The Assessment of persuasive language in WhatsApp status for customer acquisition

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of mobile-mediated communication has transformed WhatsApp into a significant platform for personal, commercial, and social persuasion. This led the researcher to examine persuasive language used in WhatsApp status updates for customer acquisition. The study uses the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which explains how people process persuasive messages through central and peripheral routes. Mixed-Methods Research was employed to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, leveraging both strengths. Stratified sampling was used to select 167 specific respondents who are marketers, business owners, and customers using WhatsApp status to interact. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to address both quantitative and qualitative data. The findings show the presence of six dominant persuasive language techniques used in WhatsApp status: the highest score was pictures (33%), second was words (26%), third was colours (21%), fourth was signs (14%), fifth was style (4%), and the last was statistics (2%). Additionally, the results show that persuasive language has four major functions: attracting attention, assurance, stimulation, and evoking emotional responses. This indicates that marketers and business owners carefully select, arrange, and tactically use different words, pictures, signals, colours, and styles to facilitate different roles. The study contributes to both verbal and visual persuasive techniques to enhance customer engagement. The study enriches the practical world by utilizing social media advertising fully. Conclusively, WhatsApp's persuasive language directly influences customer acquisition. The study recommends more investment in persuasive language techniques to acquire potential customers. Future research should focus on how persuasive language is used in other digital platforms.

Keywords: Persuasive Language, Digital Communication, Online, Social Media Discourse, WhatsApp Language

I. INTRODUCTION

The way people connect has evolved dramatically, particularly with the rise of digital platforms and social media, leading to new patterns in language use and communication. According to Ali (2021), online advertainment proves more effective and efficient than traditional marketing in terms of engagement and time utilization. Applications like WhatsApp are widely used across the globe for diverse purposes (Salem M. Alqahtani et al., 2018; Losi & Rosida, 2022). The app is recognized for its reliability and secure delivery of messages, supporting text, voice, and video calls, image sharing, and video conferencing. Its appeal lies in features such as end-to-end encryption for privacy, editing and deleting messages, copy-paste functionality, group chats with over 350 members, and business tools for ad creation—offering users flexibility, convenience, and security.

Digital advertising allows companies to tailor content based on user demographics such as age, gender, income, location, interests, browsing behavior, and device usage (Chaffey, 2020). Research shows that 82% of WhatsApp users express personal feelings or reactions through their status updates (Assaggaf, 2019). With real-time and multimedia capabilities, WhatsApp Status enables businesses to capture attention, build connections, and influence audiences by delivering engaging advertainment that viewers can see, experience, and emotionally respond to (Luo, 2020, 2021). As a result, using WhatsApp Status has emerged as a cost-effective and innovative method for promoting products, attracting customers, and boosting sales in competitive markets.

In today's fast-paced, information-driven world, persuasion plays a central role in guiding human decisions and actions. Its study has evolved through three historical phases: the "Greek era," which focused on rhetorical techniques to strengthen speeches; the 16th to 19th centuries, which shifted attention to the audience's role; and the modern phase, which views both speaker and listener as essential to the persuasive process (Arakelyan & Muradyan, 2016). This evolution highlights how persuasion depends not only on what is said but also on how it is received. Aristotle identified three core elements: ethos (the speaker's credibility), pathos (emotional appeal to the audience), and logos (logical argumentation), all of which remain foundational in persuasive communication (Arakelyan & Muradyan, 2016).

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1.1 Statement of the Problem

Modern consumers face increasing complexity when choosing products or services, and many marketers struggle to determine the most effective ways to attract them (Siraj, Rauf, & Sultan, 2021). Online businesses now compete aggressively across multiple platforms, using various social media channels to reach potential clients (Losi & Rosida, 2022). One emerging tool is the business use of WhatsApp Status, where advertisements and information are shared effectively (Moreno et al., 2017). The app's user-friendly design draws people in, while persuasive language helps hold their attention. While Losi and Rosida (2022) explored ten persuasive strategies on Instagram, they also emphasized the need to study similar techniques on other platforms like WhatsApp. Given that WhatsApp serves as a short-form, time-sensitive medium, analyzing the persuasive language used in its Status feature becomes crucial. This study aims to explore those techniques, with two main objectives: first, to identify the persuasive language strategies used in WhatsApp Status for customer acquisition and second, to assess their impact on attracting customers.

