

**EXPLORING THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE
IN CONSUMERISM**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by **Faith Chisom BERNARD (Miss)**, with Matriculation number **ART1800485** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

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Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, the source of all wisdom, inspiration, and guidance. To my father and mother, Pst. and Mrs. Bernard Onwe with boundless love and appreciation, I dedicate this project to you for being my pillars of support and encouragement. Your unwavering faith in me, your sacrifices, and your unending love have been the bedrock upon which I have built this achievement. Your wisdom and guidance have been my compass, and your belief in my potential has fuelled my journey. This dedication is a small token of the immense gratitude I feel for your constant presence in my life.

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To my humble self, I want to take a moment to recognize and express my admiration for the unrelenting tenacity and fortitude shown during the course of this journey and to express my belief that with dedication and unflinching faith, dreams can come true.

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On a final note, I want to convey my heartfelt thanks to my beloved Kelvin for never failing to reach out to me at any point and for the unfailing love, support, and encouragement throughout this endeavor.

I say I love you all, and I pray the Good Lord blesses you all tremendously in Jesus name AMEN.

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ABSTRACT

The paramount goal of this research is to tease out the components of the language of persuasion in the context of consumerism. In this age of information overload and ever-expanding consumer choices, understanding persuasive language has become the linchpin of successful marketing and consumer engagement. This study uses a mixed-methods design that uses a qualitative and quantitative approach. Also, this study uses deontological ethics and sociolinguistics theories to analyze the 110 responses and data from respondents, who are all consumers. The study delves into the ethical dimensions of persuasive language in consumerism. The research also examines how persuasive language operates within specific local contexts. Furthermore, this research aims to uncover the limits and regulations on the use of persuasive language and some hidden persuasive techniques employed by marketers and advertisers to influence consumers. In conclusion, the research acknowledges the language of persuasion and consumerism as a complex and ever-evolving field.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This research primarily focuses on the components of language of persuasion in order to comprehend the ethical dimension of persuasive language, the local

language context of persuasiveness, and limits on the use of persuasive language, as well as how they relate to consumers and positively impact consumerism.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study is based on a socio-linguistics and deontological framework and is limited to 110 responses from a questionnaire designed to collect information about consumers' ethical scores and exposure to persuasive language.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to gather both in-depth insights and statistical data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic from different perspectives. The study uses a qualitative approach to reflect the researcher's perspective and interpretation of the phenomenon under consideration, and there is also the use of questionnaires to gather data on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours related to persuasive language and consumerism. The questionnaires were designed to assess consumer responses to different persuasive techniques, examine their beliefs and motivations, and explore their susceptibility to persuasive messages. This approach provides valuable insights into consumers' subjective experiences and perspectives. A secondary source for this study is the internet, from which information about certain phenomena relating to this research is obtained.

1.4 Theoretical Background

Deontological ethics is the first theory that is used for this research. In moral philosophy, deontological ethics, or deontology, is the normative ethical theory that the morality of an action should be based on whether that action itself is right or wrong under a series of rules and principles rather than on the consequences of the action. In deontological ethics, an action is considered morally good because of some characteristic of the action itself, not because the product of the action is good. Deontological ethics holds that at least some acts are morally obligatory, regardless of their consequences for human welfare.

The first great philosopher to define deontological principles was Immanuel Kant, the 18th-century German founder of critical philosophy, who is considered the central figure in the development of deontological ethics. Kant's work, particularly his ethical framework outlined in the book *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), formed the cornerstone of deontological ethics. He emphasized the concept of duty and the importance of acting in accordance with moral principles. Kant held that nothing is good without qualification except a good will, and a good will is one that wills to act in accord with the moral law and out of respect for that law rather than out of natural inclinations. He saw the moral law as a categorical imperative, i.e., an unconditional command, and believed that its content could be

established by human reason alone. Kant did not specifically address the language of persuasion and consumerism; his ethical framework has been applied to various domains, including advertising and marketing.

This theory is applied to account for an ethical framework that focuses on guidelines for persuasive language in the context of the language of persuasion and consumerism. By assessing whether the language adheres to values like honesty, transparency, and respect for consumer autonomy, it is used to assess the ethical implications of persuasive language in consumerism. Misleading or false claims would be considered unethical according to this theory, as it considers whether the language used to persuade consumers aligns with ethical standards and moral duties. Persuasion techniques that infringe upon consumers' ability to make free and autonomous choices may be seen as ethically problematic. This theory gives insight on how to understand and address the needs and concerns of consumers using language that is respectful and transparent. By adopting deontological ethics, advertisers can prioritize the truthful and transparent presentation of information.

The second theory applied in this study is the socio-linguistics theory put forth by William Labov. William Labov, who is regarded as the founder of sociolinguistics, carried out a ground-breaking study on American English language variation in the 1960s. The idea of social stratification and its effects on language use was first

established in Labov's work. In many aspects, sociolinguistics is a synthesis of sociology and linguistics. The focus of sociolinguists is on socially constituted language, which is created by and contributes to society. The study of language use in social circumstances and how it is used to influence other people is known as sociolinguistics. A different perspective on language and society focuses on the contexts and uses of language as an activity in and of itself. By examining language in its social context, we can gain valuable insight into how we establish our social bonds within a group.

Using this idea, which recognizes that language differs across various social groups and settings, aids in explaining how language and society interact. As a result, sociolinguistics presents a special chance to combine theory, description, and application in the study of language.

These theories provide frameworks for understanding the cognitive processes, attitudes, and behavioral responses involved in the language of persuasion and consumerism.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship / Justification of Study

When it comes to persuasion, how something is expressed is just as significant as what is said. A persuasive language framework was created with this in mind by scholars Ruth Pogacar, L. J. Shrum, and Tina M. Lowrey. Understanding how

particular linguistic techniques can be used to convince has been the subject of extensive research in recent years. To create their framework, Pogacar et al. concentrated on figuring out these connections in order to offer a practical overview of the body of knowledge in this field. The framework was designed to make it easier to speak to the right people in the right ways and for the right audiences. The framework identifies the linguistic strategies that demand more mental effort from the audience.

