Advertising Language:

Secrets of Persuasion

Edited by
Su-Hie Ting

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Table of Contents

Preface

Advertising Language: Secrets of Persuasion reveals the mileage gained through the strategic use of language in advertising to convince customers to purchase products and services. Emotions can sell, but not facts! Find out what research has unravelled.

This book starts with an analysis of slogans in Chapter 1. Wun-Chiew Pung and Nurin Nisa' Aminuddin uncovered the clever use of the emotional appeal to create anticipation of enjoying fast food, and the logos appeal to highlight speed and quality. From their five-level linguistic analysis of the slogans, they found a formula for writing slogans to engage customers and accentuate the advantages and uniqueness of the fast food products.

In Chapter 2, Fatin Izzati Mohd Izam and Kee-Man Chuah turn their attention to femvertising on Instagram. They found that women empowerment messages in the caption and the brand's stance need to be coupled with the right use of emotive words to sell the product or services. Read on to find out the double standards of combining activism and consumerism, including how some brands hide behind the "go green" façade to boost sales.

Chapter 3 presents Siti Marina Kamil and Alvenna Theay Ritchi's work on code-mixing in a Malaysian social influencer's YouTube videos, Bella Khann from Kuala Lumpur. Let the authors walk you through her videos to find out how she achieves psychological closeness with her viewers through her frequent outer code-mixing between Malay and English, and versatile inner code-mixing – often relying on single words in up to seven Malay varieties!

In Chapter 4, Su-Hie Ting and Siti Sarah Hosen delved into how code-switching is used in online advertisements for identity construction. By comparing advertisements in English and Malay, they show that the need for code-switching is greater in English advertisements to tap into certain identities to increase product appeal, often achieved using single words. Find out how inter-sentential code-switching juxtaposes formality and informality.

Chapter 5 focuses on a less-known type of advertisement. Nadia Husna Yusuf Anthony and Rosnah Hj. Mustafa revealed that public service announcements on mental health rely on the pathos or emotional appeal to create a strong connection with the audience. However, there is a place for logos or the rational appeal in poster-type advertisements and the ethos appeal in video advertisements!

Professor Dr Su-Hie Ting (Editor)

Foreword

Rhetorics as a Means to Persuade in Public Service Announcements on Mental Health

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Introduction

Advertisements target the beliefs and expectations of customers for persuasive advantage using rhetorical logic. The word "advertisement" usually conjures images of product promotions. However, advertisements are not only used by professional business owners to sell a product but also to share ideas, highlight information and increase awareness. This type of advertisement is called Public Service Advertisements (PSAs). In PSAs, the intention is not commercial gains, but to educate the public on certain issues such as health, hygiene, and environmental issues, to name a few. PSAs publicise the service of government agencies and non-governmental organisations in areas such as

disability support services, emergency preparedness, and anti-smoking. The PSAs can take the form of digital advertisements and physical advertising. Digital advertising involves advertising through the usage of technology, for example, social media, television, or radio broadcast. Physical advertising involves traditional press advertising (e.g., newspapers, magazines, flyers), mobile billboard advertising, in-store advertising, coffee cup advertising, as well as outdoor or street advertising.

This chapter reveals how rhetoric is used in mental health awareness in selected PSAs in Malaysia. Mental health includes one's social, psychological, and emotional well-being, and good mental health is important because it affects how we think, feel, and act. Our study shows that Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) used mostly the pathos (emotional) appeal, but also frequently used the logos (rational) and ethos (credibility) appeals to persuade the public to look after their mental health.

Language of advertising

Advertisements usually use a combination of statements or persuasive messages and techniques, which may be achieved by using audio, text, or a combination of audio and video containing brief information, with images or a short video. In static (not video) advertisements, more space is allocated for visuals than text, particularly those disseminated through social media, with the tech development in the last 10 years (Irascu, n.d.). Although minimally used, words attract the attention of potential customers. Advertising words represent terms used in advertising and marketing copy, and they are used to attract and keep potential customers' attention and, more importantly, to highlight the benefits of a product or service and persuade customers to make a purchase (Indeed, 2022).

