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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **When Modesty Meets Self-Promotion: A Discourse Analysis of Humble-Bragging on Social Media**

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**| ABSTRACT**

Humble-bragging, or self-promotion hidden behind acts of modesty or discontent, has become a popular communication tactic in the age of social media, when users are always juggling likeability with self-enhancement. Despite the fact that earlier study has concentrated on the psychological effects of humble-bragging and the responses of audiences to it, linguistic studies that systematically examine the discursive mechanisms behind this behaviour are conspicuously lacking. This study aims to bridge this gap by analysing the rhetorical, pragmatic, and structural elements of humble-bragging on social media through discourse analysis. The data came from a purposeful sample of 500 public posts from a variety of sites, such as Instagram, Twitter (X), and LinkedIn, and represented a range of demographic backgrounds. Through an analysis of stance-taking, linguistic cues, and the relationship between self-praise and self-deprecation, the study situates humble-bragging within broader patterns of online self-presentation. The results show that humble-bragging often employs a hybrid discourse structure that intentionally employs conversational implicature to quietly express accomplishment and mixes evaluative language with mitigated self-reference. This discreet self-promotion allows speakers to navigate the tension between the cultural norms of humility and the performative demands of digital identity formation. The linguistic and interactional features of humble-bragging are highlighted in this study, which contributes to our understanding of online discourse practices and offers insights into the evolving norms of self-presentation in mediated spaces.

**| KEYWORDS**

humble-bragging, discourse analysis, self-presentation, social media, conversational implicature

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### **1. Introduction**

In today's digital age, self-presentation has become an essential component of everyday interaction. On social media platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter (now X), users are urged to curate information that portrays an idealised version of themselves (Lee et al., 2021; Liu & Suh, 2022). A distinct communication style called "humble-bragging" has emerged in this context as a hybrid form of self-promotion, in which achievements or positive attributes are subtly woven into declarations of modesty, self-deprecation, or discontent (Sezer et al., 2018; Metzger et al., 2020). From a language and discourse-analytic standpoint, humble-bragging has received comparatively less research, although it has been thoroughly examined in the domains of communication, psychology, and marketing. This is true even though humble-bragging can show how people strategically navigate identity, face, and social norms in virtual spaces (Leech, 2014; Zhang & Lee, 2023).

Humble-bragging is a complex fusion of face-saving strategies and image construction. It both satisfies the speaker's need to highlight personal accomplishments and lessens the likelihood of coming across as arrogant or boastful by masking the self-praise in humility or negative emotion (Matley, 2018; Vignoles et al., 2021). A post such as "Ugh, I'm so tired from flying back from Paris after my keynote talk," for instance, conveys both a complaint (fatigue) and a compliment (getting asked to speak

abroad). To achieve this dual goal, the audience must infer the implicit boast, necessitating the application of pragmatic mechanisms such as politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 2020) and conversational implicature (Grice, 1975; Dynel, 2021).

Despite the prevalence of humble-bragging, the majority of the scholarly research on the subject is still psychology and marketing studies that focus on its persuasiveness and audience reaction (e.g., Sezer et al., 2018; Scopelliti et al., 2020). As these works have shown, humble-bragging is often seen less favourably than direct self-promotion since it might be perceived as dishonest or deceptive. However, these studies seldom ever examine the language construction of humble-brags or the discursive techniques speakers employ to balance self-praise and modesty. This is a major research gap because understanding the linguistic and pragmatic micro-level aspects of humble-bragging might improve our comprehension of identity work and social meaning-making in digital settings (Page, 2022; Tagg & Hu, 2023).

From a discourse perspective, humble-bragging is worth considering for several reasons. First, it challenges the conventional divisions between modesty and boasting by revealing a variety of self-presentation techniques adapted to the affordances of social media (Marwick, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2020). Second, it is an example of the kind of strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984) that allows presenters to manage complex audience expectations. Third, it reflects shifting cultural norms around self-disclosure, particularly in online contexts where personal branding and authenticity are simultaneously prized (Papacharissi, 2020; Tseng, 2021).

This study uses discourse analysis as its sole methodological framework in an effort to comprehend how humble-brags are constructed, the language and rhetorical patterns they exhibit, and how these patterns serve as a vehicle for self-promotion and modesty. Unlike content analysis or sentiment analysis methods, discourse analysis allows for a qualitative and context-sensitive examination of meaning-making processes. This analysis shows how the subtle self-promotional aim is influenced by the interaction of pragmatic indicators, syntax, and lexis.

