



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
OPEN UNIVERSITY

DOCTOR OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

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Persuasive Communication in the Digital Milieu:

A Rhetorical Analysis of Vlogging Entries of a Vegan Advocate

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Acceptance Page

This dissertation titled **Persuasive Communication in the Digital Milieu: A Rhetorical Analysis of Vlogging Entries of a Vegan Advocate** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Communication (DCOMM).

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Biographical Sketch

Jea Agnes T. Buera obtained both her BA Communication Arts degree, Major in Speech Communication and MA Communication Arts degree with Development Communication as her cognate at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. After graduation, she worked as a technical support in Convergys for a year before pursuing her passion for teaching in 2005 at the Lyceum of the Philippines Laguna. She returned to her alma mater to serve as a faculty of the Speech Communication and Performing Arts Division, Department of Humanities and the Language Instruction Towards Excellence Program of the College of Arts and Sciences as a speech teacher for foreign graduate students since 2007. She also served as one of the coordinators for the Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts, an adviser to UPLB student organizations, a member of the Department and College committees, a frequent emcee and resource speaker to University and LGU events. Since 2014, she has also been volunteering as a teacher trainer at the Department of Education. In 2016, she was granted the K-12 Transition Program Scholarship for Graduate Studies and was given the opportunity to pursue the Doctor of Communication Program at the University of the Philippines Open University. Before officially going on study leave in 2016, she received an award for Outstanding Teaching and Public Service in Speech Communication of the One U.P. Professorial Chair and Faculty Awards. In 2018, she committed to veganism which also inspired her to learn more about framing persuasive advocacy through her dissertation.

Acknowledgment

"The knowledge that we are never alone calms the troubled sea of our lives and speaks peace to our souls."
-A.W. Tozer

Embarking on the Doctor of Communication Program at UP Open University has been a truly life-changing experience for me. I am grateful to God for these kind and inspiring individuals who have helped me along the way. Dios mabalos po.

Dr. Jean Saludadez, thank you for accepting me as your advisee, for sensing and checking on me when I was demotivated, for welcoming me whenever I visit you, for not answering all my questions but instead leading me to find the answer myself, and for generously sharing your time and expertise in guiding me in my dissertation and paper presentations. Thank you for constantly being of service to others amid your heavy academic and administrative load. There is a maxim that you would not really know someone until you travel with them. For me, it has only reinforced what I already know about you - your intellect, your humility, your devotion, your kindness, and your commitment to living a life of faith. Thank you for inspiring me academically and spiritually. This is reminiscent of what you have said during one of our consultations earlier this year that *"there is no bifurcation between theoretical pursuit and theological belief."*

Dr. Alexander Flor, thank you for your wisdom and generosity as one of my panel members. I admire how consistently you model mastery in our classes. I am grateful for you have always been kind and accommodating of our admission queries as the FICS Dean. Your support throughout my DCOMM journey has kept me moving forward.

Dr. Benjamina Paula Flor, thank you for all your insights on my study and for offering words of encouragement to me. I am inspired by your dedication and excellence in integrating the University's tripartite function of teaching, research, and public service.

Edward Winters or Earthling Ed, you are an inspiring vegan advocate. Thank you for willingly agreeing to be the subject of my study. I am grateful for all the work you have done and continue to do on behalf of the animals.

To the Department of Humanities (DHum) Chair Dr. Leonora Fajutagana, colleagues, staff, and friends, I am grateful for all the help you have all extended to me especially to my dearest angels AnMi and Jonnah; Prof. Carson, Prof. Ayel, Prof. Laurence, Prof. Marlon, Dr. Emman,Tita Daisy, Michelle, Kuya Adrian, and Kuya Ray-ann, DHum Mommies and Profs. Anna, Gem, Janei, Kat, Kate, Kei, Liberty, Pinky, Sarif, Tenten, and Atty. Giselle. Thank you for your kindness and prayers.

To the Doctors of Communication, most especially to Ali, Buena, Chat, Frau, Japes, Kate, Lynne, Marlon, Nimrod, and Tinay, thank you for the gift of fellowship. Your encouragement and prayers are much appreciated. To the UPOU friends and staff Ms. Jen, Ms. Marie, Ms. Maine, Efraime, and Ms. Ems, thank you for all your help.

To my childhood friends Melody, Dehbie, Banini, Khaki, Pia, and Grace; the AnJePeRi Engr. Annie, Prof. Perci and Prof. Rico; Kawingers Dr. Pam, Kate, Coach Wena, and my best beshies Dr. Rina and Ma'am Eileen, I am grateful for the gift of friendship.

To my brother Jon and sisters Jen and Aila, sisters-in-law Leny and Kate, brothers-in-law Vince and Pamboy, parents-in-law Mommy Mety and Daddy Cris, thank you for the moral support.

I am forever thankful to my parents who instilled in me the value of education. Mama Jessie, thank you for always being available to give words of advice and encouragement. I admire your resilience and devotion in taking care of us. Papa Arnel, even when you were long gone, I constantly thank God for you. Thank you for being an inspiration to me in more ways than one. I will always look up to you.

To Michael, thank you for constantly believing in me to pursue lifelong learning. Thank you for lifting me up when I am down, keeping me grounded when needed, and holding my hand to remind me of the present. To my children Miggy, Jamie, Gavin, and Ethan, you are God's greatest blessing. Thank you for inspiring me to appreciate the little but more important things in life. To quote Bob Dylan, *"May you grow up to be righteous, may you grow up to be true. May you always know the truth and see the lights surrounding you. May you always be courageous, stand upright and be strong. May you stay forever young."* Thank you for your unconditional love. I love you all very much.

Heavenly Father, thank You for being ever present in my life. Your unfathomable and steadfast love kept me through all life's challenges. I am in awe of Your faithfulness and am grateful for constantly reminding me of Your goodness through the people I meet daily. Thank You, dear God, for helping me make sense of my research endeavour. Your Word guided me to focus on the more important -the transformation rather than the destination. Thank You for the reminder to surrender the arrogance of the mind so that the brilliance of the heart will be opened. I give You all the glory.

Dedicated to:

to all the advocates

who stand and speak up for the muted and the voiceless

ABSTRACT

The study assumes vlogging as a rhetorical act to contribute to the understanding of the nature of persuasive communication in the digital milieu.

The study is framed within the Rhetorical Tradition of Communication Theory that theorizes communication as a practical art of discourse and problematizes it as a social exigency requiring collective deliberation and judgment (Craig,1999). With modern technology and mobility, we communicate in a dynamic and intricate system of personal and professional relationships, and each of us is linked to all others by fewer degrees of separation than ever before. These technological advancements have revolutionized how persuasion is performed and accomplished. The evolution of media to social media became the fulcrum that links and influences the modern world (Baym, 2015). Do the techniques and functions of persuasion change as technology changes?

By employing rhetorical analysis of vlogging entries of a vegan advocate, the study attempted to answer the following research questions: (1) What rhetorical strategies are used by a YouTube vlogger in communicating veganism as an advocacy? and (2) How do these rhetorical strategies accomplish the goal of advocating veganism through YouTube? Using netnography, a digital ethnographic research method, online data collection, observation, and immersion were employed to analyze the social interactional dynamics of a vlogosphere.

With veganism having a limited place for discussion anywhere except in social media platforms, the study particularly examined the vegan advocate Ed Winters' YouTube channel. From the selected YouTube vlog, three vlogging rhetorical acts emerged which

can be applied to all forms of advocacy in the digital sphere. The vlogger made use of: 1) misconception about the advocacy and/or its opposition; 2) morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition, and 3) move to action.

The rhetorical acts accomplish the goal of communicating an advocacy which is the required collective deliberation and judgment through YouTube by first addressing a misconception about the advocacy and/ or its opposition. The rhetor or the vlogger introduced and explained it as one of the common reasons people fail to move to action or commit to the advocacy. The rhetorical act of morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition allows the viewers to be informed of the moral issues and to question the status quo. Lastly, the rhetorical act of moving to action attempts to influence the viewers to commit to the advocacy presented by the vlogger that represents the collective deliberation and judgment.

These three rhetorical acts serve as a powerful instrument for the advancement of any advocacy as they illustrate how an advocate constructs the discourse to understand and explain that the situation or issue is important enough to speak rhetorically about it through a YouTube vlog to accomplish collective deliberation in any persuasive situation in the digital age.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Persuasion in the Digital Age

With modern technology and mobility, connecting with others in the digital age has become easier than ever. We communicate in a dynamic and intricate system of personal and professional relationships, and each of us is linked to all others by fewer degrees of separation than ever before. These technological advancements have revolutionized how persuasion is performed and accomplished. The evolution of media to social media became the fulcrum that links and influences the modern world (Baym, 2015). Do the techniques and functions of persuasion change as technology changes?

Communication scholars believe that persuasion is extraordinary and crucial in today's world as it is manifested in all communication levels and contexts. Thus, the role that persuasion plays in the digital age in facilitating social change is significant. While the classical Greeks and Romans have been evidently and continuously influencing the rhetoric of communicators in different levels and contexts today, how does persuasion take up its space in the digital milieu?

In the article, *How Does Technology Persuade?*, Sundar et al. (2013) emphasized that "the role of technology in persuasion can be meaningfully assessed by looking into the contribution made by specific features (e.g., morphology) or affordances of media technologies (e.g., interactivity)" and adopting a "variable-centered" rather than "object-

centered” approach (Nass & Mason, 1990). This gears away from the notion that technologies are mere channels in carrying persuasive messages.

In this regard, technology is an agent that participates in the persuasion (Saludadez, 2020). Our thoughts, values, advocacies, and actions are constantly shaped by the environment around us. With the influence of the Internet usage and the online environments we inhabit, social media plays a big role in persuasion as they display agency to the extent that they create alternative realities for users to construct or reconstruct online identities and presence through rhetoric. Shared experience of reality, expressed through the values and interpretations they place on certain objects, events and spaces unite them through the open spaces for synchronous and asynchronous meetings social media such as YouTube vlogging provide them. YouTube vloggers and their rhetoric are social agents that need greater scholarly attention.

Davis and Shadle (2007) expressed the value of rhetoric in a technological age by stating that “rhetoric emerges as a conditional method for humanizing the effect of machines and helping humans to direct them...by arranging and connecting diverse elements in the pursuit of theoretical questions and practical applications.” The description of rhetoric as a “syncretic and generative practice that creates new knowledge” bears a resemblance to vlogging since YouTube provides opportunities for its users or vloggers to engage, create content based on social exigency, and inform and persuade subtly or openly.

Vlogging as Persuasion

In recent years, video blogging or vlogging, a “distinctly original” form of communication that is emblematic of the amateur videos found on YouTube (Tolson as cited in Savage, 2010), has become a powerful new technological trend that has been gaining much attention worldwide. To this day, the community of YouTube video creators and/or vloggers grows each day as more technology becomes available. It has grown into one of the more influential social communities. Statistics show that more than 300 hours of video are uploaded every minute, and almost 5 billion videos are viewed daily (“YouTube by the numbers,” n.d.).

The power of vlogging as an agent of persuasion lies not solely on its scalability, interactivity, searchability, and accessibility (Biel & Gatica-Perez, 2010), but on its agentic role in the persuasion that takes the form of visual and verbal rhetoric and actively participates in sensemaking of an issue or an advocacy.

YouTube is often presented as if it were a library, an archive, a laboratory or a medium like television (Burgess and Green, 2009a). The notion of YouTube as a platform and an agent of persuasion highlights YouTube’s social, economic and technological importance. Burgess and Green (2009a) pointed out that “from a computer-science viewpoint, YouTube is nothing but a database, but in any given cultural context, moving onto the platform and watching a video obviously entails more than that.”

More so that the technology of YouTube vlogging has redefined our ideas about interaction online that catapulted the change in behaviors to adapt to a new

communicative arena in restructuring a vlogger's own and the viewers' sense of place and process of sensemaking.

Specifically, as a new mode of rhetoric, a YouTube vlog may contain a narrative, an expertise, or an advocacy that commands international access, appeal, and following. Successful content creators and vloggers become social influencers. However, merely connecting with the viewers is not sufficient as the study of persuasion in the discipline of communication studies also requires engagement or the act of interacting and sharing in the activities of the group.

Vrooman (2002) opined that cyberspace where the YouTube "vlogosphere" is situated, "is a performative space, a space created through programming and communicative interaction." With a vast amount of information online, vloggers as rhetors or persuaders carry a specific ideology and are provided with a powerful space to create ways to generate, control, sift, highlight or hide information when they communicate with the viewers. Through YouTube, vloggers are given an opportunity to connect with and to present their arguments about a particular issue to influence attitudes and beliefs to their viewers.

A vlogger's rhetoric has the power to influence the behavior and attitudes which can help in directing the action of the targeted viewers towards committing to an advocacy or otherwise. One specific way to connect and engage in communication activism is through a direct action in support of needed social change for individuals or groups (Frey and Carragee, 2007).

Connection is the power of communication that helps a rhetor relate to people, groups, communities, social institutions, and cultures such as YouTube (Edwards et al. 2013 as cited in Wahl, 2013). As an open and a free platform, YouTube has fostered a community of creators that produce videos dedicated to their advocacy and social movement. The YouTube vlogging community provides viewers means for acquiring feelings of empathy and inclusion, especially among people who seek the company of like-minded people. At the heart of this community, there exists a quality of commonality. After all, a person might be the only one who practices an alternative lifestyle in a small town, but there are many across the globe who advocate the same lifestyle that he or she can meet online.

Thus, a YouTube vlogging community allows people to transcend geographic boundaries and unite with others who share common interests. YouTube has also become central to collective and collaborative action. By subscribing, liking, commenting, sharing, and downloading the vlogs, the viewers-turned users' "tiny acts of participation" are now generally considered part of the realm of collective action (Margetts et al., 2016).

Through vlogging, people engage in a communicative act wherein a shared culture is created, modified, transformed, and experienced. With profound influences on what communities of individuals believe, value, and practice, the nature of vlogging can be characterized as 1) complex, 2) continuous, and 3) contextual.

First, vlogging occurs under complex conditions that are ever changing. It may occur in a variety of places and under different circumstances. The vlog is not just a simple output in which a YouTube video creator forwards to the recipient. One YouTube video will be viewed and received by two to two hundred viewers differently or simultaneously worldwide. The viewers' educational background, upbringing, beliefs, values, needs, ideals, motives, physical surroundings, as well as the video creator's character, speech, competence all affect the communication process.

Unlike the traditional processes of public speaking, monologue, or soliloquy, vlogging is more complex because it originated in a setting that is also similar to a face-to-face interaction except for the 'missing' interlocutor needed for turn taking. And unlike in a public speaking situation where most students approach the topic with nervous excitement or just plain nervousness, recognizing the power of articulating thoughts and advocacies, and taking into consideration the content of speech, pace, voice, audience rapport, nonverbal cues, and delivery to a room full of audience/critics, vloggers need not now worry about facing a crowd at least not while filming the vlog.

However, it is still necessary to deliver a vlog in a clear, articulate, and engaging manner since what will be presented online will be seen and critiqued. The vlog is automated making persuasion much easier to be shared among friends and viewers on YouTube quickly distributing content to millions of people across the globe. Vlogging is rhetorically distinctive since it connects the vlogger, the viewers and allows for a casual and direct conversation that is seemingly similar to a face-to-face one. There is an

existing co-participation and negotiation aspect of role assignment as seen in the vlogs and comments.

Many of the most engaging vlog content is aimed at informing or persuading viewers. Although Wesch (as cited in Werner, 2012) pointed out that vlogs usually “have no specific addressee. They are meant for anybody and everybody, or possibly nobody—not addressed to anyone in particular—or perhaps only vaguely addressed to ‘the YouTube community.’”

Vlogging as persuasion is characterized as continuous since there are no definable beginnings and endings in the process of persuasion online. Prior events in the viewers’ lives also affect how the message is received. A set of interactions of many new and existing stimuli led to a vlog’s characterization as a process. Once a vlog with no copyright or community guidelines violations is uploaded on YouTube, it is saved indefinitely until the vlogger chooses to delete it. The vlog can be viewed repeatedly or after days, weeks, months, or years it has been uploaded. Thus, a vlog is a dynamic and an ongoing event. Similarly, communication in YouTube is not something the users do, but something in which they engage.