Aristotle categorized the three primary methods of persuasion into logos, ethos, and pathos as the three appeals of persuasion. They are crucial, according to Aristotle, for any speaker who wants to sway and persuade his listeners. Simply expressed, logos is the logical evidence that the speaker offers to convince his listeners. It is founded on logic. Some rhetorical devices, such as enthymemes, instances, rhetorical inquiries, parallelisms, metaphors, and repetition, can be used to promote logos.

Ethos refers to the speaker's capacity to convince his audience that he is trustworthy and reliable. The speaker's personality affects the ethos. Ethos is based on the level of respect that the listener has for the speaker. When the audience is left with the impression that the speaker has a strong moral code, is kind, and is rational, it creates an ethical appeal.

Pathos is a persuasive approach based on emotions. The speaker uses emotional proof to stir up the audience's emotions in an effort to persuade them to take a particular action. According to Aristotle, emotions are "all those affections that cause men to change their opinion in regard to their choices and are accompanied by pleasure and pain, such as anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries," (Hall).

Consumerism, on the other hand, refers to the ideology, cultural practice, or model that promotes the acquisition of goods, and especially the purchase of goods, as a vehicle for personal satisfaction and economic stimulation. It is driven by various factors, including marketing and advertising strategies that employ persuasive language to influence consumer behavior. Consumerism is often confused with capitalism, but the latter is an economic system, while the former is a pervasive cultural attitude. Consumerism is an economic and societal way of viewing and understanding the economy that focuses on the idea of the consumption of a steady supply of goods and services by the citizens of a given country. A book on consumerism published by Thorstein Veblen, called *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, examined the widespread values and economic institutions emerging along with the widespread "leisure time" at the beginning of the 20th century.

Hilton opines that consumerism is the doctrine of a continual increase in the rate of consumption as a condition for a 'sound economy'. It is a description given to an increasingly commodified culture, which encourages inquiries and research into "the mass market", or social class and interpretations of advertising and marketing, and the material culture of commodities (Hilton). Consumerism defines the entire goal of production; the goal of production is for people to buy and consume. This justifies the fact that we are all consumers of variable products and services. Consumerism is an ideology of choice; choices are made in multifarious areas of human life in particular ways that formalize a schematic structure for choice-making in a general sense (Clarke). According to Steven Miles, consumption is different from consumerism; "notion of consumerism can be said to be of more sociological interest than consumption". Consumerism is based on the constant purchase of new goods and services with little attention to their true needs or durability. As it takes advertising to create a desire to always want to purchase goods and hire services, why not use the right language to persuade consumers?

Studies have shown the importance of making an impactful choice of language and why companies should take note of it, since it can be used as a key strategic tool for managing brand impressions and for attracting and convincing consumers (Pogacar, Shrum, and Lowrey, 2018). The ease with which consumers are able to derive meaning from language comprehension is often referred to as fluency. Also,

effective use of persuasion is essential for successful marketing and advertising. Researchers have provided an accessible framework to help marketers and advertisers choose the right language devices to persuade consumers.

To justify this study, this research underscores the complexity and ethical considerations involved in the use of persuasive language in the ever-changing world of consumerism. It highlights the need for marketers to navigate this complexity by considering ethical principles, adapting to local contexts, and recognizing the inherent constraints of their communication efforts. As earlier stated, since it takes advertising to create a desire to always want to purchase goods and hire services, why not use the right language to persuade consumers? To understand how persuasion is accomplished in real-life settings, we need to examine authentic data collected from real-life interactions. In this paper, our research focuses primarily on the aspect of language of persuasion in order to comprehend the ethical dimension of persuasive language, the local context of persuasive language, and the limits on the use of persuasive language, as well as how they relate to consumers and positively influence consumerism in society using the deontological ethics theory and socio-linguistics theory.

From the findings, less attention has been given to carrying out analysis on the use of persuasive language in consumerism using deontological ethics theory and socio-

linguistics theory by examining the ethical dimensions of persuasive language, the local language context for effective persuasion, and the limits on the use of persuasive language. Thus, this research can serve as a new area, which is of great benefit to academia.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This study explores the ethical dimension of persuasive language in consumerism, how it functions in the context of the local language, and its inherent limitations.

CHAPTER TWO

ETHICAL DIMENSION OF PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

Persuasion, or persuasion arts, is an umbrella term for influence. Persuasion can influence a person's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, or behaviors. Addressing the ethical dimensions of persuasive language in consumerism involves promoting openness in business dealings and enabling consumers to make informed decisions. By adopting deontological ethics, advertisers should prioritize the truthful and transparent presentation of information. It is applied to evaluate the ethical implications of persuasive language in consumerism by examining whether the language aligns with principles such as honesty, transparency, and respect for consumer autonomy.

Persuasion is widely accepted as unethical if used for personal gain at the expense of others or for personal gain without the audience's knowledge. Most persuasion measures have been declared to be dishonest, but not all persuasion measures are. They are ethical dimensions of using the right language to persuade someone without being dishonest and biased. An ethical persuasion attempts to avoid unwanted consequences in their outcome. These outcomes may have a direct impact on the target audience (consumer), or they might affect them indirectly.

There are ethical issues related to the use of persuasive language.

