

## An Assessment of Linguistic Strategies Used in Healthcare Content Marketing on Facebook

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### Abstract

Marketing is defined Marketing is the management process that identifies, anticipates, and satisfies customers' requirements profitably. Language enables Marketers to deliver valuable messages about their products and services to consumers. This paper aims to analyse the linguistic and persuasive strategies used in content marketing of health care products on Facebook. The study employed a descriptive design to highlight the linguistic features used in Facebook's Content Marketing to influence consumers. The study used a document analysis method in selecting healthcare content from Facebook, which consisted of excerpts of written content purposively selected from healthcare Facebook pages. The sample included 11 Facebook pages from which four excerpts were drawn to make 44 content items. Simple random sampling was then performed to select 23 content items. The analysis involved a qualitative categorisation of the various themes of language used by Facebook users. The study established that features such as pronouns, repetitions, translations, colloquial language, and parallelism were found to play a significant role in enhancing CM efficacy by making the content captivating, memorable, readable, and persuasive. The study recommends that for marketers to create a strong presence in Facebook content marketing, they should use linguistic features that can make them stand out among the thousands of messages that the consumers are exposed to daily.

**Key terms:** Facebook, healthcare content marketing, linguistic strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Advances in technology, especially the creation of social media, have changed the way marketing is done globally. The Web, especially different social media platforms such as Facebook, has transformed the way marketing and advertising are done. Marketing or advertising is no longer just selling products, appealing to the masses, or pushing messages from the company to the consumers (Scott, 2007). Instead, it is about the exchange of information between the users. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms enable users to connect by inviting friends, creating their profiles, and exchanging emails and instant messages (Ibid). It is because of these features that social media have that they have turned into an opportunity for marketers and a challenge at the same time for marketers to create brand awareness (Sabate et al., 2014). Gavi et al. (2015) have pointed out that social media is a gold mine of social interaction in which brands can listen to consumers' needs and demands, build loyalty support, share information about products and services and increase sales.

Facebook is a popular social media platform. It was the first social network to surpass the one billion monthly active users (STATISTAT, 2015). This makes it a platform for most social media marketers to post their messages since they can be easily seen by a wider audience. This assertion was confirmed by Hoffman (2013) when he observed that the emergence of various social media channels like YouTube and Twitter, among others, had created an environment where lots of information in the form of texts and images compete for consumer attention. In such an environment where lots of information has saturated the internet, marketers must create effective marketing content that helps to target the right audience, get them involved with the brand and help to build long-term relationships with customers. It has also been observed that consumers share more than 600,000 pieces of content daily and that consumers, in turn, create around 25,000 social media posts every sixty seconds (Lieb, 2012).

Content marketing (CM) is the kind of marketing that aims at attracting and retaining customers by curating content that is of value and being consistent to attract consumer behaviour (Content Marketing Institute, 2012). Forbes (2014) has described content marketing

as the creation and distribution of content that is valuable and relevant to consumers to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience to drive profitable customer action. Arising from this definition, brand managers need to make accurate and efficient decisions on social media content marketing. They must decide on the type of content, style to use and information that should be shared with the various consumers to achieve marketing goals.

Lieb (2012) has said that the primary focus of CM is to develop and disseminate content that embraces the customers' needs and interests. She contends that CM aids brand recognition, trust, authority, credibility, loyalty, and authenticity. She explains that CM creates value and benefits for the people; it answers questions and provides crucial information. It makes customers and prospects more educated and informed to make purchase decisions or associate with organisations and recommend purchases to other colleagues or superiors. For example, if a brand sells supplements, it must educate people on how such supplements help, their benefits, and how natural they are. The content must be written to attract customers to read the adverts (ads) as crucial for their needs and, more importantly, to have positive attitudes towards the organisation or its products/services.

Although the important role that content marketing plays in ensuring the goals of marketing are achieved, it's ambiguous how to develop and disseminate content to maximise engagement and other marketing outcomes such as website referrals, Word of Mouth or even sales (Stephen, Sciandra & Inman, 2015). The Absence of these important insights in the design and dissemination of content might lead to many losses in terms of money and time for marketers, as they are likely to engage in marketing campaigns that bear little fruit. The study sought to examine the linguistic features used in Facebook content marketing of healthcare products in selected countries.

Language plays a key role in designing content. Several scholars have emphasised the important role of language in creating marketing content (Leech, 1966; Bolinger, 1987; Hughes, 1987), among others. Leech (1966), for instance, mentions four functions of language in marketing. The content must hold

attention value, memorability, readability, and selling power (Leech, 1966). Vasiloaia (2009) agrees with Leech (1966) on the four marketing content functions.