One of the key advertising techniques is rhetoric, also known as the art of persuasion. Rhetoric was first introduced by Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, as the art of discourse that aims to inform, persuade, and motivate the audience in various situations. In rhetoric, a speaker or text uses the power of speech or written language to persuade the audience to believe in an idea or concept. Aristotle deftly divides rhetoric into three categories, which are ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is the usage of ethics, while pathos

is the usage of emotion and lastly, logos is the usage of logic to persuade the audience.

Let us look at each of the three techniques closely. Ethos refers to the use of ethics or credibility to persuade the audience. This means it uses trustworthiness, intelligence, character, goodwill, or a combination of these traits in the person or persons used in the products or statements to manipulate the audience's thoughts and beliefs regarding the matter at hand. Take for example a character of a dermatologist in a skincare advertisement (Figure 1). The image of a dermatologist in a laboratory coat gives the impression that the product is safe and is scientifically tested, and most importantly, "approved" by a person who is qualified and specialises in treating the skin. This results in gaining audience trust in the product.

Figure 1. Ethos appeal using a dermatologist

(Source: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dermatologist-skin-care-routine_l_6052 5357c5b6264a8fb8f04b)

Pathos refers to the usage of emotion and psychological appeal to persuade the audience. This appeal manipulates the audience by presenting statements or projecting images that can move their feelings. Pathos invokes the audiences' emotions by using experiences that every person can relate to such as love, hate, and confidence. It can be the experiences relating to

everyday struggles like relationship issues, not fitting in a social circle or not being able to handle working stress.

Logos is the usage of logic to persuade the audience. Logos is a specific character that is associated with the argument's precision and reliability. In logos, the use of facts plays important rhetoric. What logos does is, it provides logic and appeal to reason. An example of this appeal is using facts with evidence to support it, such as the statistics of people who achieve better results in skin improvements after using a certain dermatologically approved product.

Mental health

Mental illness, also known as a mental health disorder, is a wide variety of mental health conditions that affect an individual's mood, thinking, and behaviour. In Malaysia, this issue of mental illness is still something that many people are trying to understand. In 2015, the National Health Morbidity Survey reported that 29% of Malaysians suffer from depression and anxiety disorder, and that mental illness may be the second biggest health issue affecting Malaysians after heart disease by 2020 ("Light at end of mental illness tunnel", 2019). The report also showed an increase in the percentage of people suffering from mental illness from 12% in 2011 to 29% in 2015. Sadly, the statistics also show that teenagers make up for many of those suffering from depression. It is also most alarming to note that according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) the rate of death caused by suicide accounts for about a million annually with five countries having the highest rates Guyana, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Swaziland, and Russia, ranging from 32.5 to 25.3 per 100,000 population and Malaysia stands at the rate of 0.6 per 100,00 population. (Dudley, 2018.)

Mental health issues are gradually being talked about more openly in Malaysia, perhaps thanks to social media. As technology advances and social media becomes more important to everyone, people are slowly beginning to be more open about themselves, albeit with much difficulty. However, we believe that there remains this lingering stigma over this issue. Perhaps it is due to the Asian culture that we tend to be more reserved compared to our western counterparts. It may not be an overstatement to claim that

we all find it hard to accept the issue of mental illness and how this issue is becoming a threat to society.

As mental health is taken more seriously, it is worth noting that the number of campaigns and awareness programmes has also increased. Such programmes aim to raise society's awareness, encourage people to be more open and help those going through mental illness. The question is how the awareness messages are worded to persuade the public to be alert to mental health issues.

The Study

In this study, we analysed 56 PSAs promoting mental illness awareness on Instagram and YouTube channels from various NGOs, namely, the Malaysian Mental Health Association (https://www.instagram.com/mmha_1968/), Befrienderskch (https://befrienderskch.org.my/), Miasa Malaysia (https://www.miasa.org.my/) Mental Health Foundation (https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthmalaysia/) and MindaKami (https://www.instagram.com/mindakami/?hl=en).

There were not many PSAs on mental health awareness, as we found only 56 from the year 2015 until 2019. Out of the 56 PSAs we collected, 42 were poster-type and 14 were video-type PSAs.

