Discourse Analysis of Persuasive Language Techniques for Eco-Friendly Products in Instagram Captions

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Abstract. This study examines the persuasive language techniques used by Plepah, an eco-friendly packaging company, in its Instagram captions. Plepah is a provider of biodegradable food packaging. Using discourse analysis, the research explores how Plepah communicates its mission of sustainability through the framework of Kotler's AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). Using Kotler's AIDA model, this study finds out that examines how Plepah communicates its values and encourages behavioral change among its audience.The findings highlight the potential of persuasive language in promoting eco-friendly practices and suggest best practices for brands seeking to connect with sustainability-conscious audiences.

Keywords: discourse analysis, persuasive language, eco-friendly products, Instagram caption.

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising language has specific characteristics and traits that are expected to manifest or present what advertisers desire to convey to the general public. In an advertisement, language is essential in the process of conveying the product to be accepted by the readers or listeners. The use of language becomes one of the crucial aspects for the success of advertisements in influencing the public to be interested in the advertised product.

It has been observed in recent years that there is a significant global swift towards environmental sustainability, mostly due to worries about pollution, resource depletion, and climate change. The awareness of environmental sustainability leads to the demands of eco-friendly products that, ranging from renewable energy sources to biodegradable packaging. Understanding the language persuasion techniques employed in eco-friendly product advertisements is essential for effectively communicating messages about sustainability and encouraging consumers to adopt environmentally friendly consumption habits.

This shift has introduced new challenges in marketing, particularly for eco-friendly brands aiming to appeal to a diverse audience. Sustainable brands must not only communicate the environmental benefits of their products but also inspire behavioral change. The need for effective communication is particularly pressing in the food packaging industry, where unsustainable practices like single-use plastics continue to pose significant environmental challenges.

Advertising messages are crafted to persuade and attract consumers into purchasing specific products or services. The effectiveness of persuasive advertising varies based on the content of the message and, significantly, on how individuals perceive or interpret it. To create impactful persuasive advertising, every element of the campaign is carefully crafted to captivate consumers, encouraging them to buy certain products or services by tapping into their general sensibilities and emotions (Kenechukwu, S. A, 2013). Advertising messages aim to persuade consumers to purchase products or services by carefully crafting campaigns that appeal to emotions and individual perceptions of the messages.

Eco-advertisements promote products that possess eco-friendly characteristics. It has become a popular tool for promoting environmentally conscious behavior (Shahid & Qayyum, 2023). Thus, persuasive techniques such as visual symbolism, positive framing, and emotional appeals were used in the advertisement to serve as positive discourse construction.

One company at the forefront of this movement is *Plepah*, which produces biodegradable and compostable food packaging from agricultural waste. To market their innovative products, *Plepah* relies heavily on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, to share its values and engage with its audience. Instagram provides a dynamic medium for visual storytelling and brand messaging, making it an ideal platform for sustainability-focused communication.

This paper focuses on how *Plepah* uses Instagram captions to persuade consumers to adopt eco-friendly packaging solutions. The analysis employs Kotler's AIDA model, a marketing framework that outlines the steps of consumer engagement: attracting Attention, generating Interest, cultivating Desire, and prompting Action. By applying the AIDA model, this study aims to uncover the persuasive language techniques that make *Plepah*'s Instagram captions effective in promoting sustainable products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis focuses on the specific elements of speech or writing deemed relevant within a given context and examines the arguments presented through the analysis. He said that basically discourse analysis involves questions about how language, at a certain time and place is used. There are six tools used to analyze, namely: situated meanings, social languages, figured worlds, intertextuality, discourses, and conversations. There are seven task structures in discourse analysis, namely: significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge (Gee, 2011).

Discourse analysis is the analysis of language used by humans which has no limitations on the description of linguistic forms regardless of purpose or function (Brown, G., & Yule, 2003). Discourse analysis is committed to investigating what language is used for. Discourse analysis goes beyond examining the formal structure of language, exploring how language is utilized within social and cultural contexts. It investigates the connection between language—whether written, spoken, conversational, or institutionalized—and the specific contexts in which it is employed.

Advertisement

People encounter a vast number of social media advertisements daily, making social media one of the most prevalent platforms for advertising exposure compared to other media. The term advertisement is defined as the structured and composed non personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, services & ideas) by identified sponsors through various media (Arens, 2002). Advertising media play a crucial role in disseminating advertisements within society. Platforms for commercial advertising may include television, newspapers, magazines, cinemas, social media and more.