In order to comprehend how users linguistically handle the conflict between modesty and self-promotion, this study aims to explore the discourse structures and pragmatic tactics used in humble-bragging on social media. The goal of the study is to close the gap in language scholarship on humble-bragging, which has up to now been dominated by analyses focused on psychology and marketing. The research is aimed to answer the following research questions; 1) What are the linguistic and pragmatic features of humble-bragging in social media discourse? 2) How do these features function to balance self-promotion with modesty in online interactions?

## **2. Literature Review**

Humble-bragging has emerged as a distinctive communication strategy in the social media era, where users must carefully balance the competing needs of likeability, authenticity, and self-promotion (Sezer et al., 2018; Scopelliti et al., 2020). Speakers might discreetly convey their achievements while ostensibly abiding by societal norms of humility by engaging in humble-bragging, which is characterised as self-praise disguised as modesty, self-deprecation, or complaint (Zhang & Lee, 2023). Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (now X), and LinkedIn are perfect for these kinds of strategies since they inherently encourage identity development and impression management (Papacharissi, 2020; Tseng, 2021).

Humble-bragging is often seen less positively than blatant boasting since audiences may see it as inauthentic, according to earlier research (Sezer et al., 2018; Metzger et al., 2020). However, psychological and experimental studies that focused on audience perceptions and cognitive biases have largely produced same outcomes. It is currently unclear how humble-brags are constructed linguistically and discursively in naturalistic online settings, and how these constructions vary depending on the context, genre, and culture (Page, 2022; Tagg & Hu, 2023).

### **2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Self-Presentation**

The concept of self-presentation has been significantly modified for the digital age since Goffman first formalised it in 1959. This is because mediated communication allows for more intentional control over identification cues (Marwick, 2019; Lee et al., 2021). Self-presentation in the context of humble-bragging requires reducing the social cost of overt self-promotion while projecting competence or prestige. According to politeness theory, humble-bragging tries to safeguard both the idea of positive face (the want to be liked) and negative face (the desire not to be imposed upon) (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In practice, humble-bragging also heavily relies on conversational implicature (Grice, 1975; Dynel, 2021). The explicit content usually expresses humility or unhappiness, whereas the inferred meaning suggests an accomplishment or admirable trait. In addition to highlighting an embarrassing incident, the post "Can't believe I tripped on stage while accepting my award" also reveals that the speaker has won an award—an achievement that is sure to arouse appreciation.

## 2.2 Humble-Bragging and Cultural Norms

Cultural standards impact the balance between modesty and self-promotion in speech. Humble-bragging is a socially acceptable alternative to overt self-promotion, which may be discouraged in collectivist countries (Zhang & Lee, 2023). However, in individualist cultures where reaching personal objectives is highly valued, humble-bragging may be seen as unnecessary or dishonest (Marwick, 2019).

The digital world complicates these distinctions because social media viewers are often culturally varied (van Dijck et al., 2020). The fact that a message intended to appear humble to one group may be interpreted as boastful or insincere by another underscores the importance of audience planning in online self-presentation (Tseng, 2021).

## 2.3 Linguistic and Discourse Analysis Approaches

Discourse analysis provides the tools to examine how meaning is constructed through language in context (Gee, 2014; Page, 2022). Unlike quantitative content analysis, discourse analysis focuses on interpretive depth, identifying how lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and pragmatic markers interact to produce social meaning. In the case of humble-bragging, this approach can reveal:

- How explicit and implicit meanings are balanced in a post.
- How stance and evaluation function to position the speaker relative to the audience.
- How discursive patterns differ across platforms or demographic groups.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in particular, extends this inquiry to examine how humble-bragging reflects and reproduces broader social ideologies—such as the neoliberal emphasis on personal branding—or resists certain cultural norms around modesty (Fairclough, 2021; Tagg & Hu, 2023).

Since humble-bragging offers insights into how people navigate the complex interplay between audience perception, self-promotion, and modesty in digital communication, discourse analysis can learn a lot from it. By focussing on the language structure of humble-brags rather than their psychological reception, this study fills a significant vacuum in the literature. According to the literature review, despite the phenomenon's extensive documentation in the behavioural sciences, little is understood about the discourse mechanisms underlying it, particularly in online, realistic environments where identity performance is strategic and interactive.

