







Language and Persuasion: An Exploratory Analysis of Rhetorical Elements in Celebrities' Social Media Posts

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ABSTRACT

This paper adapted the framework of rhetorical devices developed by Michalik-Suchanek to examine the language used in social media posts of Ghanaian celebrities, focusing specifically on the use of rhetorical elements. *Instagram* and *Twitter* were chosen as the primary platforms for analysis due to their popularity among Ghanaians. The dataset consisted of posts from 15 Ghanaian celebrities, sourced from either one or both platforms. The study adopted the embedded mixed-methods approach. A total of 130 celebrity posts from *Instagram* and 70 from *Twitter*, all from April 2022, were collected using mobile phones and laptops through an observational guide. Through a critical analysis of the sampled data, 22 rhetorical devices were identified, with syntactic devices being the most commonly used. The study revealed that most Ghanaian celebrities prefer to use Standard English in their posts. It was also revealed that these rhetorical devices were employed by celebrities to establish unique relationships with their followers, persuade them to take action, express intentions, caption videos and pictures, and enhance the overall meaning of their posts. The research showed that the use of rhetorical devices was effective in enriching the language of the posts. Based on these findings, it was recommended that further studies be conducted to explore the use of rhetorical elements in social media posts of politicians, businesspeople, entertainers, and other public figures in Ghana. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of how rhetorical strategies are employed in the digital communication landscape. This study contributes to existing knowledge on social media research conducted in Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human communication, setting us apart from other animals.¹ According to Mulholland, its functions include informing, arguing, directing, and importantly, persuading.² A speaker uses language effectively if he or she employs appropriate rhetorical elements to persuade his or her audience as intended. Mulholland posits that language is a major tool for achieving persuasion.³ The art of persuasion hinges

¹ George Yule, *The Study of Language*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

² Joan Mulholland, *Handbook of Persuasive Tactics: A Practical Language Guide* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

³ Mulholland, *Handbook of Persuasive Tactics: A Practical Language Guide* .

on the desire to convince others towards particular ways of thinking. Communicators use rhetorical elements to enhance the impact and persuasiveness of their messages when presenting statements, commands, questions, and emotive expressions.

In the 21st century, the advent of social media has significantly advanced communication and improved social interaction. Virtual meetings now enable people to connect and develop strong relationships across countries and continents without the need for physical encounters. Through social media, individuals can access various details about others, such as their appearance through pictures, their living and work locations, and even information about their family and friends, thus turning the world into a global village. According to Tsiotsou, social media functions as a platform for users to create personal profiles and interact with others, sharing information, personal thoughts, and various types of media.⁴ Numerous social media platforms exist which include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, LinkedIn, Blogspot, Snapchat, Reddit, TikTok, and more.⁵ These platforms have paved the way for individuals to achieve national and international fame with relative ease.

Before the era of the internet, gaining public attention required considerable wealth, industry connections, and a whole lot of luck.⁶ Brands, politicians, celebrities, and organizations could only communicate with the masses through traditional media outlets such as television, radio, and print media.⁷ However, with the advent of social media and smartphones, this dynamic has drastically changed. Now, people can easily connect with others through social media platforms, enabling celebrities to easily attain national and international fame by capitalizing on this newfound opportunity. Previous studies have explored topics such as celebrity endorsements, the impact of social media influencers, social media community dynamics, and the use of rhetoric within online communities. However, the use of rhetorical elements in Ghanaian celebrities' posts has not received much attention. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by concentrating on language and persuasion in communication, an essential aspect of human existence and increasingly crucial in the 21st century. To achieve this overarching objective, the study seeks to explore the common rhetorical devices used by Ghanaian celebrities on social media and the functions and effects of these devices as used by celebrities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhetoric, a well-established field of study which dates back to the time of Plato and Aristotle, has seen several perspective changes over time.⁸ With the emergence of new media, the focus shifted to online rhetoric, which remains an ongoing area of exploration for scholars and researchers. Social media has been the subject of numerous studies as well. For instance, Neal examined how brand promotions on Instagram influence follower engagement with influencer posts, using the lens of source credibility theory.⁹ On the other hand, Nouri investigated social media influence as a marketing tool, specifically studying the impact of social media influencers on consumers' perception of certain products. The study compared traditional celebrities with social media influencers, using three criteria: interpersonal relationship, relatability, and authenticity, and analysed the data from *Instagram* and *YouTube* platforms.¹⁰ The findings suggested that consumers tend to trust social media influencers more due to their relatability and authenticity qualities in comparison to traditional celebrities.

Sudnick studied the role of social media influencer marketing within a historical moment.¹¹ She conducted her studies from the perspective of the philosophy of communication. She made it clear that her “project takes into account the importance of reflective engagement for interpersonal, parasocial, and marketing communication, seeking to understand the various intellectual and philosophical coordinates for social media influencer marketing in a social world.” The study indicated how the spread of information by social media influencers has become a very common phenomenon. Though some information can be helpful such as how the public was cautioned and educated on the measures to be taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus in 2020,

⁴ Rodoula H Tsiotsou, “The Role of Social and Parasocial Relationships on Social Networking Sites Loyalty,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 48 (2015): 401–14.

⁵ Melody Nouri, “The Power of Influence: Traditional Celebrity vs Social Media Influencer,” https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/engl_176/32 (Advanced Writing: Pop Culture Intersections, 2018).

⁶ Edward F. McQuarrie, Jessica Miller, and Barbara J. Phillips, “The Megaphone Effect: Taste and Audience in Fashion Blogging,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 40, no. 1 (June 1, 2013): 136–58, <https://doi.org/10.1086/669042>.