110 responses

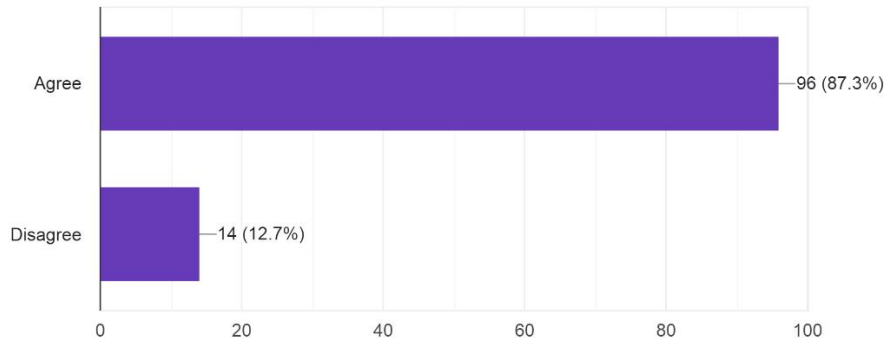


Fig.1

According to the responses obtained from the survey, it is clear that people are becoming more aware of the fact that persuasive language used in business has evolved beyond the “come and buy” era and now has ethical underpinnings. These issues should be carefully considered before using any persuasive language with a consumer. This is taken into account, as 87.3% in all agreed to it.

Using Immanuel Kant's deontological theory as opposed to utilitarian consequentialist ethics, the language used to persuade consumers from a deontologist's point of view can only be adjudged good when it is done from the duty of love for the good of the consumers, no matter who is involved. Advertisers also ensure that the driving force behind advertising is not merely for profit but also for humanity's sake. Hence, it is morally wrong if an advertiser's intentions or language contradict their core duty to see to it that good is done and evil is avoided, that the

truth be told, promises kept, and consumers' love of the good are upheld because they should be treated as ends in themselves as opposed to just a way to earn money. “Ends in themselves” is a term from Kantian ethics, which is a moral philosophy based on the work of Immanuel Kant. It refers to the idea that people should be treated as valued in their own right rather than as a means to an end. In the context of persuasive language and consumerism, this idea suggests that people should not be pressured with deceptive or manipulative language to make decisions (purchase goods or hire services) that go against their own interests.

As advanced and exposed as people are in the world today, they are still being forced indirectly to buy goods or hire services that are not of benefit to them just because they cannot detect the difference between persuasive language and manipulative or deceptive language. This might involve using emotional appeals or social pressure to influence their choices and using manipulative language or framing arguments in a way that is designed to persuade people rather than providing them with clear and factual information. This mainly suggests that people are still required to be made aware of the importance of ethical consumerism and persuasive language with ethical backing to protect environmental sustainability.

Have you ever been influenced by a persuasive language to buy a product you did not want to buy?
110 responses

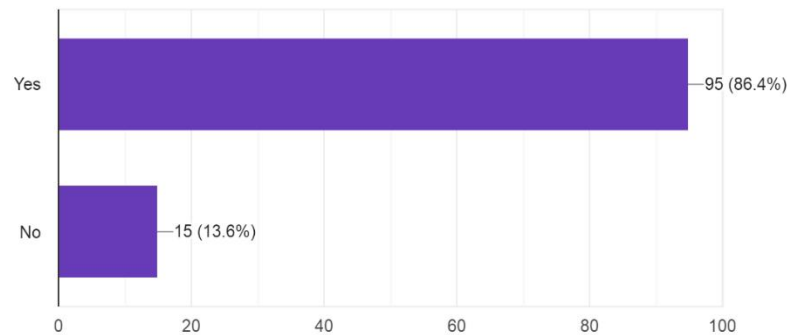


Fig. 2

This shows the use of persuasive language in the business world and the danger it poses to buyers of different products when it is abused by advertisements or marketers. According to statistics, the survey shows that 86.4% of the respondents agreed to have been persuaded by a different persuasive language to buy something they had little or no need for at that particular time.

2.1 Honesty in Persuasive Language

According to Edward R. Murrow, “To be persuasive, we must be believable; to be believable, we must be credible; to be credible, we must be truthful.” No matter the area of life we find ourselves in, it helps to be truthful, credible, and believable. Without the language of persuasion, a great business conversation can fall flat.

Persuasion backed by belief is quite possible, but persuasion without belief is unlikely.

Honesty is the quality of being truthful and trustworthy. To be honest is to tell the truth at all times, even at personal risk to oneself. According to David Ogilvy, "Never write an advertisement that you wouldn't want your family to read. You wouldn't tell lies to your own wife, don't tell them to mine." Honesty in business is also known as ethical behavior in business. In this study, our concern is the honesty of the language (persuasive language) used to promote businesses to consumers. Importantly, Kant argues that we may never treat a person merely as a means to an end (never just as a resource or instrument), and this suggests that the type of language that is used to persuade a customer should be truthful and honest and not manipulative or deceptive in order to generate sales.

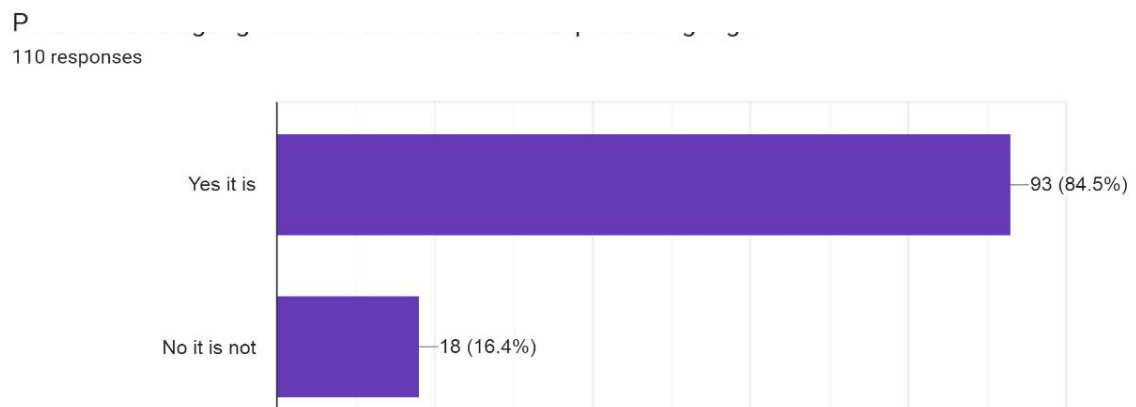


Fig. 3

Most survey participants concurred that persuasive language differs from deceptive language. Deceptive language is meant to mislead, according to 84.5% of respondents, whereas persuasive language aims to persuade or influence through the use of logic and emotional appeals. Deceptive language uses misleading tactics and language that is not honest or truthful. Therefore, according to the survey conducted, the ethical use of language to persuade consumers to buy a product or use a service is not deceptive language.