## 3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative discourse analysis methodology to examine the pragmatic and linguistic features of humble-bragging in social media conversation. In this context, discourse analysis refers to the methodical study of language in use with a focus on how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and interpreted in specific social circumstances. Investigating how people use language to regulate social impressions and carry out identity work is made especially rich by the occurrence of humble-bragging, which is self-promotion entangled in self-deprecation, modesty, or complaint. Examining meaning-making at the micro level is made feasible by the emphasis on discourse analysis, which considers not only what is said but also how it is spoken, the strategies employed, and the larger societal meanings these constructions transmit.

The research design is based on a knowledge of naturally occurring, authentic language use, which is necessary to comprehend delicate communicative practices like humble-bragging. Consequently, a purposive sample of social media posts that were selected to represent a range of audiences and situations is used in the study. The dataset comes from three platforms: Instagram, Twitter (now X), and LinkedIn. Each site offers distinct affordances for self-presentation and interaction. Twitter is often used for humour, commentary, and quick updates and is renowned for its informality and brevity. Instagram combines visual and textual elements, and captions are frequently used to frame images in ways that promote engagement or reinforce personal statements. As a professional networking site, LinkedIn promotes career-focused self-promotion, which is frequently restrained by standards of thankfulness and humility. A comparative analysis of humble-bragging's adaptation to various communicative contexts is made possible by examining it across these platforms. An initial pool of 1,200 posts was gathered, from which a refined set of 500 examples was compiled after removing duplicates, off-topic content, and entries lacking sufficient textual material for meaningful analysis.

Ethical issues had a significant impact on the data collection procedure. Following established guidelines for internet-mediated research, only posts from publicly accessible profiles were included, and no attempt was made to access secret or restricted content. All identifying information, such as usernames, profile photographs, and location data, was removed from the posts in order to protect the anonymity of the individuals whose posts were reviewed. Where direct quotes are repeated in the findings, modest changes have been made to non-essential textual parts to further safeguard privacy while preserving the original language and pragmatic aspects. This approach ensures that the study remains consistent with digital research ethics while maintaining the authenticity of the discourse under examination.

The analytical process was led by an inductive, bottom-up approach that permitted patterns to emerge from the data rather than enforcing a rigid, pre-established coding scheme. In the initial step of analysis, the 500 postings were carefully read multiple times to familiarise themselves with the context and content. The text's meaning was first reinforced or refuted by recurring lexical choices, grammatical patterns, rhetorical devices, and multimodal features such as the usage of hashtags or emojis. These preliminary findings served as a guide for the open coding process, which included NVivo software to enable systematic classification.

Descriptive labels were applied to individual text passages that captured particular linguistic or pragmatic elements of humble-bragging as part of the open coding procedure. Those that lamented a personal achievement, such as "I'm still amazed they picked me, I'm just fortunate," were categorised as "humility framing," whereas those that lamented an achievement, such as "Exhausted from all the interviews since my promotion," were categorised as "complaint framing." Other common codes were "achievement minimising," "self-deprecation," and "gratitude framing." This approach produced a wide variety of pragmatic and rhetorical strategies, illustrating the flexibility and adaptability of humble-bragging as a discourse practice.

During the axial coding step, these early codes were merged into broader categories that reflected both pre-existing typologies of humble-bragging and new patterns that surfaced in the data. Hybrid forms that included aspects of the complaint-based and humility-based humble-brag categories—both of which were well-represented in earlier research—were also evident in the data. For example, some posts combined self-deprecating humour with a gently critical tone to produce a sophisticated yet playful way to promote oneself. The identification of these hybrid categories highlights the complexity of humble-bragging and the value of a qualitative discourse-oriented approach.

The application of pragmatic analysis greatly impacted how these categories were interpreted. Using Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature, the investigation looked at indirect meaning communication. The modest or negative framing was supposed to lead the listener to infer the boast. A further framework for understanding how humble-bragging reduces potential face threats associated with self-promotion was provided by the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). It has been discovered that politeness strategies including hedging, indirectness, and the use of deferential language are crucial for finding a balance between preserving social harmony and self-praise. Stance-taking analysis also clarified how speakers positioned themselves in relation to their achievements and their audience by using emotive indicators and evaluative language to construct certain social identities.