⁷ W. Glynn Mangold and David J. Faulds, “Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix,” *Business Horizons* 52, no. 4 (July 2009): 357–65, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002>.

⁸ Michael MacDonald, *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁹ Morgan Neal, “Instagram Influencers: The Effects of Sponsorship on Follower Engagement With Fitness Instagram Celebrities” (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2017).

¹⁰ Nouri, “The Power of Influence: Traditional Celebrity vs Social Media Influencer.”

¹¹ Kati Sudnick, “The Banality of the Social: A Philosophy of Communication of Social Media Influencer Marketing” (Duquesne University, 2020).

other information, for example, those that spread information on how to cure coronavirus in 2020, can be dangerous. Hence, the public must be wary of how celebrities communicate and promote ideas and products on social media, that is, how celebrities use social media for marketing purposes. The study by Sudnick did not focus on a particular social media platform nor did it critically look at the use of language.

Ludwig conducted a rhetorical analysis of the Reddit online community to explore questions related to online identity and community from a rhetorical perspective. Notably, the study revealed that identification and constitutive rhetoric play a significant role in establishing a strong collective identity within the community.¹² However, Ludwig's analysis did not specifically address language and persuasion, focusing instead on how rhetoric shapes the identity of the online community.

METHODOLOGY

The study is within the embedded mixed-method design. According to Leedy and Ormrod, “embedded mixed method design is a type of mixed method design where one approach, either qualitative or quantitative, takes precedence while the other complements the study.”¹³ In this case, the qualitative design played a more prominent role, as the study was primarily exploratory rather than explanatory. Data collection was carried out using both laptops and cellular phones, with the aid of an observational guide, to gather posts from social media platforms. A total of 200 posts were collected, with 130 posts from Instagram and 70 from Twitter. The researchers used a purposive sampling technique to ensure a comprehensive analysis, considering factors such as the popularity of the celebrities, the number of followers, industry representation, gender, and the extent of influence possessed by each celebrity among others. Fifteen celebrities were selected for the study, all of whom are active both on Instagram and Twitter. The selected celebrities are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Jackie Appiah | 8. Nana Ama McBrown |
| 2. Yvonne Nelson | 9. John Dumelo |
| 3. Juliet Ibrahim | 10. Stonebwoy |
| 4. Nadia Buari | 11. Fella Makafui |
| 5. Sarkodie | 12. Serwaa Amihere |
| 6. Nana Aba Anamoah | 13. Sister Derby |
| 7. Yvonne Okoro | 14. Berla Mundi |
| | 15. Mona Montrage |

Data Collection Procedure

The primary source of data for the research was some selected social media posts by Ghanaian celebrities on Instagram and Twitter. These social media platforms were selected because they provide the researchers with text data. The secondary source of data was from a few websites that provided the names of Ghanaian celebrities that are most followed on social media platforms, particularly, Instagram and Twitter.¹⁴ The selection of celebrities was limited to Ghana for two main reasons. First of all, the researchers wanted to have data that could be managed well. By limiting the data to ‘most followed’ Ghanaian celebrities on Instagram and Twitter, the researchers got manageable data to work with. These websites equally provided data appropriate for this study. Second, the researchers wanted to conduct the study in the Ghanaian context to add to existing knowledge on social media research conducted in Ghana. This will expand research in the field of social media.

Using a non-random purposive sampling, the researchers selected a few posts that were relevant to the study from the many posts of celebrities on Instagram and Twitter. The data was first tabulated into categories: all data collected from Instagram and all data collected from Twitter, with their dates and names of celebrities.

Data Analysis Procedure

The researchers conducted a comprehensive analysis of the texts within the selected posts and categorized them based on the common rhetorical elements commonly used on social media. While following the modified analytical framework proposed by Michalik and Michalska-Suchanek, the researchers also included additional rhetorical elements that were not originally part of the framework but were deemed essential for the analysis. Special attention was given to the prominent rhetorical devices found in the data. To enrich the analysis, the

¹² Bradley Stephen Ludwig, “The Rhetorical Constitution of Online Community: Identification and Constitutive Rhetoric in the Community of Reddit,” 2014.

¹³ Ludwig, “The Rhetorical Constitution of Online Community: Identification and Constitutive Rhetoric in the Community of Reddit.”

¹⁴ These websites include www.ghstudents.com, www.allnewgh.com, www.braperucci.africa, www.ghvibe.com, and www.latestghana.com.

researchers integrated other crucial rhetorical elements from reputable sources.¹⁵ The frequencies and distribution of the various rhetorical elements within the selected posts were carefully recorded, highlighting which elements were more frequently employed by the celebrities. Afterward, the functions of these rhetorical elements as utilized by the celebrities were examined to gain a deeper understanding of their purposes and intentions. Additionally, the researchers investigated the reactions of followers in the form of responses or comments to gauge the impact of the rhetorical devices used by the celebrities. This, therefore, provided valuable insights into the effectiveness and influence of the rhetorical strategies employed on social media platforms.

Analytical Framework

The study adopted the analytical framework of rhetorical devices developed by Michalik and Michalska-Suchanek in analysing the rhetorical devices in the social media posts of celebrities.¹⁶ The elements of the framework as described by Zulkipli and Ariffin are as follows:

Rhetorical Elements

Definitions

Alliteration: Torto defines alliteration as a sound device characterized by the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of words in close succession, creating a powerful musical effect and emphasizing keywords, concepts, and relationships within a piece of writing.¹⁷ For example, "*Stop staring and stir the starch Stanley*" demonstrates alliteration with the repeated "s" sound.

