



## “MEKDI” SCARY DELIVERY ADS: THE ANALYSIS OF RHETORICAL ELEMENTS

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### Abstract:

Aristotle's Rhetorical persuasive elements, namely logos, ethos, and pathos, are widely adapted in any kind of business document with the intention to hook the audience's attention. This paper analyses one McDonald's (also known as "MEKDI" in Malaysia) video advertisement on the application of rhetorical elements based on Aristotle's persuasion of appeal. Identifying these three elements is the main purpose of this paper in realising the persuasive content drawn towards the audience in the advertisement, leading this paper to conclude whether the usage of rhetoric element strategies is overwhelming or not, given the author's specific purpose and specific audience. The document studied is one video advertisement of the famous fast-food chain McDonald's Malaysia. The rhetorical analysis was used to interpret the meaning of this assessment topic. Based on the findings, the video advertisement uses emotional content to engage with the audience rather than the rational quality of the advertisements where the logic of health and nutrition claims are not salient concerns. Further studies should include audience feedback to enable data triangulation for validation purposes as this paper is only to ascertain the rhetorical elements used in the advertisements and does not consider the rhetorical elements that appeal more to the audience.

**Keywords:** video advertisement, rhetorical elements

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Video in its current usage conveys a number of significances for a variety of purposes, but principally, it focuses on vision stimuli as it is the most powerful stimulus and the easiest one to implement in advertising (Baryshnikova, 2017). As previously discussed by Kim and Hancock (2016), persuasion is the key driver in marketing and advertising to convince the

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audience of the intended point of view. Additionally, the main goal of the advertiser is to reinforce the rhetorical elements to win the audience.

Rhetorical elements have been widely used by the advertiser as it known for its persuasive purposes. Thus, the uses of rhetorical elements: Logos, ethos, and pathos are viewed as a powerful tool to influence the audience and lead them into actions. Advertisements in Malaysia are not excluded from using the three main elements from Aristotle's concept. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate how logos, ethos, and pathos are used in one of the McDonald's delivery advertisement considering the credibility the company hold as a well-known fast food chain restaurant. Data were collected by categorising the scenes in the video advertisement into logos, ethos, and pathos and their characteristics based on the definitions provided from previous studies within the scope related.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Researchers have agreed that rhetorical elements are among of the persuasive techniques used in the advertisement. Despite the use of rhetorical elements in most of the video advertisements to persuade the public judgment and sometimes, these elements are used excessively by the advertiser, neglecting the facts and information that are supposed to be delivered. Stirrat (2007) stated that a variety of scholars are questioning the effects of the emotional appeal in advertisement can create.

Bolatito (2012) linked the elements of persuasion in advertisements and how it affects the viewers. He studied and reviewed different types of theories in persuasion appeal. From the review, he noted that the usage of rhetorical elements in the advertisement did not explicitly state how effective it is to appeal to the viewers and whether or not their experience with the product will be similar to what the advertisement intended to deliver. Thus, suggesting that even though the advertisement may employ the principles of rhetoric, however, the efficiency of the rhetorical elements in the advertisement is arguable.

This issue is further highlighted in Kaur and Sohal (2019) as they analysed the content of 147 YouTube-based audio-visual political advertisements based on the message characteristics, reach and viewers engagement in the YouTube's comment section. The findings showed that most political video advertisements in India failed to appeal to the viewers as it heavily relied on the elements of ethos when viewers prefer the elements of pathos more. Accordingly, leading to the need for investigating how certain appeals highlights the rhetorical elements and therefore the level of effectiveness could be measured.

It is worth to note that; how rhetorical elements give effects towards the audience especially in video advertisements in Malaysia is understudied. This issue triggered this paper to see how Logos, Ethos, and Pathos are used to appeal to the audience in a video advertisement.

## **1.3 Objective**

This paper intended to disclose the rhetorical elements used in the McDonald's delivery video advertisement and make meaning behind every scene.

## 1.4 Research Questions

- 1) How is Logos used in the advertisement?
- 2) How is Ethos used in the advertisement?
- 3) How is Pathos used in the advertisement?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Advertisement

An advertisement is a practical form of communication that is used to create connections with the customer and to persuade potential consumers through mass media (Liyana, 2018). The advertisement form varies from printed to video to provide consumers about products or services.