Deontologists require us to follow the universal rules we give ourselves. These rules must be in accordance with reason in particular; they must be logically consistent and not give rise to contradictions. That is, as an advertiser of a particular brand, we must follow the right way of persuading consumers of the brand with honest words without considering ourselves first. One of Aristotle's modes of persuasion that is closely related to honesty is Ethos. In order to establish ethos, a person must act consistently with moral principles and be truthful in the language they use to communicate. It's worth mentioning that deontology is often seen as being strongly opposed to consequentialism.

Persuasive language can make any form of business conversation more engaging and convincing. However, the ultimate purpose of an advertiser or marketer is to win consumers trust and influence what they think about buying and to continue to buy.

This is why it's important to recognize that in the process of persuading, consider honesty and integrity to avoid the popular Nigerian saying of a disappointed customer: "What I ordered versus what I got".

2.2 Transparency in Persuasive Language

In order to ensure that everyone has access to the same information and can make reasoned decisions, philosopher John Rawls claimed that transparency is a fundamental ethical norm in persuasive language. D.J. Shaw and S.S. Zabriske asserted that transparency is crucial for establishing credibility and trust with clients in the realm of marketing. Transparent advertising is more effective than less transparent advertising, according to a study by D. Obermiller and M. Spangenberg. Transparency thus refers to being truthful and open about the aims and reasons underlying persuasive language, including being explicit and forthright about the results that one prefers to aim for when using persuasive language.

Plain and simple language is one of the key ways transparency is conveyed in persuasive writing. When promoting or exhibiting your business, use plain, direct language that is easy to understand rather than jargon or other deceptive terminology. Why not use the more ethical phrase "we experienced a loss" instead of "we had a minor setback"?

The importance of upholding moral laws and principles is demonstrated by looking at transparency in persuasive language from a deontological perspective. This is a clear framework for analyzing the ethicality of persuasive language. Even though it may have a negative impact on the message's persuasiveness, persuasive language should always give all pertinent information to potential consumers or customers.

The relationship between the principles of disclosure and transparency is discussed by Robert Cialdini in his book *Influence*. Transparent language demands that every relevant piece of data be made available to the reader or consumer without making any effort to conceal or subvert the truth.

Do you think advertisers manipulate consumers with their language?

110 responses

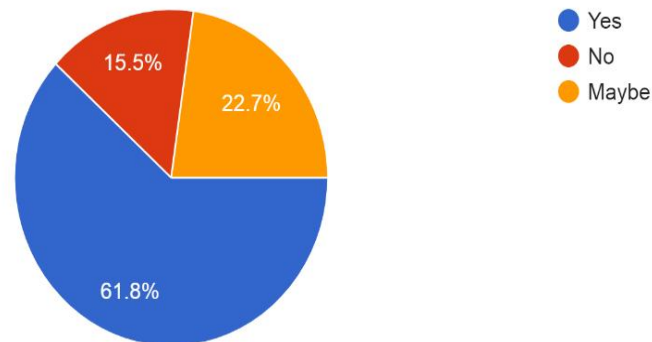


Fig. 4

This depicts how consumers respond when businesses use less transparent language to market their goods. According to the survey, 61.8% of respondents believe that the languages used to communicate with consumers are manipulative.

2.3 Respect for Consumer Autonomy in Persuasive Language

According to David Ogilvy “The consumer isn’t a moron; she’s your wife. You insult her intelligence if you assume that a mere slogan and a few vapid adjectives will persuade her to buy anything”. This quote highlights the importance of respecting the intelligence and autonomy of the consumer. The ethics of autonomy must be taken into consideration while developing a culture of ethical consumption. The preservation of a consumer's decision-making autonomy is referred to as autonomy in marketing. When they hand back control to the consumer, the consumer is now in charge of and accountable for their deeds. If a marketer is honest and viewed as dependable, they are immediately given the consumer's autonomy. Consumer autonomy is the capacity of an individual to act independently and without coercion or undue influence. It entails seeing people as deliberative agents capable of making decisions in accordance with their own values, aspirations, and interests. How persuasively the words are written and spoken has a direct impact on how much consumer autonomy is respected. The goal of ethical persuasive language

is to enlighten, educate, and influence others without going too far in the direction of deception or manipulation.

Language plays a crucial role in respecting consumer autonomy, since the words we use can influence how people perceive or respond to a persuasive message. If a marketer or an advertiser uses overly simplistic or vague language, it can be seen as deceptive or manipulative. The use of clear and unambiguous language helps consumers make informed choices and build trust in the language. Many academia and philosophers have discussed the concept of consumer autonomy, including Immanuel Kant, who believed respecting one's autonomy was a vital component of ethical behavior.