Multimodal aspects were also examined where applicable because hashtags, emojis, and photos frequently contributed to the overall pragmatic effect. A claim about going to a renowned event, for example, could be textually portrayed as a hardship but followed by a joyful selfie and a celebratory hashtag to further emphasise the accomplishment's positive social value. Particularly on visually-focused sites like Instagram, these multimodal clues emphasise how important it is to see humble-bragging as a discourse practice that includes more than simply textual components.

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Although the methodology offers a thorough, context-sensitive explanation of humble-bragging, it is crucial to acknowledge its limits. Due to the emphasis on English-language posts, which ignores linguistic and cultural differences in humble-bragging, the results might not be as applicable to other linguistic communities. Furthermore, even though multimodal characteristics were noted, the analysis was limited to textual content. This implies that future studies should examine humble-bragging's visual components in greater detail, which are particularly important on image-centric platforms.

All things considered, the methodological approach used in this study provides a solid framework for examining the discourse phenomena of humble-bragging. The study looks at actual, naturally occurring data from a range of social media sites to shed light on how people manage the tension between humility and self-promotion in digital communication. Because of the focus on linguistic and pragmatic analysis, the results will directly advance discourse studies, and the multi-platform scope will demonstrate how different communicative contexts affect the performance of this distinctive self-presentation approach.

#### **4. Findings**

Implicit status claims and explicit modesty markers consistently interacted in the 500-post dataset. The three platforms under investigation—LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter—saw the emergence of three primary discursive types: complaint-based humble-brags, humility-based humble-brags, and hybrid humble-brags. These categories are congruent with previous typologies, but the study also identified novel sub-patterns and variants that improve our understanding of how this discourse form functions.

#### 4.1 Dominant Linguistic Patterns

The humble-bragging lexical profile revealed a reliance on hedges, evaluative adjectives, and unexpectedness expressions. Even when paired with modesty disclaimers, commonly used evaluation terms like "incredible," "amazing," and "unreal" increased the perceived significance of the achievement. By conveying an air of surprise or reluctance, hedges like "I guess," "apparently," and "somehow" tempered the claim while keeping the important details. Verbs of unexpectedness, including "can't believe," "never thought," and "didn't expect," were particularly prevalent in humility-based humble-brags. These verbs were used as attitude markers to portray the speaker as an unpretentious person receiving praise.

The modesty or complaint element is given prominence in humble-brags due to the fact that the boast is usually positioned inside subsidiary phrases or subordinate clauses. For example:

*"So tired from back-to-back interviews after the award ceremony."* (TW-112)

Here, the fatigue is the grammatical focus, while the achievement—receiving an award—is backgrounded but still conveyed.

#### 4.2 Pragmatic Features

In humble-bragging blogs, Gricean implicature was employed to entice readers to infer the self-praise from a pragmatic perspective. The overt content (a complaint about exhaustion, for example) broke the criteria of relevance or quantity by including an unnecessary detail (like "award ceremony"), indicating an intentional secondary meaning.

Techniques of civility were also prevalent (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Positive politeness was achieved by alignment strategies including inclusive language ("we," "our team"), but hedged claims and deferential framing ("I'm just grateful they thought of me") demonstrated negative politeness. As a mitigating device, self-deprecation transformed a potentially haughty message into one of humility or humour:

*"Managed to win the hackathon even though I spilled coffee on my laptop mid-pitch."* (IG-305)

This example combines self-deprecatory humour with implicit boasting about winning a competition.

#### 4.3 Three Core Types of Humble-Bragging

The analysis confirmed three broad categories:

Complaint-based humble-brags framed achievements as burdens. These were particularly common on Twitter, where humour and irony are culturally salient. Example:

*"Ugh... barely slept this week between my conference keynote and the press interviews."* (TW-87)

Humility-based humble-brags presented success as undeserved or accidental, relying on expressions of surprise and gratitude. LinkedIn users favoured this form:

*"Truly humbled to be chosen as keynote speaker at this year's summit—never imagined I'd be here."* (LI-54)

Hybrid humble-brags blended complaint and humility strategies, often layered with self-deprecatory humour. Example from Instagram:

*"Jetlagged after presenting at the UN Climate Summit... and I think I tripped on stage twice."* (IG-219)

#### 4.4 Complaint as a Social Equaliser

Complaint-based humble-brags work by reframing high-status experiences as inconveniences, thus reducing perceived arrogance. This strategy makes the speaker appear relatable—everyone experiences tiredness or stress—while the embedded boast remains intact. On Twitter, this often took on a humorous, exaggerated tone:

*"Who knew filming three documentaries in two months would be this exhausting?"* (TW-210)

The complaint signals vulnerability, inviting empathy, but the underlying message reinforces professional success.