Hyperbole: Torto defines hyperbole as a rhetorical device that uses deliberate exaggeration to make a statement serious, comic, or ironic, often about a person's qualities, a concept, or a phenomenon to emphasize its significance.¹⁸ An example is "*I will love you still, my dear, till all the seas go dry.*"

Rhymes: Torto defines rhymes as the repetition of identical vowel sounds in the stressed syllables of two or more words and can be used to create artful effects in writing. For instance, "*Grace...space...pace*" showcases rhyming words in the context of Jaguar. Examples of rhyming words are the following: *puff* and *rough*, *pleasure* and *measure*, *day* and *say*, among others. There are several types of rhyme. An *end rhyme* occurs at the end of a line in poetry. *Internal rhyme* is another type of rhyme that occurs when two or more words rhyme within the same line. Also, *identical rhyme* is the repetition of the same word, usually in the rhyming position, to achieve emphasis.

Repetition: Torto defines repetition as the recurrence of certain words, phrases, statements, or questions in a written piece to emphasize an idea or contribute to sound effects. Examples include "*Africa, tell me, Africa...*" and "*water, water everywhere...*"

Personification: Torto defines personification as a comparative device that attributes human characteristics or attributes to nonhuman entities, emphasizing abstract concepts, ideas, or qualities. An example is "*all nature mourned the death of the king.*" *Or the surf flung its arm around the swimmers and enveloped them with love.*

Idiom: Torto defines idioms as fixed groups of words with established meanings that cannot be deduced from the individual words used. They add attractiveness to phrases without pointing out their literal meaning, such as "*Love at first flight*" used by Virgin America. Examples are *between a rock and a hard place*, *rule of thumb*, *know the ropes*, *when in Rome do as the Romans do*, etc.

Oxymoron: Torto explains oxymorons as juxtaposing contradictory words, terms, or ideas so as to achieve a certain literary effect or emphasize key aspects within a text or literary piece. Examples include *honest thief*, *painful laughter*, *eloquent silence*, *poisonous pleasure*, and *living dead*.

¹⁵ These include www.marriamwebster.com/words-at-play and www.thoughtco.com/rhetorical-devices.

¹⁶ Urszula Michalik and Mirosława Michalska-Suchanek, "The Persuasive Function of Rhetoric in Advertising Slogans," *Journal of Accounting and Management* 6, no. 1 (2016): 45–58.

¹⁷ Richard T. Torto, *General Knowledge of Literature: Introduction to Literary Devices, Terms and Concepts* (Cape Coast: Nyakod Printing Works, 2014).

¹⁸ Torto, *General Knowledge of Literature: Introduction to Literary Devices, Terms and Concepts*.

Imperative Mood: according to Torto, the imperative mood takes the form of a command, prohibition, entreaty, or advice and can be used to trigger an audience response or suggest actions. For instance, "*Do something memorable*" is an imperative mood used by Toyota Aygo. Examples are *come home early; eat well to stay healthy; never underestimate the power of a woman;* etc

Pronouns: according to Michalik and Michalska-Suchanek, pronouns, especially the second person singular or plural pronoun "you", or its possessive form "your", as well as the first person plural pronoun "we" or its possessive form "our" are used in copywriting to make the message relatable to the reader.¹⁹ An example is *with your miles, you can now fly further* used by Qatar Airways

Verbs: according to Torto, verbs denote actions, processes, states of being, or possessions and provide a sense of completeness or near completeness to an idea or statement. For instance, "Just imagine what Citroen can do for you" employs verbs to zoom in on the focus of the message. When a verb is used, the writer describes the action or the state of being of an entity, usually a noun, in a statement or question. Examples are *Rose is a mother; Professor Nana Osam Abban teaches at KNUST;* and *Can Catherine sing?* Some verbs can describe the process a noun undergoes. For example, *Trees, animals and humans grow; all living organisms grow.* Some verbs can express possession. Examples are *James owns a car* and *Miss Page has a pet.*

Nouns: Torto defines nouns as naming words that identify individual entities, distinguishing their characteristics and qualities. Examples are "Jane," "man," "puppy," and "love."

Adjectives: Torto asserts that adjectives describe and specify nouns by characterizing their features and qualities, providing valuable information about the properties of products and persuading the audience. An example is "More economical. Less pollutant" used by Peugeot.

According to Zulkipli and Ariffin, Burgersa, Konijn, Steen, and Iepsma included irony and metaphor as elements in their study on rhetorical devices in slogans and advertisements.²⁰ They explain that Burgersa et al. describe irony as "an evaluation which could be contradicting to the intended one, while metaphor is introduced as a comparison made from the original source to the target domain."²¹ Despite the fact that Burgersa et al. framework was designed for analysing rhetoric in advertisements, it has been considered useful for this study because social media celebrities often use their posts to advertise themselves and promote businesses. The current study may also make modifications to the framework.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents a detailed analysis and presentation of the study's findings. This follows a critical exploration and analysis of the rhetorical devices in the social media posts of celebrities in the Ghanaian social media landscape.

Rhetorical Devices

Using the analytical framework proposed by Michalik and Michalska-Suchanek, the researchers analysed the data obtained from the posts of social media celebrities. In order to identify as many devices as possible from the posts of celebrities, the researchers modified the analytical framework by Michalik and Michalska-Suchanek which consists of only 14 devices, to include more rhetorical devices. Hence, 19 more devices were selected from www.marriamwebster.com/words-at-play and www.thoughtco.com/rhetorical-devices. Thus, in all, 33 rhetorical devices were used in the analysis. Out of this total number, only 22 devices were found in the selected posts of the sampled celebrities. These devices are grouped in the table below.

¹⁹ Michalik and Michalska-Suchanek, "The Persuasive Function of Rhetoric in Advertising Slogans."