1.2 Research Objective

This study aimed to examine persuasive language techniques for customer acquisition used in WhatsApp Status in Dar es Salaam.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Terms

A Definition of language remains evasive on account of the complexity and vastness of its application. Language, according to Tseng (2018), is a systematic arrangement of symbols, signs, words, and gestures, which is conventional for the purpose of communicating thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and concepts from one person to another, and it becomes inclusive of both spoken and non-verbal communication among human beings. According to Oviogun & Veerdee (2020), a language is also perceived as a communally recognized shared resource of a speech community, whose principal function is to facilitate the transmission of abstract thought to concrete behavioral forms through communication across people.

Advertising: An advertisement is a paid form of Earned or Owned Media communication from an identifiable brand which seeks to persuade consumer attitudes or behaviors (Kerr & Richards, 2021).

The forms taken by advertisements vary depending on their purpose, such as marketing, public relations, sponsorships, and advocacy. The advertisements are often considered to persuade their target audience to take an immediate desired action: purchasing a product, by evoking desired emotions as it appeals to the prospect of acquiring status, money, love, self-esteem, and better health for oneself [4]. This relies on their being able to persuade at least a large portion of their audience into a decision and hence on language. 'It is the skilful use of words to produce an advertisement-compelling, appealing, informative and ultimately persuasive' (Ojwang 2022).

The use of language for persuasiveness generally implies the use of wording to get individuals into willing action. (Arakelyan & Muradyan, 2016) Persuasive language: In general, persuasive wording means using a symbolic approach to encourage a person to make their own decision about any intended action that may benefit business interests, and this will have its most persuasive influence on Generation Y since the present generation is very highly involved in social media. Since early January 2023, global social media users hit 4.76 billion, which has an increasing trend that influences many areas, including consumers, thus having the ability to influence purchasing decisions and create purchase intention(s) of diverse behaviors (Luo et al., 2021).

Much research has demonstrated the relationship between business promotions and WhatsApp as the ideal avenue for communication of any business advertisement (Moreno et al., 2017). Therefore, businesses may ignore, at their risk, the importance of Persuasive Language in social media, particularly in WhatsApp Status (Hidayah et al., 2023).

One factor of this persuasive approach is ensuring that one does not communicate hesitatingly. Hesitations include words like 'maybe,' 'perhaps,' disclaimers, qualifiers, or tag question can all weaken persuasion (Arakelyan & Muradyan, 2016). Customer Acquisition (also called lead acquisition) is the process that attracts, convinces, and converts potential clients into paying customers. This includes a variety of tactics to get more people to buy your goods or services (Ramroop, 2026). Customer acquisition continues to support ongoing revenue and consistent sales. These strategies ensure that your business sustains its existence, grows, and remains relevant and competitive (Coursera Staff, 2025).

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

For this study, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion, which was developed by Petty & Cacioppo in 1986, shall be discussed. The ELM suggests that persuasive communication can influence opinions through two processing routes. These can be central processing (also referred to as the central route) and peripheral

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processing (also called the peripheral route). ELM suggests that these are two pathways through which we are persuaded.

The central route occurs when individuals are motivated and able to process a message; the peripheral route involves processing via peripheral cues. In the most general sense, the model asserts that audiences are more effective at persuasive outcomes either when the strength of arguments in support of an appeal is enhanced (central route), or when the attractiveness, or perceived credibility, of the message sources is increased (peripheral route)(Petty & Briol, 2012) .

2.3 Empirical Review

Persuasive Language in Advertising Researchers has conducted extensive studies on persuasive language in commercial aspects and advertising, using several methods. For instance, Yuliah et al., (2021), identified Keraf's methods, such as rationalization, identification, hypnosis, conformity, compensation, projection, and displacement, used by an iPhone advertisement that had induced purchasing behavior (Keraf, 2000).

Kanan and Tyagi (2013) revealed that there are about 21 words used, for example: a neologism, long phrase and nominal group, short sentence, ambiguity words, the so-called weasel words, imperative words, euphonic use, avoidance of negatives, Use of colloquial and general language, repetition, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, repetition with semantic parallel, humour, association, and glorification in commercial text.

