

PERSUASIVE MASTERY: EXPLORING A MUSLIM CELEBRITY PODCASTER'S APPEALS IN 'LIGHT UPON DARKNESS'

LILISURIANI ABDUL LATIF@BAPOO^{1*}, FATIN AMIRA SURAIYA SAIFUDIN²

¹Department of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia (Pagoh campus), Johor Darul Takzim, Malaysia

² Department of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia (Pagoh campus), Johor Darul Takzim, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: lilisuriani@iium.edu.my

(Received: 4 May 2024; Accepted: 31 May 2024)

ABSTRACT: This study explores the persuasive appeals of logical, emotional, and credibility appeals employed in the podcast series "Light Upon Darkness" by a prominent Muslim celebrity turned influencer. Thematic analysis using elements from the Toulmin Model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Aristotle's Rhetoric of Ethos reveals that the podcaster employs a diverse approach, utilizing some elements of the Toulmin Model to strengthen logic, integrating all of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to evoke emotional resonance with the audience and establishes credibility by sharing personal background, life experiences, expertise, and thoughts while showing respect to the audience. These findings offer insights into the dynamics of persuasive communication in podcasting and contribute to a broader understanding of the role of appeals in shaping effective communication within the digital realm.

ABSTRAK: Kajian ini meneroka daya tarikan persuasif rayuan logik, emosi dan kredibiliti yang digunakan dalam siri podcast "Light Upon Darkness" oleh seorang selebriti Muslim terkenal yang menjadi pempengaruh. Analisis tematik menggunakan unsur-unsur daripada Model Toulmin, Hierarki Keperluan Maslow dan Retorik Ethos Aristotle mendedahkan bahawa pelbagai pendekatan telah digunakan dari beberapa elemen Model Toulmin untuk mengukuhkan logik, menyepadukan semua Hierarki Keperluan Maslow untuk membangkitkan resonans emosi dengan pendengar dan mewujudkan kredibiliti dengan berkongsi latar belakang peribadi, pengalaman hidup, kepakaran dan pemikiran sambil menunjukkan rasa hormat kepada pendengar. Penemuan ini menawarkan pandangan tentang dinamik komunikasi persuasif dalam podcasting dan menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang peranan rayuan dalam membentuk komunikasi yang berkesan dalam alam digital.

KEYWORDS: *Persuasive language, Logical Appeal, Emotional Appeal, Credibility Appeal, Podcast*

1 INTRODUCTION

Persuasive speaking aims to influence attitudes and behaviors through rhetoric strategies (15). Podcasts have emerged as a significant medium for persuasive communication in the digital age, with their popularity on the rise (6). Research on podcasts has explored their

potential as a storytelling platform and their impact on audiences. For example, (10) investigated how music podcasts persuade listeners to engage with music, while (7) analyzed interruptions in mixed-gender podcast conversations in the Malaysian context. Recent studies have also focused on communicative strategies used by well-known personalities 'directive illocutionary acts (3), expressive speech acts (13), and dominant illocutionary acts in various podcast contexts (8); (17). Even when podcasts have continued to grow in popularity, a comprehensive exploration of persuasive elements in podcasts, particularly the analysis of persuasive appeals in Islamic content, remains relatively underexplored.

This study delves into analyzing the persuasive appeals employed by a prominent Muslim celebrity podcaster in her "Light Upon Darkness" podcast series. Understanding how these appeals are strategically employed holds significance for both content creators and scholars alike. As podcasts continue to gain prominence, this research contributes to elucidating effective communication strategies within this evolving medium, benefiting creators who are seeking ways to enhance their content and enriching researchers' understanding of persuasive communication dynamics.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 DATA COLLECTION

Detailed in Table 2.1 below, the study's data comprises eight episodes from the "Light Upon Darkness" podcast series, accessible on Spotify.

Table 2.1: List of Episodes

Title	Duration	Date Published	Link
Episode 1: The Beginning	10 min 28 sec	September 2022	http://surl.li/nhzbw
Episode 2: The Rock Bottom & The Awakening	6 min 34 sec	September 2022	http://surl.li/nhzcj
Episode 3: The Realisation	7 min 6 sec	September 2022	http://surl.li/nhzcj
Episode 4: The Pilgrimage	6 min 47 sec	September 2022	http://surl.li/nhzcw
Episode 5: The Journey	5 min 46 sec	September 2022	http://surl.li/nhzdj
Episode 6: The Detachment	10 min 27 sec	October 2022	http://surl.li/nhzdr
Episode 7: The Battle Within	9 min 37 sec	October 2022	http://surl.li/nhzea
Episode 8: The Determination	8 min 18 sec	October 2022	http://surl.li/nhzel

2.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCEDURE

The podcast data was analyzed through repeated listening to each episode, adopting a multi-framework approach to analyze logical, emotional, and credibility appeals. For logical appeals, the Toulmin model's (1) key elements of claims, grounds, warrants, backing,

qualifiers, and rebuttals. Table 2.2 shows how the elements of the Toulmin Model were identified.

