language choices and persuasive strategies Malaysian social influencers use when promoting a product. The persuasive strategies are divided into three major groups based on Aristotle's rhetorical appeal: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. The data was analysed based on Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) qualitative content analysis procedures to determine the themes in the persuasion used by Malaysian influencers. Based on the analysis, the findings showed that the influencers used the three Aristotle rhetorical appeals as their persuasive strategy, namely; Logos, Pathos and Ethos.

3.1. The application of rhetorical logos appeals

The analysis has shown the heavy use of Logos (rational appeal) as a persuasive strategy in the studied advertisements. Isai et al. (2020) defined Logos as the use of argumentation, logic, justification, claims, and evidence. Malaysian Instagram influencers rely heavily on logos to persuade the public. Rhetorical logos appeal is used in persuasion to use convincing statements, added value, convenience, and transactional reward.

3.1.1. The usage of convincing statements to persuade

One of the seven strategies that emerged from the analysis that is often used in advertisements is convincing statements. This is done by making the sentences more compelling to the readers and making it easier for the audience to accept them. One of the reasons behind the use of a convincing statement is that it gives a sense of trustworthiness. It makes it easier for the audience to trust what Instagram influencers promote by appealing to logic and facts. This can be seen used by the different Instagram influencers to write captions for the promoted brands. One of the ways how influencers create a sense of trustworthiness is by using scientific remarks. Using scientific remark which is based on facts makes it difficult to refute. For example; "The new age miracle has a new upgraded formula with 10% Hyaluronic acid B3 complex to make your skin hydrated and looking dewy" (POST23/INF/19/3-12).

The use of scientific remarks makes it appear even more trustworthy, as it makes the influencers look knowledgeable about the product. Another way of creating a sense of trustworthiness is by relating it to professionals who are considered well-educated or experts in their field due to good reputations. It helps strengthen the audience's perception of the product itself. For example; "Clorox Wipes uses

professional grade disinfectant that terminates both Viruses and Bacteria in 60 seconds, professionally!” (POST5/INF2/4-9).

It sends out a message that the product is of the highest quality used by professionals. It is trying to portray that professionals are known to be the best in the field, and if the product suits the professionals, it will certainly suit the average consumer’s needs. Lastly, family testimony is also used by Malaysian Instagram influencers when building trustworthiness. A mother figure in an Asian household is commonly seen as someone who knows everything or a resource person. Hence associating a product with family testimony creates a sense of trustworthiness, like when the influencer associates the brand with his mother; “Even my mom #TrustClorox 🍷” (POST5/INF2/4-9).

Besides that, there is also a pattern that could be seen when the influencers use convincing statements. Their choice of language for writing convincing statements would often use declarative statements. Declarative statements are known to make statements by providing facts or explanations. For example; “Unlike the other anti-bacterial wipes I’ve used before, Clorox Wipes uses professional grade disinfectant that terminates both Viruses and Bacteria in 60 seconds” (POST5/INF2/4-9).

The statement gives the readers information about the product that it uses professional-grade disinfectant. This makes the statement more trustworthy as the word professional invokes a sense of credibility. Moreover, relating it with the term professional makes the product sounds more appealing and trusted to the general public.

3.1.2. The usage of added value to persuade

Another form of logos that is often utilised by Malaysian Instagram influencers is added value. Added value can be defined as attributes that are both relevant and welcomed by customers. Malaysian Instagram influencers use added value to persuade consumers to buy certain brands or products. This can be achieved by creating an image that the product is multifunctional. The multi-functionality of a product could be subjective, as different users may interpret it differently. However, we can see that Malaysian Instagram influencers use multi-functionality by promoting a product’s interesting features. For example; “Have you guys check out the new @amazfitmalaysia T-Rex Pro??! If not then you need to see it now cuz there are plenty of cool features that help you to stay fit and healthy 🏃🏻‍♂️📱” (POST8/INF6/1-6).