²⁰ Christian Burgers et al., "Making Ads Less Complex, yet More Creative and Persuasive: The Effects of Conventional Metaphors and Irony in Print Advertising," *International Journal of Advertising* 34, no. 3 (2015): 515–32.

²¹ Muhammad Fakhruallah Zulkipli and Adlina Ariffin, "Understanding The Roles Of Rhetorical Devices And Intertextuality In Promotional Discourse," *International Journal of Heritage, Art and Multimedia*, July 11, 2019, 90–107, <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijham.25008>.

Table 1. Grouped Rhetorical Devices

Group	Rhetorical Devices
1. Syntactic Devices	i) Imperative mood ii) Nouns iii) Pronouns iv) Verbs v) Adjectives vi) Zeugma
2. Sound Devices	i) Alliteration ii) Rhyme
3. Repetition Devices	i) Repetition ii) Anaphora iii) Hypophora iv) Anadiplosis
4. Comparison Devices	i) Metaphor ii) Simile iii) Personification
5. Contrast Devices	i) Oxymoron ii) Antiphrasis
6. Understatement Devices	i) Litotes
7. Other Rhetorical Devices	i) Chiasmus ii) Dialogismus iii) Eutrepismus iv) Dialogism

Chiasmus is the inversion of a phrase, creating a powerful sentence; dialogismus is when a speaker imagines what someone is thinking or speaks in another’s voice to explain and subvert an original argument; Eutrepismus is the act of stating points in the form of a numbered list; and Dialogism posits a logical conclusion drawn from a given premise.

In all, there are seven groups for the 22 rhetorical elements found in the social media posts of celebrities. The group with more rhetorical elements is the syntactic devices group with 6 rhetorical elements whereas the group with the least is the understatement devices group with only one rhetorical element. The frequency of elements found in the posts is illustrated below.

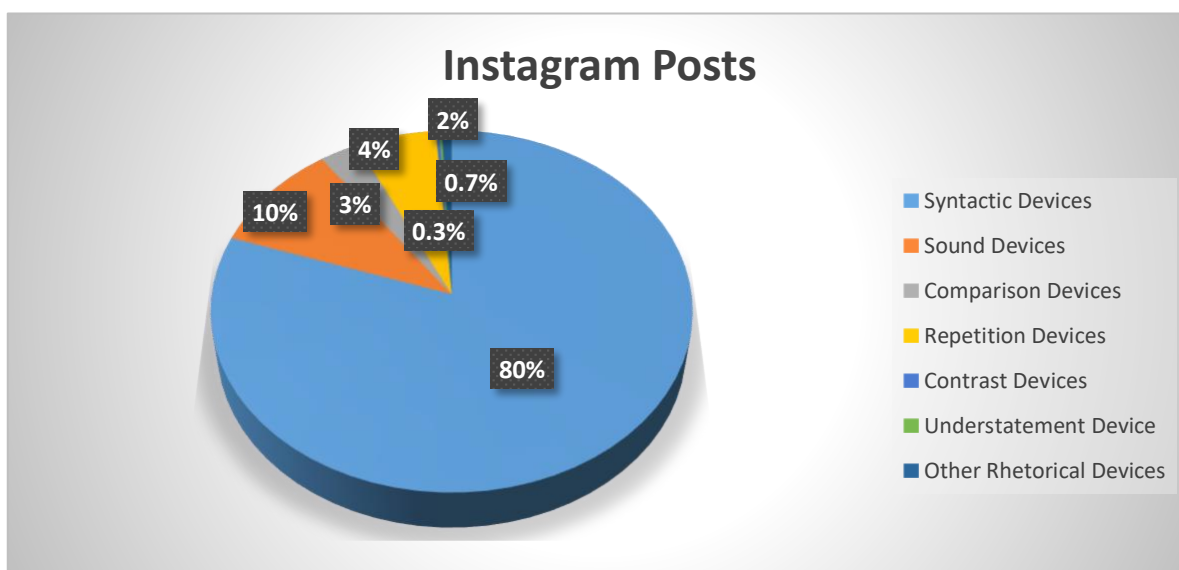


Figure 1. Frequency of rhetorical elements in Instagram posts

According to the chart above, syntactic devices emerged as the most frequently employed rhetorical devices in Instagram posts by Ghanaian celebrities constituting the highest percentage (80%) on the chart. It was observed that all celebrities examined in this study use syntactic devices in their posts to communicate with their followers. The reason for this preference lies in the fact that these devices are easily comprehensible to their audience, requiring minimal effort to grasp the intended meanings. For example, when celebrities wish to prompt their followers to take action or address an issue, they often opt for the imperative mood over satirical expressions. The imperative mood is straightforward and more accessible, whereas satire can be perplexing and demands analytical skills. Consequently, celebrities prefer the use of the imperative mood more frequently in their Instagram posts.

The next most common rhetorical devices are sound devices. Some of these include alliterations, though not employed intentionally. It was observed that whenever celebrities strive to use "sweet" language, aiming to please and persuade their followers, they naturally incorporate sound devices into their posts to enhance the pleasing quality of their expressions.