Although the approach proposed by the scholars has been widely applied in traditional advertising, it is still helpful for studying most marketing content. Hence, it gives this study a substantial basis for looking at the functions of the linguistic strategies used by healthcare content marketers on Facebook to lure the audience. This study sought to assess the various language features used in Content Marketing on Facebook's social media platform.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Most studies on marketing language use have focused on traditional forms of marketing, such as advertising (Kannan & Tyagi, 2013). The current study analysed linguistic and persuasive strategies used in Facebook content marketing of healthcare products. Although CM differs in approach to conventional marketing, especially advertising, the final goal remains to attract the audience to take positive action regarding a product or service (Lieb, 2012). This may imply that even content marketing may use language features that may assist in educating and converting consumers. There are similarities between content marketing and advertising language because both aim to inform the consumer about products and services and their benefits. The current study borrowed some aspects of advertising language, like content marketing, which might assist in content marketing.

Advertising language is a “loaded language,” according to Leech (1966). Bolinger (1980) has gone further to author a book entitled “*Language: The Loaded Weapon*.” The reason advertising is called the loaded weapon, according to observations by Vasiloaia (2009), is that the aim of marketing is achieved using a relatively weak structure, which is usually combined in a simple group around a simple unit of meaning that can be easily remembered. Hughes (1987) has further called advertising “linguistic capitalism”, pointing out that advertising is done from a linguistic point of view to create an unreal, dubious manifestation of free enterprise in which language is the common property of speech. Agencies exploit communities as a natural resource in the sectional interests of their client's marketing programs. The observations by the scholars

made about advertising language indicate that it is not the everyday language used by the speech community. Rather, it is a language that has been manipulated and exploited to achieve marketing objectives. There seems to be a similarity in how the language of marketing is used and the language of advertising (Forbes, 2014).

## Linguistic Features used in Content Marketing

Literature concerning linguistic features of marketing is available, although limited literature is available on content marketing. Scholars such as Leech (1966) identified four functions of advertising language, which he says have consequences on the language used and which the current study heavily borrowed from. The first function of advertising, according to Leech, is attention value, which he says is achieved by breaking the conventions of language use, such as wrong spelling, neologisms, puns, grammatical solecism, rhymes, semantical deviations and putting language in inappropriate or unorthodox contexts. The study sought to examine how language is used in content marketing to attract the attention of consumers so that they can be attracted to and read the content of content marketing on Facebook.

The second function of the language used is to enhance readability. Since the reader needs to search for quick and straightforward information, the style of adverts is mostly colloquial, using simple and familiar Vocabulary. Leech has called the practice of using informal language associated with private contexts in public or business communication “public colloquium”. According to Leech, informal styles suggest an easy-going social relationship between the reader and the writer. They are characterised by informal addresses to the reader mainly through the use of the second person pronoun you, causal colloquial expressions and a relative lack of politeness markers. The current study will determine whether these features are also used in content marketing on Facebook. This is because content marketing aims to create valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract customers (Forbes, 2014).

The third function of marketing, which has a consequence on the language used, is mobility. According to Leech (1966), adverts must be remembered to follow a similar sequence over time.

Repetition is a common feature used in advertising for the sake of enhancing memory. Several linguistic features are repetitive and are used primarily in the language of advertising. Such features include metrical rhythm, alliteration, and grammatical parallelism, semantic and syntactic repetition and rhyme, among others.

The fourth function of advertising, which affects the language used, is selling power. In the end, all advertisements want to sell. According to Leech (1966), as quoted in Vasioia (2014), prompting people to take the right action can best be achieved by clear instructions informing consumers what to do next. Imperatives are used to tell people what kind of action they should take. Also, adjectives with positive meanings are mostly used in advertising language to encourage consumers to take action. The study examines the features that language content creators on Facebook use to instruct consumers to purchase their products.

Besides Leech's perspective of analysing language use in advertising, Grey (2008) categorises advertising language into lexical and syntactical features. The linguistic features discussed by Grey include hyperbole, neologism, weasel words, familiar language, simple Vocabulary, Euphemism, humour, short sentences, long noun phrases, imperatives, colloquial language, present tense, syntactic parallelism, and association.

*Hyperbole* is figurative language that exaggerates something more than realistically (Grey, 2008). The purpose of hyperbole is to lure people toward the exaggerated (Koa, 2019). This may be used in CM to emphasise the educative aspects to strengthen the content's selling power. *Neologisms* are created by joining several words to create an entirely new dish. Neologism consists of two or more combined words to make a new word (Grey, 2008). They have been used to attract the attention of consumers. *Weasel Word* is a word that suggests something without being too specific (Grey, 2008). They make the audience more curious about the advertised service/product. In CM, this may be used to arouse users' emotions towards the product/service.

*Familiar Language* involves second-person pronouns and provides a friendlier attitude (Grey, 2008). Familiar language is the language that makes consumers feel involved in the advert (Koa, 2019). It is essential in CM as it helps the marketer educate the audience in a more uncomplicated and straightforward language. *Simple Vocabulary* works better in adverts (Grey, 2008). It is the kind of language that attracts the audience to understand the advert easily (Koa, 2019). Copywriters must choose the right simple words to use in their content. Simple words are suitable for CM, as readers can grasp the meaning quickly.