Advertising serves as a form of mass communication employed by identifiable sponsors or companies to present and promote ideas, products, or services through impersonal media. Its purpose extends beyond merely informing about products or services; it also aims to persuade and influence the public. Kasali (1992) states that in general, advertisement has the aims to change prospective consumers to be loyal consumers for a certain period of time or to develop positive attitude of the prospective consumers, so that they become loyal consumers in the future. Thus, it is essential for advertisers to understand the reasons behind people's engagement with advertisements and how to craft compelling and appealing ads.

Environmentally themed advertising is commonly referred to as green advertising. Through green advertising, the promotional messages aim to attract the needs and desires of consumers who seek products with environmental benefits, effectively communicating these advantages through the advertisements displayed for the products. Shimp (2003) stated three types of themes in eco-friendly advertising (green advertising), namely: 1) Green advertising that promotes an eco-friendly lifestyle, 2) Green advertising that promotes an eco-friendly lifestyle, and 3) Green advertising that projects the product's image through environmental responsibility.

Persuasive Language Techniques

Persuasive advertising uses a variety of strategies to capture the consumer's attention, build credibility and trust, generate desire for the product, and encourage positive action. To analyze the persuasive techniques in an advertisement, three key factors must be considered. The first is to examine both the advertising message and the target audience. This involves studying the content of the ad as well as the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the intended audience. The second factor is identifying the persuasive techniques used in the ad. This includes evaluating the credibility of individuals featured in the ad, their role as potential role models, and whether the ad appeals to emotions or logic. Achieving this requires careful construction of the language used in the ad to influence the consumer's preference for the product or service. The third factor is understanding the desired impact on the target audience (Kenechukwu, S. A, 2013).

Social media platforms have transformed the way brands communicate with their audiences. Instagram, in particular, combines visual and textual elements to create dynamic content that fosters engagement. Studies have shown that persuasive language on social media must balance brevity with impact, using concise yet compelling messages to capture attention and convey value (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The AIDA model, developed by Kotler (2015), remains a cornerstone of marketing theory and practice. The model emphasizes four stages of consumer engagement: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. Each stage represents a critical step in guiding consumers from initial awareness to a purchase decision. Over the years, AIDA has been adapted to suit various contexts, including digital marketing and social media platforms (Kotler et al., 2015).

The AIDA model, developed by Philip Kotler, is a proven framework in marketing communication. It consists of four stages: 1) **Attention**: The initial stage where a brand attracts the consumer's focus, 2) **Interest**: Building curiosity and engagement by presenting valuable, relevant information, 3) **Desire**: Creating an emotional connection or need toward the product or service., 4) **Action**: Giving encouragement to the consumer to take concrete steps, such as purchasing or sharing the message.

In the terms of social media marketing, the AIDA model is particularly relevant. Platforms like Instagram allow brands to integrate visuals, hashtags, and captions to engage consumers at multiple stages of the model. Instagram has become a powerful platform for advertisers to connect with their target audience. With millions of active users, it provides an ideal space for brands to promote products, services, or ideas through visually engaging

content. The key to successful Instagram advertising lies in creating captions that resonate with the audience, sparking their interest while remaining concise and impactful.

Research by Chaffey (2020) highlights the importance of concise, impactful language in social media captions, where limited space requires brands to convey their message effectively. By framing its Instagram captions within the AIDA model, *Plepah* exemplifies how persuasive language can drive consumer engagement and promote eco-friendly behavior.

3. METHODS

The study will employ a qualitative approach, utilizing discourse analysis as the primary methodological framework. It is a descriptive qualitative study. As stated by Merriam, qualitative research is employed to get an understanding of the particular phenomenon in a particular context (Merriam, 2009).

The sample of eco-friendly product advertisements were collected form *Plepah* Instagram captions. This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach to examine Plepah's Instagram captions. Twenty three captions were purposively selected based on their relevance to the brand's core messaging about sustainability and eco-friendly practices. The captions were analyzed with a focus on identifying how each caption corresponded to the four stages of the AIDA model: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

4. RESULT

The analysis revealed that Plepah effectively uses the AIDA model to structure its Instagram captions, employing persuasive language techniques tailored to each stage.

Attention: Capturing the Consumer's Focus

The first stage of the AIDA model is Attention, and *Plepah* captures attention through direct, relevant language that highlights the eco-friendly benefits of its products.