The statement above shows that it is commanding the consumer to go and check out the watch. It calls out the reader to take action after reading the statement.

3.1.3. The narrative of convenience to persuade

The document shows that convenience is also used to persuade consumers. It appeals to the consumers’ logic that the product promoted is convenient for them. Farquhar and Rowley (2009) mentioned that convenience relates to consumers’ savings in time and effort in purchasing a product. The findings showed that the influencers usually highlight the point of a product that is easily attainable or accessible in their postings when persuading the customers to buy a product. Accessibility is one of the ways how the narrative of convenience is used as a persuasive strategy. They will highlight the

availability of the product as a critical factor when promoting a product. For instance; "Have you try out the NEW Lively Tea that is currently available at your nearest Family Mart Store" (POST38/INF30/1-5).

The statement appeal to the fact that the promoted products are readily available and accessible to the public and the ease of access is the key selling point in their persuasive strategies. There is also a distinct choice of language when using this strategy. One of the key choices that can be seen is the use of declarative statements. This helps explain or added information about the products. Some of the ways declarative statements are used in the postings when pointing out convenience are; "Can't wait to enjoy Connor's Draught now in a can" (POST28/INF23/1-12).

They highlight the convenience of the product by pointing out the facts about it, and in this case, it is about the product's availability in new packaging. Another language choice that can be seen used by these Instagram influencers is rhetorical questions. According to Špago (2016), rhetorical questions are understood as questions that are not meant to be answered but rather to convey a message that would not be as memorable and as persuasive had it been expressed as a straightforward statement. It is used to make a statement rather than get an answer, and Malaysian Instagram influencers use these techniques when trying to persuade the public. For example; "Have you try out the NEW Lively Tea that is currently available at your nearest Family Mart Store" (POST38/INF30/1-5).

The statement is not looking for whether they must try the product but rather pointing out that it is now available in the stores. This wording strategy will notify the public about the product's availability. The consumer will need to try the product as it is conveniently available for them. The sense of convenience in the word choice makes it easier for people to approach the brand.

3.1.4. The use of transactional rewards as a persuasive strategy

Another key strategy that Malaysian Instagram influencers use when persuading consumers is highlighting the products' transactional rewards. This reward system has become a key strategy in persuading the consumer when promoting a product. Malaysian Instagram influencers use this strategy when highlighting the rewards possibility and purchase value of a product. One strategy used to highlight the purchase value is by stressing the discounted price, such as; "You can use my promo code YAYA35 to get RM35 off on First Care Activating Serum Starter Kit" (POST22/INF18/6-9).

This strategy is carried out by giving out promo codes to the public to get the product at a discounted price. Another way that uses this strategy is by having the consumer spend a minimum amount to enjoy the discounted price. For example; "Enjoy free shipping just by spending a minimum of rm4! and enjoy Daily 95% off on selected items!" (POST12/INF10/5-15).

They persuade the consumer to spend first to get the additional benefits. Another way the appeal of purchase value is used as a persuasive strategy is by utilising a "buy one free one" promotion. They encourage the consumers to buy the product to get a second one for free. For example; "Here's a limited time special Buy 1 Free 1 voucher code just for you: BENAMIRB1F1. Valid for 1st time users until 14th Jun only. Hurry and try any 2x ZUS drinks for the price of 1x now!" (POST14/INF12/6-13).

They persuade the public by appealing to their logic of getting two similar products at one price, which is undeniably a value purchase. Another strategy identified is the use of transactional rewards possibility. The use of rewards possibility to persuade consumers to buy a specific product. This could be

the possibility of winning prizes or money. This strategy will promote the products by offering consumers opportunities to win money when they purchase a product, for instance; "The more you shop, the higher the chance of winning (prizes worth RM30,000)!" (POST40/INF31/1-4).

