
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Violations of Grice's Maxims in Social Media Influencers' Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the violations of Grice's maxims (1975) in the discourse of Social Media Influencers' (SMIs) advertisements. Eight different advertisement videos from Snapchat of eight different SMIs are examined. A program named QDA Mine Lite is used to code the violations and to extract the frequencies of each violation in order to know the most violated maxim. As a result, the most violated maxim is the maxim of quantity, in which it is violated in three instances. The least violated maxims are the maxims of quality and manner in which they are only violated once.

KEYWORDS

Influencers, Social Media, Grice, Maxims, Violations

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1. Introduction

Social media is currently the trend in which one can showcase their lifestyle and have other people admire it. Moreover, it is not only a hobby to some people, but a 24/7 job in which they make so much money from it. Mostly, the ones who gain money and fame through social media are called Social Media Influencers (SMIs). According to Chae (2018), SMIs are "online celebrities who exhibit their personal lives to many followers via social media" (p.1). Furthermore, because of their fame, many companies try to sponsor them and have them advertise for their brands (Booth & Matic, 2011).

SMIs advertisements' studies are recently gaining more attention. This is because they are of so much influence nowadays that even other countries do invite them to their countries to advertise for so many things such as tourism. This shows the influence they have over their followers and these countries, and the sponsoring companies or brands invite those SMIs because they know that they are trusted by their followers even more than traditional celebrities (Jin et al., 2019). They are trusted to the point that even if they disclose that the advertisement that they are doing is sponsored, their followers would still perceive it positively and would still trust them (Stubb et al., 2019).

1.1. Significance of the study

Nowadays, the rise of research on this topic is justified because of the attention people are giving to SMIs. This research will help SMIs to understand better the best way to advertise, will help companies choose the best fit of an SMI according to the way they deliver the advertisement and will help the people know which SMI delivers their messages or advertisements the best. There are many previous researches on this topic, such as Chae's (2018) study, which explains the females' jealousy of SMIs and other studies that evaluate the impact of disclosing the sponsorship relationship (Stubb et al., 2019). However, up to the researcher's knowledge, there is no such research done on Saudi SMIs while relating it to Grice's maxims (1975). This research will shed light on the significance of the application of Grice's maxims (1975) on the discourse of SMIs' advertisements. The application of such a theory is important since it could help and influence the effective delivery of SMIs' messages. This is because, according to Grice (1975), the purpose of the maxims is to help in the "effective exchange of information" (p.51).

1.2 Objectives of the study

There are two main objectives for this research:

- To check if the application of Grice's maxims (1975) is the best fit for advertisement research
- To reach a conclusion of the most important maxim when advertising products

1.3 Questions of the study

- Are Grice's maxims (1975) applicable to SMI's advertisement contents?
- What is the most prominent maxim in advertisements?
- What is the most violated maxim in advertisements?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical framework:

Grice (1975) proposes the Cooperative Principle (CP) and defines it as the contribution which it must be "... as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (p.45). Moreover, he presents the four conversational maxims which fall under the cooperative principle. Such maxims must exist for a conversation to be appropriate. The four maxims are: the maxim of quantity, which is providing information as much as needed. Secondly, the maxim of quality where the information must be accurate and honest. Thirdly, the maxim of relation in which the information must be of relevance. Lastly, the maxim of manner where the information is direct and not ambiguous.

2.2 Previous studies:

Dhanesh and Duthler (2019) investigate the conciseness of funded advertisements by SMIs on the consumers' "cognitive persuasion knowledge, attitudinal persuasion knowledge and behavioral intentions, specifically eWOM intention and purchase intention" (p.1). An online inquiry is done in order to answer the research questions. The researchers conclude that, as a result, the conciseness of funded advertisements is connected to the awareness of the advertisement, which is also related to buying it and eWOM motives. Moreover, it is also related to the SMI's and followers' relationship and eWOM motives. Nevertheless, SMI's and follower's relationship is not affected by the awareness of the advertisement.

Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019) are studying the influence of digital influencers' eWOM on their followers' attitudes towards the advertised products. They are focusing on the effects on "brand engagement in self-concept, brand expected value and intention to purchase recommended brands" (p.371). The participants are 280 followers of digital influencers. The results demonstrate that the influence of these digital influencers boosts all "brand engagement in self-concept, brand expected value and intention to purchase recommended brands" (p.372), and they all affect each other.

Jin et al. (2019) examine the effects of Instagram celebrities versus traditional celebrities as dependable sources, brand biasness, enviousness and social presence. They are using a theoretical model, and the choice of participants is random. As for the findings, most of the participants feel that Instagram celebrities are more dependable, have a clear and good attitude toward brands, are privileged and have a more powerful social presence even more than traditional celebrities.

Ki and Kim (2019) test persuasion as a method of SMIs for consumers to buy from certain brands. Using influence as a framework to investigate this method occurs in four stages: 1. SMIs' pursuit of influence. 2. Consumers' reaction towards the attempted exercise of influence. 3. Consumers' motivation to yield to such influence. 4. Their agreeing observable consequences. "[S]tructural equation modeling" is used to assess the proposed design and theory as the methodology of this research. The researchers agree lastly through the findings that these stages affect consumers in a positive way.

Stubb et al. (2019) explore the effects of a certain process of sponsorship disclaimer in funded advertisements by SMIs. This process is called "sponsorship compensation justification disclosure" (p.110), which explains the partnership between the SMI and the sponsoring brand. An experimental design is used to compare the effects of this process, a simple disclosure of sponsorship and sponsorship with no disclosure at all on consumers' reaction to a YouTube influencer's video on a product review. This research provides evidence that the "sponsorship compensation justification disclosure" (p.14) process has more positive effects and is more trustworthy than the other two processes.

Audrezet et al. (2018) argue that SMIs need to approach their followers in a careful manner, especially when advertising for brands to protect their own credibility. A qualitative approach is applied based on SMI brand sponsorship examination, interviews of SMIs and the correlation of these two sources. Two credibility management approaches are found: enthusiastic and transparent credibility.

Motallebi and Kuhi (2015) examine the differences between social and commercial advertisements using Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, Leech's (1983) politeness principle and Searle's (1970) speech act theory. They have concluded that the cooperative

principle is observed differently in both types and that it is more dominant as a constraint than the politeness principle. Furthermore, speech acts are observed too in both types, but they are mostly never violated.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection:

To answer the previously provided research questions, the data is collected from the well-known application Snapchat using a screen recording option in iPhone x. This application authorizes its users to take pictures and videos. Therefore, SMIs use this application frequently to advertise for sponsored brands through pictures and videos. Eight video recorded advertisements are the focus of this research.

3.2 Participants:

The participants in this research are chosen to be 8 Saudi female SMIs. Moreover, they have at least more than one million followers on social media's platforms.

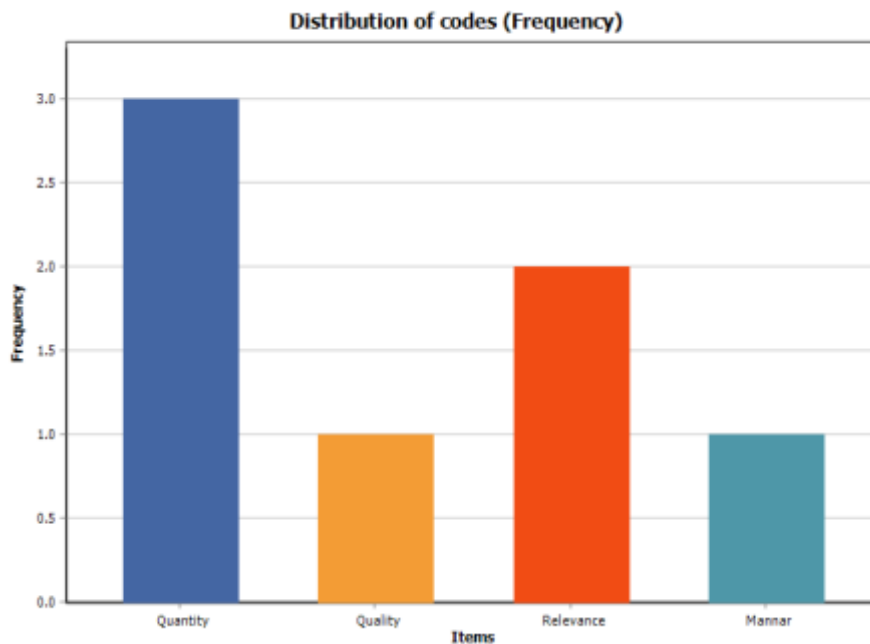
3.3 Data analysis:

The data are analyzed using a program named Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Miner Lite, which allows coding patterns to be easily done. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Grice's maxims theory (1975) is the framework of this research, and each maxim is examined against each advertisement. Accordingly, this program is used to code the violations of Grice's maxims (1975) and to get frequencies of how many times each maxim is violated.

4. Results and Discussion

Grice's four maxims (1975) are applied through the data of the 8 different SMIs. After application, all of the maxims are at least violated once in one of the cases or the advertisements. However, there are certain maxims which are violated more than the other maxims (See Figure 1).

Figure.1



The most violated maxim is the maxim of quantity, which is violated in 3 different advertisements. It is violated once for not providing enough information, as if the advertisement is cut off for technical problems. Moreover, it is violated twice because the SMIs are trying to add more information than is needed, such as in the following example:

Extract.2: V2.SMI2.Da. 30/09/2020 (Gender: F, Known as: Malak H., AD: Hair product)

ṭaba'an maā 'biī 'kdhīb 'alykuūm maā 'istakhdamtah ya'nīī maā kamalt ḥataā shaharr (.) w lil'manah mutaqaṭī' bishakil mutaqaṭī' l'nīī 'indīī jaām'ah wi 'indīī 'imbisi wi 'indīī swshilmīīdyāā w ḥalat 'umīī ḥalah

Of course, I don't want to lie to you; I did not use it. I mean, I did not complete even a month (.), and honestly, it was intermittent in an intermittent way because I have university, I have the MBC, and I have social media, and I'm a mess.

In the above example, the SMI tries to add more information than is needed when she gives details about her busy schedule: "I have university, and I have the MBC, and I have social media". This is a clear violation of the quantity maxim in which the information provided is something which is not needed to be included in the advertisement of the hair product that she is sponsored to advertise for. Furthermore, this example also violates the maxim of relevance since this information is not closely relevant to the content of the advertisement. Subsequently, the second most violated maxim is the maxim of relevance, which is violated only in two different advertisements.

The second example, which includes a violation of the relevance maxim, is the following one:

Extract.7: V7.SMI6.Da. 08.10.2020 (Gender: F, Known as Fif., AD: Shopping App.)

maā 'driī 'ish 'qulakum <ṣabah 'khaḥr 'wwa masaā' 'khaḥr> ya'niī mat'awadt 'quūl ṣabah 'khaḥr waddinyaā līsaā mlayilah ya'niī tawnīī 'sa'ah 'ithna'sh winuṣ 'laylī. .hhh 'umuūman khalniī 'qulkum <'an 'uruḥ 'iktuūbar=

I don't know what to say <good morning or good evening> I mean, I'm not used to saying good morning when it is still dark; I mean, I just woke up twelve and a half at night ↓. .hhh generally, let me tell you <about October's offers=

This example demonstrates a clear violation of irrelevant information since the SMI tries to give a long introductory, which is not relevant to the advertisement itself of the shopping app that she is advertising for. She talks about what is proper to say to the followers when she says, "I don't know what to say <good morning or good evening>" and it does not stop at that, but she also tries to explain why and this is considered to be longer than a usual greeting. Both of the maxims of quality and manner are only violated once.