Respecting consumer autonomy and using persuasive language are related since the two are deeply interconnected. In order for the consumer to make their own decisions, it is necessary to employ language that provides information. We must speak in a way that connects with them and give them a sense of respect for their autonomy if we want to persuade them. In order for consumers to make informed decisions, marketers and advertisers must always make sure they have access to all essential information. This covers the cost, specifications, advantages, dangers, and terms and conditions. By employing straightforward language in your persuasive messaging, you give informed consumers a better chance to exercise their autonomy

in the decision-making process. Avoid using jargon or technical terms that could frighten or confuse customers. Consumers can understand the facts and make judgments without feeling overwhelmed when they are written in easy-to-understand language. Respecting consumer autonomy not only adheres to moral standards but also helps firms and customers establish enduring, trustworthy relationships. Consumers are more likely to interact with a brand and make decisions when they feel that their autonomy is respected.

In conclusion, it is evident that there is more to the use of persuasive language in business. Incorporating ethical considerations into the way persuasive language is used is one way to stop deception and manipulation in the market. Deontological ethics deals with rightness and teaches how to avoid doing the wrong thing or persuading consumers using the wrong language that is void of truthfulness, transparency, and consumer autonomy.

CHAPTER THREE

LOCAL LANGUAGE CONTEXT OF PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

Local language is the language spoken in a community, home, or business as opposed to regional, national, or international languages. The local linguistic context, as well as the particular setting and culture in which it is employed, frequently have a significant impact on persuasive language. Depending on whether it is utilized in a group or an individual environment, the use of persuasive language may vary.

The local language environment can be viewed as a particular illustration of the more general socio-linguistic code-switching phenomenon. The use of language in a particular setting is the focus of the subset of local context known as local language context. Depending on the situation or environment, the local language context may relate to a particular dialect or register. As different cultures and societies may react differently to various techniques of persuasion, the local language context can also impact the effectiveness of persuasive language. The use of emotional appeal causes the local linguistic environment to have an impact on persuasive language. In some situations, persuasion is thought to be most successful when it appeals to emotions.

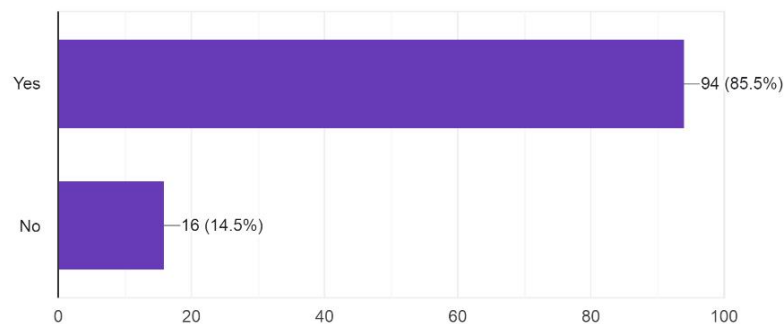
It is less complex to reach the audience as well as consumers when the market or advertising space uses the local language. It is more effective to use language to persuade someone to buy something or employ a service when you use a language

that they are familiar with or that is simple for them to understand and comprehend in the situation. Reaching a target audience must include meeting certain requirements, one of which is the local linguistic background. Persuasion is made simpler by lowering oneself to the audience's or consumers' level in terms of the language used in that setting.

The relationship between local language context and consumerism is considered from a sociolinguistic perspective, which is the study of language as a social

Does the use of local language or cultural references in advertising impact your perception of the brand or product?

110 responses



phenomenon.

Fig.5

This demonstrates how strongly consumers agree that the use of the local language affects how they view a certain brand or product. As may be seen, 85.5% of

respondents approved of the effect of local language or cultural references in advertising.

According to this viewpoint, the local language context might affect how people perceive particular brands, goods, and services. If a brand employs the local language in its packaging or advertising, the perception that the brand is more prestigious may change depending on the area. This may result in higher sales and brand loyalty from customers who identify with the local language. According to studies, when consumers are given information about items or brands in their local language, they are more likely to think the item or brand is of higher quality and they are more likely to purchase the item or use the service. A person's emotional response to exposure to a local language may have an impact on their decision-making.

3.1 Dialectal Prejudice in Persuasive Language

Dialect prejudice is discrimination based on a person's dialect or way of speaking. Dialectic prejudice is a type of linguicism. Dialectal prejudice, often referred to as linguistic prejudice or dialect discrimination, is the term used to describe the unfavorable attitudes, prejudices, or stereotypes that certain people may have toward people or groups that speak a specific dialect or regional variation of a language.

Dialectal prejudice can significantly affect how persuasive language is perceived when it is used in a given situation. The influence of this on the message's effectiveness is enormous. This is due to the fact that consumers' emotional reactions

to dialects, depending on whether they consider them to be prestigious or not, vary. When targeting a local audience, this has a greater impact because using a dialect that is viewed unfavorably might harm the consumer's emotional connection to the company. Businesses frequently consider the regional context and the consumer's emotional impact when marketing to consumers. This is because how consumers perceive and react to persuasive language can be greatly influenced by the local language context and the emotional impact of dialect.

Dialect prejudice is often based on stereotypes and assumptions about dialects rather than objective facts. People may assume that a dialect is less intelligent or uneducated based on stereotypes rather than evidence. This can lead to discrimination and inequality, as people who speak a particular dialect may be treated differently or unfairly, and this can hinder effective communication and persuasion in business.

The distinction between speakers of Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin, particularly in the context of Nigeria, is called dialectal prejudice. Standard Nigerian English is considered a prestige dialect and is connected to wealth, status, and education. However, Nigerian Pidgin English is frequently stigmatized and considered an indication of poor social status, which might have an impact on consumer behavior. Additionally, the way that banks advertise their goods and

services reflects dialectal discrimination in Nigerian advertising. Standard Nigerian English is frequently used by banks in their marketing, which is perceived as being more reliable and trustworthy. However, some banks are starting to use Nigerian Pidgin English in their marketing since it might be perceived as more personable and approachable to persuade those present at the local level to bank with them. Brands and marketers can persuade consumers to choose their goods and services by establishing a sense of confidence and trustworthiness through the use of Standard Nigerian English. On the other hand, brand owners and marketers are able to engage with consumers on a more emotional level by combining components of Nigerian Pidgin English, making them feel more at ease with their products.