*Repetition* is another feature. This is the language used to make the advert look unique, compelling, and easy to remember (Grey, 2008). Repetition is useful in making some parts of the content more memorable to the audience. On the other hand, Euphemism is a feature recommended by Grey (2008) as a soothing or indirect expression that replaces the offensive, taboo, or more direct one. In agreement, Koa (2019) points out that Euphemism is used instead of an unpleasant expression to make people comfortable consuming the content. This is also among the best features of CM as it creates an easy-going relationship with the audience.

*Humour* is defined as a quality in something that makes it look funny (Grey, 2008). Humour may be visual or verbal, and humour in ads shows the product's positivity. This kind of language is preferred in CM to entertain the audience and smoothly educate them. The use of *short sentences* is a helpful feature in helping people quickly consume adverts (Grey, 2008; Koa, 2019). Short sentences help the readers to grasp the meaning without straining and are the best in CM because there is a need to create content with simple language for the audience's straightforward grasping of meaning.

Content marketers use *long noun phrases* in ads to capture the audience's attention (Grey, 2008). It is a group of words used to add quality to the product. A long noun phrase may consist of three or more words or two or more independent phrases in an utterance (Koa, 2019). These can be used in CM, especially healthcare content, to explain a concept from various concepts. In addition, *imperatives* depict an order (Grey, 2008). The imperative goal is to make

consumers act positively toward the advertised service brand/product. Call to Action (CTAs) words are good examples of imperatives through which, in healthcare CM, marketers educate people, helping them adopt new health habits.

*Simple and colloquial language* is another syntactic feature. Colloquial expressions differ from what they are observed (Grey, 2008). For example, the use of contractions falls into this category. This kind of language use plays better in CM. It allows marketers to educate people in a less formal context to create an easy-going relationship and a calm and friendly communicative environment. *The present tense* gives the notion that the advertised is real. A present tense suggests a universal timelessness (Grey, 2008). This language makes the content look fresh and current, using examples in the present tense.

*Syntactic parallelism* consists of phrases or sentences of the same structure (Grey, 2008). Structures appear respectively in a text, complementing each other (Koa, 2019). It is used as a tool for persuasion as it balances the flow of ideas. It also helps make the language used in CM good for easy memorability by the audience. Vasiloaia (2009) has pointed out that advertising language uses techniques similar to poetic texts. He states that the technical effect is the advantage of Mnemonic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and assonance. The study sought to examine whether poetic features are also used in creating content for Facebook in marketing healthcare products.

There is a similarity between the features identified by Grey and Leech (1966). Some standard features include hyperbole, neologism, familiar language, simple Vocabulary, Euphemism, humour, short sentences, imperatives, colloquial language, present tense, and syntactic parallelism. The linguistic features also seem to be serving the same functions in advertising. The current study aims to identify the components used in content marketing on Facebook in disseminating information on healthcare products. The study borrowed heavily from some of the linguistic features identified by the two schools.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings show how content marketers used such features to attain CM success on Facebook through highlighted linguistic features.

*Repetition* is one of the most used linguistic features in the language of advertising. This linguistic feature allows the communicator to use sounds or words repetitively to make something stand out or emphasise something. In the analysis, the study found the use of repetition as follows. In CT6, the author used the following extract:

*Kuta hizi huanza kuwa na vijitundu  
**vidogo vidogo** na kadiri muda  
unavyokwenda bila kutibiwa, vitundu  
hivi huongezeka ukubwa...*

These walls begin having **small** holes, and as time goes by without treatment, these holes enlarge...

Dr Amar's Facebook page in CT06 educates people about pain during sexual intercourse. The author of the content used the word 'video' repetitively to strengthen the point. The marketer is educating the audience about pain during sexual intercourse. One of the causes mentioned that underlines the problem is fungi. Hence, in explaining how fungi can affect women and cause pain during sexual intercourse, the author uses the word 'vidogo' twice to show that the problem starts and escalates. The walls tend to have tiny holes (like there is no problem) and eventually enlarge and cause problems for the specific person. The repetition was used to show how the problem starts with a minor challenge, but in the end, it may lead to a much bigger problem.

Another use of repetition was analysed in CT07. The author of the content used the following extract:

*Hivyo unaweza ukawasiliana nao  
**kisirisiri** kupata namna gani uweze  
kuachana na hiyo hali.*

Therefore, you can **secretly** communicate with them to find a way to leave this situation.

CT07 comes from the Herbal Clinic, which educates about constipation. The author used the phrase

'kisirisiri', meaning 'secretly,' explaining that some people may feel embarrassed to find medication for constipation. They encourage the audience to see them for medication because they can keep their information confidential. Therefore, repetition emphasises the level of privacy they can guarantee when helping people with such problems.