Baym (2015) pointed out that the change has been rapid as digital technologies remove the barriers associated with traditional media such as the format, location, distance and time, and the transfer of content in sending a message across. She added that our engagement online is becoming a requirement for “successful participation in society.”

To discuss the change in the rhetorical modes, it is important to turn to Walter Ong's work on "technologization of verbal communication" or the shift from orality to literacy and the impact of this shift on culture and education. From stories, songs, folklore, public speeches and written traditions, forms of human communication have evolved into social networking. To date, no form of media has had much of an impact on our daily lives as social networking particularly Facebook and YouTube (Wahl, 2013).

Oberg concurred (2018), social media has shifted the landscape in this new technological era of constant connection. He vividly provided an example that "in a blink-of-an-eye, you're exposed to content from an array of sources posted anywhere around the globe...Ideas about plant-based food, knowledge about factory farming, and encouraging messages from individuals and organizations about how to change the world are being exchanged at a rate like we've never seen before."

Lastly, vlogging as persuasion is characterized as contextual. Context influences the online interaction between the vlogger and the viewers. Context also determines the constraints and conventions of a new genre - advocacy vlogging.

Bhatia (1993) defined genre in a linguistic discursive sense as "a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of the community in which it occurs," such as advocating through vlogging. This is why a vlogger advocate's language and delivery are unique to the event or the rhetorical situation and all these occur with one or more people involved in online interaction.

Problems or exigencies also come to exist based on how people perceive and define them in interaction. As a new vlog genre, advocacy vlogs address issues that arise because of people's values which have either remained or changed through time. Thus, the analysis of an attempt at persuasion must cover all pertinent not only rhetorical elements, but also contextual elements, each of which is functioning and interacting in an advocacy vlog genre which has found a niche in the vlogosphere of the digital milieu.

Rhetorical Tradition as a Theoretical Framework

This study is premised within the Rhetorical Tradition of Communication Theory which views communication as a “practical art of discourse” and “people act as rhetors” or persuasive speakers (Craig, 1999). It problematizes how the nature and function of classical and contemporary rhetoric is envisioned and how the theory, practice, and critique of rhetoric has constantly been interconnected with the views about personal, political, and social issues and advocacies.

The study identifies advocacy through vlogging communication as a social exigency which requires collective deliberation and judgment. This is aligned with Craig's articulation that “from a rhetorical perspective, one way for an academic discipline to legitimize itself in the culture is to establish its social relevance by showing that it has something interesting to say about culturally salient themes and practical problems-such as, in our culture, communication.”

According to Hogan (2013), the two cultural imperatives (need to educate for citizenship and an ongoing debate over the rules or norms of democratic deliberation) in the

rhetorical tradition “inspire normative conceptions of persuasion that emphasize the responsibilities that go along with the right of free speech in a democracy.” Brigrance (as cited in Hogan, 2013) wrote that “democracy and the system of speechmaking were born together and since ancient times, we have never had a successful democracy unless a large part, a very large part of its citizens were effective, intelligent, and responsible speakers.” The revisionist scholars have told and retold rhetoric's story to advance a variety of agenda. While some rhetorical scholars have “denounced persuasion as a mechanism of control and domination” (Foss & Griffin 1995 as cited in Hogan, 2013), Hogan still insists that “persuasion has remained a dominant theme in the rhetorical tradition...but with a focus on the role of persuasion in political and civic contexts civic contexts of persuasion, and an overriding emphasis on the moral character of the speaker and the ethics of persuasion.”

On the contrary, according to Foss and Griffin (1995), rhetorical study must not focus on evaluating and developing rhetors as speakers who persuade their audiences. Instead, the goal should be “presentation as invitation...to show the strength of one's position through defensible support of claims.”

Similar to the dynamics of a vlog, the vloggers create content to be uploaded on YouTube for the viewers to decide to be engaged or transformed by the vloggers which is beyond the control of the latter. By looking at the lens provided by the Rhetorical Tradition, the study is focused on theorizing a vlogger's communication as a practical art of discourse.

The Social Exigency that Requires Collective Deliberation and Judgment

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, kinds of truths (theoria or the province of metaphysics or science; and phronêsis or wisdom or social knowledge that is needed to make choices about matters affecting the society) were distinguished. The contingent qualities of social truths can be attributed to having or to say that something is "a problem" or a gap that exists between value and what actually is (Campbell et al., 2015). It is the discrepancy between what is ideal and what is real.

This focus can be seen in the rhetorical situation's fundamental component - the exigency or the purpose, specific need, and setting for a rhetorical discourse. It is the need for adjustment to the environment or what Bitzer calls in his essay, *The Rhetorical Situation*, "a problem or defect, something other than it should be" because we can perceive and define them as such in interactions through rhetoric. Bitzer (1968) defines the rhetorical situation as:

"A complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence, which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."

Such situations exist as "rhetorical responses for us" because "they speak to situations which persist—which in some measure are universal." The tradition of a rhetorical situation "tends to function as a constraint upon any new response in the form." Thus, rhetorical situations can reveal simple to complex structures. Bitzer notes that rhetorical

situations can be simple in structure for as long as the “the message exists as a response to one clear exigency easily perceived by one major audience.”

In this study, the YouTube community, particularly the vlogosphere, is likened as a rhetorical situation that requires identity creation and performance of the YouTube video blogger (vlogger) as a rhetor to create an identity or position him/herself as a subject, as well as negotiate a new social order to address the exigency. The study further argues that when a vlog with an advocacy is published and circulated in the public sphere, it enters a rhetorical situation. It functions as a means of persuasion through which a person or an advocacy group can define problems, or exigencies, with current practices that then justify their specific social change proposals. This is in congruence with Craig’s (1999) articulation that “problems of communication are theorized as social exigency requiring collective deliberation and judgment.”

The identified social exigency is communicating veganism as an advocacy through YouTube vlogging which requires collective deliberation and judgment. Perceived as a radical movement and philosophy, veganism has a limited place for discussion anywhere except in cyberspace or social media platforms. One primary motivation of going vegan and advocating veganism is to put a stop to mass exploitation of animals. The impact of animal agriculture puts a heavy strain on many of the Earth’s finite land, water, and energy resources directly affects both humans and animals. Thus, aside from animal rights and animal liberation, vegan advocates promote the environmental benefits associated with veganism which is based on the premise that animal

agriculture contributes to emissions of greenhouses leading to human-induced climate change, as well as land degradation and deforestation.

Personally, committing to a vegan diet was easier than communicating veganism. How any advocate persuades others through the power of rhetoric is essential to motivate others to identify with and share the same commitment can just as easily divide.

This is the exigency - the necessity for action and the challenge in communicating veganism. How does an advocate such as a vegan influence others through vlogging? If veganism can be seen as a movement that confronts institutional wisdom and cultural norms, then it is valuable to better understand the ways in which individual vegans communicate about veganism in the digital milieu.

VanOsdel (2005) articulated that "exigency and the alleviation of exigency, through changes in the material and social environment are necessary components of the rhetorical situation" for people to not only survive but flourish through these changes.

As recommended by Burke (1969), if we hope to understand human action, and in particular human motivation, we must understand those acts and motives as taking place within a particular scene which both realistically reflects the course of the action and symbolizes it. Thus, this dissertation examines YouTube vlogging entries created by a vegan activist by analyzing the rhetorical strategies used in communicating veganism.

To contribute to understanding the nature of persuasive communication in the digital milieu, the study looks into how vlogging accomplishes advocacy or what vlogging accomplishes in advocacy.

The Research Questions

This study employed a rhetorical analysis on a YouTube vlogger who is communicating veganism with the following research questions:

1. What rhetorical strategies are used by a YouTube vlogger in communicating veganism?
2. How do these rhetorical strategies accomplish the goal of advocating veganism through YouTube?

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Rhetoric and Advocacy

As both art and science, persuasion has a long and remarkable history in the rhetorical tradition. When being addressed, Aristotle outlined persuasion in terms of rhetoric comprising three modes: logos or reason; pathos or emotion; and ethos or character. Rhetoric has been defined as “the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion.” Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) added that in order to master the art of persuading, one must turn to rhetorical theory since rhetoric is defined as the “energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions.”

The art of rhetoric is the study of advocacy as it provides a voice for ideas and issues by drawing attention to them and making it possible to gain adherence to them. Understanding the art of rhetoric enhances one’s skills in advocacy because the art of rhetoric is the capacity to distribute power as it seeks to study how language is used in persuasion.

More specifically, it studies the ways humans use symbols to affect others and shape their world (Sellnow, 2018). For Bitzer (as cited in VanOsdel, 2005), the nature or definition of rhetoric is “a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of [an audience's] thought and action. Hogan (2013) clearly explained that “in a healthy

politics of persuasion citizens are educated to listen carefully, think critically, and communicate responsibly as they have a sense of duty and choice to participate because the voice matters.”

Specifically, an advocate’s goal is to change or reinforce perceptions about a political or social problem by using arguments, lines of reasoning, anecdotes, and illustrations to tempt the audience to convince and to move an audience to a specific point of view usually presented through public speaking.

In the ancient times, public speaking was called rhetoric, which meant “the art of the orator.” Rhetoric comes from the Greek word *rhêtorikê*, -ikê meaning “art or skill of” and *rhêtor*, meaning an experienced public speaker. The aim of which was to persuade. As far back as 450 B.C, Greek and Roman scholars have already long recognized the need for crafting persuasive arguments, which led them to use rhetoric as a tool to discover, create, communicate, campaign, and advocate a cause.

The principles of the old rhetoric have never been more relevant. As a speech communication teacher, I would explain public speaking by paying tribute to the classical rhetoric. I would emphasize that when a rhetor who is preparing for a speech delivery organizes a speech into three main parts and applies rhetorical appeals, he or she celebrates Aristotle. When a rhetor prepares for a speech by researching, Cicero is applied. When a rhetor rehearses before a presentation, Quintilian is acknowledged and when moral principles are included in the speech and are actualized, Isocrates is recognized.

Almost every face-to-face or online encounter involves an explicit and implicit goal to gain adherence or to motivate others to our way of thinking to achieve our objectives. Contemporary rhetoricians view it as a symbolic action and is essential to any cooperative effort among people as it functions to adjust ideas to people and people to ideas (Bryant as cited in Olson, 2011). Rhetoric is sometimes seen as synonymous with discourse, and often used interchangeably with ideology with a focus on persuasion, and implicit in any definition of rhetoric is the notion of power (Brummett, 2000 in Higgins & Walker, 2012).

However, from a contemporary perspective, Burke sees the interaction as more complex than the term "persuasion" suggests. Identification is a process necessary to human communication both in face to face or in a digital platform. Burke (1969) states that we are "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with one another." Jackson (2013) defined identification as the feeling of relating to a person, issue, or organization that can result from empathy, sense of community or feeling of responsibility created by rhetoric. He added that people seek to identify with others through and necessary to communicate.

Burke's (as cited in Jackson, 2013) conception of a rhetoric in which identification rather than persuasion is "key," is a discursive exchange in which "the various voices, mutually correcting one another, will lead toward a position better." This is why the motive that impels the kind of discourse he envisions is more cooperative than competitive. He states, "one does not want merely to outwit the opponent, or to study him, one wants to be affected by him . . . --in brief, to learn from him." In this sense, Burke does not

dismiss the traditional Aristotelian idea of persuasion, but instead uses his theory as an extension of the traditional definition.

Burke (1969) clearly emphasized that "you persuade or communicate with a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his." He added that ideology takes possession of people through the mechanism of identification and, as William Rueckert (as cited in Clark, 1997) puts it, life in language is "charged with highly symbolic identifications," both "overt and covert."

Thus, identification takes place by applying various rhetorical devices, connecting and engaging with, and targeting viewers' feelings, attitudes, perspectives, and opinions before they may be directed to an advocacy.

Advocacy Vlogging and Related Studies

Today, the rhetorical theory takes into consideration all levels and contexts in which symbol use occurs such as intrapersonal, dyadic, group, public, and mediated discourses such as Internet interactions.

Virtual or online communities have opened many doors for users to engage and experience. Countless users communicate in these communities such as YouTube's more than two billion users worldwide. More so that the number of people creating YouTube content is constantly increasing. In fact, more than 45 hours of video are uploaded and over 320,000 videos are viewed every five seconds (<http://www.everysecond.io/youtube>).

Every time people are connected to the Internet, users are attaching themselves to virtual communities where they share their thoughts, feelings, experiences and pieces of advice for a particular topic. Aside from having a shared goal, interest, need, or activity that provides the primary reason for belonging to the community, virtual communities are characterized as having access to shared resources; repeated active participation; reciprocity of information, support and services between members; and a shared context (Whittaker et al., as cited in Warmbrodt, 2007).

Banking on communication and synergy among its subscribers and content creators, YouTube's highly active, engaged, and potential viewers can also be tapped into committing to an advocacy.

Generally, an advocacy is not only directed at policy makers, but also private sector leaders whose decisions affect people's lives, as well as the media, development agencies, and other institutions whose opinions and actions influence policy makers (Buckley,n.d.).

A communication plan is required to determine the stakeholders' roles in achieving the advocacy objectives, especially the audience's background and needs among others and how the advocacy needs to be communicated. The AALEP's (2014) recommended factors (reach, frequency of the campaign, cost, feasibility, effectiveness, rapid response, and repetition) in deciding which methods of communication to use were aligned with the nature of vlogging.

As rhetoricians would say, "Truths cannot walk on their own legs. They must be carried by people to other people. They must be explained, defended, and spread through

language, argument, and appeal” (Campbell, 2015). This awareness of the truth is powerful because it does stimulate thought. This thought can stimulate action, through vlogging or simply watching a vlog. Moreover, vlogging an advocacy is a rhetorical act as it takes on a personal value, shares it to others to help move them in action.

A distinct characteristic of advocacy vlogging as theorized in the first chapter is its contextuality which can come from a certain language, experience, role, presence, and values that are unique to a vlogger. As an advocacy vlogger, one proactively aims to educate and bring about personal and policy changes through short, focused, consistent, cost-effective, and accessible campaign video blogs online. The vlogs not only provide platforms for social change, but also access for research.

There is one study directly linked to vlogging advocacy for social change by Raby et al. (2017) who created a methodological tool for vlog analysis to isolate specific videos and identify themes and patterns that revealed a rich landscape of social change-oriented content. Results of the study showed that over half of the 30 selected teen vloggers in Canada addressed sexism or feminism.

Other scholarly work focused on vloggers addressing LGBTQ issues, education, including bullying, governance, environmental issues, mental illness, and racism. Feger (2019) presented an exploratory account of ways that transgender people’s personal YouTube channels provide new avenues to cultivate resilience as a collective. Caron (2014) showed how young Canadian vloggers create a space to participate in civic discussions around bullying and Wachowich and Scobie (2010) analyzed how through storytelling vlogs youth are mobilizing themselves and connecting online.

Even before the significant growth and popularity of YouTube itself, vlogging has already opened a window of opportunities for scholarly research. During the early years of YouTube, several researchers have investigated vlogging technologies. Parker and Pfeiffer's (2005) have examined ways to make vlogs more interactive than just having videos posted on a blog site while Miles (2006) identified current limitations of vlogs and how these limitations could be addressed with future technologies.

In 2007, Clayfield and Luers individually examined the difference between vlogging and other traditional media. Luers (2007) also identified vlogs as "a new form of cinema" since vloggers have "entertainment and network values in mind." Clayfield (2007) labeled YouTube creators as "authors of vlogs" and emphasized that anyone can vlog and become a producer because vlogging is "cheap so it allows everyday people to create new media."

Warmbrodt (2007) conducted research examining the structure of the vloggers' community and the motivations of vloggers. He shared that the characteristics of the vlogging community are similar to text blogging in a number of ways, including the community's highly interactive and social nature. Vlogging allows for a more personal, intimate, and empathetic interaction. Warmbrodt's study revealed that vloggers were strongly motivated by the opportunity to share life stories, experiences, and cultures with others because vlogging allows for a more personal, intimate, and empathetic interaction. Before YouTube was compensating its popular creators, one primary motivational factor for vloggers then was the "low barrier to entry enabled by inexpensive tools and web distribution."