In relation to sociolinguistics theory, this situation is the concept of “markedness”. This principle states that certain linguistic features are more likely to be noticed and evaluated by listeners, while others are more likely to be ignored or taken for granted. In the case of dialectal prejudice, Standard Nigerian English is the unmarked dialect, while Nigerian Pidgin English is the marked dialect. The concept of markedness is important to understand because it helps explain why some dialects are perceived as more prestigious or powerful than others. In order to get full knowledge of dialectal prejudice in persuasive language, one must understand how dialects can carry social meaning. Dialects can be associated with certain socioeconomic classes, ethnic groups, or regions. This leads to stereotypes and preconceptions about the people

who speak those dialects. In summary, dialectal prejudice focuses on the negative biases against non-standard dialects, which can hinder persuasion.

3.2 Linguistic Prestige in Persuasive Language

In sociolinguistics, linguistic prestige is the degree of esteem and social value attached by members of a speech community to certain languages, dialects, or features of a language variety. Linguistic prestige is directly associated with power. According to Thomas Paul, “there is nothing in the particular language itself that determines its worth; it is the connection of the language in question to the phenomenon of power that determines the value of that language and that contributes to the standardization process” (Bonfiglio).

The prestige of a language depends on its record, or what people think its record to have been. This is the social status that is associated with a particular language or dialect. The status is based on factors such as the history of the language, its use in prestigious institutions or media, or the socioeconomic status of its speaker. However, linguistic prestige in this context is concerned with how the prestige language or dialect can be used to persuade consumers and its effects on persuasive language use. This can be considered with a closer look in terms of social status. Social status can be used to persuade consumers by making them feel like they are part of a more exclusive or elite group. In this way, linguistic prestige can be used as a tool for

persuasion. Linguistic prestige involves strategically using prestigious linguistic elements to enhance persuasion. This can be used to create a sense of “in-group” and “out-group” among consumers. A company marketing a product to people who speak a specific dialect may use linguistic prestige to make these consumers feel like they are part of an exclusive group. This can make the product more appealing and desirable to these consumers while also creating a sense of authenticity and credibility. Depending on the environment, consumers may be more likely to be persuaded by messages that use a prestigious language or dialect. This is because they may perceive these messages as more credible, authoritative, and trustworthy. As a result of this, brands tend to use prestigious languages or dialects in their marketing to appeal to consumers. A luxury brand may use Standard Nigerian English in its advertisements to create an image of sophistication and elegance.

Linguistic prestige also creates a sense of exclusivity. This is known as “positional prestige”. An exclusive, high-end product may use a prestigious language or dialect in its marketing to create the impression that it is only for a selected group of consumers. This can in turn make the product seem more desirable and exclusive, which could lead to an increase in sales. However, it is important to note that this can also alienate certain groups of consumers, making them feel like they are being excluded from the product.

Dialectal prejudice and linguistic prestige are concepts that address language variation and its influence on persuasive communication, with dialectal prejudice acting as a barrier and linguistic prestige as a strategy. Dialectal prejudice can hinder consumers' receptiveness to non-dialectal persuasive messages, while linguistic prestige can enhance the persuasive power of a message, convincing consumers to buy a product or service. These concepts are subfields of sociolinguistics, which study how language is shaped by social factors. They both can influence the effectiveness of persuasive language, which in turn can affect consumer behavior. A company might use persuasive language that appeals to the prestige of a dialect in order to influence consumers to buy their product, or better yet, they might use persuasive language that is designed to overcome the prejudice against a certain dialect in order to reach a wider audience.

In conclusion, these ideas emphasize the significance of taking linguistic diversity and consumer perceptions into account when using persuasive language or employing communication tactics. When marketers or advertisers use the local language in their marketing and advertising efforts, they are more likely to effectively communicate with and appeal to the local audience and potential customers, as opposed to using a language that may not be well understood in that region.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIMIT ON PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE USE IN CONSUMERISM

These are boundaries that exist between what marketers can and cannot do to persuade consumers. There are certain uses of persuasive language that are not allotted under law, but our focus is not on things that may be illegal but on ways that are considered unethical or inappropriate by professional standard use of language. Limits on persuasive language in the context of consumerism is a topic that includes ethics, legislation, psychology, culture, and the overall societal impact of persuasive language communication. This brings up the crucial issue of how to combine the right to free speech with safeguarding customers. It includes considerations of the ethical and legal restrictions that ought to apply to the persuasive language used in marketing, advertising, and consumer-focused communications. This is certainly where the line should be drawn about creating languages that are truthful, honest, and free of false claims, and how to put in place the societal boundaries that should be considered when using persuasive language in consumerism.

When employing persuasive language, marketers and advertisers must adhere to certain rules, which are established in this area. In order to entice consumers without encircling them, advertisers and marketers should encourage rather than propel consumers through knowledge, instinct, experience, and nonverbal indicators. This

creates a framework for consumers to perceive and then predict. Violating these limits by advertisers or marketers can lead to reputational damage, legal consequences, and a loss of trust among consumers. As consumers are prone to believing what they hear or see from the marketer or advertiser as long as it seems compelling to them, some have claimed that rigorous controls on the use of language of persuasion should be in place in order to safeguard consumers from being fooled. Others believed that acceptable levels of persuasion and consumption should be determined by the free market. Some people also think that it is impossible to govern the language of persuasion and that instead, consumers should be urged to be more discerning and critical of how they consume news and information. While there are different perspectives on the limits of language in persuasion, one common theme is that the effectiveness of persuasion can be limited by an individual's level of interest in the topic. While persuasion through language is inherent in consumerism, there are significant limits that should be put in place to avoid misleading consumers.