### 2.2 Video Advertisement

Doherty et al. (2018) added that video advertisement is an instrument that is created to convey a certain message intended by the creator. According to Goodrich (2011), three of the most important characteristics in video advertisements are the length of the pre-roll, the amount of information in the content, and the amount of humour in that content. These three characteristics play a crucial in determining on whether the video advertisements manage to persuade their audience or to annoy them.

### 2.3 Rhetorical Elements

This paper used rhetorical elements analysis based on Aristotle's Rhetorical concept that highlights persuasion appeal into three (3) main categories: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos that commonly adapted in video advertisement (Kaur & Sohal, 2019). Poulakos (1999) affirmed that rhetoric is an artistic activity, which has concern with how, when, and what expressions are used in particular moments with specific purpose. These three rhetorical elements are widely studied to highlight the emotional, logical and credibility appeal for its intended audience (Kaur and Sohal, 2019).

#### 2.3.1 Logos

Logos or logic is an appeal that caters to viewers' logic or reasoning (Bolatito, 2012). It requires viewers to rely on their reasoning based on facts, statistics and numbers to derive judgement (Al-Momami, 2014). Logos is measure based on clarity, conciseness, and arrangement. Clarity is important for marketing communication as it highlights the products by giving a clear message (Hiam, 2014). As for conciseness, Mirabela (2010) suggests that the entire idea or message must be conveyed in few words due to the fact that an ideal headline must be formed five to eight words. Lastly, Vroutas (2019) claimed that arrangement of images, video, text and web design is important for great visual advertisement. By having these three, we will be able to measure logos that appear in the video.

### **2.3.2 Ethos**

According to Kaur and Sohal (2019), ethos or credibility appeals are persuasive in nature. It is used as a method of persuasion that establishes credibility in the eyes of the viewers (Al-Momami, 2014). To measure ethos in the video chosen, this paper looks at the credibility, expectation and reference. For credibility; brand or character that convinces people that the company is more reliable, honest, and credible (Bolatito, 2012), which, in this case is the brand McDonald's and how it has established credibility among the people in Malaysia. Another characteristic of ethos is reference that is used to persuade by appealing to authority or credibility (Mckee, 2017). Authority reference example: explanations from credible people (Yu, 2016).

### **2.3.3 Pathos**

Bolatito (2012) stated that pathos or emotional appeal can invoke certain emotional responses to the audience and the outcome of it can be positive or negative, depending on the message it is trying to deliver. This paper included three categories to measure pathos namely through tone, emphasis, and engagement. Tone in this paper, describes as tune or music used to evoke emotion in the video. Music can yield positive or negative emotions such as love, humour or even fear and guilt among the viewers of advertisements (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). According to Do (2016), the emphasis is an indispensable aspect of speech that conveys a variety of information including focus and emotion. In order to gain viewers' attention, engagement is used to appeal to the viewers' emotions (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy 2004, P: 46). It can bring to mind nostalgia that viewers can relate to.

## **2.4 Past studies**

### **2.4.1 Past study on rhetorical elements**

Yu (2016) analysed advertisement language in the aspect of Aristotle's Rhetoric Theory by looking at how pathos, logos, and ethos are used. The paper highlighted that the usage of Ethos in advertisements can be done via the appearance of celebrities, explanations from credible people and positive branding of the company. Meanwhile, logos can be observed from three ways; description, terms, and data. Lastly, the analysis found that pathos is used to appeal to people's emotions from biological and psychological needs and it is not just a mere persuasion. The study noted that having only one element of appeal in the advertisement will only cause the advertisement to be dull. Thus, the researcher realised that for a stronger effect on the advertisement, all three elements of appeal must be presented.

### **2.4.2 Past study on rhetorical elements used in video advertisement**

A study by Vu (2010) aimed to highlight which rhetorical elements are widely used in the advertisement and how they affect the audiences' emotions at large. The attempt of this study is to investigate rhetorical elements that are present in the forms of images, words and sounds from a wide collection of 200 randomly selected video advertisements from Vietnamese television that consist of products ranging from food, medicine, cars, and etc. Findings revealed that rhetorical figures in visual rhetoric are powerful tools that are used frequently to promote

product value and leave a strong impression, to manifest positive thought in viewers to remember the product (Vu, 2017).

The case study conducted by Liyana (2018) analysed Pampers advertisement in three parts: the structure of the advertisement, language use, and types of persuasive techniques used in Indonesia. The data were collected qualitatively through observation of the advertisement from the television. The findings highlighted that the advertisement used a tagline at the beginning and end of the video, the language used in the advertisement was mostly informal, and lastly, the advertisement used Aristotle's persuasive technique to influence the audience which categorises the elements into logos, ethos, and pathos. The researcher found that the advertisement stressed on logos more than ethos and pathos. Liyana (2018) then emphasised that certain commercials have their own languages and techniques to attract buyers.