It persuades the consumer to spend their money so that there will be a possibility for them to win prizes or money. Besides that, another form of rewards possibility strategy that they often use when persuading is giving out free gifts, as seen from the caption written; "Hi everyone! Good news Libresse now is having a promotion where you can get a FREE Libresse SensitiV Daily Intimate Care gift box worth RM25 (comes with 1 pack of liners, wash & wipes) when you spend RM20 and above on Libresse products, including 1 pack of Libresse SensitiV!" (POST25/INF21/1-11).

This strategy encourages the consumer to buy the product to be eligible for the gifts. It can also be seen that the choice of language these Instagram influencers opt for when using this strategy. Most influencers opt to use declarative statements when using this strategy as it helps in conveying the needed information to the public, such as; "Enjoy free shipping just by spending a minimum of rm4! and enjoy Daily 95% off on selected items!" (POST12/INF10/5-15).

It clearly shows how the sentence expresses a statement hence a declarative statement. Another language choice that can be seen used by the influencers is rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions can be an effective persuasive device, and it is evident in the writings of these influencers, for instance; "If you guys wanna have a tea time snack why don't you use the foodpanda app? You can use the voucher code JOY33 for 33% off" (POST27/INF22/1-7).

The question asked by the influencers is simply trying to emphasise a point about the application. It is a persuasion device to persuade the customers to test the application. Furthermore, we can also see the use of imperative sentences when persuading. An imperative sentence gives instructions to the readers to do something. Malaysian Instagram influencers can be seen using this choice of language when writing their captions. For example; "Drop by your nearest Watsons and also stand a chance to win prizes worth up to of RM88,000" (POST7/INF5/11-14).

It gives orders to the readers as a means of persuasion. Using wording that gives out order is also a persuasive strategy, as it influences the readers to act. It helps tell people what to do after receiving the information.

3.2. The application of rhetorical pathos appeals

Another Aristotle's rhetorical appeal that can be seen in the document is the use of rhetorical pathos appeal. Pathos, or the appeal toward the recipient's emotion, indicates the elements that affect the message recipients emotionally. It is powerful in terms of its ability to persuade. This emotional appeal is often used when persuading consumers. Some ways they utilise Pathos are emotional appeals, social status, and personal growth.

3.2.1. The use of emotional appeal as a persuasive strategy

The emotional appeal may be more effective at persuading consumers than a rational message frame hence why it is widely used in a persuasive setting. This emotional appeal is used by playing with the human senses and providing self-satisfaction to the readers. Playing with human feelings allows the

influencers to create imaginary descriptions for the readers to relate to. They can imagine the product that is being promoted. Instagram influencers would use adjectives to describe the noun. For example; "Don't miss out this crunchy, tasty chocolate cookie mixed with dried berries" (POST6/INF4/1-5).

They give descriptive adjectives to the noun so the readers can imagine the final product. Other examples of how influencers use this strategy include; "I just love every bits of this KITKAT Gold Ice Cream! It's wafer flavored ice cream, crunchy golden caramel flakes with KITKAT wafer & luxurious white chocolate coating" (POST9/INF7/1-9).

The imaginary description helps enhance the emotional appeal to the reader, which helps persuade them to get the product. Besides using the human senses, influencers also use self-satisfaction as a method to persuade consumers. They would portray the product as it brings self-satisfaction to the consumers. For instance; "Some comfy outfit to wear daily or even at home ☐ Also guys! I recommend you guys to get the printed shirt from @Quiksilver_Malaysia so that Korang boleh pakai time Raya ☐ 🌙" (POST17/INF15/1-6).

The influencer promotes self-satisfactory by relating it to the comfort of the product. Consumers tend to be attracted to the product as it brings positive emotional appeal. The analysis showed that this strategy is often accompanied by a specific language choice: declarative statements. Declarative statements help convey information to the readers, as shown by this example; "The lemak-y rice, paired with extra sambal and Kari Atuk is such a heavenly combo & you guys need to try this out ☺ ☐" (POST31/INF4/1-12).

A declarative statement helps convey information about the product by providing facts and explanations. It gives the necessary information for the readers to take note of. Since it is based on facts, this type of sentence usually creates a sense of trustworthiness.