In deontological ethics, there is an emphasis on rules and obligations. When it comes to the limits on persuasive language use in consumerism, we consider whether or not there should be certain rules or regulations in place to protect consumers from being misled or manipulated. We also look at whether or not advertisers and marketers have an obligation to be open and fair in their use of language. The theory of deontological ethics is a moral theory that emphasizes the inherent rightness or

wrongness of actions themselves rather than the consequences they produce, and this is guided by the idea of moral duties and principles. When we apply deontological theory to these limits, we can see how it helps us understand the ethical constraints

of consumerism.

Do you think there should be a limit on the use of persuasive language in advertising ?

110 responses

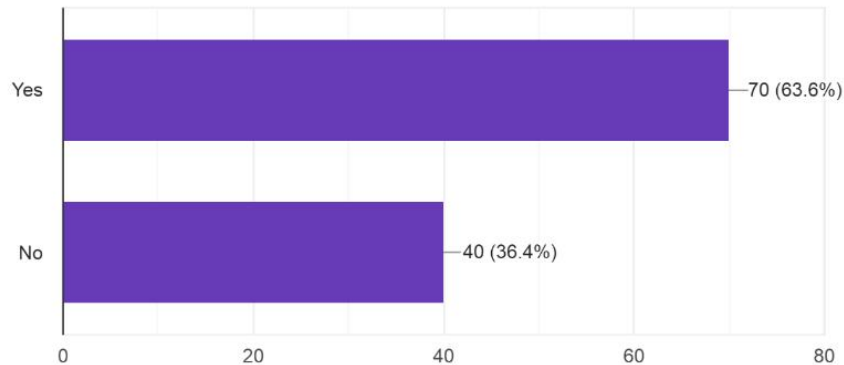


Fig. 6

According to the responses to the survey, consumers are aware of the overuse of persuasive language and concur that there should be a limit placed on its usage since they believe that they make certain judgments without even realizing it. According to the responses, 63.6% of respondents agreed that the use of persuasive language in advertisements or product promotion in public places should be restricted.

4.1 Hidden Persuasive Language Technique

Understanding and using persuasive techniques is essential when communicating persuasively. A vital skill required to attract new clients and investors, build a brand, or motivate people is the use of persuasive language techniques. The specific methods people employ to persuade others to concur with them are known as persuasive strategies. The major goal is to foster trust and aid others in acquiring new behaviours. Persuasive strategies are widely used in practically every facet of life. It's critical to pay attention to the reactions of your audience when presenting ideas at work and to modify your persuasive strategies as necessary. Some common persuasive language techniques are the use of emotional appeal, which involves using emotions to persuade people; the use of logical appeal, which involves the use of logic and evidence; and the use of repetition. While we have persuasive language techniques, there are also hidden persuasive techniques. These are techniques or tactics used to influence consumers without them realizing it. These techniques can be subtle and ineffective, making it somehow impossible for consumers to detect that they are being persuaded. These techniques can be used to manipulate consumers into making decisions that are not in their best interests. According to Marshall McLuhan, a media theorist, "the medium is the message." This suggests that the way a message is delivered can be just as, if not more, important than the message itself. In other words, the way information is presented can significantly impact how it is received and perceived by the audience.

The potential way to regulate the use of hidden persuasive language techniques is through transparency and disclosure. If consumers are made aware of the techniques that are being used to influence them, they may be less likely to be influenced by them. Advertisers could be required to disclose when they are using subliminal messages or other persuasive techniques. In Vance Packard's book *The Hidden Persuaders*, which explores the use of psychological techniques such as subliminal messaging in advertising, Packard argues that these techniques are being used to manipulate consumers without their knowledge or consent.

When reading about a product or service, have you ever noticed that the words used to describe it can change your perception of the product?

110 responses

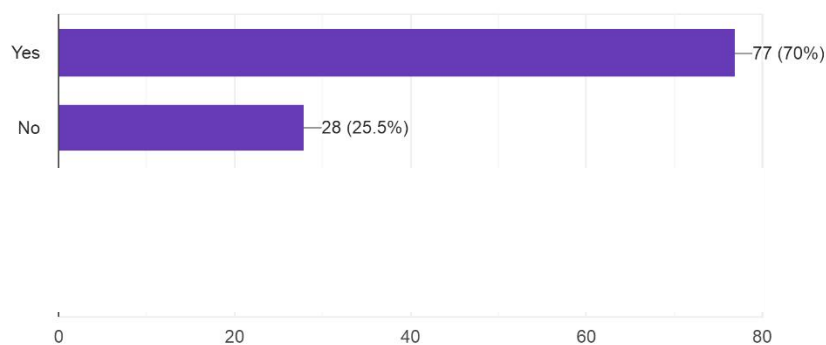


Fig. 7

The response to this question reveals whether or not someone has picked up on the use of hidden persuasive language strategies. 70% of respondents to the survey agreed that the words used had altered how they perceived the products, indicating

that some consumers are now aware of the use of covert persuasive language strategies.

4.1.1 Embedded Language

An embedded language is when one language is used inside another language. It is a hidden persuasive technique in which the language used is worded in a way that makes it sound like a suggestion or advice. Embedded language is a general term that includes a variety of linguistic strategies and components used to persuade or influence, including embedded commands, but not exclusively. Instead of clear directions, embedded language frequently provides implied recommendations or instructions. By doing this, the audience may find the persuasive message less jarring and more appealing. This is a type of persuasive language used to influence the consumer's behaviour without their realizing it.

In the context of persuasiveness, embedded language refers to the employment of subtly worded hints or features that are intended to affect the consumer's feelings or actions without overtly expressing a request or recommendation. When utilized morally and sensibly, embedded language can be a potent instrument for persuasion.