Businesses need to find a way to deliver their message about their product/service as well as attract consumers efficiently and at the most reasonable cost. By doing these customers can be acquired efficiently, and the right audience can also be reached (Chedal, 2024). Initial attention needs to be created to develop contact between customers (as well as their potential customers) and the company with the help of attraction so the company's products or services get noticed by target users (Chedal, 2024). The goal is to deliver informational messaging, providing solutions to specific consumer needs and values, and offering something worthwhile and meaningful with the optimal use of appropriate communication channels to create dialogue.

It allows us to contact directly without targets and convince and influence several areas in the customer journey. Advertising is made using a combination of creativity and art/science skills. The color choice for commercials is one effective tactic that works for businesses in influencing customers' feelings and supporting marketing intentions (Shukla, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024), as colors can bring forth a variety of rich and meaningful information for customers (Ojwang, 2022). However, consumers' responses towards colors depend on cultural meaning, personal preference, and response to particular hues (Harutyunyan, 2015; Shukla, 2024). Apart from that, colors are also used in ads to provide meaningful information by invoking emotions or conveying a message (Ojwang, 2022). Visuals are among the tools to capture consumer attention.

Studies have shown that consumers would have negative perspectives toward and even avoid ads with unattractive images, consequently reducing purchase intentions (Leung, 2019). Whereas good-looking visuals such as images of products, people in good shape, or smiling can capture consumers' attention, highlight brand awareness, and engage consumer emotions (Al-Juboori, 2021; Ojwang, 2022). Words still have key importance in conveying messages in a commercial context; for instance, Ojwang (2023) found that language used in billboard advertisements could achieve persuasive, reassuring, and attention-catching outcomes. Lamb (2014) has identified 21 commonly used rhetorical devices in a commercial context, including: alliteration, allusion, appeal, analogy, anecdotes, the use of colloquialism, commonplaces (or clichés), connotation, emotive language, expert opinion, hyperbole, the use of inclusive language, imagery, jargon, metaphor, pun, repetition, rhetorical questions, sarcasm and a simile. These devices, in combination, create the advertising messages effectively for the target audience to attract their attention and to gain their sales (Losi & Rosida, 2022).

2.4 Conceptual Review

Typically, companies with multi-channel efforts see better customer acquisition and engagement than those that do not have a multi-channel presence. While there are countless acquisition strategies, the key to customer acquisition understands that most customers will not engage using just one channel (Braze, 2025). Digital acquisition is a broad category that may include content marketing, search engine optimization, targeted ads across platforms, social media marketing, and social media management.

Technological advances, like artificial intelligence (AI) and customer relationship management (CRM) platforms, can even help identify highly qualified leads, automate acquisition processes, and boost sales. (Vtiger) Customer Acquisition is the one process that every business owner needs to care about; whether it is a small or medium business enterprise, it contributes to keeping a business surviving and growing (Amazon Ads, 2025).

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III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The suitable research methodology for mobile business analysis largely depends on the specific objectives of the research, the type of data required, and the context of the mobile business being analysed. As per this study, a mixed research methodology was used.This methodology combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, leveraging both strengths. It is beneficial for obtaining a well-rounded understanding of mobile business operations, from numerical trends to user sentiments. It allows comprehensive analysis that involves understanding both the measurable aspects of the mobile business (e.g., app performance) and the contextual or user experience aspects (e.g., user feedback). A mixed-methods approach is often ideal for comprehensive mobile business analysis as it combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2014, & Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

3.2 Research Design

As per the nature of this study, a descriptive design was adopted to support the establishment of a systematic description and interpretation of the relationship between the use of WhatsApp status and customer interaction and feedback, which helps the business grow. The descriptive design is appropriate when looking for the details (attitude, behavior, and perception) of a phenomenon that allows researchers to obtain data to explain the existing relations in a given environment (Kothari, 2004; Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this design is suitable for identifying patterns, frequencies, and relationships related to WhatsApp status usage and its influence on consumer involvement and feedback in business situations.

3.3 Study Area

This study was mainly conducted among WhatsApp users in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The study engaged business owners, customers, and marketers. These groups were identified based on the merits of digital businesses by creating, sending, and receiving information with persuasive language in WhatsApp status.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The sampling technique is suitable in this context as it lets the researcher pay attention to participants with specific information, guaranteeing the gathering of rich and relevant data (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Stratified sampling was used to select specific respondents who are marketers, business owners, and customers using WhatsApp status to interact.