Eemeli Hakoköngäs and Inari Sakki (2019) tried to understand the usage of advertisement in delivering the political message in Finnish Dairy Product. The data for the research varies from various advertisement formats, from printed newspapers to videos. In this study, they combined the three elements of appeal (logos, ethos, and pathos) to constitute a form of argument that forces the audience to understand the message called enthymeme (Smith, 2007). The study found that most advertisements used enthymeme as a rhetorical tool to deliver political messages in dairy product commercials. The videos mainly touched on the audience's nostalgia and emotions in order to influence them to receive the agenda (The traditional Finnish employment is under threat) behind the advertisements. In conclusion to this study, the rhetorical elements are also used as political psychology to instil nationalism in consumers.

### **3. Material and Methods**

This paper predominantly falls on rhetorical analysis to appeal to the sense of rhetoric element with reasonable evidences and appropriate details as noted by Roskelly (2008). Endres, et al. (2016) added that rhetorical analysis is a mode of textual analysis that attends to persuasive features of texts in which suit more the purpose of this paper.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design is the structure of the research and it is one of the most crucial substances in any research as it holds all of the elements in research together (Akhtar, 2016). This paper used qualitative research based on the definition by Levit et al. (2017): To explore meanings and insights in a given situation. Also, this paper also refers to a range of data collection and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling (Gopaldas, 2016) to gather the information intended.

#### **3.2 Sample**

According to Das (2017), sample is the object or population that is collected and used in a research by using various sampling methods. Sampling makes a research more accurate, economical, and determines the generalisability of the research findings. The sample in this

paper is video advertisement from McDonald's delivery, Malaysia. This video advertisement is chosen as it represents adequate logos, ethos and pathos elements and refers to the Malaysian culture and context the most.

### 3.3 Instrument

The instrument used is a table containing three main categories of rhetorical elements: Logos, ethos, and pathos. Each of the characteristics is included in table 1, so it is considered adequate to classify each of the rhetorical elements that appear in the advertisement. The data analysed will be inserted in the table accordingly.

**Table 1:** Rhetorical elements for instrument

Rhetorical Elements	Characteristic	Evidence from Text
Logos	Clarity	
	Conciseness	
	Arrangement	
Ethos	Credibility	
	Expectations	
	Reference	
Pathos	Tone	
	Emphasis	
	Engagement	

### 3.4 Method Data Collection

Data collection is described as the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest (Anastasia, 2017). In this context, the data is collected by analysing the McDonald's delivery video advertisement and determining the scene into each of the categories and characteristics of rhetorical elements.

### 3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The data is analysed by categorising the document into the three persuasive elements, logos, ethos, and pathos which are usually embedded in advertisements to persuade the audience (Pratap, 2018). The characteristics that fall in each of the main rhetorical elements are also included.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This paper uncovered that more than one rhetorical element is used in the McDonald's delivery ads. The three tropes of rhetorical elements structure identified and stressed upon are logos, ethos, and pathos. The existence of various elements structure will be discussed as follows.

**Research Question 1:** How is Logos used in the advertisement?

**4.1.1 Logos**

According to Rife (2010), logos are logic or reasoning given to the audience that is also seen as a persuasion method that is done by using proof or apparent proof. Logos elements in the video advertisement of McDonald's, Malaysia are as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Logos, characteristic, and evidence from text

Rhetorical Elements	Characteristic	Evidence from Text
<b>Logos</b> Logic or reasoning given to the audience. It also can be seen as persuasion method that is done by using proof or apparent proof (Rife, 2010).	<b>Clarity</b> Successful marketing communications have a clear marketing message: what's great about your brand or product (Hiam, 2014)	"No electricity at home?" (26s)  "Chill lah, we deliver!" (28-30s)
	<b>Conciseness</b> The ideal headline is considered to be formed of five to eight words though many headlines are often elliptical or violate grammatical rules (Mirabela, 2010)	"No electricity at home?" (26s)  "Chill lah, we deliver!" (28-30s)
	<b>Arrangement</b> Arrangement of images, videos, text, and web design are part of the formula for a great visual advertising campaign and with the right design and strategy, they can steal attention and communicate value propositions in a blink (Vroutas, 2019).	Camera rolls from the bottom of the stairs up to the door. (8-12s)  Stairs were set as the focal point at the beginning of the ads. (3-5s)  Switching focus from the deliveryman towards what's in front of him repeatedly. (2-s)