Table 2.2: Questions to Identify the Elements of Toulmin Model (1)

Toulmin Elements	Model's	Questions
Claim		What exactly is your position statement?
Ground		What is the evidence that...?
Warrant		What strengthens the reasoning results?
Backing		Is the warrant solidly backed for supporting the grounds?
Qualifier		Is there any other possibility?
Rebuttal		Does the wording of the claim allow for these exceptions?

For emotional appeals, thematic analysis, guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs, was employed, categorizing data into themes aligned with physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-transcendence needs (2), (11), (21); (16) as seen in Table 2.3

Table 2.3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (2), (11), (21); (16)

Hierarchy	Needs
Highest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-transcendence • self-actualization • self-esteem • love and belonging • safety
Lowest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physiological

Similarly, credibility appeals were analyzed using thematic analysis grounded in Aristotle's Rhetoric of Ethos, identifying the main themes related to credibility indicators following the framework used by (20). Table 2.4 below shows the indicator for rhetorical appeals grounded in Aristotle's Ethos.

Table 2.4: Indicator for rhetorical appeals grounded in Aristotle's Ethos (20)

Ethos	Indicator
Appeal to credibility and trust in the speaker or audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows the speaker as capable and close to citizens • Shows the good background of the speaker • Shows the speaker as an expert in a particular field • Shows that the speaker comes from the same group as the audience

- Shows respect for the rights and feelings of the audience
- Appeals to ethics, that is, the character, personality, and other characteristics of the speaker
- May use phrases such as “in truth”, “in my opinion”

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 BUILT OF LOGICAL APPEALS

It was revealed that even though all six elements of the Toulmin model were applied, elements of claims where the podcaster asserts a viewpoint or assertion, grounds that justify the claim, and warrants that connect the grounds to the claim were largely used. This approach of reasoning is close to those made in academics (1); (4) and political contexts (19). Examples are seen below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Elements Employed to Build Logical Appeals in the “Light Upon Darkness” Podcast

Toulmin Model’s Elements	Examples of Utterance
Claim	"The older you get, the more you realize that you need to surround yourself with people who are positive and good"
Ground	"Because the more you surround yourself with people who are negative and bad, then you will become like them."
Warrant	"Because it's, a hadith says, you know, when these friends like perfume, you know, like if it's a good friend. So, you will have the effect of that perfume wherever you go, but if your friends are bad friends, then you know you will have that burnt smell with you as well. So, you're going to be like them too."

3.2 BUILT OF EMOTIONAL APPEALS

The findings show that the podcaster took the approach of storytelling in the podcast and presented emotional appeals by relating to all of Maslow’s levels of needs, similar to approaches taken by politicians. This can create powerful connections and a sense of belonging with the audience, evoking their emotions (12). (9) and (18) reported that both positive and negative emotional connections in political communication can effectively evoke emotions among voters and secure support. Table 3.2 below depicts the summary of key themes for emotional appeal and examples of utterances.

Table 3.2: Elements Employed to Build Emotional Appeals in the “Light Upon Darkness” Podcast

Hierarchy	Needs	Examples of Utterance
Highest	Self-Transcendence	Spiritual Enhancement “I think that realization came when I started become more spiritual, when I started become more aware of Allah, when I started getting older.”