#### **4.5 Humility as a Likeability Enhancer**

Humility-based humble-brags function primarily as positive politeness strategies, appealing to the audience's appreciation for modesty. By framing achievements as accidental or undeserved, speakers invite admiration without seeming to seek it. On LinkedIn, this often appeared in career-related posts:

*"I'm just lucky to work with such an amazing team that helped us win this award."* (LI-131)

Here, credit is distributed to others, but the speaker's role is still central to the narrative. The modesty invites audience approval while the achievement remains salient.

#### **4.6 Humour and Hybridisation for Audience Bonding**

Hybrid humble-brags deploy humour to make self-promotion palatable, signalling self-awareness of the brag. This aligns with Goffman's (1959) idea of backstage persona management, where the humour functions as a "wink" to the audience, acknowledging the brag while inviting them into the joke:

***"Accidentally sat next to the director of my favourite film on my business-class flight to Cannes. Spilled my drink on him within five minutes."*** (IG-178)

This humour softens the brag (business-class travel, Cannes, meeting a director) while fostering intimacy with the audience.

#### **4.7 Strategic Ambiguity and Audience Co-Construction**

A recurring theme was strategic ambiguity—leaving the brag implicit so that the audience does the interpretive work. This not only avoids overt self-praise but also allows the audience to feel complicit in the recognition of the achievement, strengthening social bonds. For example:

*"Not sure I deserved that standing ovation, but it was surreal."* (TW-152)

The modesty is explicit, but the audience must infer the scale of the accomplishment (a public performance that garnered a standing ovation).

#### **4.8 Multimodal Cues**

Across Instagram in particular, the visual layer added complexity. Textual modesty often contrasted with highly polished images, producing a knowing dissonance. For example, a caption reading "Just lucky to be here" might accompany a high-quality photograph of the user on a red carpet. Emojis (😄, 🙌, 🥳) frequently softened the brag's impact or framed it humorously, while hashtags like #blessed, #firstworldproblems, and #cantbelievethis signalled both stance and audience alignment.

#### **4.9 Cultural and Relational Adaptations**

Although this study focused on English-language posts, variations suggested that cultural norms influence the balance between self-promotion and modesty. LinkedIn's preference for humility-based strategies aligns with professional etiquette in Anglophone contexts, while Twitter's tolerance for complaint-based humour reflects a cultural appreciation for irony. Instagram's mix of glamour and modest captions resonates with influencer culture, where self-branding thrives but must be tempered to avoid perceptions of vanity.

### **5. Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pragmatic and linguistic construction of humble-bragging in social media discourse and how these traits function to balance self-promotion and modesty in online encounters. A purposive sample of 500 posts from Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter (X) was used for the discourse analysis. The results demonstrated that humble-bragging is a strategically complex form of self-presentation that uses lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and multimodal resources to manage the social tension between maintaining likeability and projecting competence.

The findings both confirm and broaden our understanding of humble-bragging. Previous studies, particularly in the domains of marketing and psychology, have tended to focus on audience perceptions and the persuasiveness of humble-brags (Sezer et al., 2018; Scopelliti et al., 2020). Because humble-bragging may be interpreted as dishonest, these studies often conclude that people prefer straightforward self-promotion to humble-bragging. This perspective is helpful, but it ignores the micro-level language and pragmatic processes that generate and manage humble-bragging in everyday contexts. By concentrating on naturally occurring speech and offering a comprehensive explanation of the communication strategies employed, this study closes that gap.

### **5.1 Linking Findings to Theoretical Frameworks**

From a pragmatics perspective, the findings align with Grice's (1975) notion of conversational implicature. The explicit content of a post, like a complaint about tiredness, often breaks the norm of quantity or relevance by including seemingly unnecessary details that hint at an accomplishment. By inferring the implied boast, the reader is invited to take part in the co-construction of meaning. This interpretive involvement adds to the appeal of humble-bragging by giving the listener the impression that they are "discovering" the boast themselves.

Politeness theory is another useful lens through which to understand how humble-bragging reduces the face threat associated with self-promotion (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Complaint-based humble-brags sometimes employ negative politeness strategies such as indirectness or hedging to avoid imposing the boast on the audience too directly. Conversely, humility-based humble-brags mostly use positive politeness strategies, such as expressing thanks or associating with a group, to establish rapport. Both are used in hybrid forms that create a multi-layered effect by fusing modesty and comedy.