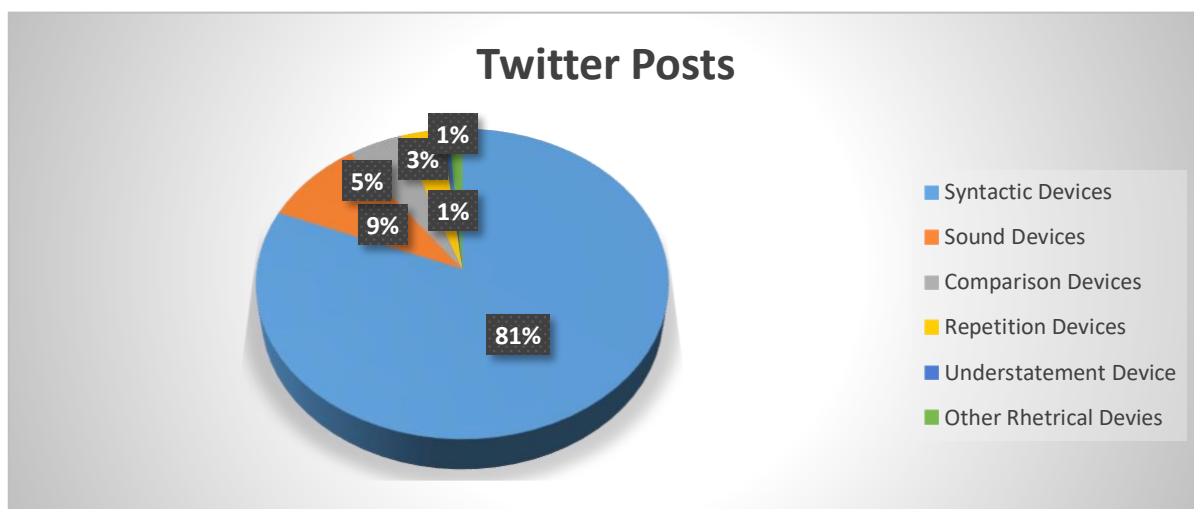


Figure 2. Frequency of rhetorical elements in Twitter posts

As in Instagram posts (figure 1), Twitter posts also exhibit a prevalent use of syntactic devices, constituting 81% of the rhetorical devices employed. This similarity can be attributed to the fact that the same celebrities who post on Instagram also use Twitter and thus employ similar rhetorical strategies on both platforms. It is worth noting that the number of celebrities sampled on Twitter is lower than that on Instagram.

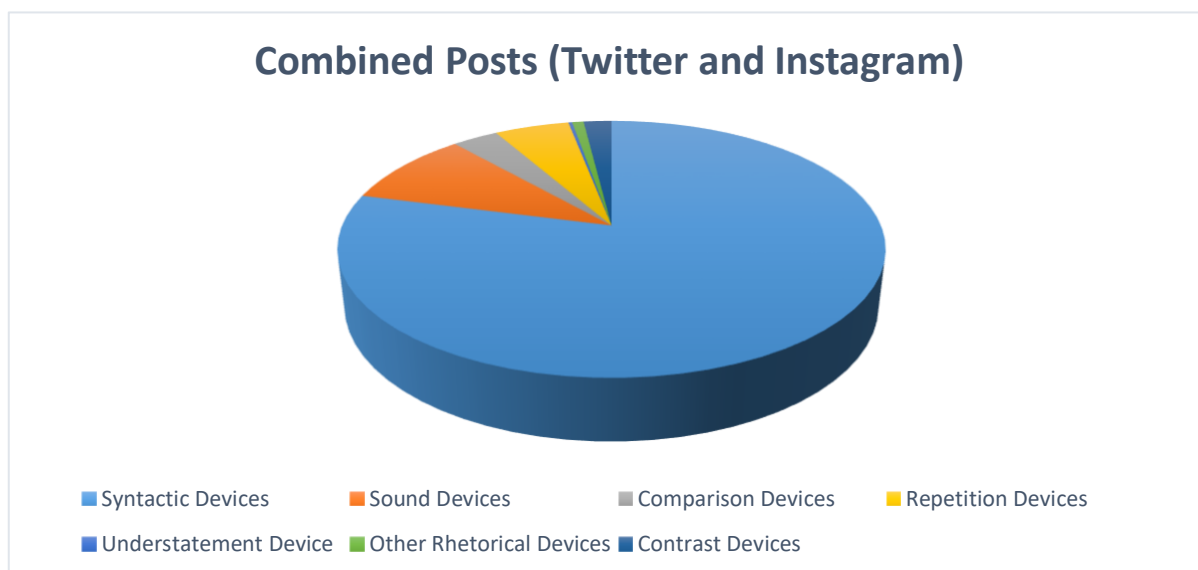


Figure 3. Frequency of rhetorical elements in both Instagram and Twitter posts

Based on the analysis presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, it becomes evident that syntactic devices remain the most commonly used rhetorical devices in celebrities' posts on both Instagram and Twitter. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that when these posts were combined, syntactic devices emerged on top of the list as the most prevalent rhetorical devices across social media platforms. Following syntactic devices, sound devices emerge as the second most frequently used rhetorical devices. On the other hand, contrast and understatement are the least employed rhetorical devices in the entirety of the posts.

It is worth noting that some celebrities are active on only one of the two platforms, with most Instagram users not being on Twitter. This discrepancy makes combining their posts essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of rhetorical device usage. To gain further insights into how these devices function and which individual devices are predominantly used, the researchers meticulously examine the grouped devices, breaking them down and analyzing them individually.

Syntactic Devices

As mentioned earlier, among the array of rhetorical devices employed in social media posts, syntactic devices stand at the forefront. This assertion finds support in the following table. Thakur defines syntax as the study of sentence structure, encompassing the arrangement of words into coherent forms.²² Given that sentences inherently comprise words, any discourse on syntactic analysis necessitates a consideration of words. As posited by Kolln and Gary, language wields greater potency when words are meticulously woven together, with grammar centering on this amalgamation of words.²³ Consequently, when words are purposefully combined to achieve specific impacts, their utilization becomes a strategic rhetorical choice. He adds that the choices that one makes in one's use of words to communicate effectively are rhetoric.