In 2008, Molyneaux et al. analyzed short vlogs to investigate how women and men communicate using vlogs and react as viewers to vlogs by using a dual analytical approach to analyze both production of content and reception of audience. In essence, the method used was ethnography as it captured the motivations, processes of creation, and culture of interaction through vlogging.

Using a web-based tool, a “novel analysis” of manual annotation of YouTube videos to obtain a dataset of vlogs based on the characterization of vloggers’ nonverbal behavior was conducted by Biel and Gatica-Perez (2010). The annotation consisted of browsing all the videos from a given user and answering a few questions about them. Four behavioral cues (speaking energy, speaking time, voicing rate, and speaking turns) were extracted to characterize some constructs related to conversational interaction (interest, dominance, extraversion, or roles).

Griffith and Papacharissi (2010) conducted a textual analysis utilizing Goffman’s (1959) notions on the presentation of self to identify dominant modes of communication: reflecting employment of vlogs as diaries, media for identity expression, and a means to indulge in narcissism.

To argue that vlogs are monologues, Frobenius also made use of Goffman’s notion of “imagined recipients” to emphasize the notion that vloggers interact with “a non-present, future audience.” The study focused on the strategies that vloggers use to involve their audience by showing examples of five devices (proposed by Clark and Carlson, 1982) used to designate hearer roles (viewers) in vlogs: physical arrangement, conversational history, gestures, manner of speaking, and linguistic content.

Gao et al. (2010) conducted a comprehensive survey of vlogging technology by investigating various vlog mining topics, vlogging technological structures, tools, techniques, and several incentive applications such as user-targeted video advertising and collective intelligence gaming.

A combination of online ethnography and descriptive statistics was conducted by Snelson (2013) to investigate characteristics of school-related vlogs, vloggers, and viewers; vlog context; vlog content; vlogger culture (patterns of speech or practice); and motivations for vlogging about school.

Rhetorical Studies on Vlogging

Rhetorical studies on vlogging include Gabriele's (2016) that investigated iterations of ranting manifest via YouTube video blogs through a rhetorical lens employing Carolyn Miller's theory of genre as social action and using Miller's paradigm to develop a methodology equipped to analyze YouTube vlog rants as generic texts. She employed rhetorical criticism to present how theories apply to the practice of persuasive discourse.

The study's discussion on the social implications of comedic vlog rants suggested that "YouTube vlogging creates a unique subject position for the vlogger; a subject position that enables greater social influence and the potential for celebrity status." It also inferred that Miller's theory "facilitates a description of how the affordances of YouTube enable users to utilize the platform's available tools to record and upload videos of themselves engaged in the performance of comedic ranting." Her description of the

exigence of ranting via YouTube vlog makes the object of rhetorical analysis (the rhetorical act) the video blog uploaded on YouTube.

Using the same lens, Werner's (2012) dissertation examined the YouTube vlog as a rhetorical mode of address and a portal to the public sphere and "explores how and why these largely unrehearsed, unedited, and unorganized videos have nonetheless become one of the internet's most magnetic and beloved forms." By employing the rhetorical genre theory to document how YouTube vlogs have been cultivated and used by rhetors and their audiences, four vlogging genres emerged: confession videos, reaction videos, witness videos, and rant videos.

From a linguistic perspective, Riboni (2017) analyzed YouTube beauty guru's makeup tutorial. Like Frobenius (2014), Riboni states that "the vlogging component confers makeup tutorials the liveliness, immediacy and conversationality typical of face-to-face communication [...] YouTube vlog's continuous address to the viewers inherently invites their feedback." Her qualitative analysis focuses on generic, rhetorical, and linguistic practices." By collecting her data from YouTube beauty guru channels, Riboni analyzed the rhetorical structure of the makeup tutorial and explored how the gurus discursively construct their identity as well as represent the idea of beauty and makeup.

Netnographic Studies on Vlogging

While the method of netnography has been repeatedly done in marketing research topics such as business-to-consumer context, consumer-related experiences, tourism, identity, brand management, and brand communities.(Heinonen & Medberg, 2018), advocacy initiatives through YouTube vlogging remain understudied.

Of all the social networking sites, Facebook has been used most often in netnographic while there are only a couple of pre-existing research using netnography on YouTube vlogging. One of which is Schuman's et al. (2018) netnographic study focused on military vlogs or milvlogs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who vlogged about military-related trauma. The analysis showed seven themes: motivation, loss, managing symptoms, help-seeking, guilt and shame, suicide, and connecting to other veterans. Through vlogging, the war veterans were able to "tell their stories, position these stories against others' experiences, and engage in outreach and advocacy of providing accessible resources for developing preventive and/or mental health treatment/support links."

Although netnography revealed motivation of YouTube users, there is virtually no literature published on rhetorical analysis of a vlogger advocate, combined rhetorical and netnographic study, or vlogging as persuasive communication.

Other Related Literature on Vlogging

The YouTube genres such as beauty and politics have been researched in the past years and there have been a couple of studies on the formal language of YouTube video comments, online identity, and vlogging as a pedagogy among others.

Simonsen's study (2012) emphasized on the performative way, presentations of the self/selves of vloggers, and categories based on themes, aesthetics, medium specific user-interactivity and the functionality of affordances on YouTube and his discussion on "orality" culture and the affordances of YouTube and how it is viewed in the context of contemporary cultural studies showed relevance to the study.

Fuerte's (2017) study explored what Filipino identity is created according to the Filipino-centric content of the vlogs and the personalities of the vloggers themselves. She identified that the value of *pakikipagkapwa* is successfully presented as a dominant ideology that simply defines how a Filipino should be wherein the vloggers play a vital role in the creation of this perception and the proliferation of other stereotypes.

Before delving into netnography, I conducted Hymes' Ethnography of Communication (EOC) to study YouTube vlogging as a pedagogical approach. The framework was used to explore the physical setting, the participants, their goals, the media and modes of communication, the norms that guide interpretation, the genre or type of event that occurred in the vlog, and the effectiveness of vlogging vis-à-vis the course objectives through the student interviews, survey, reflection paper, and student evaluation of teacher.

The same methodology of ethnography of communication combined with speech analysis was employed when I conducted a study about a Filipino YouTube vlogger who revealed his cancer scare through an exploration of the EOC elements which revealed that the vlogger's communicative act was a participatory performance of self-disclosure.

Other studies on YouTube have focused on reactional video content and other user-generated genres. A number of scholars studying YouTube focus on various characteristics, practices, or motivations of the site's users. In this they more or less fall under the general heading of audience studies.

Sánchez-Querubín & van Laarhoven (2019) also qualitatively analyzed the two most viewed, active, and very personal YouTube vlogs that were created by patients with

terminal cancer in 2018 who were labeled as microcelebrities or people who produce social-media content about their personal life to command attention and manage networks of viewers using features such as metrics and comments.

Gauntlett (2013) sees YouTube as a fostering community because it encourages users to engage by adding comments, subscribing, giving star ratings, and sending messages.

To qualitatively explore how vloggers achieve audience engagement in their vlogging, Zhang (2018) examined three key factors that are considered crucial for vloggers to achieve engagement: content, context, and presence. She concluded that through a vlog content, vloggers can use interaction, self-presentation, information management, and rewards to achieve consumer engagement beyond video consumption.

Pereira Salgado (2013) problematized the concepts of audience, fan, and community of Felipe Neto's channels on YouTube by attending in particular to the links between fans and their idol or the influencers while Have (2017) investigated the extent of influence beauty vloggers have over the buying intentions of consumers.

Napoli (2010) takes audience studies in a new direction by calling for a reconceptualization of the idea of the mass, particularly as it functions in the two-way communication of a Web 2.0 platform like YouTube. Reno (2007), drawing on the ideas of Luiz Beltrao and Nestor Canclini suggests that the audience, as it engages YouTube, highlights the "folk-communicational character" of the Internet.

Aside from the individual research studies of the abovementioned scholars, no comprehensive work has been done on YouTube vlogging with the exception of Patricia G. Lange, Jean Burgess, and Joshua Green.

In an autoethnography combined with content analysis, Lange (2015) shared her personal journey into vlogging, in which videos are used not only to “share one’s self, develop empathy for others, and exchange knowledge, but more so be involved in peer-to-peer mentorship and connected learning that can open new forms of digital and participatory literacies in media cultures.”

In her new book, *Thanks for Watching: An Anthropological Study of Video Sharing on YouTube*, Lange (2019) provided an anthropological perspective by analyzing more than 300 YouTube videos and conducting almost 200 interviews with YouTube participants to present how core concepts from anthropology (participant-observation, reciprocity, and community) apply to sociality on YouTube.

It was discussed how monetization of YouTube videos created an impact for open sharing and creative exploration of personal and social messages. The book also provided a fresh look into patterns of digital migration, YouTube’s influence on off-site interactions, and the emotional impact of losing control over images. It debunked traditional myths and past research findings about online interaction, such as the “supposed online/offline binary, the notion that anonymity always degrades public discourse, and the popular characterization of online participants as over-sharing narcissists.”

Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2009) authored the first book about YouTube, *YouTube Online Video and Participatory Culture*. The comprehensive introduction discussed how YouTube serves as a novel tool then and how it “relates to wider transformations in culture, society and the economy.” The authors drew on a range of theoretical sources and empirical research to explain how YouTube is being used by its stakeholders (media industries, audiences, amateur producers, and by particular communities of interest) and the ways in which these challenge existing ideas about “cultural production and consumption.”

In the book, *The YouTube Reader*, Burgess and Green (2009) also wrote a chapter that described YouTube vloggers not only as cultural entrepreneurs and performers, but also as a shared cultural resource for other YouTube users. They argued that this is one reason the numbers of subscribers and video responses are valuable in understanding how popularity works in YouTube. The vloggers “provide markers for a sense of ‘YouTube-ness’—through their participation and ways in which other YouTubers engage with them, a sense of YouTube’s ‘common culture’ is created.

Literature showed that although researchers have conducted comprehensive studies on vlogging as a technological trend and a space for self-disclosure and participatory culture, the scholarly conversation on advocacy vlogging, rhetorical, and/or netnographic analysis of vlogs is still very limited.

From a rhetorical lens, this warrants further investigation on how YouTube vlogging can serve as an agent for persuasion especially in advocacy vlogs by looking into a vlogger

advocate's rhetoric and analyze how the articulated rhetorical acts in the vlog accomplish collective deliberation and judgment.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In analyzing the rhetorical structures of a YouTube video blogger in communicating an advocacy, qualitative research methods were employed. Interpretivism was the epistemological framing used for this dissertation as it asserts that different people construct meaning in different ways, even when experiencing the same event (Crotty, 1998). Thus, the research interpretations and findings in qualitative research are context-specific.

With online communities becoming important fields for qualitative research with its diverse and open cultural spaces, this study provides the distinctive cultural and rhetorical features of YouTube vlog entries as qualitative data and explains the process of combining netnographic and rhetorical analyses that have been developed in this research.

Netnography

Netnography originated from ethnography which is defined as “the study of people in their own time and space, in their own everyday lives” (Burawoy et al. 1991, as cited by Hallett and Barber, 2014). Ethnographers must study people in their “natural habitat” to understand the fissures between practices and discourses, and to situate the micro-workings of everyday life within larger social structures.

Ethnography is centered on an extended period of immersion in a field setting, allowing the researcher to understand the activities and relationships of a culture or subculture

from an emic perspective (Denzin, 1997). An ethnographer is described as someone who inhabits in somewhat of a strange no-man's land or stranger in a strange land, but trying to live as a native.

With the technological advancements in society, Denzin (1997) articulated that ethnography needed to adapt. Kozinets (2006) argues that the mass adoption of networked personal computing since the mid-1990s has seen the development of new cultural formations that are novel due to their online context, and so consequently require new research methodologies.

Before the term netnography has gained usage as the term referring to a virtual, or internet ethnography (Kozinets, 2002), a number of terms have emerged in the literature, including digital ethnography, ethnography on/of/through the internet, connective ethnography, networked ethnography, hyper-media ethnography, digital ethno, and cyber-ethnography, to coin the new research method.

Although other researchers perceived netnography and the above terms as synonymous, the more established view is that netnography is a distinct research method, with its own set of guidelines. Digital ethnography, online ethnography, virtual ethnography, and cyber-ethnography, however, are not characterized by any specific practices, and thus they are considered much more general approaches to online research (Kozinets, 2018).

Netnography was originally developed by Kozinets (2002) as a tool for marketing and consumer behaviour study. It is described as a qualitative and interpretive research

methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of the online environment to form an understanding of a cultural phenomenon.

Rokka (2010) distinguished netnography from the other research methods by providing several benefits starting with the netnographic data which are often described as “rich and naturalistic, with the ability to accurately depict the lived realities of customers” or users.

Another distinct quality of netnography is that it can be conducted in an “unobtrusive manner, offering researchers a view of customers’ everyday lives especially in the case of sensitive research topics” (Kozinets, 2001).

Netnography has the advantage of being faster, simpler, and much less expensive than traditional ethnography (Kozinets, 2006). It is an adaptable and flexible qualitative method that has proven useful in various research settings (Kozinets, 2015). It is also compatible with other research methods such as rhetorical analysis.

Kozinets (2002) recommended that marketing researchers who seek to generalize netnographic findings could also employ other methods (e.g. interviews, focus groups, surveys, or traditional ethnographies).

According to Heinonen & Medberg’s (2018) meta-analysis, more than half of the netnographic studies combined netnography with other qualitative or quantitative methods or as a complement to larger studies such as this dissertation.

Since both rhetorical analysis and netnography’s main purpose is to analyze and understand the whys and hows of human communication, behavior, and experience, as

a YouTube netnographer, I am employing rhetorical analysis to focus on the cultural and rhetorical structures underlying vlogger's online communication and how language or rhetoric is used to construct virtual realities. Thus, the merging of netnography and rhetorical analysis is vital in the study as it allowed me, as a researcher, to be an active participant in the YouTube culture by immersing and understanding the elements of a rhetorical situation taking place in the vlogosphere.

Rhetorical Analysis

Sellnow (2018) emphasized that a rhetorical analysis will be a "useful tool for exploring mediated popular culture texts such as YouTube videos." The goal of any rhetorical analysis is to demonstrate your understanding of how the piece communicates its messages and meanings. This method has been proven useful in understanding persuasion in social movements.

According to Foss (2009), the neo-Aristotelian method of rhetorical analysis is primarily used to analyze speeches and their persuasiveness that would affect the audience (Foss, 2009). The goal is to articulate what strategies were used, how, and for whom a message is crafted. One way of looking at this process is that you are breaking the piece down into parts. By understanding how the different parts work, researchers can offer insights as to the overall persuasive strategies of the piece. Specifically, in analyzing the rhetorical structures of a YouTube video blogger, new and old qualitative research methods were employed taking into consideration the notion that every human

interaction is communication including computer-mediated ones such as video blogs recorded and uploaded on YouTube.

Similar to rhetorical analysis, netnography aims to understand, rather than measure, the world of online communities such as the vlogosphere including its members, norms, customs and rules, shared value systems, and distinct language features and linguistic shortcuts (Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2002).

Netnography also aims to understand that our social worlds are increasingly digital and today, anyone with a computer or a smartphone and a reliable internet connection has the potential to become a social media influencer. The goal is to interpret this complex world of vlogosphere.

With Kozinets' (2002) affirmation that "netnography is positioned somewhere between the vast searchlights of big data analysis and the close readings of discourse analysis," an observational netnographic and rhetorical analysis were conducted to study the social interactional dynamics and rhetorical strategies used in an online community that allow a YouTube vlogger to advance an advocacy.

Specifically, the purpose of the methodology is to answer the following questions:

1. What rhetorical strategies are used by a YouTube vlogger in communicating veganism?
2. How do these rhetorical strategies accomplish the goal of advocating veganism through YouTube?