One observation worth mentioning is from 2015 until 2016 the main topic highlighted in the PSAs is awareness of a specific type of mental illness, namely, depression. Then from 2016 onwards, the topics include other types of mental illness such as social anxiety, schizophrenia, posttraumatic stress disorder, etc. Information shared on these PSAs became more specific on the kind of mental illness that exists, indicating a better understanding of mental health.

To search for these PSAs, we used the keywords "mental health" and "mental health advertisement". Once collected, the PSAs were analysed using Aristotle's ethos, pathos, and logos appeal. We discovered in our initial observations that poster-type PSAs tend to use one type of appeal in one poster, while video types lean towards a combination of various types of appeals. In addition, video-type PSAs are more story-based than poster-type PSAs.

However, poster-type PSAs tend to be more straightforward in their message. This is because telling a story can convey the message that mental health is important and that those who are afflicted with it need to find help rather than deal with on it their own.

Logos, pathos, and ethos in poster-type PSAs on mental health

Our analysis of the 42 poster-type PSAs showed the use of three rhetoric techniques in the PSAs. Table 1 shows that the most frequently used rhetoric technique is pathos (18 occurrences or 42.9%), followed by logos (14 occurrences or 23.8%) and ethos was the least used (10 occurrences or 33.3%).

Table 1. Frequency of pathos, logos, and ethos in poster-type PSAs on mental health

Appeal	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total	Percentage
Pathos	0	2	2	10	4	18	42.9
Ethos	0	1	2	2	5	10	23.8
Logos	0	2	2	6	4	14	33.3
Total	0	5	6	18	13	42	100

There were no poster-type PSAs from any of the four chosen NGO social media accounts in 2015. Our search indicated that the earliest uploaded PSAs in all four organisations only began in September 2016. This may suggest that the four NGOs only began to use Instagram as a platform to spread mental health awareness towards the end of 2016. This could be partly due to the increasing popularity of social media.

Logos, pathos, and ethos in video-type PSAs on mental health

In addition to the poster-type PSAs, we also found 16 video PSAs on mental health awareness. As shown in Table 2, again the pathos appeal was the most

frequently employed (9 occurrences or 56.3%). This is followed by ethos (four occurrences or 25%) and logos (3 occurrences or 18.7%).

Table 2. Frequency of pathos, logos, and ethos in video-type PSAs on mental health

Appeal	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total	Percent-age
Pathos	3	2	1	2	1	9	56.3
Ethos	0	0	1	1	2	4	25.0
Logos	2	1	0	0	0	3	18.7
Total	5	3	2	3	3	16	100

Revealing the language of mental health PSAs

For this section, details in both poster-type and video PSAs are combined and excerpts are included to reveal the language of the pathos, logos and ethos rhetoric.

Pathos in the Selected PSAs
Pathos, a word which originates from the Greek language meaning "suffering" or "experience" is a technique that connects the audience with emotions such as empathy, grief, anguish, happiness, sympathy, and rage. Carefully chosen words arouse different kinds of emotions in the audience or readers. This can be clearly seen in the highlighted sentences in Examples (1) to (5).

(1) People tend to assume that I can't snap out of it when I feel depressed
(2) "Don't be afraid to reach out."
(3) You don't have to fight this alone.
(4) Let's talk about anxiety
(5) Be their voice You okay tak? "All it takes is a simple question to bring about change in someone's life

In Example (1), the personal pronoun "I" and the word "depressed" portray the situation of a person who experiences depression, thus evoking

a feeling of sympathy and empathy toward the person going through the hardship of depression. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines depression as the state of sadness and depressive mood that affects the individual's ability to function in school, at work, and at home. They further warned that "when recurrent and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition" *(Strengthening Mental Health Promotion - World Health Organization Beaver County, Pennsylvania, n.d.)*

In Aristotle's rhetoric, one of the key characteristics of pathos is revealing the individual's own emotions to persuade the target audience. For example, Example 2 shows how a plea is made in the sentence "Don't be afraid to reach out". This provides the image of a person struggling with mental illness being given assurance to avoid fear and look for help. This is further enhanced by Example 3 which reads "You don't have to fight this alone" (Figure 2). These messages create a strong empathy for those struggling with depression and emotional turmoil. The assurance that there are those who can and are willing to render help is a skilful use of the pathos technique.