Based on table 2, it can be seen that this advertisement used minimal logic clarity with only two statements of phrases included. The evidence picked is based on Hiam's (2014) definition of clarity; what's great about your brand or product. The clarity can be seen in the way the ideas are presented at the 26th second, narrated and captioned at the bottom of the video: "No electricity at home?" This phrase is rather straightforward in which a question is used to trigger the audience by relating to a real, personal situation. The great thing behind the question is: it continues with the reassurance that McDonald's delivery has it covered. The statement following at the 28th second is quite straightforward and fitting to Malaysian sociolinguistics; "Chill lah, we deliver!" Both statements are not grammatically correct but understandable by Malaysians in the majority as the English words used are very simple.

For this paper, conciseness is described in such a way that the ideal headline should be formed in five to eight words, whereby many are often indirect or violate grammatical rules (Mirabela, 2010). The two phrases: "No electricity at home?" and "Chill lah, we deliver!" fit the characteristic of conciseness as the messages were delivered in simple words; however, grammatically, the sentences are incorrect. From the excerpts taken from the video, it shows

that conciseness values meaning more than grammar. The message can also be relayed quickly as the sentence itself is already direct.

Lastly, the characteristic of arrangements for advertisements are based on Vrontas's (2019) definition: great visual advertising consists of an arrangement of videos and the right design and strategy, to steal attention and communicate. In this advertisement, it appears in several scenes and described as below:

*Camera rolls from the bottom of the stairs up to the door. (8-12s)*

*Stairs were set as the focal point at the beginning of the ads. (3-5s)*

*Focal point switched from the deliveryman towards what's in front of him repeatedly. (2-s)*

Based on the arrangement of the scenes above, there is an intention to communicate a creepy theme to the audience. All the arrangements provide background information on normal setting of typical Malaysian horror movies to the audience.

While using logos is useful as it can suggest things as in simple facts, it may also seem ambiguous depending on how the audience interprets it. The information added in the advertisement is too general and does not include the service charge of the delivery or the delivery area covered; thus, it can be considered as inaccurate.

**Research Question 2:** How is Ethos used in the advertisement?

#### 4.1.2 Ethos

Ethos, according to Yu, (2019) is moral competence or personal traits of the speaker, including characters and the positive image of the corporation. Ethos is based on the exchange and interaction that depends on the perception of the viewers. Ethos elements analysed in this paper are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Ethos, characteristic, and evidence from text

Rhetorical Elements	Characteristic	Evidence from Text
<b>Ethos</b> Moral competence or personal traits of the speaker including character and the positive image of the corporation. (Yu, 2016)	<b>Credibility</b> Ethos rhetoric is also invoked to tie a brand to fundamental rights as brands build trust with their audience (Detisch, 2019).	McDonald's logo was kept at the bottom until throughout the ad.(0-28s)
	<b>Reference</b> Reference in an advertisement is used to persuade by appealing to authority or credibility (Mckee, 2017).	Delivery man wearing McDonalds red uniform. (0-3s) (5-7s) (12-13s) (21-22s) (26-27s)

This advertisement used the company's logo to display credibility throughout the advertisement until the last 28 seconds. As a famous and well-known company, the McDonald's logo is able to create a connection and trust from the audience.



However, the issue here is that it could do the opposite, as McDonald's also known as unhealthy food (fast-food); viewers may think that this label that should provide ethos could provide the aura of pretentiousness. This could turn the advertisement off, and fail to convince the reader of anything.

**Research Question 3:** How is Pathos used in the advertisement?

#### 4.1.3 Pathos

Pathos drive is not only an attempt to evoke emotional responses in the audience but to also anticipate immediate responses (Roskelly, 2008). In terms of the inclusion of pathos, it is a powerful element as it stirs the viewers' emotions. Pathos advertisements not only evoke your feelings but anticipate your responses too. Pathos appeals to an audience's basic emotions such as joy, fear, and envy. All are easily triggered in many ways and are thus as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Pathos, characteristic, and evidence from text