The phases of netnographic research as presented by Kozinets (2010) are research focus; community identification and selection; engagement, immersion, and data collection; analysis and iterative interpretation; instantiation, and integration. On the other hand, a rhetorical analysis focuses on the rhetor, the audience or the viewers, the rhetoric, and the exigence. This study modified and expanded the rhetorical situation wherein elements were added to fit the context of the study.

Netnographic Rhetorical Analysis

For this study to reveal further the cultural complexities and the multimodal and rhetorical richness of the selected YouTube vlog entries, the methods of netnographic and rhetorical analysis were combined to generate the non sequential but coordinated phases of this study's methodology: Online Community Identification; Rhetorical Situation Identification through Engagement, Immersion, and Data Collection; Thematic Analysis and Thematic Analysis, and Rhetorical Analysis and Interpretation.

Online Community Identification

Before restructuring or studying the context of the vlog and the background of the vlogger to establish understanding of the artifact, the audience for the artifact and why the artifact is engaging in the particular rhetoric, a netnographic analysis was conducted to study the social interactional dynamics of a vlogosphere that allows a YouTube vlogger to advance an advocacy.

Traditionally, vegan advocates make use of a variety of measures to influence people to take steps in eliminating animal products from their diet and lifestyle. Forms of activism

include handing out pamphlets, producing documentaries, initiating talks and debates, organizing campus vegan activities, sharing vegan recipes, opening vegan food places, working for and building animal sanctuaries, protesting or discouraging meat consumers out in the streets.

Nowadays, YouTube channels are used as communicative platforms for plant-based advocates, medical doctors advocating plant-based, vegan diet, vegans, and vegan activists to upload videos online to discuss their expertise and advocacy and get maximum and swift exposure for their videos to build audience and authority on veganism.

By employing netnography as a research method, the YouTube channels of vegan vloggers were viewed and the selection of the research subject was purposely made based on Kozinets' (2010a) list of recommendations in choosing the subject. His six criteria are as follows:

- 1) The online site must be relevant to the research focus and questions.
- 2) The online site must be active or with recent and regular communications.
- 3) The online site must be interactive.
- 4) The online site must be substantial in terms of numbers of users.
- 5) The online site must be heterogeneous, involving different participants
- 6) The online site must be data-rich.

Earthling Ed's YouTube channel was the chosen research subject as it was substantial in the total number of vlogs uploaded about veganism, relevant to the research questions, active in both posts and comments, heterogeneous in terms of the number of people/viewers involved, and potentially would provide rich data.

Engagement and Immersion

Before collecting the data, immersing in the YouTube community was important to learn and understand its language and context. My personal YouTube channel created almost 10 years ago was reactivated to have content access and contribute to the community.

To be immersed in the community and the advocacy, subscribing and following vegan YouTube vloggers became part of the daily routine for over a year. Voluntary informed consent is essential before proceeding to the data selection. Electronic mails were sent to the selected YouTube vlogger to introduce myself, explain the purpose of and procedures involved in the study, and seek permission for him to be part of the research.

Data Collection

The video analyzed from a rhetorical perspective fulfilled the four requirements:

- 1) The vlog offered at least two events which can be active or stative.
- 2) The vlog was organized by time which means that the vlog had a sequence of events arranged chronologically or had flashbacks or flash-forwards.

3) The vlog depicted a relationship between and earlier and later events in the vlog.

4) The vlog presented a unified subject. The setting, vloggers, and their actions were connected in ways that together tell a story.

To provide a context of understanding of why the YouTube vlogs were created and uploaded for public consumption, describing the rhetorical situation is vital.

Aside from answering the research questions, field notes from a netnographic perspective, are important in collecting relevant data, personal observations, introspective reflections, and questions such as:

1. What is meaningful in the vlogs?
2. Where is the vlogger coming from?
3. What is it like to connect to the YouTube community members?
4. What is absent from the findings that you expected to find?
5. What do I not understand in the vlog?
6. Has the classical rhetoric kept its power among the vloggers?

This process gave me an opportunity to understand and document my learning of the YouTube community culture - its architecture, practices, language, members, uses, reach, and resonance. As a netnographer, my decisions of what to analyze were documented. Through participation within the YouTube community, the netnographer also becomes vital in the creation and analysis of data (Kozinets 2015).

The Expanded Rhetorical Situation

The process of creating a YouTube video blog represents what Lloyd Bitzer calls “The Rhetorical Situation” which is part of the analytical framework of this study. Lloyd Bitzer describes the rhetorical situation as a “sketched conception” wherein the situation persuades the rhetor or the vlogger that the situation or issue is urgent and important enough to speak rhetorically about it. The study argues that when a vlog with an advocacy is published and circulated in the public sphere, it enters a rhetorical situation. It functions as a means of persuasion through which a person or an advocacy group can define problems, or exigencies, with current practices that then justify their specific social change proposals. While the advocate as a rhetor, his or her message, and the audience are critical to understanding rhetorical acts, it is important to contend that these rhetorical acts emerge from dynamic and shifting elements.

The expanded rhetorical situation for this study includes the a) exigence; b) rhetor ; c) the rhetoric or the message; d) the rhetorical acts; e) rhetorical strategies; f) the audience; g) purpose; h) medium; and i) genre. All these elements were considered and revealed before and after the analysis of communicative acts.

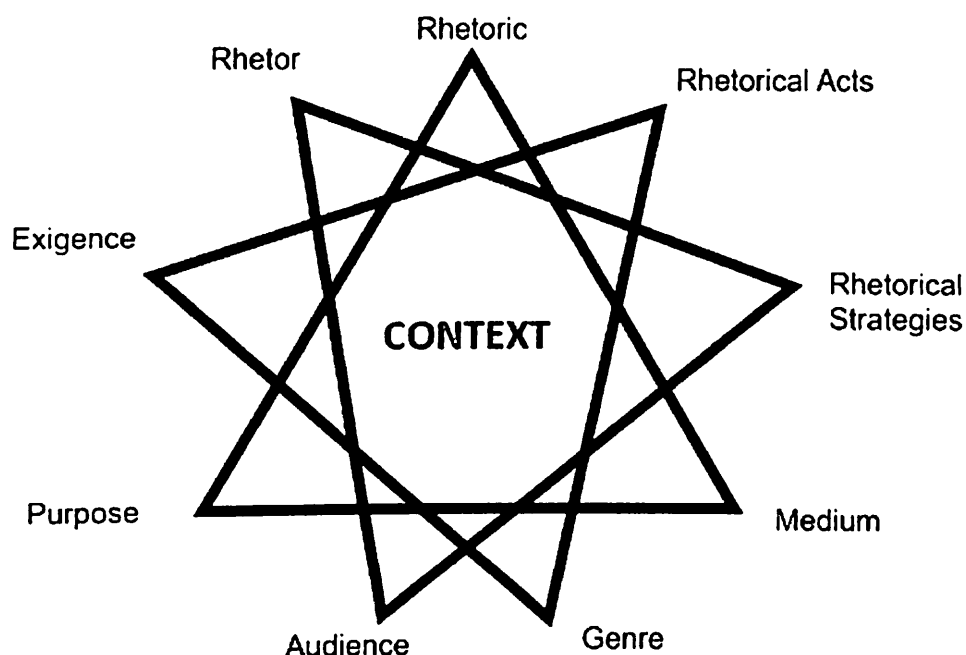


Figure 1. Expanded Rhetorical Situation

The Rhetor

An initial Google search on the term “vegan youtube vlogger” “vegan youtube vlogger activist” brought more than 600,000 results. In choosing a vlog to study, it had to fit with Kozinets’ guidelines and Aristotle’s ethos or credibility standard. As someone who is always included in the list of best or top vegan YouTubers and influencers, Ed Winters, also known as YouTube vlogger Earthling Ed, is an advocate who has devoted himself to participating in all forms of animal rights activism after becoming a vegan. He possesses the authority and credibility as a vegan educator, public speaker, and content creator.

According to his personal website <https://earthlinged.org/>, he is the co-founder and co-director of an animal rights organization named Surge that aims to “create a world where compassion towards all animals is the norm.” In 2016, Surge founded *The Official Animal Rights March* which had a successful growth spurt from 2,500 participants in London in 2016 to 28,000 participants across the world in 2018.

In an interview, Ed Winters articulated that “going vegan was the only way I could live in alignment with my morals and oppose animal suffering.” What inspired him to become vegan was a news story about a truck carrying 7,000 chickens crashing on the motorway while heading to the slaughterhouse. Feeling so sorry for the animals that were suffering and in pain, he realized his hypocrisy because there was a dead chicken in his fridge and the only reason those animals were in the truck going to slaughter was because he demanded they be killed through his purchases.

After watching *Earthlings*, Ed was inspired to produce the documentary *Land of Hope and Glory*, an “exposé” of UK farming. He also spearheaded the on-going moving activism project called *The Big Vegan Activism Van*. He has ventured into opening a non-profit, plant-based food place, Unity Diner. The animal rights organization Surge directly benefits from most of the profits. The rest of it goes to the completion of rescue sanctuary for animals (<https://www.unitydiner.co.uk/>).

Earthling Ed used his website as a platform for people to be educated and be committed to going vegan. In a year, 33,248 people signed up to go vegan through Earthling Ed’s online content. In 2018, he advocated a 22-day vegan challenge for the ethical and environmental benefits and spoke to thousands to thousands of university

students across the United Kingdom. He has over 204,000 YouTube subscribers with almost 200 uploaded videos about veganism as of September 2019. As proof of his social media influence, Ed Winters was invited to teach a class entitled 'animals as commodities' at Harvard University as a guest lecturer. He will be speaking at other universities including Brown, Cornell, Columbia, Yale, Lundl, and Rutgers about veganism.

Ed Winters' second TEDx talk called *Every Argument Against Veganism* will show how he "goes through all the main arguments that people use to try and not be vegan - and logically debunk them to show people that there's no validity or veracity against the vegan argument" (Chiorando, 2019).

The community of YouTube is held up by the content but also the viewership, likes, comments and subscriptions. Ed Winters' YouTube channel, Earthling Ed, has over 265,000 subscribers with almost 208 uploaded videos about veganism as of April 2020. Before further describing the selected rhetor, an informed consent was drafted and sent to Ed Winters on February 7, 2019. The email was composed of a brief self-introduction, an overview of the dissertation focus, and the informed consent. After a week, Ed Winters acknowledged the receipt of email and kindly agreed to take part in the study. In a subsequent email, I was invited to be part of his official mailing list and received regular updates about his advocacy through his website and social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

The Medium

To this day, the community of YouTube creators, video bloggers or vloggers grows each day as more technology becomes available. This is why there is a shift of YouTube byline from "Your Digital Video Repository" to "Broadcast Yourself" that is paving way to a new generation of communicators. Through YouTube as the medium, vloggers are given a democratic space to present their arguments for or against a particular issue. Particularly, YouTube has fostered a community of advocates such as vegan creators who produce videos dedicated to veganism and animal rights.

The selected vlog is from Earthling Ed's 30-YouTube video series which mainly addressed fallacies and excuses people make to avoid going vegan. The vlogger's purpose is to unmask to the viewers the fallacies in each non-vegan argument in each of the videos.

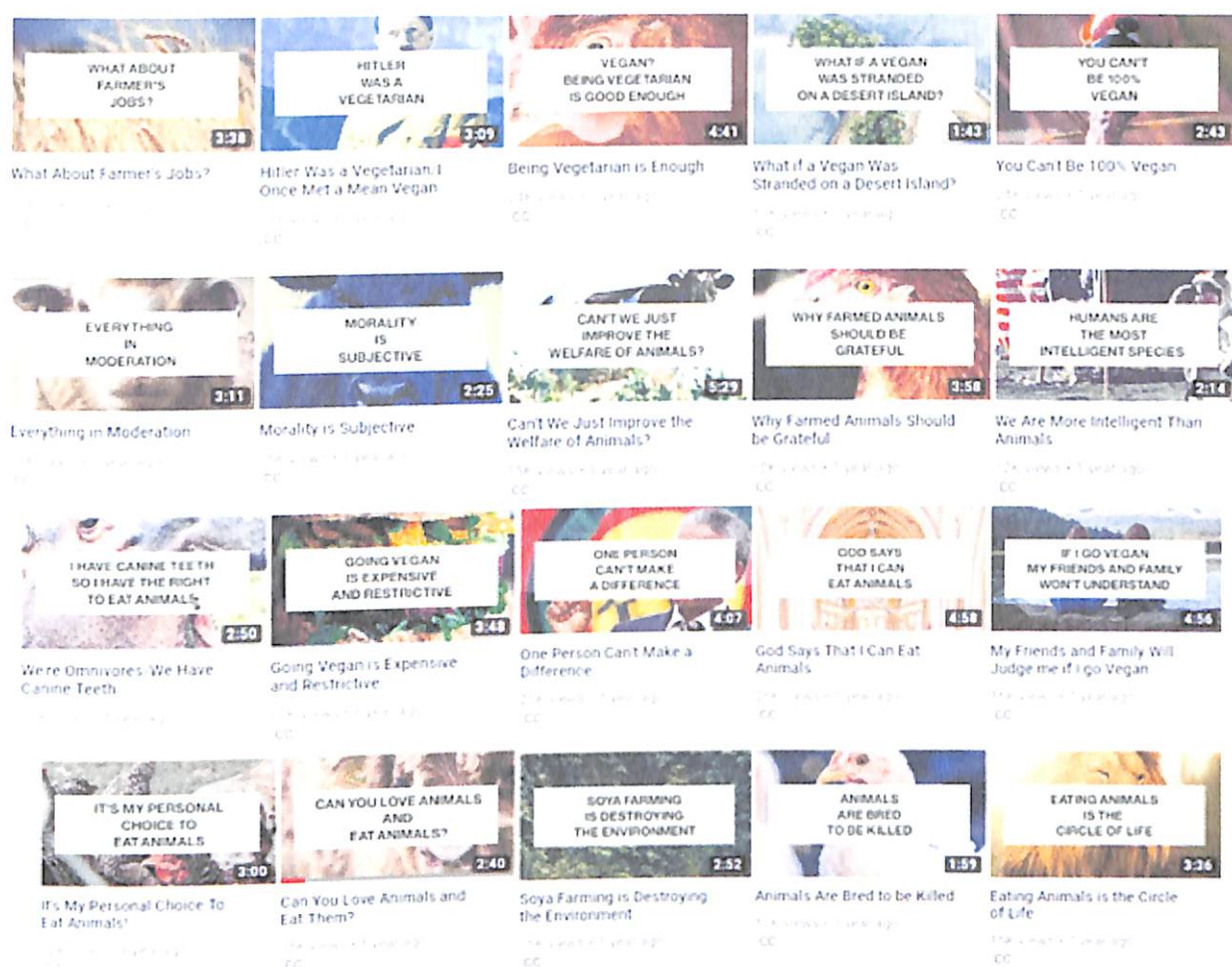


Figure 2. Screenshot of Earthling Ed's YouTube Channel's 30-vlog series on misconceptions about veganism and animal consumption

The Audience

The audience is an important part of the rhetorical situation as they are those who are the intended or unintended viewers and/or active users of the rhetorical message. In the rhetorical context of vlogging, the invoked audience are those imagined by the vlogger. The vlog itself creates roles and invites the audience to take on those roles, so it plays a part in creating its own audience. The rhetors themselves make decisions based on

their audience since the latter has the capability to identify the language used, identify with the rhetor, know the importance or the gravity of the discourse, the strategies and the delivery used by the rhetor, and the arguments in the rhetoric.

The rhetor's YouTube channel, Earthling Ed, has over 265,000 subscribers as of August 2019. The video analyzed for the study titled *"It's my personal choice to eat animals"* has almost 35,000 views with over 400 comments. Over 2,400 viewers clicked and *like* button and 52 disliked the video. Based on the number of likes alone, it can be inferred that the viewers agree with the vlog's rhetoric.