The repetition above is of a word appearing consecutively. The study also found that some content had a repetition of the name/word of the product being explained. In CT16, the word 'fruit' was repeated several times within the content as follows:

Although **fruits** have fibre, most **fruits** also have a substantial amount of metabolisable carbohydrate calories, so **fruits** make a suitable exchange for starchy carbs at times. For example, in a meal of eggs, spinach, and oats, you could drop the oats and have **fruit** instead. If you need to keep your calories low or you want a very simple meal, another option is lean protein and **fruit**...

In this regard, repetition has been used differently as the author intends to make the word appear several times to the reader to make it stick in the mind. According to Vasiloaia (2009), repetition makes the content memorable. How the word has been used may influence readers to remember the message of the content. This kind of repetition is also a function of coherence that makes the flow of ideas move smoothly.

Another example of repetition was analysed in CT19. The author was educating about 'essentials' and their importance in body metabolism.

The textbook definition of "**essential**" refers to whether someone's body can manufacture its own nutrients or has to wait to be supplied with food. Although the body has essential amino acids, **essential** fatty acids, **essential** vitamins, and **essential** minerals, it does not have **essential** carbs. If one has all the **essentials**, plus adequate energy, they could survive and even

stay healthy on protein and fat with near-zero carbs.

The word 'essential' appears several times in the content. It may be implicit or explicit, but such use of language works better for the content's memorability (Vasiloaia, 2009). The content explains the intake of carbohydrates. In educating people about the micronutrients of the food, the word 'essential' was unavoidable, as it focused on the content. The author used the word several times to influence readers to get it as the focus. This kind of language use may help the content readers remember what has been recurring. It presents a significant part of the message that you can have essentials from various food types, but not carbohydrates. In the same content, the author used the word 'carb' repetitively. The term 'carb' represents carbohydrates. The word is used repetitively, which may significantly impact the audience. Both repeated words in this content are nouns. The word 'carb' repetition may influence people to remember that carbohydrates are not necessary for 'essentials.' This may cause them to add other varieties of food to their meals as advised.

Repetition is the linguistic feature that works better in making the content memorable and easy to remember. Repetition also improves the way the content appears to the audience. Repetition of the words in the content, as seen in CT16 and CT19, works as a cohesive tool for the easy flow of ideas. It helps the reader pass through the content by seeing the repeated words as the message's focus.

## Use of Pronouns

Marketing content employs a considerable use of pronouns, just like other types of discourse. The study's use of 'you' and 'your' pronouns was so extensive. This is referred to as *you-attitude* or *you-perspective* in the context of marketing. Content Marketing was found to use a more second-person point of view to address the audience directly. Almost all marketers had a considerable use of a second-person point of view.

Using second-person pronouns enables the marketer/writer to address the target audience directly. It is written with consideration for the people who are the consumers of the content. The 'you'-

perspective provides many advantages to marketers, and it can be incorporated easily into CM through the genuine concern of the audience. According to Locker (1997), the benefits of using second-person pronouns include creating a friendly atmosphere, motivating the reader, and establishing mutual trust.

In analysing the content, it was found that marketers used second-person pronouns to attain familiarity with the audience. For example, in CT13, the marketer used second-person pronouns as follows:

To avoid Heart surgery in the future, know **your** limit.

Do **your** due diligence before **your** workout.

Some paid Fit Trainers will not tell **you** the important facts for **your** heart, but **you** need to know this! Know **your** heart's limitations.

The primary method of calculating one's maximum heart rate is subtracting **one's** age from 220. For example, if **you're** 35 years old, subtract 35 from 220 to get a maximum heart rate of 185. This is the maximum number of times their heart should beat per minute during exercise.

Anything more will force **your** heart to build extra muscles to accommodate **your** needs at that time, but when you get older and are not living up to **your** heart's expectations, **you** will start having heart problems and eventually Heart Surgery.

CT13 comes from Christine Honore Forbes's page, and the content discusses the importance of people knowing their limitations before workouts. The marketer has used the second-person pronouns 'you' and 'your' several times to make the content seem directed to the target audience. According to Grey (2008), this is the way of forming familiarity with the audience. The marketer used a you-attitude across the content to make the readers see that the message is meant for them.

In this extract from CT13, second-person pronouns have been used thirteen times. It reflects how the author has used the second person to present the message to the audience. The news being presented is about the wellness of the human heart. Regarding the seriousness of the matter under discussion, the marketer chose to send the message using the 'you'-perspective to address people directly. The marketer delivered the message directly to the audience to create a sense of responsibility.