3.2.2. The narrative of personal growth in persuasion

Malaysian Instagram influencers also promote personal growth using Pathos as a persuasive strategy. This is done by highlighting the self-improvement quality of the product to the readers. Jain et al. (2015) stated that self-growth is a desire to become a better version of oneself and these Instagram influencers apply emotional appeal to the consumer to make them want to change. This is done through personal testimony. They give their testimony of the product and how it has benefited them. For example; "Now that it's Ramadhan, I can't skip a day without my InnerShine as it helps to keep my skin and my body healthy since it contains natural goodness from fruit extracts with added nutrients like fibre and vitamins" (POST30/INF25/6-12).

The given testimony strengthens the emotional appeal when they are trying to persuade. Furthermore, they also promote personal growth by focusing on how the product benefits have helped them boost their confidence. For instance; "This has boost up my confidence to have a brighter smile!! I use this product on a daily basis, and I don't think I'll ever change my toothpaste ever again!! 💕" (POST13/INF11/1-11).

Another way they could play with the narrative of self-improvement is by promoting self-investment. They highlight the point of investing in oneself to help one grow to be a better version of themselves. This can be seen from the caption; "Want to invest in yourself? In your physical health, your

well-being, and mental! @amazfitmalaysia Amazfit T-Rex Pro will help you improve your everyday life😊 don't waste time, get yours!" (POST20/INF17/1-6).

The method of promoting self-growth plays with the emotions of the readers. As can be seen from the analysis, the language choice when using this method is straightforward. The analysis showed that declarative statements are often used when using this strategy as it helps provide the necessary information they want to convey. Such as; "Darlie Whitening Baking Soda Toothpaste can effectively clean and whiten teeth with gentle polishing giving me a confident smile." (POST13/INF11/1-11).

The use of descriptive statements makes it straightforward when they are trying to highlight a point. However, they might also use rhetorical questions to make a statement. For example; "Want to invest in yourself? In your physical health, your well-being and mental! @amazfitmalaysia Amazfit T-Rex Pro will help you improve your everyday life😊 dont waste time, get yours!" (POST20/INF17/1-6).

The use of rhetorical questions helps to emphasise the point they are trying to convey while getting the audience to think about it. Besides that, evidence shows that Malaysian Instagram influencers use cumulative sentences when writing their captions. For instance; "As you guys know realme has launched this cool designer toy, realmeow, it owns the personality of independent, breakthrough, fearless and agile!" (POST21/INF17/1-9).

Cumulative sentence helps gather details about the main idea and additional details, making it easier for them to provide necessary information to the readers.

3.2.3. Social status as a persuasive device

Another key strategy used in the documents to appeal to consumers' emotions is social status. They appeal to the readers' emotions by utilising the concept of social status. It gives the readers a sense of privilege or rarity to be associated with the brand or product. This technique is used to invoke a sense of exclusivity within the readers when associated with the brand. For example; "If this is something you fancy, well this is ONLY available at @adidasoriginals flagship store in Pavilion KL" (POST3/INF2/3-9).

The captions written meant to make the product look premium, and only a selected few would be able to obtain it hence further highlighting the social status of the person associated with it. Furthermore, Malaysian Instagram influencers would also use another strategy to highlight the social status effect by playing the narrative of "first to have or do something". For instance; "I've always loved Disney, and to be one of the first to rock the all new @adidasOriginals stan smith x Disney which is mad" (POST2/INF2/3-5).

The exclusivity of being the pioneer of a product shows the social status of the people associated with it, and it can help appeal to the readers' emotions to be one of the pioneers. Additionally, the language choice for this type of strategy can be seen as straightforward. A declarative statement helps make the posting more credible with the facts and details related to the product. The analysis showed that declarative statements are used to convey information about the products and other necessary information, as can be seen here; "Glad to be wearing the adidas Batik Trefoil Tee, a first ever local designed apparel by artist @jaemyc for @adidasmy" (POST1/INF1/1-4).