"Your future & eco-friendly food packaging. 100% biodegradable. Compostable."
The use of "100% biodegradable" and "compostable" immediately emphasizes the product's unique selling points, drawing attention to its eco-friendly attributes. These terms quickly let the consumer know that the product is good for the environment, which is an important concern for many people today.

"Plepah. 100% Safe. 100% Natural. 100% Compostable."
Repetition of "100%" reinforces the brand's commitment to safety and sustainability, creating a memorable and attention-grabbing statement. This repetition makes the message stick in the consumer's mind, helping them remember the brand's commitment to these important values.

By focusing on clear, eco-friendly language and using repetition, Plepah effectively grabs attention and appeals to consumers who care about the environment. This approach helps the brand stand out and shows that it cares about offering a sustainable product.

Interest: Generating Curiosity and Engagement

The second stage of the AIDA model is Interest, which *Plepah* generates by explaining the unique features and values of their products. The brand explains how its products are created from natural, biodegradable materials:

"Each packaging that you use is made from fallen areca leaf sheath which were considered as waste. Through a very thoughtful process we are trying to redefine its value."

This explanation invites curiosity about the innovative process behind the packaging, encouraging readers to learn more about the brand's mission. This explanation helps to engage the audience by showing them how the company transforms what was once waste into useful, eco-friendly packaging. It makes the process sound innovative, inviting consumers to learn more about how these products are made.

"We see agricultural waste as something of value. It is the basis of Plepah's first journey to Redefine Waste."

By presenting a unique perspective on agricultural waste, the caption positions Plepah as a forward-thinking and innovative company. This statement positions Plepah as a company that is forward-thinking and innovative, focusing on sustainability and reimagining how we use natural resources.

Plepah's explanation not only informs but also invites the audience to think more deeply about the environmental impact of everyday products. By highlighting its unique approach to using agricultural waste, Plepah engages the audience and creates interest in learning more about its mission and the values behind the brand.

Desire: Creating an Emotional Connection

Desire is cultivated in the third stage by appealing to consumers' values and emotions. *Plepah* uses emotional language to reinforce the environmental and ethical benefits of choosing their products. The captions evoke desire by appealing to emotions and promoting the benefits of eco-friendly living.

"Don't wait for someone to change the world, be the change. Start using eco-friendly, sustainable, and compostable disposables."

This caption motivates readers by invoking a sense of responsibility and empowerment, encouraging them to take action.

"What's even better is that it's 100% biodegradable. So you can enjoy the indulgence of your favorite dim sum without worrying about the packaging."

By connecting the product to enjoyable experiences like eating dim sum, the caption creates an emotional link between sustainability and everyday pleasures.

Action: Encouraging Concrete Steps

The final stage of the AIDA model is Action, where Plepah motivates consumers to take specific steps. The brand uses clear and direct calls to action that encourage people to act, whether by switching to eco-friendly products or partnering with the company.

Plepah uses direct and clear calls to action to motivate consumer behavior. The captions encourage readers to take specific actions, whether it's adopting eco-friendly products or partnering with the brand.

"It's time for your business to have an eco-friendly packaging option!" This call-to-action targets businesses, urging them to choose sustainable solutions for their operations. Plepah makes the message feel immediate and personal, encouraging businesses to take action now.

"Start using eco-friendly, sustainable, and compostable disposables." A simple yet powerful call-to-action that prompts immediate consideration of eco-friendly alternatives. It directly encourages consumers to consider eco-friendly alternatives for their daily needs, making it easy for them to take that first step toward a more sustainable lifestyle.

Plepah's captions remove any hesitation by presenting eco-friendly choices as simple, practical, and important for both businesses and individual consumers. The brand not only captures attention and builds interest, but also pushes for real-world action, helping consumers make a positive environmental impact right away.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate how Plepah uses the AIDA model to craft persuasive Instagram captions that promote its eco-friendly products. By capturing attention, generating interest, cultivating desire, and prompting action, the brand engages its audience and encourages sustainable behavior. The analysis highlights the importance of emotional appeals, logical explanations, and actionable messages in sustainability marketing.

As eco-conscious consumerism continues to grow, Plepah serves as a compelling example of how brands can leverage social media to communicate their values and inspire change. Future research could explore the impact of these strategies on consumer behavior and the long-term success of eco-friendly brands in fostering sustainable practices.

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