The coming example illustrates a violation of the quality maxim because the SMI provides untruthful information about not advertising this hair product anymore. She explains that it is because she loves it too much and wants to keep it for herself; when she will do next is advertising for the same hair product and give full information about it:

Extract.2: V2.SMI2.Da. 30/09/2020 (Gender: F, Known as: Malak H., AD: Hair product)

(ziyuūt) wisam ma' 'zayt 'mithaālīī <'bashirkum maā raāḥ 'stakhdimha 'iniī muū::rr (.) fil'i'lanaāt> wala raḥ 'sti'in fihaā la'nu££ 'naā££££ ṣirt£ 'stakhdimah££.

(oils) wisam with the perfect oil <good news to you I won't use it anymo::re (.) in advertainments> and won't rely on it because££ ££££ started£ using it££.

The last violation is the violation of the manner maxim, which, as mentioned before, is violated only once in the following example, advertising for a SPA company. This maxim is violated because the talk or the information provided by the SMI is unclear or ambiguous because of the improper use of the language when she says, "fiī ḥyatīī 'masaj wid sbaā". This example shows that there is something missing, and a native of Arabic would think of it as unacceptable, although the SMI is a native Arabic speaker. Therefore, the violations of each of the four maxims appear to be affecting the production of the advertisements negatively. This example clearly demonstrates how negatively the delivery of the advertisement is affected by this violation:

Extract.3: V3.SMI3.Da. 08.10.2020 (Gender: F, Known as: Mona N., AD: SPA)

"fiī ḥyatīī 'masaj wid sbaā ḥaqīqīī jismīī marrah miḥtaj="

"In my life, the message wed spa honestly my body really needs="

5. Conclusion

As discussed previously, there are some violations of Grice's maxims (1975) in SMIs' advertisements. However, the number of violations suggests that even though the SMI might not be an expert in the field of marketing, they still unconsciously try to minimize the violations of Grice's maxims (1975). This answers the first research question since the maxims apply to the discourse of SMIs' advertisements and give more value to these maxims. The results provided above are in accordance with some of the previous literature. The number of violations suggests that the SMIs are careful when they advertise the products, especially the

maxims of quality and manner since they are only violated once. This result is in line with what Audrezet et al. (2018) have stated about the need for SMIs to be cautious when advertising in order not to lose credibility in front of their followers. Furthermore, this result answers the second research question about the most important maxim in advertisements. Moreover, the most violated maxim in the data is the maxim of quantity, which is said to be likely violated in advertisements (Motallebi & Kuhl, 2015). This finding answers the second research question on the most violated maxim. Nevertheless, the violations of the quantity maxim which Motallebi and Kuhl (2015) have discovered are not similar to what has been found in this research. This is because, in the social and commercial advertisements that they have investigated, the quantity maxim is mostly violated because of a lack of information. On the other hand, in this research, this maxim is mostly violated because more information is added than is needed. Lastly, this research has certain limitations which are recommended to be overcome in future research.

The limitations of this study are caused by the fact that this research can be considered as preliminary research. This is because, to the researcher's knowledge, not much has been done within the field of linguistics that investigates SMI advertisements. Therefore, this research cannot be generalized since only 8 advertisements are investigated, and further research needs to be conducted with a larger set of data. In addition, only female SMIs are the focus of this research, which demands further research with gender as a variable. Lastly, this research can contribute to both the fields of Linguistics and marketing and to the Saudi community of SMIs, their followers and sponsoring brands. This is because SMIs can use Grice's maxims (1975) when advertising in order not to lose the trust of their followers. Furthermore, the followers and the sponsoring brands can benefit from such research in knowing whom to choose to follow or use as an advertiser for their brands in social media according to the professionalism of the SMI when maintaining their content using Grice's maxims (1975).

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