Figure 2. Mental Illness Awareness & Support Association (MIASA)

(Source: https://www.miasa.org.my/)
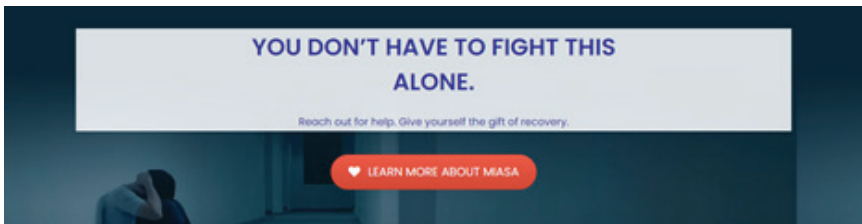
Examples (6) to (8) show a different kind of pathos appeal in video-type PSAs which combines pleas and promises. Example (6) says, "Depression isn't always obvious. Be kind. Everybody is fighting their own battles". This is a plea to readers to have compassion and kindness towards those struggling with mental health. In Example (7), a promise is made in the sentence "You are not alone" and stresses that help is available. The strong idea of togetherness in fighting for better mental health is presented in Example (8) where the use of the pronoun we in "We are in this together" shares a strong message of working together to enhance the importance of having the support to fight mental health issues. In addition, there is a plea to

those suffering from mental health issues to hang on and keep fighting, "Don't you dare give up on this life. Not tonight. Not tomorrow. Not ever." This plea is made to prevent thoughts of suicide, and giving them a reason to live ("You are alive here for a reason").

(6) Depression isn't always obvious. Be kind. Everybody is fighting their own battles.

(7) You're not alone, Help is near.

(8) You are alive here for a reason. It's time to stop suffering in silence. Don't you dare give up on this life. Not tonight. Not tomorrow. Not ever. We are in this together. If I am going to keep fighting…you can too.

These PSAs frequently use emotion to stir the audience's emotion, thus increasing the public's understanding of the importance of mental health awareness. Weiss (2015) stressed the most important aspect of persuasion is emotion because when we are emotionally moved, we tend to connect better. This means that emotions are an important aspect that makes the audience weigh the importance of mental health awareness.

Logos in the selected PSAs

The analysis of logos rhetoric in the mental health awareness PSAs reveal different ways of presenting logical facts, arguments, claims, data, and evidence. It also uses factual language by mentioning behaviours and actions to reason with the audience. Examples (9) to (15) show how factual language and statistics are used to show the severity and prevalence of different forms of mental health issues in the community.

(9) Around 8-12% of Malaysians were affected by depression. According to the DSM-5, there 8 illnesses under this umbrella, including major depressive disorder, persistent depressive disorder, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, and disruptive mood dysregulation disorder.

A common way of presenting facts is using proportion. Example (9) presents the number of people suffering from depression in the county and the kind of illness associated with depression. Eight to 12 persons in every 100 of a country's population is an alarming figure, and this is something that

we need to take seriously and calls for everyone's attention. The focus here is on the proportion of people affected by depression, similar to Example (10) that talks about the percentage of children and adolescents suffering from diagnosable mental health problems. Instead of computing it out of 100 which is hard for the public to imagine, Example (11) computes the incidence of depression out of 10, which is easier for the public to visualise. Example (12) simplifies it even further by computing the incidence of traumatic events out of three. Example (13) shows the awareness of the copywriter of the PSA because it addresses the issue of the public being not able to comprehend statistics of incidence, to create awareness to look beyond the simplistic reply of "I'm fine" to a question of "how are you?".

(10) 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem, yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.

(11) Less than 2 in 10 would be willing to let someone with depression provide childcare for the family.

(12) One in three of us will experience a traumatic event at some point in our lives. This can severely impact upon our mental health.

(13) Did you know that on average we say, "I'm fine" 14 times but mean it just a fifth of the time?

Besides percentage, facts are also presented as absolute numbers. Example (14) shows the alarming statistics, giving the exact number of people who commit suicide because of mental depression ("Nearly 30,000 people commit suicide each year"). Although the example is taken from a statistic in the United States, it provides an example of what could happen to other countries, including Malaysia.