The study also highlights the role that multimodality plays in humble-bragging. Although previous research has identified the verbal components of the technique, this analysis shows that visual and textual signals often function together—or even in intentional dissonance—to generate meaning. An Instagram post that is highly stylised and conveys exclusivity or affluence, for example, can have the message, "just lucky to be here." This visual-verbal contrast can offer a layer of irony that enhances the post's entertainment value while maintaining the self-promotional message.

This work fills a significant vacuum in the literature by providing a comprehensive explanation of the verbal and pragmatic features of humble-bragging, which tends to favour experimental designs over naturalistic data. The discourse-analytic approach demonstrates that humble-bragging is not a single method, but rather a flexible collection of strategies that can be adapted to suit different audiences, platforms, and identity aims. It also illustrates how, in spite of the myth that humble-bragging is useless everywhere, contextual alignment may be essential to its effectiveness. When the form, tone, and platform rules are all in balance, humble-bragging can achieve relational and self-promotional objectives.

The results also cast doubt on the idea that boasting and modesty are mutually exclusive. In reality, the two are frequently combined, with speakers using modesty to present their accomplishments in a way that is both appealing and socially acceptable rather than to hide them. This hybridity highlights the need for more complex analyses that take into consideration the interaction of form, function, and context and challenges oversimplified models of self-presentation.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study places humble-bragging in the dynamic and highly performative world of social media, analysing it as a distinctive communication style that blends modesty and self-promotion. To find the nuanced linguistic, pragmatic, and multimodal tactics that allow people to look humble despite projecting success, 500 postings from Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter (X) were analysed using a discourse analysis lens. By doing this, the study has filled a significant vacuum in the literature, which up until now has concentrated more on audience perceptions and persuasive effects than on the discursive creation of humble-brags in real-world, believable situations.

The findings demonstrate that, rather than being a singular strategy, humble-bragging is a flexible collection of approaches impacted by platform norms and audience expectations. Complaint-based humble-brags, which present accomplishments as burdens; humility-based humble-brags, which present success as unexpected or undeserving; and hybrid humble-brags, which combine the two strategies and are often accompanied by self-deprecating humour, are defined as the three main categories of humble-brags. Each of these forms uses language components such as evaluative adjectives, hedges, and verbs of unexpectedness, as well as syntactic structures that situate the brag inside modest or complaint-focused framings. In practice, humble-brags use conversational implicature to signal an implicit boast and politeness strategies to steer clear of potentially embarrassing situations.

The multimodal nature of humble-bragging, which is particularly apparent on Instagram, adds another level of intricacy. The sarcastic tension created by the often-modest subtitles accompanying visually impressive photos makes it difficult for viewers to reconcile the contradictory spoken and visual signals. Emojis, hashtags, and other non-verbal cues can be used to soften or gently accentuate self-promotion as position cues. There were distinct platform-specific trends: LinkedIn inclined

towards types of humility that were in line with professional etiquette, Twitter chose hilarious, complaint-based framings, and Instagram thrived on the visual-verbal interplay that made the boast both obvious and inevitable.

These findings affect our perception of digital self-presentation in broader ways. Humble-bragging is a reflection of the conflict between the demand for exposure and the social norm of modesty, and it is made worse in environments where personal branding is expected but overt arrogance is prohibited. Far from being just dishonest, humble-bragging can be seen as a socially adaptive strategy that helps people strike a balance between the competing goals of self-promotion and likeability. Specifically, by employing comedy and self-awareness to transform potential arrogance into an opportunity for engagement, the hybrid forms demonstrate a nuanced sense of audience sensibilities.

The study theoretically expands on Gricean implicature to account for meaning-making across textual and visual modes and enhances our knowledge of politeness strategies by demonstrating how positive and negative politeness can be combined in a single act. In a practical sense, it provides guidance for people, influencers, and organisations looking to share accomplishments without offending audiences. The study lays the groundwork for further cross-cultural, multimodal, and reception-focused research, despite its limitations, which include its concentration on English-language posts and three platforms.

In the end, humble-bragging is a type of online conversation that thrives on irony, nuance, and meaning co-construction. This delicate balancing act between modesty and self-promotion will continue to be a window into the changing conventions of online communication as social media continues to influence how we curate and share our identities.

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