In CT6, the marketer used the following extract to deliver the message directly to the audience by creating a sense of familiarity through the use of the second-person perspective:

*Kumbuka matatizo ya uzazi unayokutana nayo kama maumivu makali kipindi cha hedhi, ugumba, kukosa hamu ya tendo la ndoa, kupata maumivu wakati wa tendo la ndoa, mpangilio mbaya wahedhi, uzito mkubwa nakitambi siyo kitu ulichoumbiwa, bali nimatokeo ya Maisha unayoishi, kwa kifupi matatizo yote haya chanzo chake kikubwa ni kuvurugika kwa homoni za kike au hormonal imbalance. Matatizo haya siyo kwamba ni mabadiliko ya vinasaba kutokanana umri, ila ni matokeo ya mpangilio mbovu wa vichocheo ama homoni zako na hasa homoni za uzazi. Hivo utakubaliana nami kwamba wanawake hawajaumbiwa kupata shida hizi zote hata kama umri wako umeenda, unahitaji kuendelea kufurahia tendo la ndoa. Sawazisha mpangilio wako homoni zako na matatizo yote haya utakuwa umeyakimbiza.*

Remember, reproductive problems like severe pain during menstruation, infertility, lack of sexual drive, pain during sexual intercourse, poor menstrual cycle, obesity, and a big belly are not what **you** were created for. Still, they result from the kind of life **you** are

living. In short, all these problems are sourced in female hormonal imbalance. These problems are not because of changes in DNA due to age, but because of **your** hormone imbalance, especially reproductive hormones. Therefore, **you** will agree that women were not created to face all these problems. Even if **you** are old, **you** need to continue enjoying sex. Balance **your** hormones, and all these problems will vanish.

CT6 from Dr Amar educates people about pain during sexual intercourse. The content has utilised the second person point of view in expressing the message. In the Kiswahili version of the extract, the marketer stressed the second-person view using the 'u' prefixes equivalent to 'you' in English. Also, some other words, '**zako**' and '**wako**', are second-person possessive pronouns equal to '**your**' in English. All these uses of the second-person view help the author to direct the content to the audience. Just in CT6, second-person pronouns have been used more than 40 times. According to Leech (1966), using a 'you-attitude' helps in the readability of the content. Marketers make the audience the point of focus for the content, which triggers audience engagement.

Another example comes from CT18, which talks about food quality in fighting weight loss.

Eat fewer processed foods & more natural foods. It's always better for **your** health, and it may help **you** with **your** deficit. The trick here is to increase nutrient density while controlling calorie density. This is much easier to do with natural foods like vegetables and fish than with man-made foods like pastries or burgers. **You** could get away with eating low-quality, highly processed foods and still lose weight as long as **you** stayed in a calorie deficit. Still, when **your** calories are getting lower and lower, it only makes sense to get the highest nutrient density possible from every calorie **you** eat.

For **Your** Instant Weight Loss Diet Plan/Customised Diet Plan:

In the content, second-person pronouns have been used eight times. Like in other content that had a considerable use of the second person, the primary purpose of using such a linguistic feature is to give the audience the feeling of being the focus of discussion for easy engagement. Much of the content employed second-person pronouns at large, which may give them a sense of belonging to the audience.

The second-person pronouns enable writers to emphasise their readers instead of their products, services, or brands. Marketers familiarise themselves with the audience through engaging content (Leech, 1966; Grey, 2008). This linguistic feature creates a better communication atmosphere between the author and the audience for easy engagement. The marketer/copywriter's work ensures that the written content adheres to the audience's needs and wishes. Besides, the content must refer to the audience as the point of reference. In CM, it does not matter about the marketer but the intended audience.

In the present study, marketers had a considerable use of second-person pronouns. This linguistic feature was the second most highly used linguistic feature in the study; it was used 167 times across all content items, and 19 participants were found to use the feature. The 'you-perspective' is essential in ensuring the audience feels the importance of being the Centre of the discussion. This perspective cannot be achieved without the proper use of second-person pronouns.

## Loanwords

Content Marketing in the healthcare industry needs much education to be produced for the audience. According to Grey (2008), advertising language uses neologisms as words coined to make the content look unique. However, it was different from the analysis conducted in this study. It was found that marketers used many loanwords from the English language in the Kiswahili language. Loanwords are words from the source language that are used in the target language to attain a specific goal. According to Löber (2017), marketers use loanwords to evoke associations and internationality, attraction, language comprehension, authenticity, and recognition.

In CT1 from Dr Boaz Mkumbo, which talks of pumpkin seed flour, the use of loanwords was found, as shown in the following extract:

*Unga huu una mafuta mazuri ya  
**Omega 3***

This flour has good oil of **omega-3**

*Una boost nguvu ya mwili kwa  
sababu ya kiwango kingi cha  
**selenium, Zinc na Magnesium**. Ndio  
maana wengine huhusisha na  
kuongezeka kwa stamina ya tendo la  
ndoa. Hii ni kwa sababu ya kuwa  
**Booster***

It **boosts** the body's energy because of the high amount of **selenium, zinc, and magnesium**. That is why others associate it with increased sexual stamina. This is because of being a **booster**.

*Ina **boost** shughuli za mwili maana  
inakiwango kingi cha madini kama  
**zinc selenium na magnesium***

It **boosts** metabolic activities because it has a high amount of minerals like zinc, **selenium**, and **magnesium**.

The content has used several loanwords from the English language in Kiswahili. Words such as 'omega 3', 'selenium', zinc, 'magnesium', and 'booster' were used. They were used without translation or any effort for customisation. Therefore, using loanwords may be a communicative strategy to communicate without changing the message. This may have implications for people who do not understand the borrowed words.