Table 2. Types of syntactic devices and their occurrences in posts

Device	Instagram		Twitter	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Imperative mood	69	14	33	24
Noun	104	21	39	28
Pronoun	123	25	30	22
Verb	96	19	26	19
Adjective	83	17	8	6
Zeugma	21	4	2	1
Total	496	100	138	100

From the table above, the most syntactic devices used on Instagram are pronouns (25%) while that of Twitter is nouns (28%). However, the use of nouns (21%) is second to pronouns (25%) on Instagram. The next device to the noun is verbs, followed by adjectives and then the imperative mood. The last is the zeugma, which is the use of a word that relates to two or more words usually in such a manner that it applies to each. It is the last because it is not often used as the others. Nouns, pronouns and verbs being most frequently used indicate that celebrities use more sentences or structures close to the sentence in structure or meaning.

Sound Devices

Some sound devices were also identified in the posts as rhetorical devices. Though four sound devices (alliteration, rhyme, onomatopoeia and cacophony) were selected by the researchers, the results yielded only two (alliteration and rhyme). The results are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Types of sound devices and their occurrences in posts

Device	Instagram		Twitter	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Alliteration	54	92	14	93

²² D. Thakur, *Linguistics Simplified* (New Delhi: Syntax, 2011).

²³ Martha Kolln and Loretta Gary, *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices and Rhetorical Effects*, 7th ed. (Pearson Education Inc., 2013).

Rhyme	5	8	1	7
Total	59	100	15	100

Between the two sound devices identified in the posts, alliteration happens to occur more than rhyme, hence, having a higher percentage of 92 for Instagram and 93 for Twitter. The type of rhyme that was identified was the internal rhyme. This is because the posts were written in prosaic format; therefore, there were no end rhymes but internal ones.

Repetition Devices

Repetition devices were also identified in the post as presented below. Though hypophora, which is the rhetorical strategy a speaker (in this case a celebrity) uses when he or she poses a question and answers it, may not be strictly considered a repetition device. It is however grouped under repetition devices because it can be considered as a repetition in the way that a speaker uses it: asking a question and answering it instantly. It is as though the answer to the question has been repeated. Another reason for its inclusion in repetition devices is that it can also be used for emphasis just as repetition devices do.

Table 4. Types of repetition devices and their occurrences in posts

Device	Instagram		Twitter	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Repetitions	28	82	2	33
Anaphora	2	6	1	17
Hypophora	3	9	2	33
Anadiplosis	1	3	1	17
Total	34	100	6	100

From the analysis, more repetitions were found in Instagram posts than in Twitter. The first repetition device topping the list by having the highest number of occurrences is repetition. For Zulkpli and Ariffin, repetition occurs when certain words in a phrase or a sentence recur to emphasize the message.²⁴ Hence, the repetitions that were identified were to the effect of emphasizing the message in the posts. Repetition makes up 80% of the repetition devices in Instagram posts, followed by hypophora (9%). However, in Twitter posts, repetition and hypophora have the same percentages: 33% and 33% respectively. Similarly, Anadiplosis is next to anaphora (and last to all the repetition devices) in Instagram posts, but it has the same percentage (17%) as anaphora (17%) in Twitter posts.

Comparison Devices

For comparison devices, metaphor comes first with 68% and 76% in Instagram and Twitter respectively. Next to metaphor is simile (18%), and personification (14%) comes last, though it has the same percentage (12%) as simile (12%) in the Twitter posts. While metaphor makes a direct comparison between two dissimilar entities, the simile compares two things with the use of *like*, *as*, or *than*. Personification compares objects by attributing human qualities to them. In the posts that were analyzed, these elements were found in these same roles.

Table 5. Types of comparison devices and their occurrences in posts

Device	Instagram		Twitter	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Metaphor	15	68	6	76
Simile	4	18	1	12
Personification	3	14	1	12
Total	22	100	8	100

Contrast Devices

Two contrast devices (oxymoron and antiphrasis) were found with equal frequency only in Instagram posts. This means that these rhetorical devices were rarely used by celebrities as they can pose some challenges of

²⁴ Zulkpli and Ariffin, "Understanding the Roles of Rhetorical Devices and Intertextuality in Promotional Discourse."

misinterpretation by those who are not familiar with their use. Thus, celebrities do not use them in order to avoid such misinterpretation. Unlike oxymoron which primarily puts two contrasting words or terms closely together for emphasis, antiphrasis occurs when a statement means something other than the literal meaning of the words it is composed of. Antiphrasis is considered an irony.

Table 6. Types of contrast devices and their occurrences in posts

Device	Instagram	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Oxymoron	1	50
Antiphrasis	1	50
Total	2	100

Understatement Devices

The types of understatement devices found in the data were litotes. Litotes are used by understating something affirmatively by using the contrary. It was found once in the Instagram posts and once in the Twitter posts. As used in just only one post among the posts analyzed, it can be concluded that understatement is the least used rhetorical device used by social media celebrities.

Other Rhetorical Devices

There were other devices identified that could not be included in the ones mentioned earlier. These devices were grouped as *other rhetorical devices*. Whereas dialogism occurred in both Instagram and Twitter posts, chiasmus and dialogismus occurred in only Instagram posts while eutrepismus occurred in Twitter posts. Chiasmus occurs in the inversion of a phrase, creating a powerful sentence. Eutrepismus is the act of stating points in the form of a numbered list. Although these devices are not often used by social media celebrities, they are powerful devices that can be used to achieve great effect. Dialogism and dialogismus can be confused if one does not take care, but they are different terms and devices. The former posits a logical conclusion drawn from a given premise while the latter makes a speaker imagine what someone is thinking or speak in another’s voice to explain and subvert an original argument.