Aristotle believed that rhetoric is the study of communication and persuasion and different messages or speeches should be made for different audiences at different situations to establish persuasive communication. So with YouTube vloggers attributed as "verbalizers of the online world" who are drawn to the more thoughtful and deliberate style of asynchronous communication, vlogging is more complex than a monologue, soliloquy, or public speaking because it originated in a setting that is also similar to a face-to-face interaction with an audience except for the 'missing' interlocutor needed for turn taking. (Richarson as cited in Suler, 2016)

The Rhetoric

In understanding the vlogger's rhetoric or the message in its full complexity, it is necessary to study both the vlog content and contexts within and around it. Rhetorical texts such as vlogs are produced and distributed within rhetorical situations; therefore, text and context cannot be separated. To extract the specific video for the study,

Earthling Ed's YouTube video blog addressing the most common excuse to counter veganism was selected. In terms of setting, the date the vlog was published, the place where the vlog occurred, and other physical aspects of the vlog were identified to determine coherence and fidelity.



Figure 2. Screenshot of the selected advocacy vlogger for the rhetorical analysis

1] So the next excuse that we're addressing today is the excuse that it's my personal choice" to eat animal products.

2] Again, this is something we hear all the time as vegans.

3] People saying "Don't judge me," "Don't force your beliefs on me," "It's my personal choice to eat what I want."

4] And this excuse is quite interesting when insofar, it is arguably someone's personal choice to eat animal products.

5] We all personally choose to do so.

6] But it's also someone's personal choice if they want to commit rape or commit an act of murder.

7] The person personally chooses to do those things.

8] Likewise, if some wants to beat and abuse a dog, it's their personal choice to beat and abuse that dog.

9] Just because someone personally chooses to do something does not make the action morally justifiable.

10] The problem is when people use the excuse "It's my personal choice," it shows how far detached they've become from the fact that the animal products they're eating have either come from an animal that is already dead or one that is in the process of being exploited and will eventually end up dead.

11] When people use this excuse, it shows how far detached they've become from the fact that those animal products came from a victim, a living being who suffered.

12] It makes people think that only they are affected by whether or not they eat animal products.

13] So when people say to vegans, "Respect my personal choice," We are respecting the personal choice of others.

14] We're respecting the personal choice of the 56 billion land animals and the 2.7 trillion marine animals who are killed needlessly, who do not want to die for us.

15] We are respecting the personal choice of the humans that are also abused and exploited in the animal agriculture industries; the slaughterhouse workers, who suffer from some of the highest rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide.

16] *We're respecting the personal choice of the animals that don't want to be skinned for fashion or the animals that do not want to be tied down to laboratory tables for science or for cosmetics.*

17] *As vegans, we respect the environment and everyone who is affected by climate change because consuming animals is responsible for causing some the worst environmental calamities that we're currently facing as a species.*

18] *As vegans, we're respecting the personal choice of everyone who wants to live a long, fulfilled, happy, healthy life by telling them that consuming animal products causes the most prevalent diseases and illnesses currently affecting our society: heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney failure.*

19] *All these diseases can be attributed to the fact that we consume animal products.*

20] *But most importantly, a simple switch to a plant-based diet can not only prevent many of them, it can even reverse and treat some of them as well.*

21] *In our society here in the West, we do not consider it morally justifiable for someone to beat, kill, and eat a dog in Yulin, even though they personally choose to do so.*

22] *We do not consider it morally justifiable for someone to hunt a dolphin in Taiji, Japan, or to hunt a pilot whale in the Faroe Islands even though they personally choose to do so.*

23] *By that logic, it can't be morally justifiable for us to eat any animal that we eat here in the West even though we personally choose to do so.*

24] *So the question I'd like to ask anyone who uses the "respect my personal choice" excuse is what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own?*

The Exigence

After learning the extent of agony the animals go through from birth to death such as pigs forced in tiny crates, suffering from open wounds, abscesses, cannibalism, and other harrowing footages of slaughter practices as well as the damage livestock consumption do to our own health, the environment and the animals themselves, the identified social exigence is communicating veganism as an advocacy through YouTube vlogging which requires collective deliberation and judgment.

As stated in the introduction, committing to a vegan diet seems to be easier than communicating veganism since it is considered as a radical movement. If veganism is indeed perceived as a movement that confronts institutional wisdom and cultural norms, it is then valuable to better understand the ways in which individual vegans communicate about veganism especially online.

Thematic Analysis

After selecting vlogs to be analyzed, transcriptions were made and themes of how the YouTube vlogger communicated veganism to the viewers were compiled. The field notes gathered were used to organize themes that emerged from the analysis of the online community. The data were analyzed using qualitative and ethnographic thematic content analysis techniques. Qualitative content analysis extends the scope of inquiry to examine meanings, themes, and patterns that may be apparent or concealed in a text (Grbich 2013).

As netnography involves an inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data, thematic content analysis was deemed an acceptable method for a textual inquiry (Silverman 2006). Thematic content analysis is the detailed examination of coding and categorizing textual information into constituent trends of consensus.

By coding and highlighting the sentences or ideas on how the vlogger explained the consequences of animal consumption, the common themes emerged after the sentences have been categorized under each theme.

In a qualitative research, coding captures the essence of a piece of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009). It derives from interpretation of the data, rather than using preconceived codes as in a quantitative research.

Before coding, the vlog was viewed a couple of times (including the other 29 vlogs on misconceptions about veganism) before it was transcribed and viewed multiple times again for me to be immersed in the data. Often you are not looking to place a value judgment on the piece, and if there is an implicit or implied argument you may not be ultimately taking a side.

Since the study's goal is to analyze rhetorically how a video blogger communicates his message by breaking the video into parts, it attempts to understand how the different parts of the video work, insights shall be offered to its overall persuasive strategies. Taking it entry by entry, I briefly summarized not only what each entry is about, but also what the vlogger is rhetorically doing in the vlog. Graphic organizers helped in visually representing and understanding the rhetoric of the vlogger by breaking up its linear structure. Identifying the rhetorical structures such as description, cause/effect,

sequence, compare/contrast, problem/solution, and definition helped identify the style and tone of the vlog. Manual coding was done in cycles to develop themes. The codes were further developed to major themes after subsequent viewing of the vlog.

As a vital phase of netnography, making abstractions, checking and refining, generalizing and theorizing were employed to complete the analytical coding. Through this method, it revealed the nature of YouTube vlogging, the rhetorical strategies employed by the vegan vlogger, and how these rhetorical strategies accomplish the goal of advocating veganism through YouTube vlogging.

The three rhetorical proofs such as ethos, logos, and pathos were analyzed and coded. In identifying ethos, two characteristics were coded for that exemplified this rhetorical strategy, including the mention of self and affiliation with the audience and the mention of authority. In identifying logos, two characteristics were coded for to identify the rhetorical strategy, which were the inclusion of facts and sources cited. In identifying pathos, two characteristics were coded for to identify the rhetorical strategy, including in the inclusion of emotional and morality appeals. Other rhetorical strategies that have been used were analyzed and coded as well and each of these strategies were operationalized.

Categorization According to Rhetorical Proofs

After identifying the modes of persuasion or the rhetorical proofs, the table below with the crafted guide questions was used to categorize according to rhetorical proofs.

Table 1. Guide questions for the rhetorical proofs

LOGOS	ETHOS	PATHOS
What evidence did the vlogger present to convince the viewers that the argument is logical?	What authority does the vlogger have on the advocacy?	What emotions was the vlogger trying to elicit from the viewers?
What reasons, definitions, analogies, quotations, citations from authorities did the vlogger use?	What clues in the vlog showed that the vlogger is credible/believable?	What kind of descriptive language did the vlogger use in presenting the advocacy?

The objective was to examine the video blog’s rhetorical acts by breaking down the transcriptions into smaller units before doing a descriptive treatment (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

The video blog was also analyzed and to complete the last step, I made use of descriptive coding to not only identify the rhetorical proofs, evidence, and devices in the statements that link the latter two to the rhetorical proofs, but more so to determine the rhetorical acts in the vlogs.

The Purpose

Earthling Ed’s YouTube Vlog: *It’s My Personal Choice To Eat Animals!*

Rhetoric	Rhetorical Proof	Rhetorical Devices	Rhetorical Act
1] <i>So the next excuse that we’re addressing today is the excuse that it’s “my personal choice” to eat animal products.</i>	Ethos	>Identification (use of “we” as a form of identification)	Misconception
2] <i>Again, this is something we hear all the time as vegans.</i>	Ethos	Use of the pronoun “we”	Misconception
5] <i>People saying “Don’t judge me,” “Don’t force your beliefs on me,” “It’s my personal choice to eat what I want.”</i> 6] <i>And this excuse is quite interesting when insofar, it is arguably someone’s personal choice to eat animal products.</i>	Logos	Example	Misconception
5] <i>We all personally choose to do so.</i>	Ethos	Use of “we” Identification	Morality

6] <i>But it's also someone's personal choice if they want to commit rape or commit an act of murder.</i>	Logos/Pathos	Analogy Deductive reasoning	Morality
7] <i>The person personally chooses to do those things.</i>	Logos	Factual statement	Morality
8] <i>Likewise, if some wants to beat and abuse a dog, it's their personal choice to beat and abuse that dog.</i>	Logos/Pathos	Analogy	Morality
9] <i>Just because someone personally chooses to do something does not make the action morally justifiable.</i>	Logos	Analogy Comparison	Morality
10] <i>The problem is when people use the excuse "It's my personal choice," it shows how far detached they've become from the fact that the animal products they're eating have either come from an animal that is already dead or one that is in the process of being exploited and will eventually end up dead.</i>	Pathos	Factual statement relating to the concept of "absent referent"	Morality

11] <i>When people use this excuse, it shows how far detached they've become from the fact that those animal products came from a victim, a living being who suffered.</i> <i>It makes people think that only they are affected by whether or not they eat animal products.</i>	Pathos	Epanaphora	Morality
12] <i>So when people say to vegans, "Respect my personal choice," We are respecting the personal choice of others.</i>	Ethos	Identification (Use of "we")	Morality
13] <i>We're respecting the personal choice of the 56 billion land animals and the 2.7 trillion marine animals who are killed needlessly, who do not want to die for us.</i>	Logos/Pathos	Factual data Identification	Morality
14] <i>We are respecting the personal choice of the humans that are also abused and exploited in the animal agriculture industries; the slaughterhouse workers, who suffer from some of the highest rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, drug</i>	Logos/Pathos	Factual data Enumeration Identification	Morality

<i>and alcohol abuse, and suicide.</i>			
<i>15] We're respecting the personal choice of the animals that don't want to be skinned for fashion or the animals that do not want to be tied down to laboratory tables for science or for cosmetics.</i>	Logos/Pathos	Example Identification	Morality
<i>16] As vegans, we respect the environment and everyone who is affected by climate change because consuming animals is responsible for causing some the worst environmental calamities that we're currently facing as a species.</i>	Logos	Identification Factual data Emphasis	Morality

17] <i>As vegans, we're respecting the personal choice of everyone who wants to live a long, fulfilled, happy, healthy life by telling them that consuming animal products causes the most prevalent diseases and illnesses currently affecting our society: heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney failure.</i>	Logos and Pathos	Identification Factual data Comparison and Contrast	Morality
18] <i>All these diseases can be attributed to the fact that we consume animal products.</i>	Logos	Cause and effect	Move to avoid animal products
19] <i>But most importantly, a simple switch to a plant-based diet can not only prevent many of them, it can even reverse and treat some of them as well.</i>	Logos	Recommendation Explanation	Move for a plant-based diet
20] <i>In our society here in the West, we do not consider it morally justifiable for someone to beat, kill, and eat a dog in Yulin, even though they personally choose to do so.</i>	Logos	Example	Morality

21] <i>We do not consider it morally justifiable for someone to hunt a dolphin in Taiji, Japan, or to hunt a pilot whale in the Faroe Islands even though they personally choose to do so.</i>	Ethos and Logos	Example Analogy Identification	Morality
22] <i>By that logic, it can't be morally justifiable for us to eat any animal that we eat here in the West even though we personally choose to do so.</i>	Logos	Repetition of and refuting an argument	Morality
23] <i>So the question I'd like to ask anyone who uses the "respect my personal choice" excuse is what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own?</i>	Logos	Rhetorical question	Morality

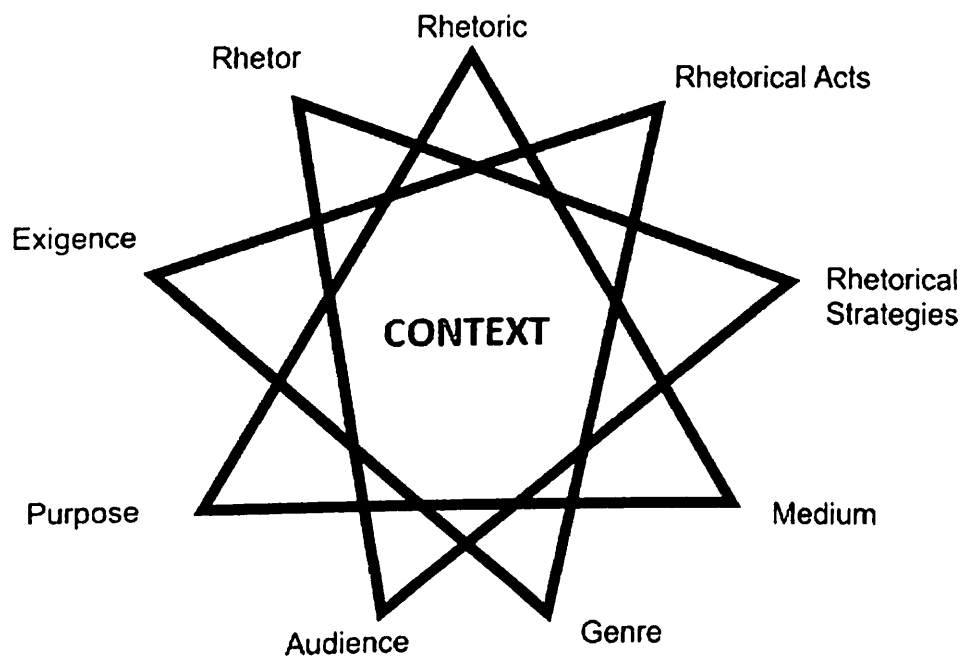


Figure 1. Expanded Rhetorical Situation

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Guided by the Rhetorical Tradition of Communication Theory, my dissertation focused on identifying and analyzing a vegan YouTube vlogger in communicating his advocacy to answer the following research questions:

1. What rhetorical strategies are used by a YouTube vlogger in communicating veganism?
2. How do these rhetorical strategies accomplish the goal of advocating veganism through YouTube?

The Rhetorical Plan

Among the resources for attaining both content and the vlogger's personal purpose are the various patterns of organization of the vlog. Before analyzing the rhetoric, as a minimum, I have observed that the vlogger developed a system of points and subpoints that presented his ideas in logical and strategic ways. Problem-solution, reversal of apparent position, extended analogy, and examples were the patterns employed in communicating the advocacy through YouTube.

Ed Winters presented a problem-solution as his rhetorical plan in addressing the misconception. He began by setting forth a non-vegan's argument of consuming animal

products as a personal choice. After presenting counter arguments, he proposed a solution of committing to veganism or adopting a plant-based diet.

The plan provided an advantage to the vlogger by giving him an opportunity to build common ground with his viewers before reaching the part of the vlog that is controversial.

The rhetorical plan involved argumentation in that the vlogger seeks to convince the viewers to take a particular course of action. While explaining the problem, he emphasized to the viewers the effects of consuming animal products to the animals themselves by explaining and describing the situation, analyzing the problem, and recommending a solution.

Rhetorical Acts and Strategies of the Vegan Vlogger

Earthling Ed has consciously and unconsciously appealed to various audiences evident in the YouTube video series he produced to identify and unmask fallacies or excuses people make about meat consumption and veganism.

The rhetorical analysis focused on determining the rhetorical strategies and how they accomplish or achieve the goal of communicating veganism to the YouTube viewers. By considering the YouTube vlogger advocate's invention or skill, his creativity of exploring the "available means of persuasion" and skill in creating the discourse through YouTube vlogging to communicate veganism are identified in the analysis.

In the selected YouTube vlog, three prevalent rhetorical acts emerged after completing the thematic analysis.