		<p>“When I look back at the different hardship that I had, you know. We're still having, you know, alhamdulillah there are blessings. Because anything that happened to you and it brings you closer to Allah, it's great, alhamdulillah”.</p>
	Self-Actualization Needs	<p>Self-Realization “Something missing inside of me? I need to go look for that, I need to look for what it is you know”.</p> <p>“It is a constant purification process every single day. and it is something that we need to be aware of, of ourselves, we have to be really real with ourselves, like wait a minute, do I need purification? Am I okay? What's why heart at? Am I focused on Allah? Am I praying like a robot? What's going on? right, so this purification process is forever, and this battle doesn't stop, but that is the jihad, right?”</p>
	Self-Esteem Needs	<p>Personal Contribution “So, I think having that spotlight taught me that yes, I'm responsible, I need to make sure that I have, I leave a good effect on people, right?”</p> <p>Ambitious “And I when I was a girl, I, when I was like 8 years old, I wanted to be like Janet Jackson. I was like ohh I wanna be that I wanna be that, so I aspired to be an artist from a very young age.”</p> <p>“It wasn't because I wanted to go out there and become famous. I love the culture. and I suppose when I grew older, I wanted to be somebody.”</p> <p>Nonconformity Confidence “There is a feeling of safety. There's a feeling like I'm OK, there's a feeling like I don't have to prove myself to anyone anymore. I don't have to stress myself the way that I used to for people anymore, right? And I don't have to please them all the time, right?”</p> <p>“So, there's always hope for a better day, right. And I feel like if you're going through a journey right now to take it step by step, you know it's not an overnight thing, it is a process. So, trust in the journey, trust the process and what Allah has prepared for you and embrace it, right? Don't be afraid to embrace it. And always, you know, if you are feeling down, rely upon Allah. Just call out to him.”</p>
	Love and Belonging Needs	<p>Strong Family Bond “You know alhamdulillah my parents, MashaAllah, Alhamdulillah, they gave me wonderful guidance,</p>

		<p>they provide for me, Allah provides me for all of us, but they gave me a wonderful childhood and a loving family and Alhamdulillah.”</p> <p>Cared for by others. “And only like a few close people that really knew me very well, inside and out. They knew that I needed help. And that's when they said, Nina, you need to stop right now. If not, I'm gonna tell your parents.”</p> <p>Social Adeptness “Because the hip hop industry, Malaysia at that time, it was all guys, they were all men. There are probably just like one or two girls. So, I was very inspired. I was like, OK, I wanted to be as good as the guys.”</p>
	Safety Needs	<p>Toxic Environment “cause there's so many other things that linked to music and entertainment with the dark side of things, you know, whether it's clubbing, drugs, alcohol, you know, addictions and really toxic things that really, you know, pull a person down, and it's the environment, it's the people, right? So being in these kinds of environments, it exposes you to all of these things.”</p> <p>Finding Security “...it was about letting go of these toxicities, you know...” and “...if I don't stop this right now, I'm going to die. I'm going to die. I have to do something.”</p> <p>Emotional Safety "I think that knowledge is very grounding from the Quran and Sunnah, it's something that keeps a person steady no matter what happens in your life."</p>
Lowest	Physiological Needs	<p>Fulfillment of Basic Needs: “I've got all the awards already. I have my family, you know? I alhamdulillah, I have everything else?”. “The whole realization that, you know, I have everything, but there's still something missing”.</p>

3.3 BUILT OF CREDIBILITY APPEALS

The podcaster’s strategies to build credibility appeals were categorized using Aristotle's Rhetoric of Ethos. The result shows that the storytelling approach also encompasses all indicators of credibility, as illustrated below in Table 3.2. This approach as pointed out by (5) strengthens a speaker’s position and reinforces the authenticity of the messages delivered, contributing to the overall impact of the podcast on the audience's perspectives and beliefs (14).

Table 3.3: Elements employed to build Credibility Appeals in the “Light Upon Darkness” Podcast

Indicators	Examples of Utterance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows capability and closeness to citizens 	<p>"I think my journey throughout my career has taught me that adab, of I suppose to being able to regulate myself in social media and. and when people look at me when people talk about me, when people criticize, you know, I've learned what to do, how to handle it."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows own good background 	<p>"Alhamdulillah, I'm an 80's child, so I'm like right in the middle of you know, analog and digital. Alhamdulillah, I got to see, you know, Walkmans and boom boxes and box TV's. "</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows own expertise in a particular field 	<p>"Alhamdulillah, I pretty much lived most of my life in the entertainment and music industry. radio industry as well. And then after that I shifted my career and I moved into Da'wah."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows a sense of similarity with the audience 	<p>"We all have different things that we need to purify ourselves with. But I think what really helps us tawba making sincere tawba, you know asking forgiveness from Allah SWT and at the same time, find your, find a space whereby you can forgive yourself as well. You know when you are too hard to yourself sometimes you don't give yourself space to be able to heal and really let it go."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows respect for the rights and feelings of the audience 	<p>"Everybody has their own journey. Everybody has their own challenges in terms of finding this happiness."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows the character and own personality 	<p>" So, I had to really dig deep in myself and really expose myself to Allah. Expose myself and say "Ya Allah, I've been really you know, selfish. You know, I had so much ego" and Alhamdulillah Allah made it easy for the layer of ego to like to shred off until it was just me and him."</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use phrases to show opinions or thoughts 	<p>"I think, Allah, Alhamdulillah made it easy for me to keep my hijab on, to continue on the journey of purification"</p>