(14) Nearly 30,000 people commit suicide each year. 1 in 5 Americans suffers from mental illnesses.

The analysis of logos rhetoric in the PSAs reveal another way of presenting statistics, which is in terms of time. In Example (15), a WHO statistic presents a shocking figure of suicide cases in terms of the number

of people committing suicide in a matter of less than one minute. This is impactful than statements like "Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15 to 29 years old" which may be lost on the public.

(15)   Every 40 seconds, someone dies by suicide. WHO

The analysis of logos in the PSAs reveals different ways of presenting statistics on the prevalence of mental health issues, that is, as proportions, absolute numbers, and in terms of time. Using statistics may lend a scientific credibility to the mental health awareness messages, but it loses out on the warmth and connection conveyed by using anecdotal accounts of people with mental illness (and this will be explained next).

Ethos in the Selected PSAs

Aristotle's ethos originates from the Greek word meaning the fundamental values or character of an individual or organisation. It uses the image of a charismatic, reliable voice, and trustworthy image rather than emotional situations to garner audience trust. In the context of mental health PSAs, the image is not a charismatic figure but that of a fellow sufferer of mental health problems. Names are used to show that the persons are real, as shown in Examples (16) to (20).

(16)   **Dayana**, battling social phobia.

(17)   It takes time to realize, it takes guts to recover. **Dr Hazli Zakaria, Senior Lecturer and Clinical Psychiatrist at UKMMC,** Cheras, Malaysia

(18)   Raising awareness means bringing to light the normality of mental health issues and finding ways to resolve them collectively. … Raising awareness means bringing to light the normality of mental health issues, and finding ways to resolve them collectively. **Priscilla**

(19)   Hi, my name is **Markiplier**. I run a YouTube channel, but today I'm here to talk to you about the awkward moment in trying to talk to your friends. Mental health is an interesting subject because everybody knows about it, but nobody knows how to talk about it.

(20) "When everything seems to be going against you, remember that aeroplane takes off against the wind, not with it" **Henry Ford**. Befrienders

However, there are authority figures use for the ethos rhetoric, such as Example (17) where the name of a Senior Lecturer and a Clinical Psychiatrist, which conjures the image of someone who has a vast experience in the field, thus garnering the audience's trust. Example (19) mentions the name of a famous YouTuber. Markiplier first introduces himself and shares his thoughts on the difficulty of talking about mental illness issues. Example (20) is a person speaking on behalf of Befrienders, Kuching. Befrienders is a Suicide Helpline set up to offer emotional support to people who are lonely, in distress, in despair or having suicidal thoughts. Figure 3 shows the paper aeroplane, which is the logo of Befrienders Kuching, and is mentioned by Henry Ford who reminds the audience that the "aeroplane takes off against the wind, not with it". Henry Ford shares his analogy of what a plane does when it takes off. Going against the wind here is a clever use of language to show that achieving something deemed difficult is not impossible.

Figure 3. Befrienders Kuching suicide helpline

(Source: https://befrienderskch.org.my/)
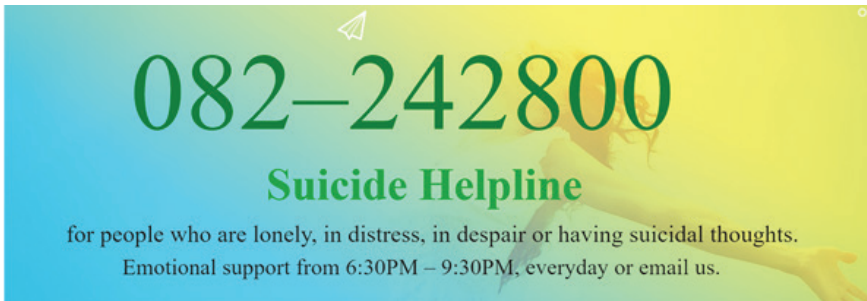
Ethos is a technique that appeals to the audience by unlocking readers' and audience's trust. It may employ the use of a credible voice, and sufferers with first-hand experiences to gain the audiences' trust that these PSAs are trustworthy. The main technique in the ethos rhetoric is to use names of sufferer, to acknowledge the ownership of the suffering.