3.5 Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire is appropriate for finding measurable data on customer engagement and feedback patterns to simplify analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In contrast, interviews were employed for in-depth understanding from business owners and customers on the roles played by WhatsApp status in business growth (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to address both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics were applied to the questionnaire data to summarize and present information on customer engagement and feedback patterns, using measures such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, which help in identifying trends and relationships in the data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For the qualitative data obtained from interviews, thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify, analyze, and report recurring themes and patterns related to the role of WhatsApp status in business growth and customer interaction (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The combination of these two methods allows for a comprehensive analysis, providing both numerical evidence of engagement and feedback trends as well as deeper insights into participants' perceptions and experiences.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Persuasive Language Techniques Used in WhatsApp Status

One of the purposes of this study was to identify persuasive techniques used in WhatsApp status to capture customer interest for business growth. According to the data collected, respondents reveal that business owners and marketers use persuasive language techniques such as attractive words, pictures, signs, colours, statistics, and different styles to attract customers. Table 1 shows the percentages of all persuasive language used in WhatsApp status for business interactions.

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Table 1

Persuasive Language Techniques Used in WhatsApp Status for Business Interactions

Persuasive Technique	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Colour	35	21.00%
Pictures	55	33.00%
Words	43	26.00%
Statistics	3	2.00%
Signs	24	14.00%
Styles	7	4.00%

Data Source: Researcher, 2026

According to the findings, images are the dominant strategy and are used in 33% of cases (see Table 1). This is because images are effective for quickly communicating information, attracting the viewer's attention, arousing interest in a product or service, supporting memory, and affecting retention over time. A respondent said, *"...images attract and provide assurance of the authenticity of the product...?* Visual images also elicit strong emotions; for example, a client's feeling to have the advertised products and services. Visual information has a strong potential impact on consumers and affects buying behavior. It has been noted that attractive visual aids draw viewers' attention by concentrating on the consequences people would receive, and this creates the perception of ownership of desired products and services (Al-Juboori, 2021; Ojwang', 2022).

Text, or written material, ranks second, accounting for 26% of cases. Marketers using text communicate ideas, feelings, facts, statistics, and the intent to affect consumers' decisions to buy a product/service. Text helps make the offer compelling for the customer by showing them what the benefit to buy are. Example of text used *"- restocked...19,000 epuka sold out"*- as it shows testimonials in text and enhances authenticity or originality of the promotion. The text may use catchy words and can make the product engaging to lure customers to buy (Luo, 2021).

Color is the third most used tactic, used in 21% of cases. Color captures the attention of users, especially female customers, and draws attention to specific features or products being promoted. One respondent said, *"colours always invite me to concentrate..."* Color affects the emotions of the receiver toward the advertising content, thereby influencing the customer's Purchase decision. Color receives moderate support as a persuasive tool, meaning it is very powerful to be used with other media. In marketing color is a tool that captures consumer attention to enhance the appeal of the promotion itself (Shukla, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024).

Signs (emojis, symbols, and special characters) are a strategy used in 14% of the persuasion techniques. It has been noted that signs enhance emphasis, transmit emotion, or add playful aspects. However, respondents found it to be a supportive strategy. These are tools that support persuasion but are unlikely to drive adoption on their own. Research supported this, as signs amplify emotional involvement and the persuasiveness of the message (Maiberger, Schindler, and Koschate Fischer, 2023).

Style is one of the least used strategies and accounted for 4%. It involves the language and style of the advertisement that make content more interesting, entertaining, dynamic, and Interactive. Style also raises awareness about the product and increases interest. Style also relates to the personal lifestyle or social identity of the product user, and it causes more emotional impact and increases conversion (Wijayanti, 2020).

Statistics is used as a strategy in 2% of cases, thus having the lowest utilization rate. Statistics may support claims by providing verifiable proof of a product or service's effectiveness. Yet, in this context, numerical data did not generally appear to be a high-impact persuader. Some consumers are reported to avoid statistical information on the basis of personal difficulty with numbers or math-related data. Though prior research has established the utility of the so-called "statistical proof" in other digital contexts, this method seems to be least relevant in WhatsApp status promotions (Rabab'ah et al., 2024).