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the analysis of the "Light Upon Darkness" podcast series provided valuable insights into the persuasive strategies employed within the podcasting medium to attract the audience's attention and initiate change. Through the examination of logical, emotional, and credibility appeals, it is evident that the podcaster communicates with a good tapestry of appeals and creates an intricate pattern of support for the claims made, incorporates a diverse array of needs, and employs sharing of background, life experiences, expertise, and personal thoughts. Even though the focus of the study was only on a single podcast series, its findings add to the broader understanding of persuasive communication in digital media that can be learned or inculcated. Recommendations for future studies include expanding the scope to analyze a diverse range of podcasts and incorporating various theoretical perspectives to enhance the analytical framework, thereby providing a more comprehensive exploration of persuasive communication strategies within the podcasting domain.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ananda, D., & Sujito, S. (2023). An Analysis Argumentative Essay Using Toulmin Model at The Second Semester of English Language Education Students of Uin Raden Mas Said Surakarta In The Academic Year 2022/2023 (Doctoral dissertation, UIN RADEN MAS SAID).
- [2] Celestine, N. (2023). Abraham Maslow, his theory & contribution to psychology. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/abraham-maslow/>
- [3] Darong, H. C., & Neldis, N. (2023). Investigating illocutionary acts in video podcasts and its pedagogical implication in EFL teaching. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research*, 5, 48-60.
- [4] Dia, E. E., Suyono, Widodo. H.S, & Sunaryo, H. S. (2020). Rhetoric Patterns of Toulmin in Class Discussion Arguments Universitas Negeri Malang. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12B), 8514-8527.
- [5] di Carlo, G. S. (2015). Pathos as a communicative strategy for online knowledge dissemination: The case of TED talks. *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 21(1).
- [6] Edison Research. (2022, March 23). The infinite dial 2022. <https://www.edisonresearch.com/The-Infinite-Dial-2022/>
- [7] Hairudin, A. S. (2022). Conversational Analysis on The Interruptions Of Men And Women In Malaysia's Podcast. *Journal of Language and Communication (JLC)*, 80-101.
- [8] Isanabiah, I., & Fitrawati, F. (2022). Analysis of Illocutionary Acts Performed into Fluency's Youtube Channel. *English Language and Literature*, 11(3), 336-364.
- [9] Johnson, C. (2010). The politics of affective citizenship: from Blair to Obama. *Citizenship Studies*, 14, 495 - 509. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2010.506702>.
- [10] McDaniel, B. (2022). All Songs Considered: The Persuasive Listening of Music Podcasts. *Twentieth-Century Music*, 19(3), 411-426.
- [11] Mcleod, S. (2023). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>
- [12] Nurhasanah, N., Siwi, P., & Pawiro, M. A. (2023). Love And Belonging Needs in Istiqomah's Novel Seribu Musim Merinduimu. *Journal Of Language*, 5(1), 120-126.
- [13] Putri, J. O. M., & Ariyaningsih, N. N. D. (2023). Expressive Speech Acts Found in Eric Nam and Jessi's Utterance in The Dive Studios Podcast. *Journal of Humanities, Social Science, Public Administration and Management (HUSOCPUMENT)*, 3(1), 8-14.
- [14] Quach, S., Septianto, F., Thaichon, P., & Chiew, T. M. (2021). Mixed emotional appeal enhances positive word-of-mouth: The moderating role of narrative person. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 62, 102618.
- [15] Rosenberg, B. D., Marshburn, A., & Siegel, J. T. (2022). Persuasive Communication: Source, Message, Audience. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*.
- [16] Sims, J., & O'Connor, D. (2021). Maslow revisited in contemporary aged care. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.12967>.
- [17] Sitorus, R. D., & Elfrida, R. (2022). An analysis of illocutionary acts in podcast Ruang Sandi Videos by Sandiaga Uno. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 50-55. <https://doi.org/10.52622/joal.v2i1.58>
- [18] Kumar, S. (2023). Emotional Appeal in the Tweets: A Study on Indian National Political Parties. doi: 10.58966/jcm2023223
- [19] Supardi, M., & Sayogie, F. (2022). The Logical Pattern of Argument: A Case Study of National University Debating Championship. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(1), 65-76.
- [20] Ting, S. H., Kamil, S. M., & Chai, N. C. (2022). Logos, pathos and ethos in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches during his comeback as prime minister of Malaysia. *Trends in Undergraduate Research*, 5(1), f1-15.
- [21] Trivedi, A. J., & Mehta, A. (2019). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs-Theory of Human Motivation. *International Journal of Research in all Subjects in Multi Languages*, 7(6), 38-41.