Table 7. Kinds of other rhetorical devices and their occurrences in posts

Device	Instagram		Twitter	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dialogism	2	50	1	50
Chiasmus	1	25	-	-
Dialogismus	1	25	-	-
Eutrepismus	-	-	1	50
Total	4	100	2	100

The examples of the use of these as identified in the social media posts of celebrities are as follows.

Dialogism:

God doesn’t waste anything we go through. He knows how to bring good out of every situation. (Jackie Appiah, April 8, 2022)

Chiasmus:

*YN * NY (Yvonne Nelson, April 13, 2022)*

Dialogismus:

@iamnadiabuari, the beauty that is @samera_buari, the forever baby girl no matter how old she thinks she is now (Nana Aba Anamoah, April 27, 2022)

Eutrepismus:

Some marry for the money, others for a passport, others for kids, others because of a banging body, etc etc errmm... (Yvonne Nelson, April 26, 2022)

DISCUSSION

This section presents a detailed discussion and interpretation of the rest of the research questions. Sudnick suggests that celebrities “communicate their daily lives in a visually appealing manner that encourages others

to mirror their aesthetic choices.”²⁵ Sudnick further states that based on their relationship with their followers, celebrities “become the source of important information, advice, and motivation for their followers.”²⁶ From the analysis, it was realized that social media can be considered one of the main channels that celebrities use to engage their followers. This discussion looks at how these celebrities use rhetorical strategies to engage their followers. Starting with the identification of the major rhetorical elements used by celebrities, the researchers discuss the functions, effects and effectiveness of these devices.

Major Rhetorical Devices

It has been noted in the analysis that the major rhetorical devices used by celebrities are syntactic devices. Among these, nouns, pronouns and verbs stand out. This is because most of the celebrities use Standard English conventions, especially, grammar and usage. Thus, they use language as educated people, although there are instances where some of them try to be more casual by using pidgin or broken English. They often use complete sentences because they follow some Standard English conventions. The following are some examples.

You are all you've got (Yvonne Nelson, April 15, 2022)

History will be made tomorrow (Jackie Appiah, April 15, 2022)

I launched the women/youth in Agric program in the Guan district over the weekend. Free ginger seedlings will be distributed to over 120 farmers across the District to boost ginger production and create more jobs this farming season. Together we can make Ghana a better place. (John Dumelo, April 19, 2022)

Laff small, u mek serious too much

Thank you shatta movement for your patience #GOGALBUM (Shatta Wale, April 17, 2022)

It can be observed from the above examples that all the first three posts used Standard English conventions. Being sentences, all these posts have subjects and predicates. The issues of concord and tense were observed. Also, it can be seen from the above data that nouns, pronouns and verbs are used more. Since they followed the Standard, they tend to have their subjects as nouns and pronouns and their predicates having verbs as their heads. Second to syntactic devices, sound devices were used in the posts. Among these, alliteration is the most used as in the examples below.

*...those who **win** battles **we** know nothing about. (Nadia Buari April 15, 2022)*

***Set** your **standards** (Sarkodie, April 24, 2022)*

From the examples above, “win...we” and “set...standards” alliterate the repetition of the /w/ and /s/ sounds respectively. The arrangement of these alliterating words makes the message pleasant and easy to relate to.

Functions of Rhetorical Devices and Their Effects

Rhetorical elements play a crucial role in shaping both the content and impact of a message. While certain devices enhance the message's allure to the audience, others imbue the message with significance. Similarly, some devices foster a more relational aspect of the messages, while others provoke the audience to take action. Furthermore, certain devices render messages more personally relatable, while others infuse them with authenticity. The significance and consequences of employing these devices should not be underestimated. Presented below are a few examples of the roles and effects that rhetorical elements assume within the social media posts of celebrities.

Pronouns are employed to occupy various syntactic positions, encompassing subjects and objects. Their usage can yield diverse effects. Primarily, the utilization of pronouns establishes a distinct rapport between the celebrity and their recipients, fostering a sense of belonging.

We are God's children forget everyone (Mona Montage April 24, 2022)

The use of the pronoun “we” in the above data establishes a unique relationship between the celebrity, her audience and God, as well as, it creates a sense that both the celebrity and her audience belong to God.

²⁵ Sudnick, “The Banality of the Social: A Philosophy of Communication of Social Media Influencer Marketing.”

²⁶ Sudnick, “The Banality of the Social: A Philosophy of Communication of Social Media Influencer Marketing.”

*If **you** want more inspiration and business tips, **my** brother @kingbuari got **you**. So make sure to follow and thank **me** later (Nadia Buari, April 1, 2022)*

Through the use of the term "you," the celebrity engages her audience in a direct manner. This choice of language not only signifies her communication with her present listeners but also extends to those who might have an interest in her words. Additionally, she strategically incorporates the pronouns "my" and "me" to lend authenticity to her statements. By referring to "my brother," she conveys the idea that the individual she endorses can be relied upon. Thus, her audience is encouraged to act without hesitation. The ensuing reaction was evidenced by the presence of likes and comments, underscoring the audience's comprehensive understanding of her message.

*I got the best Makeup Brand **You** Can Trust on **your** FACE@florirobertsgh Right here in Ghana. (Nana Ama McBrown, April 5, 2022)*

By using "I", the celebrity personalizes the brand to convince the reader ("You") to purchase the product. To this post, a part of the audience wanted to know whether she had some in stock and how they could get it from wherever the celebrity would send it.

*Together **we** can make Ghana a better place. (John Dumelo, April 19, 2022)*

By the use of the pronoun "we", the celebrity includes his audience, all Ghanaians and himself in the statement. That was a concluding sentence to an announcement that he made. By making such a statement, he asks the audience to join him to continue doing things that can make Ghana better. In essence, the audience is admonished to do his or her part of the work for Ghana.