The three rhetorical acts: 1) misconceptions on eating animal products as a personal choice; 2) morality of eating animal products as personal choice; and 3) move towards veganism addressed a common excuse or characterization about veganism, and they represent Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation" wherein the situation persuades the rhetor or the vlogger that the situation or issue is urgent and important enough to speak rhetorically about it, in this case, through a YouTube vlog.

Misconceptions on eating animal products as a personal choice

1] So the next excuse that we're addressing today is the excuse that it's "my personal choice" to eat animal products. Again, this is something we hear all the time as vegans. People saying "Don't judge me," "Don't force your beliefs on me," "It's my personal choice to eat what I want." And this excuse is quite interesting when insofar, it is arguably someone's personal choice to eat animal products. We all personally choose to do so.

The vlogger's first three sentences provided the excuse or the misconception that eating animal products is a personal choice. Eating animal products is indeed exercising a choice, but the consequences extend well beyond the person. The use of the pronoun "we" was used three times in the first three sentences of the video. In the very first sentence, *"So the next excuse that we're addressing today is the excuse that it's "my personal choice" to eat animal products,"* The personal pronoun "we" was used to present the excuse non-vegans give to defend meat consumption. This reveals the

vlogger's ethos, a rhetorical character that appeals to the sensibilities and values of a people and directs them to accept certain "truths. The articulation of the first sentence reflects the vlogger's good will and good character for inviting or including the viewers to be part of the discussion adding a personal tone in the vlog as it characterizes community and identification with vegan viewers when Earthling Ed stated "*we hear all the time as vegans*" in addressing the issue of having "personal choice" to eat animal products.

The second use of "we" as a symbol of togetherness was evident in the second sentence when the vlogger uttered, "*Again, this is something we hear all the time as vegans.*" The personal pronoun 'we' instead of the use of 'I' has rhetorical functions as it creates a sense of togetherness and blurs the vlogger-viewer divide. As Mühlhäusler & Harré (1990) point out, the use of 'we' instead of 'I' also diminishes the responsibilities of the speaker or the vlogger since he is portrayed as collaborating with the hearer or the viewer. It appealed to ethos as it characterized community and identification with vegan viewers.

Eating animal products is indeed exercising a choice, but the consequences extend well beyond the person. This is in congruence with Kenneth Burke's identification theory where the speaker attempts to connect with the audience. In this context, the vlogger made use of "we're addressing" to include the audience in the rhetoric and in the act of explaining the misconception. For the YouTube vlogger to persuade the viewers, s/he must have engaged and connected with them on some level. This connection can be attained through identification which Jackson (2013) defined as the feeling of relating to

a person, issue, or organization that can result from empathy, sense of community or feeling of responsibility created by rhetoric.

When eating animals is considered as a *“personal choice,”* it comes across as a euphemistic way of saying, “Respect my choices” or “Don’t judge me or don’t hold me accountable for my actions that harm animals.” Thus, the statement is not intended to support the argument of eating animals, but rather a defense mechanism to end the discussion.

When this occurs, “personal choice” becomes the highlight that takes away awareness and the welfare of animals from the discourse. This is aligned with Boylan’s (2013) quote, “Without awareness there is no freedom. Awareness is vital for any possibility of free choice.” Indeed, without awareness, there is no free choice.

The rhetorical situation can be the result of many events. The misconceptions represent understandings and/or misunderstandings produced by ideological systems and structures that support othering vegans. The quotations are ideologically imbued with meanings that highlight certain interests while muting others. Earthling Ed’s vlogs are rhetorical responses to a situation. The situation at hand is the misconception or excuses non-vegans make about consuming animal products.

Morality of Eating Animal Products as Personal Choice

The statement *“But it’s also someone’s personal choice if they want to commit rape or commit an act of murder. The person personally chooses to do those things”* is an appeal to uphold morality. It also appeals to logos as it attempts to reason deductively

and provides an analogy of having personal choices to eat animal products and having the same personal choices of committing heinous crimes.

Similarly, the statements *"Likewise, if some wants to beat and abuse a dog, it's their personal choice to beat and abuse that dog. Just because someone personally chooses to do something does not make the action morally justifiable"* suggests that this personal decision encompasses morality and ethics. By stating this, the rhetor aimed to uphold the moral status of animals.

The use of the rhetorical device, repetition of the rhetoric, *"The person personally chooses to do those things"* is intended for emphasis. Rhetorical devices as such are used by rhetors to enhance arguments for persuasion.

The statement *"shows how far detached they've (non-vegans) become from the fact that the animal products they're eating have either come from an animal that is already dead or one that is in the process of being exploited and will eventually end up dead"* appealed to logic by explaining that the use of "personal choice" excuse of eating animal products. This is reminiscent of Carol Adam's (2014) concept of "absent referent." She reasoned that "behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes...The absent referent functions to cloak the violence inherent to meat eating, to protect the conscience of the meat eater and render the idea of individual animals as immaterial to anyone's selfish desires. It is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our 'meat' separated from any idea that she or he was once

an animal, to keep something from being seen as having been someone, to allow for the moral abandonment of another being.”

The argument appealed to the viewers’ logical side as it provided rebuttal by comparing eating animals to acts of crimes as “personal choices.” Looking at it from an ethical perspective, a person’s right to choose ends at a point when exercising that right causes harm to other beings. Hence, while it might be legal and seemingly normal to kill and consume animals, it is still not ethical.

Philosopher Nicholas Rescher (MacKinnon & Fiala, 2018) as cited in echoed that “moral obligation is always interest-oriented. But only individuals can be said to have interests; one only has moral obligations to particular individuals or particular groups thereof.” Most of us believe that we are entitled to treat members of other species in ways which would be considered wrong if inflicted on members of our own species.

On the other hand, the statement *“So when people say to vegans, ‘Respect my personal choice,’ We are respecting the personal choice of others. We’re respecting the personal choice of the 56 billion land animals and the 2.7 trillion marine animals who are killed needlessly, who do not want to die for us”* appeals to ethos.

Earthling Ed would often ask rhetorical questions with an ethical dimension such as *“so the question I’d like to ask anyone who uses the “respect my personal choice” excuse is what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own?”* This was done to challenge the viewers to think critically. The use of a rhetorical question to counter an argument was employed in the video blog. This Socratic Method, a technique that was devised by the

Greek philosopher, Socrates, is used to allow the viewers to reach conclusions on their own, without being told how to answer or how to feel. By asking a series of rhetorical questions that highlight the dissonance in the viewers' perception of animals, the vegan vlogger was trying to make the viewers reveal it to themselves. Through this approach, he makes the viewers reveal the answers to themselves. By using this rhetorical strategy, critical thinking is stimulated, and the viewers are left questioning themselves and letting them assess if their actions are aligned with their morals. With this method, Earthling Ed planted seeds by leaving the viewers questioning themselves and their personal choices.

His rebuttal pointed out that "personal choices" have dire consequences. An analogy was given to illuminate the oppression of animals in general. The rhetor stands by his principles by explaining that to deny animals the right to live their lives according to their own interests is wrong and to attempt to defend our choice to eat them as a personal one is morally unjustifiable.

The types of evidence used by Earthling Ed varied. He used comparisons, quotations, and personal experiences to support his ideas. He kept his ideas tightly structured and consistent. Logical evidence was first apparent in the introduction of the video blog as the rhetor presented accurate factual data and statistics of the number of animals killed annually.

Another component of logical proof is evidence of refutative skills such as picking out relevant and significant points of clash, resolving contested issues, revealing clearly the relation of a non-vegan's claims to his own, preserving the structural wholeness of the

vlog as a constructive enforcement of an idea. The rhetor has proven that he possesses refutative skills as he was able to meet objections and defend veganism against non-vegans' claims.

Earthling Ed emphasized through repetition a relevant and significant rebuttal that *"we live in a society of animal lovers yet how come a society of animal also be the same society that pays for and perpetuate a system that slaughters 56 billion land animals and up to 2.7 trillion marine animals every single year" or "It's impossible to love animals if you pay for them to be murdered and killed."*

The argument, *"In our society here in the West, we do not consider it morally justifiable for someone to beat, kill, and eat a dog in Yulin, even though they personally choose to do so. We do not consider it morally justifiable for someone to hunt a dolphin in Taiji, Japan, or to hunt a pilot whale in the Faroe Islands even though they personally choose to do so"* appealed to the viewers' logical side as it provided rebuttal by comparing eating animals to acts of crimes as "personal choices."

Viewers with deeply entrenched beliefs or habits as eating meat are being challenged to shift to a plant-based diet also challenges them to defend old beliefs or habits. Thus, the tendency is to make the belief, habit or issue personal as a response to the vlogger making it public.

Meat-eaters who decide to address animal consumption as a "personal choice" is an implicature to block any further discussion or evaluation. This also implies that the viewer does not want to be judged or held accountable for his or her food choices.

Earthling Ed challenging viewers to follow a plant-based diet might hinge on "symbolic threats" to the status quo or their dietary choice.

In the rhetoric, *"We are respecting the personal choice of the humans that are also abused and exploited in the animal agriculture industries; the slaughterhouse workers, who suffer from some of the highest rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide. By that logic, it can't be morally justifiable for us to eat any animal that we eat here in the West even though we personally choose to do so,"* the vlogger focused on enumerating the ill effects of animal agriculture to its workers. Implicitly, the vlogger presented an ethical conundrum to the viewers by allowing them to make a decision based on their values. It has been stated in a way that challenges the audience to think critically. This is indirectly letting the viewers understand that their food choices also affect other people's lives.

The rhetor's argument, *"So the question I'd like to ask anyone who uses the "respect my personal choice" excuse is what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own? By that logic, it can't be morally justifiable for us to eat any animal that we eat here in the West even though we personally choose to do so,"* pointed out that "personal choices" have dire consequences.

An analogy was given to illuminate the oppression of animals in general. The rhetor stands by his principles by explaining that to deny animals the right to live their lives according to their own interests is wrong and to attempt to defend our choice to eat them as a personal one is morally unjustifiable.

In the argument, the rhetor, Earthling Ed, picked and emphasized through repetition a relevant and significant rebuttal that *"we live in a society of animal lovers yet how come a society of animal also be the same society that pays for and perpetuate a system that slaughters 56 billion land animals and up to 2.7 trillion marine animals every single year"* or *"It's impossible to love animals if you pay for them to be murdered and killed."*

Earthling Ed appealed to logic to convince the audience of the irony that is existing. Specifically, situational irony is used to show the opposite or what is contrary for a dramatic or emphatic effect and is apparent as the rhetor's argument conveyed the incongruity of the statement. The irony of being animal lovers and yet killing billions of animals was emphasized. The implicature of the statement is that it would be impossible to love animals if people pay for them to be murdered and killed.

Inflicting intentional suffering and pain onto them goes against the very foundations of love. This was a strong rhetoric based on a rational argument showing connections between the illogical point of loving animals and also being a contributor to the murder, death, suffering, and pain of animals before eventually consuming them.

The use of pathos was evident to evoke emotions by emphasizing that other animals too have intelligence and sentience or the ability to perceive one's environment, and experience sensations such as pain and suffering, or pleasure and comfort (Turner & D'Silva, 2006).

Earthling Ed provided moral arguments on the value animal lives and their welfare in persuading the viewers to commit to veganism. This was a deliberate attempt to highlight the abuses animals experience due to animal agriculture.

The shift from “we” to “you” point of view is a persuasive way of addressing the audience as it calls for action. The second person “you,” “your,” or “yours” are usually in the context of providing instructions or advice, thus the shift to better engage the viewers. It drew on the areas of Burke’s consubstantiation to identify with the viewers since differences are inevitable among people and human interaction is far more complex than simply persuading online. Vloggers like Earthling Ed share far more personal experiences with their fans, or “friends” as most of them refer to their fan base. They open up their homes and invite viewers into their lives by sharing their ways of living making it much easier to identify with them.

In this context, the vlogger’s attempt to interact with the viewers by identifying with them is a necessary step to communicate with anyone online or offline. As Burke (1969) stated, people are “both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with one another.”

In this sense, there is a need to link the animals’ sentience and intelligence to humans as we feel more connected to those who are like us. Larsson’s et al. (2003) *Reasons for Pursuing Veganism Research* echoes this emphasis when they observed that vegans tend to cite moral concerns regarding animal welfare as the key motivation for pursuing veganism. Accepting that animals experience pain and identifying with them should become one of the greatest motivations for going vegan.

Thus, the vlogger tried to establish a sense of identification with the viewers and bridge the viewers with the animals. The use of “we” as in “...we live in a society of pet lovers” is one form of identification. Heath (as cited in Miller, 2002) stated that “identification

acknowledges that communication is difficult because humans have different experiences and because ambiguity allows each of us to hold different meanings of terms.”

Earthling Ed recognized this and made use of Burke’s identification to “draw into communion and community with others” through symbolic processes such as YouTube vlogging. It is focused on language use and motives of the vlogger as it examines the construction of his rhetoric through various rhetorical devices to analyze underlying messages. Burke (1969) clearly states that “you persuade or communicate with a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his.”

By employing strategies of Burke’s rhetorical identification, we can better understand and analyze persuasion in rhetoric. To accomplish change, deliberative rhetoric or *symbouleutikon* is done since it focuses on what lies in the future. It is the rhetoric of vegan advocates by foreseeing what effect embracing veganism might have if change is made at the moment of the rhetoric.

The vlogger’s rhetoric also focused on the lack of respect for the interests of the animals by poaching them for fashion and using them as laboratory experiments, “*We’re respecting the personal choice of the animals that don’t want to be skinned for fashion or the animals that do not want to be tied down to laboratory tables for science or for cosmetics,*” is aligned with Peter Singer’s (2009) principle of speciesism. He believes that this is an objectionable attitude similar to racism or sexism because it propagates maltreatment of animals simply because they are members of a different species. He

has made a strong argument that although animals may have different interests than humans do, it does not mean that their interests are to be taken more lightly.

Personal health reasons can also provide the impetus for people to start eating a vegan diet. In the vlog, there was also an implicature on giving importance to emotional health when he uttered, *"As vegans, we're respecting the personal choice of everyone who wants to live a long, fulfilled, happy, healthy life..."* before Earthling Ed enumerated the diseases (heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney failure) caused by consuming animal products. Earthling Ed made use of logos or statements with scientific basis to counter the wide acceptance of animal consumption. His claim was attested by the American Dietetic Association's (as cited in Messina & Burke, 1997) report stating, *"Scientific data suggest positive relationships between a vegetarian diet and reduced risk for several chronic degenerative diseases and conditions, including obesity, coronary artery disease, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and some types of cancer."*

Although the suffering experienced by a meat-eater may not be the same as the animal bred to be slaughtered for consumption, the health effects of meat consumption still lead to a host of health problems. Earthling Ed argued that the unsanitary, overcrowded, and infested factory farms increasingly propagate sickness and disease among the animals, including swine influenza, avian influenza, foot-and-mouth disease, and mad-cow diseases which also lead to human infections.

Ed Winters (2019) clearly declared that:

*"In contemporary society, people do not need animals or their secretions. By consuming animals products, we are shortening our lifespan, destroying our planet, and causing an unimaginable amount of unnecessary harm to innocent, living beings... Going vegan allows us to become more in touch with our innate compassion. If we all went vegan, society would naturally become more loving and gentle. How could we hurt another human being if as society we felt that inflicting suffering onto a chicken was immoral?"*Also, he strongly expressed his opinion to respect the workers in the animal agriculture industries who are affected with *"some of the highest rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide."*

Earthling Ed recommended to make *"a simple switch to a plant-based diet can not only prevent many of them (diseases enumerated), it can even reverse and treat some of them as well."*

Move Towards Veganism

A move for action towards veganism is the third rhetorical act that emerged from the YouTube video blogger's rhetoric. Before the explicit mention of the call for action to commit to veganism, the statements below indirectly stated the harmful effects of animal consumption:

"As vegans, we respect the environment and everyone who is affected by climate change because consuming animals is responsible for causing some of the worst environmental calamities that we're currently facing as a species."