In the CT06, the following extracts were used to show loanwords:

*Uvimbe huu kitaalam hujulikana kwa  
majina mengi lakini '**fibroid**' ndilo jina  
linolotumika sana*

This swelling is technically known by many names, but '**fibroid**' is more popular

*Yawezekana ikawa ni tatizo la mirija  
ya uzazi kujaa maji machafu kutokana  
na kuzaliana kwa bacteria wabaya  
eneo hilo, tatizo ambalo hujulikana  
kitaalam kama **Hyrosalpinx**.*

It may be a problem of tubes being filled with inadequate fluids due to the reproduction of harmful bacteria in that area, an issue which is technically known as **Hyrosalpinx**. *Vyakula vya ngano pia vyenye protini inayoitwa **gluten** vinaharibu mpangilio wa homoni zako.*

Wheat foods, also containing a protein known as **gluten**, destroy your hormonal balance.

The CT6, which is about pain during sexual intercourse, also used words borrowed from the English language. The author used 'fibroid' to represent the swelling in women's genital parts. Also, 'hydrosalpinx' was used to describe a health disorder in women, and 'gluten' was used to represent the protein that causes hormonal imbalance. Despite other scholars having various reasons for using foreign words in marketing campaigns, the healthcare industry in languages like Kiswahili may lack some of the equivalents to use. But also, others may be used accidentally by authors even though there are terms to represent such words.

In CT8, the author used the following extracts:

*Michirizi hii hutokana na kutanuka  
kwa Ngozi na ongezeko la **hormone**  
ya **Cortisone** ambayo inazalishwa na  
tezi zilizopo kwenye figo kitaalamu  
zinajulikana kama **adrenal glands**.  
**Hormone** hii huathiri uwezo wa ngozi  
kutanuka na kusinyaa.*

These stretch marks result from the stretching of the skin and the increase in the **Cortisone hormone**, which is produced by the glands in the kidneys, which are technically known as **adrenal glands**. This **hormone** affects the ability of the skin to stretch and shrink.

Matumizi ya dawa za kupaka (cream)  
zilizokatika group la  
**CORTICOSTEROID** mfano Carolight  
kwani dawa hizi zinaathiri uwezo wa  
ngozi kutanuka na kusinyaa.

The use of creams within the group of **CORTICOSTEROID**, such as caro light, affects the skin's ability to stretch and shrink.

In the content CT8, the marketer also used loanwords to achieve his goal. Words such as 'hormone,' 'cortisone,' 'adrenal glands,' and 'corticosteroid' were used in the content. The word 'hormone' may be deliberately used because Kiswahili has a word for 'hormone,' which is 'homoni.' Using an English word to represent another word present in the Kiswahili language may help attain a specific goal, such as showing off. Other words used may be due to a lack of appropriate equivalents in the Kiswahili language to carry such words, hence using loanwords.

According to Löber (2017), in marketing, neologisms are used to evoke associations and internationality. Someone using loanwords in their content may be doing so for various reasons, like associating with the English-speaking world. The use of English in Kiswahili content may signal that the marketer is well informed, as they use the English language to expand their audience by including some of the words from the most used language across the world. Loanwords also work better for capturing readers' attention (Leech, 1966) by creating curiosity to see what is meant by the author. The loanwords may be used for further research by the audience on other sites.

Loanwords have been used extensively in the Kiswahili content. English content has no use of loanwords. Considering the healthcare field being used in the Kiswahili language makes it hard to have all equivalents in the Kiswahili language. That is why marketers found themselves using loanwords. Loanwords were the third most used linguistic feature in the study; they were used 69 times. CT22 was used 22 times, which is a greater number compared to all other content items.

## Use of Translations

Another linguistic feature that was depicted in the analysis is the use of translations. Marketers used translations differently in their content. This linguistic feature happens when the author writes something in Kiswahili (a word or a phrase); then, they translate it into the English language within the content. It is not a translation of the whole text but just an extract from the full content. The translation follows the source text consecutively. According to Löber (2017), this kind of language used in ads may not differ in purpose from loanwords. In this case, a foreign language is redundant to the Kiswahili audience, but it may be crucial for other audiences to use the English language.

In the analysis, it was found that marketers, on several occasions, used translations in their content. For example, in CT1, the marketer used the following translation:

**'Unga Wa Mbegu za Maboga: Dr  
Boaz Kitchen™ Pumpkin Seed Flour.'**

The extract is the title for CT1. The content comes from Dr Boaz Mkumbo, MD's Facebook page, and the content is about pumpkin seed flour. The translation was used in the title. The marketer may have thought of various reasons for using such creativity in writing the content. Löber (2017) says one reason for using foreign words is for internationality. Then, it may be possible that the author wanted to have a bigger audience know what the content is all about. Therefore, using such a translation in the content may help even people who do not know the Kiswahili language to understand that the content was about 'pumpkin seed flour.'