The verb as a rhetorical device is used to draw attention to the action of the verb, as well as, to state one's position in relation or identity. Aside from these, the verb is also used to announce intentions and express expectation and ability as in the respective examples below.

*I'm the news and I **will make** you keep talking!!!!!! (Shatta Wale, April 19, 2022)*

*This week will be an amazing week. God will answer your prayers in an unexpected way. You **will smile** again. Thanks @bourbon_house_cafe for opening a new branch in East Legon. (John Dumelo, April 4, 2022)*

*God doesn't waste anything we go through. He **knows** how to bring good out of every situation. (Jackie Appiah, April 8, 2022)*

Nouns primarily serve the purpose of announcing programs, presenting one's identity, distinguishing individuals or events, and providing captions for videos, pictures, and songs. Through these applications, celebrities enable their audience to grasp their perspectives on the post, consequently guiding them toward specific thoughts or actions in response. The subsequent instances illustrate these points.

Volta Root... (Stonebwoy, April 8, 2022)

Another banger from @sima_brew (Serwaa Amihere, April 9, 2022)

Kindness.... Grace & Hustle (Fella Makafui, April 6, 2022)

The imperative mood was used to advise the followers, entreat the audience to take action and provide encouragement. Below are the respective examples of these effects.

Don't fight change, embrace it, and you will step into the fullness of what is in store for your life. Location@Peduasevalleyresort (Jackie Appiah, April 10, 2022)

Losing The Weight Can Be Stressful. Let #Calorad Help you in the process @caloradweightloss. Call delivery (Nana Ama McBrown, April 7, 2022)

WATCH YOUR CIRCLE! (Yvonne Nelson, April 26, 2022)

Though some of the use of sound devices such as alliteration is coincidental, they add some effect to the message. Alliterations make the message sound good.

Happy birthday my beautiful cuz. May God's grace abide bountifully in your life and may all the deepest desires of your heart come to pass. I love you beyond @kukies closet. (Nadia Buari, April 23, 2022)

Metaphors and similes enrich the message with imagery and make the message more appealing for the audience to read and reflect on.

Fame is light, but could also be your worst nightmare! Careful what you wish for! (Jackie Appiah, April 3, 2022)

Strong women wear their pain like stilettos. No matter how much it hurts, all you see is the beauty of it... (Juliet Ibrahim, April 1, 2022)

Some posts have more than one rhetorical device. By using more than one device, the celebrity makes the post perform multiple functions for a particular or several effects. Some examples from the data are the following.

Set your standards (Sarkodie, April 24, 2022)

To every beautiful young buttercake of mine out there reading this, I want to forget about being impressive and commit to being REAL...because being real is IMPRESSIVE. (Nadia Buari, April 26, 2022)

Happy birthday to not so little cousin of mine...the pain in my bottom...at 20yrs old you sure look matured hunay...remember sunscreen is ur friend on this your vacay...love you little mama@nneka_nld (Yvonne Okoro, April 20, 2022)

In the first example, there is a combination of imperative mood, alliteration and pronoun. These make the message not only appealing but also put a lot of meaning into the message. In the second example, there are repetition, alliteration, pronouns, adjectives and verbs. In the third, there are litotes, metaphors, pronouns and imperative mood. All these make the message loaded with more meaning for the audience to reflect. Afterward, the researchers investigated the reactions of followers in the form of responses or comments to gauge the impact of the rhetorical devices used by celebrities. This, therefore, provided valuable insights into the effectiveness and influence of the rhetorical strategies employed on social media platforms. The responses and comments provided evidence of followers' comprehension and relatability to the celebrities' posts. The ensuing instances offer an illustration:

Post:

God doesn't waste anything we go through. He knows how to bring good out of every situation. (Jackie Appiah, April 8, 2022)

Comments:

*Na TRUE U dey talk. Keep the (fire emoji) burning (by @smithgeorgebrue)
Beautiful woman u have said it all (love and clap emojis) (by @onyegbule_chinonso)*

Post:

*I got the best Makeup Brand You Can Trust on your FACE@florirobertsgh
Right here in Ghana (Nana Ama McBrown, April 5, 2022)*

Comment:

Wanna try it (by @mira.aa13565)

Every single post from these celebrities has likes or emojis or positive comments or all of these three which confirms that the use of rhetorical strategies is effective in social media posts of celebrities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The exploration of language use in Ghanaian social media discourse remains an underexplored domain. As such, it presents an opportunity for in-depth investigation. This area holds significant potential for informing social

media users about the intentional use of language. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that further studies be conducted to delve into the intricacies of language in social media posts within the Ghanaian context.

Additionally, it is proposed that future studies extend their focus to the exploration of rhetorical elements in social media posts by key figures such as politicians, businesspeople, entertainers, and other public figures in Ghana. Such investigations would contribute substantially to unravelling how rhetorical strategies are strategically employed in the dynamic landscape of digital communication. These comprehensive studies would not only enrich scholarly understanding but also offer practical insights for effective language use in the digital realm.

CONCLUSION

The study centered its attention on the use of rhetorical devices within the realm of social media posts by celebrities in Ghana. Using Instagram and Twitter as the primary sources for data collection, the researchers identified a total of 22 distinct rhetorical devices. Upon examining these devices, the analysis revealed syntactic devices as the dominant rhetorical tools, underscoring celebrities' inclination toward employing Standard English conventions in their posts. This exploration also illuminated the pervasive nature of rhetorical device usage within virtually all social media posts by celebrities. These devices were discerned as instrumental in establishing unique relationships, persuading followers to take actions, conveying intentions, providing captions for visual content, enhancing the depth of post meanings, and fulfilling other functions.

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