4.2 The Role of Persuasive Language on Customer Attraction in WhatsApp Status

The data collected through the Likert scale was used to test respondents' perceptions and attitudes of the roles played by persuasive language techniques used by business owners and marketers on WhatsApp status as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Role of Persuasive Language in Customer Attraction in WhatsApp Status

ROLES	SCALE 1	SCALE 2	SCALE 3	SCALE 4	SCALE 5
Stimulate	1.2	7.19	37.72	23.35	30.54
Assure	2.4	4.79	24.55	32.34	35.93
Attract	2.99	5.39	27.54	37.13	26.95
Emotional Support	2.4	5.99	19.76	41.32	30.54

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There is high agreement, indicating that assurance as a persuasive feature plays an important role in persuasiveness via WhatsApp status updates. Marketers and business owners apparently make use of persuasive language such as the choice of words, images, color, and distinctive format to build a sense of credibility with customers. The participants agreed that there will be a greater feeling of trustworthiness, confidence, and belief when businesses use assurances. These findings agree that assurance is one of the primary persuasive devices in e-commerce because it lacks face-to-face contact with customers. This finding is consistent with some previous studies on linguistic features used in advertising, such as words or color for consumers' attitudes in an advertisement. Also, it affects consumer decision-making (Ojwang, 2022).

There is a neutral agreement about the persuasive language function to trigger responses in consumers. This suggests that persuasive language elements can stimulate emotions, thoughts, and actions relevant to an advertisement. Persuasive features enable individuals to psychologically invest and increase response to the advertisement. For food promotion, for example, visual appeals showing attractive meal features along with interactive video content encourage users to respond and desire the offered food items (Rantung and Katemba, 2024).

Attraction was also cited as a function of persuasive language in WhatsApp status ads by the participants. It works in a way that marketers use varied styles of language such as wording, emojis, images, and words, to grab one's attention and direct interest towards a product or service. Users feel more eager to look for more information when colors that appear vibrant and energetic are used. This evidence goes along with many other studies stating that the persuasive tools used are to attract consumers' attention (Kubro, 2019).

Also, participants believe persuasive features do have emotional triggers. It appeals to emotions where product advantages are expressed; then consumers make choices to fulfill those emotions and desires for having the product. The use of words such as exciting', 'amazing', and many more builds longing so much that users crave the item. In such cases, emotion functions as a base of an argument and makes consumers have a persuasive and satisfying experience of an advertisement.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The current study has explored ways in which persuasive language used in WhatsApp status updates affects how customers are enticed by and interact with various businesses. Given the increasing popularity of digital interaction between consumers and enterprises, and the rise of WhatsApp as a major communication platform for all forms of interpersonal and professional dealings, it has undoubtedly proven its potency as a channel of promotion. The findings provide support that persuasive language is utilized extensively in status updates in an attempt to influence a wider range of prospective customers.

Six persuasive features were identified to play significant roles in the attraction and engagement of potential customers: Attractive wording, the use of images, symbols, color, the appearance of facts, and a unique presentation strategy. Each was found to induce behavior in users, starting from piqued curiosity to a variety of emotional and attitudinal changes culminating in purchasing behavior. The research concludes that these elements do not act in isolation but rather complement each other to carry out various functions like triggering action, creating credibility and confidence in the business, capturing and holding the user's attention, and inducing diverse emotions.

The results have led to the conclusion that marketers meticulously create and organize their communication using various linguistic and visual persuasive strategies to achieve maximum impact on their audience. Brands leveraging multiple persuasive features are generally successful in gaining customers via status updates. Thus, it is recommended that businesses need to invest in a broader array of persuasive strategies when utilizing digital media for advertising in order to gain a customer base and interaction.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed. Business owners ought to focus their energy on investments in persuasive language strategies to elevate customer interaction, strengthen their brand, influence consumer decisions to purchase, and meet consumers' demands and preferences with accurate yet emotionally appealing and highly credible messages. Additionally, a training program needs to be set up to equip marketers and social media managers with adequate knowledge of persuasive language utilization in the digital sphere, and allow the companies to test the same strategy across different platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and X to see the effectiveness level of it throughout the channels to identify various influences and contributions of persuasive communication on business growth. Future studies could compare different kinds of persuasive features used on various platforms and different segments of customer groups or particular kinds of products.

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Declaration of Interest

The author declares that he does not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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