Besides, the marketer may have thought of using translation in the title to make other Kiswahili-speaking people understand what is meant by 'Unga wambegu za maboga' in the English language. It may be possible to use only the Kiswahili version, but it may leave some of the audience behind. For example, in Kenya, they call 'pumpkin' 'malengee,' using the phrase 'unga wa mbegu za maboga' may leave the other Kiswahili audience uncertain of what is meant by the marketer. This is vital because content on Facebook reaches a bigger audience worldwide. In the same content, CT1, the marketer used another

translation. The translation was used to explain further 'Msongo wa sumu mwilini,' using the 'Oxidative stress' phrase. The purpose may be to clarify for other readers who may not know the Kiswahili meaning of oxidative stress.

Another use of translation was depicted in CT2. The marketer used the following extract:

**'MATUMIZI YA UNGA WA KARANGALOZI: Dr Boaz Kitchen ALMONDFLOUR'**

CT2 comes from Dr Boaz Mkumbo, MD, Facebook page, and the content is about almond flour. Again, on this occasion, the author has used translation in the content. The reason may be to reach a bigger audience and let many people know what is contained in the content. Löber (2017) explained that internationality might be purposely used for Kiswahili-speaking people, as almond nuts are not so familiar to many people. Using a Kiswahili phrase 'unga wa karangalozi' may be harder even for Kiswahili-speaking people themselves. But including a translation within the title may help the audience know that 'karangalozi', like something new, means 'almond nuts.' It is purposely used in the content by the marketer to enable an easy understanding of the content.

In the same content, CT2, another translation was used. The marketer wrote: 'kusafisha sumu mwilini yaani free radicals.' That is to say, the marketer used the phrase 'free radicals, which is in English, to explain the case presented in Kiswahili.

In CT8, the author also used the translation as follows:

**'TATIZO LA MICHIRIZI KWENYE NGOZI (STRETCH MARKS) NA TIBA YAKE'**

CT8 is about stretch marks. It is good to note that this is not the content in regular fields; it is content in the healthcare industry. Using only the phrase 'michirizi kwenye ngozi' as meaning 'stretch marks' may not be understood by other people, whether in English or Kiswahili-speaking communities. Due to technical fields like health, some of the terminologies may not be well-known to laypeople. Hence, translation may help many people understand what is explained and help them find more about the matter by searching for extra information online.

Apart from translations used in the titles, it was found that some translations were used within the content. For example:

*'mafuta (fat)'*

*'upande wa juu wa mikono (biceps)'*

*'dawa zakupaka (cream)'*

These may be purposely used in the content to allow a bigger audience to know what is being discussed in the content. Including English translation may help Kiswahili-speaking people search for more information regarding the same thing, which is discussed for further knowledge.

## Imperatives

These are linguistic constructions that tend to pose a state of command to the audience. They are useful expressions when one is trying to give orders directly to the other counterpart in communication. According to Grey (2008), imperatives are used to make orders to people. In the context of marketing, Koa (2019) states that imperatives are used to make customers act in a particular way or buy or even join a brand community. The study found that marketers frequently use imperatives in health care content.

In CT23 from MKAZI WA WAKAZI Blogsports, which presents 14 ways to get rid of early ejaculation, the following extract was used:

*"Acha mawazo"*

'Stop overthinking';

*"jitibu magonjwa yafuatayo"*

'cure yourself of the following diseases;

*"acha ulevi"*

'Stop drunkenness';

*"fanya mazoezi ya viungo"*

'Do physical exercise';

*"tumia kitunguu swaumu"*

'Use garlic';

*"Kula tikitimaji"*

'Eat watermelon';

*"kunywa maji mengi kila siku"*

'Drink plenty of water daily.'

*"Tafuna mbegu za maboga"*

'Eat pumpkin seeds.'

The content is about the ways to deal with early ejaculation. The marketer presented 14 different

methods to deal with the problem. In offering the solution, he used direct conversation by directly talking to the audience. These extracts are sub-headers carrying the answers provided by the marketer. For example, when the marketer says "*Acha mawazo*", which means 'stop overthinking,' he directly addresses the audience by directing what to be done in such a particular situation. When he says "*jitibu magonjwa yafuatayo*", which means 'cure yourself of the following diseases,' that is to say, the audience is being given an obligation to follow if they really want to get rid of that particular health condition.

Apart from those examples, the marketer used the imperative "*acha ulevi*" from the same content, which means 'stop drunkenness.' The imperative has been used to show that finding the solution is crucial for exempting oneself from alcohol. Another imperative used is "*fanya mazoezi ya viungo*", which means 'do physical exercise.' This was used to emphasise the importance of physical exercise. The marketer also used "*tumia kitunguu saumu*", which means 'use garlic.' The phrase "*kula tikitimaji*", which means 'eat watermelon', was also used. In the same line of argument, the marketer used the imperatives "*kunywa maji mengi kila siku*" to mean 'drink plenty of water daily' and "*tafuna mbegu za maboga*" was used for 'eat pumpkin seeds.' These imperatives were used to show the importance of the methods presented in dealing with the early ejaculation problem. They are presented in the second-person view via imperatives to show the audience that they are obliged to take action.