3.3. The application of rhetorical ethos appeals

Ethos is an element the speaker uses to establish credibility with the readers. Ethos is an ethical appeal that includes proof of the message sender's authority and credibility. The message will be more influential if it comes from a credible source. Malaysian influencers use this technique by appealing to the reader's national pride.

3.3.1. Sense of national pride as a persuasive device

According to Ha and Jang (2015), national pride is the emotional attachment to one's own country and is sometimes known as patriotism. The influencers appeal to the readers' sense of patriotism by playing the narrative of local sentiment. This is done by appealing to the readers' national identity. For instance; "Dressed in the Malaysia-Exclusive adidas batik trefoil tee, designed by our local artist @jaemyc" (POST3/INF2/3-9).

The influencer reinforces the statement as a brand ambassador for the product and having him advocating about the local sentiment of the product makes the statement more credible. Another example would be; "So that day, I received this bundle of joy from @merryicecream.my ! They sent to me 6 different unique flavors of ice cream with a local twist such as taufufah, gula melaka and salted egg cheese! The flavors are so unique and it definitely creates a series of mind-blowing taste!" (POST32/INF26/1-16).

Since the influencer is a local Malaysian, it establishes the credibility that she knows how local flavours taste and associating it with the product makes it more credible. Another key takeaway from the analysis is how the influencers' language choices affect this strategy. When using this strategy, the influencers opt to use cumulative and declarative statements as both help convey information to the readers directly. For instance; "Glad to be wearing the adidas Batik Trefoil Tee, a first ever local designed apparel by artist @jaemyc for @adidasmy" (POST1/INF1/1-4).

The language choice makes it easier for readers to understand the statement as they are short, direct, and concise. It gives out the necessary information about the product shortly and concisely. This helps it be easier to comprehend and creates a sense of honesty as the influencer is direct and does not beat around the bush with unnecessary information to make the statement appealing.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that Malaysian social media influencers used Aristotle's rhetorical appeal in their brand-related postings to persuade their followers to approach the brand/product. The most prominent rhetorical appeal is the appeal to Logos. It can be seen that the influencers relied heavily on Logos (rational appeal) as a persuasive strategy in the studied advertisements. Oeppen-Hill (2019) stated that logos help express common sense and refer to the clarity of the argument. It can include data and statistics to bring forth a rational argument. Malaysian social media influencers rely heavily on logos when persuading by using convincing statements, added value, the narrative of convenience and the use of transactional rewards. This study also revealed that Instagram influencers use rhetorical pathos appeal as a means of persuasion. Pathos deals with convincing the other by creating an emotional response to an

impassioned plea or a convincing story. Malaysian Instagram influencers use Pathos by using emotional appeal, personal growth and social status. Emotional appeal is applied as it is more effective at persuading consumers than a rational message frame. Lastly, the research revealed that Malaysian Instagram influencers also apply rhetorical ethos appeal when persuading. According to Varpio (2018), Ethos is the appeal focused on the writer, which refers to the writer's character, credibility and trustworthiness. This strategy is the least used by Malaysian social media influencers based on the study. The influencers use Ethos by playing the narrative of national pride. Ha and Jang (2015) state that national pride is the emotional attachment to one's own country and is sometimes known as patriotism. This is done by using local sentiment. Since the influencers are Malaysians, their credibility has been established, making them trustworthy, which is an important aspect of this rhetorical appeal.

The study revealed that language choice also plays a role in persuasion. The most prominent is the use of declarative sentences when making statements by providing facts or explanations followed by imperative sentences and the least used language choice is rhetorical questions.

The findings of this paper can be beneficial to the overall knowledge about persuasion. This paper will also shed some light on influencer marketing and better understand the field, as little research has been done regarding their language usage to persuade the consumer. This study will offer marketers and influencers a better understanding and a guide on using language to persuade consumers.

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