In the context of consumerism, the use of embedded commands and embedded language can be effective in persuading individuals to make purchasing decisions. However, it's crucial for marketers and advertisers to use these techniques responsibly and ethically, ensuring that they provide accurate information and respect the autonomy of consumers. Overly manipulative or deceptive use of these techniques can harm trust and reputation in the long run, as when people are not aware that they are being influenced by embedded language, they may feel that they are being manipulated, which can lead to a lack of trust in a brand or organization. Also, embedded language makes consumers form beliefs that are not based on facts or evidence, which can lead to people making decisions that are not in their best interest.

Do you think that the use of embedded language can have negative consequences?

110 responses

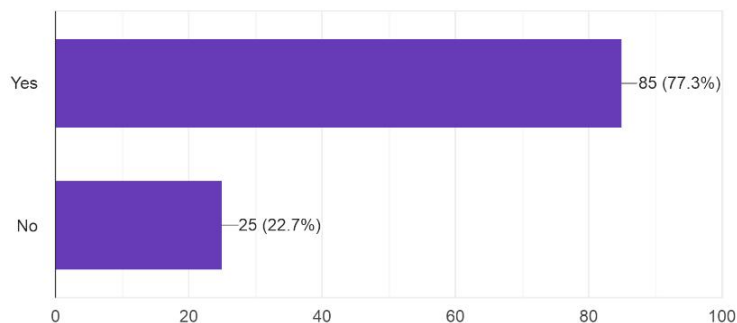


Fig. 8

This inquiry concerns the possible drawbacks of employing embedded language. According to the responses gathered, those who are aware that embedded language is used for persuading consumers concur that there are drawbacks to employing the language for influence. 77.3% of respondents agreed with the assertion that embedded language affects consumers and may have unfavorable outcomes.

4.1.2 Framing Language

The term "framing" in linguistics describes how language affects how an event or situation is perceived. This could involve the choice of words or expressions, the voice tone, or the setting in which a statement is made. For instance, the words "I'm just asking" or "I need you to" might be used to soften the tone of a question or remark, making it less forceful or confrontational. Language frames influence our responses by triggering cultural narratives, which are the shared ideas of a particular culture. Framing language can also tap into emotions like fear, hope, or guilt.

The deliberate presentation of information with the goal of influencing the audience's perception and interpretation of it is known as framing language. This style of language expresses a specific viewpoint or perspective, it can be used to sway people's opinions on a subject, problem, or item. Framing language is seen as a covert persuasion tactic and can be overt or subtle. It is difficult to identify because

of the way this language is used since it is not always clear to the listener why a particular issue is being presented in a particular way, thereby making it a hidden persuasive language.

The prejudice known as the framing effect happens when people's opinions are affected by how information is conveyed to them. The framing effect specifically happens when the same information is presented in several ways, and people's opinions or choices are influenced by the way the information is presented. From how politicians frame issues to how marketers frame their languages, the framing effect can be observed in a variety of different circumstances. In a similar vein, marketers employ framing to sway consumer choices. Marketers can sway consumers' opinions of things and raise the possibility that they will buy the product by framing them in a specific way. For instance, consumers may find a product that is marketed as "low fat" or "healthy" more tempting than one that is "high calorie" or "unhealthy."

In the context of consumerism, a business employs framed language to refer to a product as "essential" or "necessary" to consumers in an effort to persuade them to buy it. By creating a sense of urgency or necessity, framing language can encourage impulsive purchases. Additionally, marketers or advertisers may present their goods as "luxurious" or "high-end," which may persuade buyers that they are desirable or

worthwhile investments. A business might use framed language to describe a product to consumers as "vital" or "required" in an effort to persuade them to buy it.

In conclusion, this chapter emphasizes the need to limit the use of persuasive language in marketing and consumerism. It acknowledges the significance of ethical and legal considerations as well as the necessity to balance free expression and consumer protection. Also, it highlights the use of hidden persuasive techniques like embedded and framed language with boundaries.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

There are many facets to the language of persuasion and consumerism that demonstrate how persuasive language is applied in daily life and how this affects consumerism. The elements of persuasive language have been examined through the lens of two theories, namely the sociolinguistics theory and the deontological ethics theory. These theories helped to analyze the various persuasive languages in the context of consumerism and how the effectiveness of persuasive language is also dependent on the local language context and the ethical considerations involved. This research discussed how ethical dimensions play a central role in the language of persuasion, emphasizing the importance of truthfulness, transparency, and respect for consumer autonomy. Responsible marketers understand that while persuasion is a legitimate part of advertising, it should not involve deception, manipulation, or the exploitation of vulnerabilities. The local language contexts introduce another layer of complexity, as cultural norms, values, and linguistic nuances profoundly impact the effectiveness of persuasive messages. Successful marketers must tailor their language to resonate with diverse audiences and demonstrate cultural sensitivity. Lastly, how inherent limits on the use of persuasive language are essential to maintaining trust and integrity in consumerism. These limits include prohibitions

against deception, respect for vulnerable populations, the requirement of informed consent, and adherence to environmental and social responsibility.

Additionally, this research considers when to stop or perhaps pause using persuasive language in the marketing and advertising era, the importance of both the positive and negative effects, and its use in consumerism. It looked at the dialectal prejudice that can affect the way people perceive others based on their language, as well as the idea of linguistic prestige and how it influences consumerism. With the responses collected from the questionnaire, this study was able to gain valuable insights into the impact of persuasive language on consumerism. From all the responses, it showed that while some people are aware of the use of persuasive language, others are not as aware.

In this ever-evolving age, the language of persuasion in consumerism remains a critical tool for businesses seeking to thrive in competitive markets. However, responsible and ethical practices are essential to ensure that persuasive language respects the rights and dignity of consumers, aligns with local values, and operates within clear boundaries. In doing so, marketers contribute to a marketplace that values honesty, transparency, and the well-informed choices of consumers.

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