Rhetorical Elements	Characteristic	Evidence from Text
<b>Pathos</b> Pathos will attempt to evoke an emotional response in the audience (Majors, 2017).	<b>Tone</b> Tone have the potential to affect the audience attitude towards an advertisement and their brands both positively and negatively (Eckler, 2011)	Wolf howling and dog barking sound. (1-6s)  Squeaking and cracking sound of door. (5-21s)  Suspenseful music. (9-14s) (18-21s)
	<b>Emphasis</b> Emphasis is an essential aspect of communication that conveys a variety of information including focus and emotion (Do, 2016).	Change of expression. (27-28s)
	<b>Engagement</b> The engagement appeals to the emotion (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy 2004)	Traditional stairs from Malaysia as the focal point at the beginning of the ads. (3-5s)  Switching focus from the deliveryman towards what's in front of him repeatedly. (2-28s)

The tone used in the advertisement evokes a sense of spookiness among the audience. This can be seen in the wolf howling and dog barking as the background audio (at the 1st and 6th seconds), the wooden door making squeaking and cracking sound (at 5th to 21st seconds) and suspenseful music that was added to keep the audience on edge ( at 9th to 4th seconds) (at 18th to 21st seconds).

The advertisement also emphasises on the expression of the character. The deliveryman's expression changed from fear to slight calm and relief towards the end of the advertisement on the 27th to 28th seconds. The emphasis on the changes will cause the audience to feel relaxed as the element of fear is quickly replaced with relief and humour.

Lastly, in terms of engagement with the audience, the advertisement used stairs as the focal point at the beginning of the video, creating nostalgia of a traditional house in Malaysia which most Malaysians can relate to (Solomon et al, 2006, P.15) (at 3rd to 5th seconds). Moreover, the engagement with the audience can be felt when the advertisement kept switching between the point-of-view of the audience viewing the delivery man and the point-of-view of the deliveryman at 2nd to 28th seconds. This technique is used to create a connection with the audience which gives the audience the same feeling as the delivery man: fear.

However, it is worth noting that too much emotion involved may cause to misleading information as there are no facts to support the messages. The usage of unpleasant elements (for example, fear) in the advertisement can backfire as the audience may miss out on the message it tried to deliver.

#### **4.2 Discussion**

The findings of this study are found to be relevant with other past studies as the results are profoundly similar; all studies pointed out that the rhetorical elements, logos, ethos, and pathos are widely used in the advertisement. Logos in the McDonald's advertisement are used in consideration of three characteristics, namely clarity, conciseness, and arrangement. Clarity is measured by how clear the message is, conciseness is described as the ideal headline, and arrangement is based on the design and strategy of the advertisement. Logos is also a powerful tool to provide a strong impression on the audience to the product as highlighted by Vu (2017). This also explains why the brand stressed on logos more in their advertisement (Liyana, 2018). Ethos in this study is also analysed according to two characteristics: credibility and reference. Credibility is defined as trust built from the brand with the audience, whereas reference is used to persuade by appealing to authority or credibility. The results are similar in regards to Yu's (2016) study where the researcher highlighted the usage of credible people or reference in order to appeal to the audience. Credibility in ethos is an important characteristic as it can also be used to deliver strong political messages in an advertisement (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2019).

Finally, the findings pertaining pathos are also accurate as they are similar to past researches such as Yu (2016), which conveys that pathos affects the audience emotionally, which aligns with how it affects the audience's psychological needs. Tone is used to affect the audience's attitude, while emphasis is the way the advertisement conveys the information. In addition to that, engagement is used to observe how it appeals to viewers' emotion.

## 5. Recommendations

Further studies should include audience feedback for more in-depth analysis as this paper aims to simply ascertain the rhetorical elements used in the video advertisement. The findings of this rhetorical element study should lend further insights into rhetorical elements that appeal more to the audience.

This paper is limited to one business document, and specifically focuses on the rhetorical elements. However, it has highlighted how logos, ethos and pathos that are used in the McDonald's delivery video advertisement. Future research should also highlight the needs of professional development among advertisers. Advertisers should have the basic knowledge of what an advertisement should fundamentally constitute and not only focusing too much on their "personal messages".

## 6. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the rhetorical elements used in McDonald's delivery advertisement and to sum it up, it is found that the advertisement contains all elements of appeal; logos, pathos, and ethos. Logos and ethos can easily be found in the advertisement as the video clearly stated the messages, and in addition to the brand, McDonald's itself is widely known to the public. The video advertisement also uses pathos as an attempt to draw the audience's attention to the advertisement by bringing the audience's emotional responses using suitable tone and the surrounding elements. This element causes the viewers to be more invested in the advertisement as the messages are easily conveyed.

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