Conclusion

The analysis of PSAs on mental health shows that there is an increase in knowledge of mental health from the year 2015 until 2019. This can be seen through the visible changes in the content used in mental health awareness advertisements. The main topics about mental illness expanded from just depression to other types of illness such as dissociative identity disorder, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, the gradual acceptance of mental illness also can be seen through the changes in the data throughout the five years of data, where the advertisement gives more and more content regarding listening to the cries for help from people afflicted with mental illness. This means that awareness of mental health has been acknowledged by a majority of the public and now they are trying to encourage people to help listen to people with mental illness. However, although there is awareness about mental health is rising, there is still a stigma surrounding the topic. Del Casale et al. (2013) studied the efficacy of an educational project conducted among teenagers attending high schools that aims to increase mental health knowledge and challenge the stigma that is linked to mental stigma. Del Casale et al. (2013) concluded that PSA is a good way to provide brief educational information about mental health and to lessen the stigma.

All three types of appeals are used in poster-type and video-type mental health awareness PSAs. We observed that pathos is the most used appeal in mental health advertisements to increase public awareness and to gain attention, empathy and understanding. This clever manipulation of psychological appeal is used to create a strong connection with the audience in terms of the audience's emotions. To summarise, pathos uses emotion in the form of emotive words, such as adjectives, making pleas, confessions, and promises. PSAs that use the pathos appeal establish a bridge to connect readers, thus increasing our level of empathy and sympathy towards mental health sufferers. Next is the clever use of logos which we found to be the second most used appeal in poster-type PSAs while in video-type PSAs we could see the recurring use of ethos. Connors (1979) stated that ethos is the intelligence, character, and goodwill of the individual user as a base for this type of appeal. Ethos makes use of credibility to persuade while logos, stresses logic and appeals to reason (Aho, 1985).

The second most used modes of persuasion in poster-type advertisements and video-types advertisements differed. In poster-type advertisements, the second most used appeal is logos; for video-type, it is ethos. In the persuasion mode, ethos uses credibility to persuade the audience, while logos use facts to convince. In video form advertisement, the usage of ethos has more impact than logos. One of the aspects of ethos used in this study is the use of previous experiences of persons with mental illness, and the message of past experiences is much better communicated in the form of a video rather than merely posters. The credibility of the message that is being shown is much more trustworthy than just reading the message on a poster.

In Aristotle's Rhetoric, a spoken or written text that is meant to influence or persuade must use either one or a combination of the three approaches– the idea or presenter must present itself with charisma, and he or she must find out what moves the reader or audience, or he or she must provide testimony as evidence. In summary, the PSAs we analysed showed a consistent and effective use of rhetoric appeals to reach out to readers and viewers alike. Their frequency of use may vary, but since all three rhetorical appeals have their own merits, each was either individually used or combined to achieve the intended message, that is to increase audiences' awareness, to share a message to educate, to show empathy to those who suffer no matter what their degree of suffering. From the examples presented and discussed in this chapter, we could see how pathos, the technique which uses emotional appeals, logos that present us with logic and facts, and ethos that links the messages with the credibility of the person sharing the message were skillfully exploited in the mental health awareness PSAs.

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Slogans of top fast food brands: Advertising appeal and language
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Magnifying femvertising on Instagram: How brands sell empowerment through emotive words
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Code-mixing in a Malaysian social influencer's YouTube videos
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Identity construction through the use of code switching in online advertisements

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Rhetorics as a means to persuade in public service announcements on mental health

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Advertising Language:
Secrets of Persuasion

This book exposes the secrets of persuasion embedded in advertising language used in various social media platforms. While you and I may be aware of the magnetism of vibrant imagery, we may not realise the surreptitious pull of wordplay. This book explains how slogans and emotive words are used to convince consumers that "This product is worth it!". The book also reveals the power of weaving in and out of languages. Read and find out how code-switching is used by social influencers to carve out their desired profile and advertisers to construct identities that appeal to a range of consumers. "Advertising language: Secrets of persuasion" is not only about increasing sales. The book also goes into how rhetorics are used in public service announcements on mental health to spur actions towards social well-being.

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One tree planted for every book published