In this utterance, the vlogger appealed to logic as he emphasized on the negative effects of animal consumption on the environment, specifically climate change. This was seconded by a CNN article, *The Amazon is burning because the world eats so much*

meat. The crisis has been linked to animal consumption since animal agriculture does require massive amounts of resources such as land, feeds, water, and energy which ultimately cause living and sentient beings to endure immense suffering.

Wildfires are fueled to pave the way for animal agriculture; feeding massive amounts of soy, grain, and water to animals; and then transporting, slaughtering, processing, and storing their meat. These animals living in factory farms endure great amounts of suffering, enough that it is generally bad to bring them into existence by creating economic demand for meat.

The use of the personal pronoun “we” (as vegans) was consistent all throughout the video. Connecting with the viewers was apparent in the articulation of the advocacy. It is a clear indication of Burke’s identification since the vlogger connects with and persuades the viewers by identifying with them in certain ways. In this context, persuasion may occur after the viewers have identified with the vlogger. Burke stated that people, by nature, are responsive to symbolic expressions that can unite them in purpose and action when a persuasive message such as the vlog is skillfully crafted.

When Earthling Ed emphasized on the negative effect of animal consumption, he presented it in a superlative statement to emphasize its gravity. Similarly, the use of the word *species* implied the effects in totality since the word *species* pertains to all organisms.

In the succeeding rhetoric, the vlogger appealed to logic as he enumerated the negative effects of animal consumption on the environment and people’s health.

"As vegans, we're respecting the personal choice of everyone who wants to live a long, fulfilled, happy, healthy life by telling them that consuming animal products causes the most prevalent diseases and illnesses currently affecting our society: heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney failure. All these diseases can be attributed to the fact that we consume animal products."

The rhetor called for action to avoid animal products and instead embrace a vegan or a plant-based diet. The recommendation was explicitly mentioned when Earthling Ed proposed in his conclusion, *"but most importantly, a simple switch to a plant-based diet can not only prevent many of them, it can even reverse and treat some of them as well."*

In general, Earthling Ed also consciously and unconsciously appeals to various audiences. This was evident in the selected YouTube video series which addressed fallacies or excuses people make about going vegan. Ed's purpose was to identify and unmask fallacies in arguments as shown in each of the videos.

One of his rhetorical strategies is asking rhetorical questions that highlight the cognitive dissonance in the viewers' perception of animals. Through this approach, he makes the viewers reveal the answers to them. By using this rhetorical strategy, critical thinking is stimulated and the viewers are left questioning themselves and letting them assess if their actions are aligned with their morals.

An example of a rhetorical question from the video is *"what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own?"*

Communication philosopher and ethicist Jurgen Habermas (1979) explains that ethical communication promotes autonomy and freedom. To be ethical, he emphasized that communication should provide a sense of choice and empowerment, while simultaneously acknowledging and encouraging a sense of social responsibility. An ethical persuader is someone who intends to help others make the best choice upon truthful information.

The types of evidence used by Earthling Ed varied. He used comparisons, quotations, and personal experiences to support his ideas. He kept his ideas tightly structured and consistent. Logical evidence was first apparent in the introduction of the video blog as the rhetor presented accurate factual data and statistics of the number of animals killed annually.

Another component of logical proof is evidence of refutative skills such as picking out relevant and significant points of clash, resolving contested issues, revealing clearly the relation of a non-vegan's claims to his own, preserving the structural wholeness of the vlog as a constructive enforcement of an idea. The rhetor has proven that he possesses refutative skills as he was able to meet objections and defend veganisms against non-vegans' claims.

Although Aristotle began the study of persuasion in ancient Greece, his ideas still hold and are still the basis of much of the rhetoric and rhetorical research conducted today. As Aristotle argued in *Rhetoric* over 2,000 years ago, the successful persuader must employ the rhetorical triangle to gather support of the public. Earthling Ed employed the three rhetorical proofs to elicit emotion and to engage the audience's loyalties and/or

commitments. It is necessary that the viewers are convinced of the “goodness” of the vlogger for if this is not the case, the vlogger may acquire viewership, but not necessarily stand a chance of winning its confidence.

Ethos was evident in the vlog. Earthling Ed was credible in sharing his advocacy online. His rhetoric had the three constituents of ethical appeal which reflected his good character, good sense, and goodwill. To spread his advocacy, he made use of different ways to reach out to people.

The use of logos was also prevalent in the vlog. Earthling Ed appealed to logic citing facts and statistics. These were used by the vlogger to convince the audience that there is significant reasoning for his argument.

Pathos was implied in every argument as the vlogger attempted to persuade the viewers by implicitly putting them in a certain frame of mind to trigger an emotional response, specifically empathy, after enumerating the ill effects of animal consumption to the environment, people’s physical and mental health and to the animals themselves.

Craig and Muller’s (2007) three means of persuasion that are reflective of Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals are compulsory for a rhetor. They stated that the speaker must “reason logically, understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and understand emotions.”

Anaphora was evident in the rhetoric especially in the rhetorical act, move for action. Repetition of the phrase “As vegans, we respect” was made to emphasize the

significance of unity as vegans, identification with the viewers, and respect for the animals, the environment, and the people's health and lives in general. These factors can be viewed as a pool of reasons YouTube viewers may draw on in order to explain or justify their commitment to veganism, with viewers identifying more readily with some reasons than others.

While there is a distinction between those who adopt veganism due to ethical concerns, and those who eat a plant-based diet for health reasons, it is possible that individuals' reasons for pursuing veganism may change over time.

Earthling Ed's YouTube viewers might take up veganism, or the consumption of a plant-based diet, based on health or environmental reasons, initially, and later become more aware of the philosophical underpinnings of ethical veganism or vice versa.

After conducting a rhetorical analysis on Earthling Ed's vlog, it has been evident that the classical rhetoric has kept its power in the digital milieu. In this particular context, the vlogger possessed ethos or source credibility based on his expertise and competence on veganism. As an advocate, vlogger Earthling Ed is an opinion leader as he serves as a model for the subscribers and viewers of his YouTube channel.

Aristotle's invention is a reminder to communicators to study the interaction of the modes selected to avoid leaving out available means to persuade by considering the *logical exposition of the argument (logos)*, the competence, mastery, and credibility of the rhetor (ethos), and *his or her emotional appeal (logos) made available by the rhetorical situation*.

Similarly, persuasion used in virtual environments such as YouTube offers virtual versions of classic rhetorical proofs: virtual ethos, virtual pathos, and virtual logos. Each of these virtual appeals gives online rhetors the means to occupy positions made available by the new medium. The analysis also directed attention to devices and elements that are part of each rhetorical act.

With YouTube's influence on the viewers' behavior through the videos uploaded, rhetoric has evolved to include the process of "adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas" in messages of all kinds. Once clicked, the uploaded vlog is continually persuading, shaping people's perspectives about the world of veganism and providing a firsthand account as could no other conventional speaker.

Theorizing Vlogging as a Rhetorical Act

In the rhetorical analysis of the YouTube video blog, three rhetorical acts or three Ms of persuasion emerged which can be applied to all forms of advocacy in the digital sphere. They are **1) misconception about the advocacy and/or its opposition 2) morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition, and 3) move to action**

The rhetorical acts illustrate how an advocate constructs the discourse to understand and explain that the situation or issue is urgent and important enough to speak rhetorically about it through a YouTube vlog. The rhetorical acts are considered to be a major element of the expanded rhetorical situation I modified (see Figure 1). They accomplish the goal of communicating an advocacy which is the required collective deliberation and judgment through YouTube by first **addressing a misconception about the advocacy and/ or its opposition**. The rhetor or the vlogger introduced and

explained it as one of the common reasons people fail to move to action or commit to the advocacy. The rhetorical act of morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition allows the viewers to be informed of the moral issues and to question the status quo.

Lastly, the rhetorical act of moving to action attempts to influence the viewers to commit to the advocacy presented by the vlogger that represents the collective deliberation and judgment.

By stating misconceptions about the advocacy and its opposition, upholding morality or presenting moral argumentation, and moving for action, the rhetor or the YouTube vlogger has attempted to introduce a misconception; inform and persuade the viewers of the moral issues about the advocacy and its opposition and influence the viewers to commit to action. This is because we are now living in a time of health, environmental, and animal crises, conflict, and confusion, a confluence of cultural, technological, and exigency forces that influence how we communicate with others.

Borchers (2005) explains that "our contemporary culture presents us a complex web of influences, many of which we cannot ignore and many of which we do not consciously choose." Vlogging has become a powerful tool in influencing its viewers through the uploaded videos created by the advocates.

Thus, persuasion in YouTube is a dynamic and an ongoing event. Similarly, communication in YouTube is not something the users do, but something in which they engage. In general, the vlogger' rhetoric is pragmatic. It demonstrated the applicability of vlogging an advocacy to address the **Misconceptions**, uphold **Morality**, and ultimately **Move** to action.

The three rhetorical acts of vlogging serve as a powerful instrument for the advancement of any advocacy. A fitting rhetorical response is, therefore, determined by the way the situation is presented and statements that are arranged to comprise each situation. The vlogger's rhetorical responses to the viewers would not have been elicited without today's health, animal, human, and environmental crises. Thus, exigent discourses such as ongoing discussions and debate about the advocacy and issues surrounding it are a key feature of the rhetorical situation.

With digital communication technologies blurring the lines of distinction among mass, multimedia, social media persuaders, various publics, personal networks, and individuals, this study combined traditional theories and research in rhetoric persuasion within the context of new and dynamic channels of communication and investigated the prevalence of persuasive communication with particular attention to the impact of digital communication channels on the persuasion process.

In theorizing vlogging as a rhetorical act, it is significant to take into consideration both traditional and digital forms of persuasive performances and the extent and amount of space it takes up in the discipline of rhetoric since both have a specific intent to create a change or shape audience's thoughts, beliefs, actions, or emotions.

Blakesley (2002) uses performance to describe traditional forms of rhetoric: "We are more accustomed to thinking of rhetoric as the performance itself, the use of language to persuade others to act or change their minds [...]." While not performances in the formal or traditional sense, the classic forms of rhetoric share many common elements with traditional performance.

Traditional rhetorical performances such as speeches make use of language and paralanguage, bodily movements, physical appearance, objects, haptics (touch), oculesics (eye behavior), chronemics (time), and many other elements simultaneously as the speaker delivers a speech. Each element separately could be considered as performance. When placed together, the elements operate in tandem to create a performance like a theatrical play. In this context, the audience engages with each element, observing, accepting or rejecting them which is also considered as a performance.

Articulating an advocacy through YouTube vlogging is a rhetorical act. With the viewers' support and performance through their social media presence and engagement, they themselves are part of the rhetorical act. Although the multimodal form interaction between the vlogger and the viewers are asynchronous, there is still a discursive exchange wherein the vlogger and the viewers mutually engage with one another that will lead toward a position better. The advocacy vlogs' rhetorical acts of directly addressing viewers' comments through more vlogs distinguish the mode of interaction dominated by user-generated content from those dominated by traditional media.

Traditionally, Monroe's Motivated Sequence (MMS) is used as a pattern of organization for persuasive speeches. This five-step method aims to seek immediate action. The first is Attention Step used to relate to the audience and show the importance of the topic by sharing a relevant quote, a rhetorical question, a dramatic or humorous story, or a visual aid. The Need Step contains the exigency or the problems with the current situation with testimonials or other forms of support to show the extent of the need.

The Satisfaction Step is where a plan or solution is presented to show how it will work for the audience and what it will do for them. Fourth is the Visualization Step that heightens the audience's desire to solve the problem by helping them visualize the plan's potential benefits. Lastly, the Action Step is where the speaker appeals or challenges the audience by making a call to action.

In comparison with the study's subject, the vlogger, albeit asynchronously, interacts with the viewers using only three rhetorical acts or modes of persuasion in the digital age: addressing a Misconception, presenting a Moral Argumentation, and Move or Moving to Action.

Misconception

Misconceptions are beliefs that contradict scientific evidence. These may or may not be due to a lack of knowledge or a worldview that supports a given misconception or denies consideration of other perspectives that would threaten their own worldview. To demystify an advocacy process in the digital age, addressing or correcting prior misconceptions is practiced for the viewers to acquire new knowledge as well as understand and resolve conflicts between prior knowledge and newly presented ones in a digital format.

As an advocate, addressing all misconceptions may not be possible. However, across all areas of study some misconceptions are more common than others. The value of addressing a misconception during the persuasive performance of vlogging is that if the issue presented through a vlog is very important to the viewer but the he or she does

not understand the arguments being presented in the vlog's message, or if no arguments are actually presented, then elaboration of the arguments will not occur.

Thus, vlogging a misconception is theorized as a rhetorical act for there is an interactive digital dialogue between the vlogger and the viewers. One of the rhetorical effects of the digital world has been the ways in which the globally accessible messages posted to it can address particular audiences. By analyzing underlying messages that advocate a particular viewpoint, the viewers become critical and interactive consumers making educated choices whether or not to embrace such messages. In the study's selected vlog, the vlogger's intended for an interactive digital dialogue for the viewers to seize a moral high ground.

As a rhetorical act, a vlog can be characterized as acquiring a sense of closeness and vulnerability because of its setting and tone. The vlogger brings the viewers visually close to him or her with the upper body filling the frame. Vlogs are also usually short in duration, more focused, purposive, and replayable.

Addressing a misconception through vlogging also feels intimate because they echo face-to-face exchanges, but only remediates it, creating a new mode for interpersonal dialogue. Therefore, the motive that impels the kind of discourse is more cooperative than competitive. This also means that a person's language is closely linked to his or her motives. Therefore, to understand a speaker's motives, it is necessary to understand the action of his or her language or rhetoric.

Morality or Moral Argumentation

Forms of moral argumentation that were observed in the vlogging entries are claim-reason points based on moral norms as premises. Motivated by moral and ethical principles, the vlogger advocate takes on a special role in serving both the interests of justice and the rights and privileges of his "clients" (the animals, the environment, and the people) by pleading a case, supporting a cause, or recommending a course of action and seeking to influence policies by pleading or arguing within political, economic, and social systems.

When presenting a moral argument, the vlogger deeply employs the concept of identification rather than persuasion per se to facilitate understanding of how his way of communicating unites or separates him from the viewers through the choices of words and overall vlog content.

Thus, vlogging occurs under complex conditions that are ever changing as it recognizes intricacies of communicating advocacies online. A rhetorical action responds to its context since there are a variety of interactional features that influence the creation, persuasion, dissemination, and interpretation of a vlog genre. Vlogging is a continuous process since there are no definable beginnings and endings in the persuasive performance as it is all up to the viewers when and how they will be possibly taken in the vlogs.

Move

Move is the third rhetorical act that is intended to move the viewers into action made at the conclusion of a rhetorical performance. In a vlog, Move is a call-to-action addressed to the viewers who can act on an issue or an advocacy immediately. Compared to a traditional speech delivery which would take much longer, advocacy vlogs are usually three to five minutes short. For the viewers to potentially act on a call, the vlogger excluded trivial hindrances and framed the Move to Action in the viewers' best interest to stir them to act on the advocacy as soon as possible.

To act rhetorically indicates that an action was initiated that can be translated into virtual experiences that are shaped by a response to particular symbols. They are the vlogger's production of words, sounds, and images forged to create a mental picture in the minds of the viewers.

The notion of power is implicit to rhetoric studies because "it is majorly concerned with how language and other symbolic forms influence the way an audience thinks, feels or acts." The reason for choosing YouTube videos demonstrate the influential role the vloggers play in how the world is interpreted which is reflected in the rhetorical tradition of communication. YouTube video blogs as a form of entertainment can both reflect and shape what people believe and how they behave.

In comparison to a face-to-face presentation, the selected vlogging entries used various terms of address, questions, and directed language and employed specific gaze and gestures or movements within a fixed frame. For instance, the point of emphasis in the video is the vlogger's close up face and inserted video clips within the vlog which

provides an important cue for what the viewers are supposed to understand or take away from the vlog. The vlog uses voiceover narrative to tell a story and make its case. It relies heavily on pathos, appealing to the viewers' sense of empathy. The vlogger's voice underscores the textual modality as he started out sounding relatively calm, became more concerned, somber, and quick in articulating the plight of the animals. The fast-rhythmic background music created a sense of urgency and helped lend the vlog atmosphere and underscore its main point such as persuading the audience that animal exploitation or abuse is a serious problem affecting all areas of our lives.

The framing of the vlog is a basic way that creates a rhetorical feature because it directs what the viewers can and cannot see. The vlogger has the potential to alter the perception of a concept by contributing to associated experiences which improve the capacity to understand. Since the vlog's explicit rhetorical purpose is to persuade audiences to understand and respond to the advocacy promoted, and since facts alone are not always enough to induce this goal, then it is up to the vlogger's ability to alter perceptions of the viewers through the virtual experiences they create and employ in the vlogs. Together, the modalities work together in the vlog to create a coherent feeling and rhetorical perspective: the rhetor's voice, voiceover, music, inserted videos and photos.

In this regard, YouTube vlogging is a rhetorical act because it demonstrated the influential role a YouTube advocate vlogger plays in how the world is interpreted since vlogging, although a primarily form of entertainment, can both reflect and shape what people believe and how they behave. The vlogger's rhetoric is not necessarily

ornamental speech, as the thoughts and actions of an audience can be influenced through any type of speech or written communication.

The study demonstrated that rhetorical approaches can be applied to the study of the influence of YouTube vloggers and their respective advocacies. It identified and theorized the rhetorical acts of an advocacy YouTube vlogger to accomplish collective deliberation that mirrored the three advocacy roles: 1) its influential role in addressing a misconception, 2) engaging the viewers to seize a moral high ground, and 3) moving an action.

The vlogger addressing a misconception as the first rhetorical act drew attention to the exigency by helping the audience better picture it in their minds. The rhetorical act of calling attention to the morality of the advocacy and its opposition attempts to persuade the audience to form stronger connections to the claims and to make an implicit appeal about how things should be or that the opposition's claims are not right and that it should or could be made right. The third and last rhetorical act of moving to action identifies a challenge and provides ways to address the challenge by calling attention to the act of accepting the vlogger's view of reality by committing to the advocacy.

The structure of the rhetorical acts extracted after looking into the repetition of points, rhetorical structural and textual clues found in the vlogging entries is the same structure used in any persuasive situation not just in an advocacy. Thus, the performance of persuasion is embodied in the three Ms – Misconception, Morality, and Move to accomplish collective deliberation in any persuasive situation in the digital age.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study assumes vlogging as a rhetorical act to contribute to the understanding of the nature of persuasive communication in the digital milieu. It is grounded within the Rhetorical Tradition of Communication Theory that theorizes communication as a practical art of discourse and problematizes it as a social exigency requiring collective deliberation and judgment (Craig, 1999).

Using netnography, a digital ethnographic research method, online data collection, observation and immersion were employed to analyze the social interactional dynamics of a vlogosphere.

With veganism having a limited place for discussion anywhere except in social media platforms, the study particularly examined the vegan advocate Ed Winters' YouTube channel. To analyze the rhetorical strategies employed by the YouTube vlogger to communicate veganism, the study anchored on the rhetorical tradition of communication to answer the following research questions:

1. What rhetorical strategies are used by a YouTube vlogger in communicating an advocacy?
2. How do these rhetorical strategies accomplish the goal of advocating veganism through YouTube?

As the study aimed to understand the YouTube vloggers' rhetorical strategies in communicating veganism, it examined the YouTube video blogs' through the old and new rhetorical lenses combined with netnographic analysis. From the rhetorical analysis of the YouTube video blog, three rhetorical acts emerged. The vlogger made use of: 1) misconception about the advocacy and/or its opposition; 2) morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition, and 3) move to action.

The rhetorical acts accomplish the goal of communicating an advocacy through YouTube by first addressing a misconception about the advocacy and/ or its opposition. The rhetor or the vlogger introduced and explained it as one of the common reasons people fail to move to action or commit to the advocacy. The rhetorical act of morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition allows the viewers to be informed of the moral issues and to question the status quo. Lastly, the rhetorical act of moving to action attempts to influence the viewers to commit to the advocacy presented by the vlogger that represents the collective deliberation and judgment.

The rhetorical strategies mostly present in the YouTube vlog were rhetorical questions and identification. The use of rhetorical questions with an ethical dimension to counter an argument was evident in Earthling Ed's video blog to allow the viewers reach the conclusions on their own, without being told how to answer or how to feel. The rhetorical questions also highlighted the dissonance in the viewers' perception of animals and stimulated critical thinking among the viewers. Identifying with the viewers recurred in the vlog. The evident use of identification in the various rhetorical devices were applied to connect, engage with, and direct the viewers to commit to veganism.

The rhetorical proof, pathos, was implied in the vlogger's every argument. By enumerating the ill effects of animal consumption to the environment, people's physical and mental health and to the animals themselves, the vloggers aimed to trigger an emotional response, specifically empathy, to the viewers which may lead them to consider veganism.

The vlogger's rhetoric serve as a powerful instrument for the advancement of any advocacy as they illustrate how an advocate constructs the discourse to understand and explain that the situation or issue is important enough to speak rhetorically about it through a YouTube vlog to accomplish collective deliberation in any persuasive situation in the digital age.

Conclusion

Persuasion used in virtual environments challenged established social media power and that digital rhetoric offered virtual versions of classic rhetorical appeals: virtual ethos, virtual pathos, and virtual logos. Each of these virtual appeals provided the YouTube vlogger the means to occupy positions made available through his YouTube channel.

The study's selected vlog presents itself within the advocacy vlog genre with a theoretical exploration of vlogging's rhetorical affordances made available to the rhetor by the other important elements of the expanded rhetorical situation presented in the methodology and discussion (rhetor, rhetoric, exigence, rhetorical acts, rhetorical strategies, medium, audience, and purpose). The different elements of this study's expanded rhetorical situation intersect one another in a dynamic and changing environment such as the vlogosphere.

Of critical importance in the expanded rhetorical situation is the role played by its contextual feature (physical, social, and cultural) in shaping the decisions a vlogger makes when creating a vlog for the viewers who construct meaning from it. For an advocate to communicate a cause, context shapes the purposes vlogging. Moreover, context affects the opportunities, requirements, and limitations that affect the choices vloggers make. For the viewers, context shapes their attempt to construct meaning as they watch a vlog. Physical context can enhance or diminish their ability to view the vlog. Social context affects the extent to which vloggers and viewers share common experiences and expectations about an advocacy. Cultural context affects the fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and aspirations that they bring to the understanding of a vlog.

The combined rhetorical and netnographic analysis undertaken in this study contributes to the theorizing of persuasion in the digital age specifically by analyzing the rhetorical strategies of vlog entries of an advocate communicating veganism. This study identifies the advocacy of veganism, not only as an emerging new genre in the YouTube community but more so as a social exigency requiring collective deliberation and judgment.

Theorizing the ways in which a social exigency influences the emergence of a new genre helped articulate the relationship between the technology of vlogging and a vlogger's rhetoric in advocating for a cause as a cultural and rhetorical construction. It helped illustrate how a vlogger presents his arguments in a more humanist orientation

towards persuasion. The vlogger, as a creator and an advocate, shares content for social change produced in a context of mutually interacting elements of the vlogosphere.

The study contributes new knowledge on the area of advocacy vlogging. This is because by examining the vlog entries, the study revealed an engaged and open virtual community such as the vlogosphere continues to integrate into the physical as manifested in vlogging and redefines ideas about interaction online that may catapult to change in behaviors and adapt to a new communicative space in restructuring a vlogger's own and the viewers' sense of place and process of sensemaking through a new genre of advocacy vlogging. Hence, advocacy vlogging has become a powerful agent in influencing or reinforcing existing beliefs of the viewers on certain levels. It permeates through and across many levels of society as it cuts across cultures and multi-temporally connects people cultivating a real sense of community in a virtual space.

To reiterate, vlogging serves as a persuasive agent with an opportunity to move the viewers from no or lack of knowledge to gaining attention about the exigency, or from gaining attention to understanding the core of exigency, or from understanding to intent of doing something about the exigency, and/or from the intent to actually doing something to address the exigency or creating a discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.

Distinctively, a vlogger identifies and persuades to shape people's perspectives about the world of veganism and provide firsthand accounts as could no other conventional speaker. The discourse about advocacy vlogging is present on many levels of society –

socially, economically, politically, culturally, and more importantly for the purposes of this study, rhetorically.

Communicating an advocacy is never complete without active sense making from the viewers who are actively involved in the co-production of meaning. A rhetorical study contributes in advancing a communicational view of an advocacy as it explores the use of rhetorical strategies and engages questions of meaning and value on exigencies which allow for the construction of points of argument, creation of discourse, and communication of the advocacy with a pragmatic intent of offering a perspective on the solutions of a particular social exigency.

The study's methodological contribution is employing netnography in gaining insights from the YouTube vlogging community through identification, selection, engagement, immersion, data collection, analysis, and iterative interpretation. The method is described as unobtrusive as it is of major significance to netnography to respect the vlog as itself without intervening with the vlogger or the viewers.

The vlogging entries analyzed rhetorically and netnographically were more than transcribed words, but instead revealed meaningful and rich engagements and interconnections among the members of the vlogosphere.

The rhetorical purpose of the vlog is also closely related to the tone of the discourse. While the apparent purpose is explicitly stated frequently throughout the vlog, the implicit purpose is often emphasized through the manner in which an advocacy vlogger described, justified, and employed visual, auditory, and discursive elements at his

disposal. These fundamental components are the building blocks of each vlogging entry and function to expand and shape viewer experiences.

The culture, language, influence, identification that emanated from the vlogging entries themselves represented components to this study that cannot be underestimated. The data encompass everything surrounding those words that can be used to understand the culture in which the community functions.

Do the techniques and functions of persuasion change as technology changes?

Traditionally, a persuasive performance cannot exist without an audience. The audience is in the same space as the performance. They act or perform together in a communicative situation. For example, in a public speaking engagement, there is an enforcement of a code of conduct as part of the traditional face to face performative performance. If for example viewers disrupt a persuasive performance by taking a phone call or reacting loudly, their attention will be called. The audience's reactions through an applause, laughter, and other nonverbal cues allow them to engage with the performance. It is apparent that the audience even guides a performance because when we speak in public, we also observe their nonverbal behavior to know if they understand by gauging their emotional state through their responses to adjust to the situation.

The speaker and audience both undergo a sense of identification and division at different times and in different ways. The goal of the speaker is usually to negotiate the strongest identification possible. Regardless of whether they have been persuaded by the message or purpose of the speech, the audience would have experienced changes

in thoughts, attitudes, and emotions in some areas and to some degrees. Among the rhetorical forms, speeches have great potential to affect powerful change.

In the digital age, persuasion is unique as it is also communicated through a unique performance. The idea is that the digital world performs itself differently in different areas to communicate different things and it does this by design. Digital spaces are meticulously designed and crafted to attract the right audience and capture their attention. For instance, different applications and platforms are used by people for different purposes. A message on Facebook, for instance, carries a much different set of meanings than a message on YouTube. Both are social networking sites, but both perform differently.

Technology has made the audience a prominent feature in the persuasive process. The audience plays an active role in the co-creation of meaning. Rhetors in the digital age make use of audience analysis to understand their audiences and adapt their message since the audience in the digital age is potentially massive and anonymous who are taking control of what interests them online.

The difference in performance goes beyond function and into what is being communicated to the audience. Digital content and spaces are performances as they are crafted through restored behavior and meant to be placed before an audience. Each space allows agents to engage in their own performances before audiences in unique ways. At the core of the matter, many performances, both formal and informal, can be seen to employ rhetorical or persuasive strategies. Likewise, many forms of rhetoric can be seen as performances. These kinds of persuasive performances can be analyzed

from a rhetorical perspective, or from a perspective of performance. The performances of both agents, vlogger and viewers, come together to negotiate identification, persuasion and the larger performance itself.

Recommendations

For further studies on persuasive communication, video blogging, and advocates championing a cause such as veganism, below are theoretical, methodological, and practical recommendations that can be explored by communication researchers.

Theoretical Recommendations

The main objective in pursuing this study is to offer new knowledge about vlogging as a persuasive communication that addresses critical issues raised by advocates that can be applied in different contexts in this digital age. A relevant theoretical approach with its roots firmly grounded within the Rhetorical Tradition of Communication Theory will help in making an important contribution in the field of digital rhetoric. Such a study can serve as an avenue to a variety of research opportunities since there is new knowledge that can be obtained in focusing on persuasion in the digital age as a theoretical pursuit as shown in the study by focusing on vlogging and using other forms of persuasion in other social media platforms such as tweeting and instagramming.

Using the other tradition of communication theory, communicating an advocacy through YouTube vlogging can be examined specifically from an ethnographic perspective

under the Sociocultural Tradition can contribute in looking into how online communities build an advocacy through different forms of communication.

Using the Sociopsychological Tradition of Communication Theory, communicating an advocacy can be studied by observing personality traits and variables. By looking at the patterns of thinking on how people generally act, interact, and react to certain situations, this tradition may focus on how an advocate's communication behavior is predicted or how he or she decides on the type of message intended to use in advocating a cause.

Using the Phenomenological Tradition of Communication, participants such as YouTube vlogger Earthling Ed may become more salient in their involvement in their lived worlds, especially around their personal and social advocacy behaviors and the ways in which they communicate a cause.

Future studies using the Critical Tradition of Communication Theory may reveal oppressive social conditions that affect the marginalized advocates in communicating a cause.

Methodological Recommendations

The evolution of the landscape of cyberspace, social media, and mobile technology has created a space for netnography in exploring the study of persuasion in the digital age by understanding the online social interaction and experience from a human perspective. With netnography's epistemology of giving value to the human operating behind the technology, the focus is on the how she or he is "absorbed into a communication that

can then be relayed the way that sense is made in a specific context and the practices perpetrated and perpetuated in the digital world and beyond" (Kozinets, 2015).

For example, since recently there is more attention given to the use of visual images in social media, netnography using Instagram to study images posted by popular "influencers" may be used as linguistic data to reveal hidden meanings and cultural connections in social media communication. Similarly, the value of shared stories and narratives in Twitter, Tumblr, or Wattpad cannot be overstated in netnographic research.

Researchers focused on vlogging as a communicative act may also further contribute to the body of knowledge by pursuing the recommended research ideas below.

For example, if a potential research is grounded in the Sociocultural Tradition with a focus on analyzing YouTube vlogs, Kozinets' (2015) netnography may be used as a new method in conducting ethical and thorough ethnographic research by combining both archival and online observation and immersion in YouTube.

For future netnographic researchers, analyze a specific online community and specify the research questions to handle the rich but also overwhelming data online. Doing so would give you the opportunity to explore the community in greater detail in a specific amount of time. It is also recommended to invest in combined rhetorical and netnographic analyses of discourses and interpretation of digital data as it shows potential in exploring other elements of the vlogosphere and online communities in general.

For future quantitative research from a sociopsychological perspective, YouTube viewers' perception of advocates' vlogging and vice versa may be examined through experimental research to understand the factors that affect how they communicate with each other. To assess how vloggers decide on the type of message they intend to use, a survey research may be employed. An empirical research on persuasive communication may be explored to identify and analyze perceived vlogger credibility, vlogger likeability, message variables, and persuasive effects.

A qualitative method that can be considered for future research is an interpretive phenomenological analysis to uncover the lived experiences of vlogging advocates as they relate to their personal, professional, and advocacy pursuits.

For studies using the Critical Tradition of Communication Theory, critical discourse analysis (CDA) may be an option in inquiring about the marginalized vlogger advocates. Through CDA, discursive codes, constraints, and ideologies that dictate the way they communicate with others will be revealed. A critical approach in examining social conditions grounded in Marxist and feminist perspectives can also be considered in future studies.

Practical Recommendations

On a practical level, the study recommends a need for further research on the idea of advocacy vlogging such as veganism. Specifically, research on vlogging the effects of veganism, including a focus on activism for the rights of all living things, a life of

compassion towards all beings, and the idea of mindfulness and spirituality is recommended.

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