In the analysis, several imperatives were depicted. In CT6 from Dr Amar, which is about pains during sexual intercourse, the author used the following imperatives in delivering the message and in trying to educate what to do for one to be able to get rid of pain during sexual intercourse.

*Epuka msongo wa mawazo;*  
Avoid stress

*Tafuta mazoezi rahisi ya kupunguza  
na kuepuka msongo wa mawazo*  
Find simple physical exercises to  
reduce stress.

*Hakikisha unapata usingizi wa  
kutosha walau masaa 8 mpaka 9 kila  
siku.*

Make sure you get enough sleep, at  
least 8 to 9 hours every day.

*Na pia punguza ama epuka kwa kiasi  
kikubwa matumizi ya pombe na  
vidonge*

Also, cut down or avoid the use of  
alcohol and drugs to a greater  
extent.

'*Epuka msongo wa mawazo*' means 'avoid stress.' This is used on this particular occasion to try to help women who suffer from a health condition. Another imperative used is '*Tafuta mazoezi rahisi yakupunguza nakuepuka msongo wa mawazo*', which is equivalent to the English expression 'find simple physical exercises to reduce stress.' These imperatives are geared to present the solution to show that the audience must fulfil what is required. Another imperative used is '*hakikisha unapata usingizi wakutosh awalau masaa 8 mpaka 9 kilasiku*' which means 'make sure you get enough sleep at least 8 to 9 hours every day'. This is another obligation presented in the content to remind the audience to get enough sleep. Another imperative is '*na pia punguza ama epuka kwa kiasikikubwa matumiziya pombe na vidonge*,' which is equivalent to 'also cut down or avoid excessive use of alcohol and drugs.' This was used to impart to the audience that alcohol may be one of the underlying causes. Imperatives are essential linguistic features in addressing the audience directly.

According to Koa (2019), imperatives are essential for appealing to the audience to take the marketer's desired steps. Therefore, in the healthcare industry, this kind of language use may be useful in a particular case to seek a way to arouse the courage of the audience to do something for their health. Leech (1966) says the marketing content must have selling power. Imperatives are potential linguistic features for the persuasion of the audience. They tend to address the audience in a more direct way to impose a sense of obligation.

From the study, most of the imperatives used were those pushing the audience to take a further step to heal their problem or live a better life. The study found

that imperatives were the fourth most used linguistic feature. Marketers used 63 imperatives across all content, and CT23 used 28 of them, which is higher than all other content.

## Syntactical Parallelism

These are linguistic features that were also found in the analysis. According to Leech (1966), syntactical parallelism can be defined as a repetition of patterns of two or more similar concepts in the same form of structure. There are various reasons why marketers use parallelism in their content. Some of the reasons could be to make the content attractive, to emphasise the content, or even to make the form memorable to the audience. In the analysis, it was found that marketers, on several occasions, used parallel features to deliver their messages. For example, in CT6, the marketer used the following parallel features:

*Kuongeza ufanyaji kazi wamfuko wa mayai (ovaries), kuzuia Saratani yamatiti, kuimarisha afya ya mifupa kwa wanawake walio komahedhi (menopause).*

**To increase** the functioning of the ovaries, **prevent** breast cancer, **and improve** bone health in women who have stopped menstruating (menopause).

CT6 from Dr. Amar educates the audience about pains during sexual intercourse. The syntactic structure used on this occasion involves using the 'to-infinitive verb' form in consecutive clauses. The marketer is trying to mention some of the medications used to cure the health condition. The parallel features were used in mentioning the benefits of Soy capsules, the supplement used to treat health conditions. The parallelism used brings a clear flow of ideas as three consecutive to-infinitive verbs were used in the clauses to present the supplement's benefits.

Another use of parallel features in CT07 comes from the Herbal Clinic. The content provides education about constipation. For example, the marketer used the following extract:

*Choo kiwe laini saizi ya ndizi, kisitoe harufu, kisiwe cha kukatikakatika*

*kama cha mbuzi, usisukume kinatakiwa kitoke chenyewe.*

The stool **should be** as soft as a banana, not smell, and **not be** in pieces like the goat's stool; you **should** not tense; it has to come effortlessly.

The marketer educates the audience on what constipation is, its effects, and what people can do to eliminate the problem. Then, in explaining how the stool should be normal, the marketer uses parallel clauses, signalled by using the auxiliary verb 'should.' The content has been presented in a particular manner that enables the flow of ideas to be smooth and proper rhythm. Parallelism, like on this occasion, helps to deliver a good flow of ideas. It also acts as the catalyst for readers to quickly grasp the message from the content.

In CT14, which comes from Christine Honore's Facebook page, it talks about the remedies for the flu. The marketer used the following parallel feature:

**What** is Echinacea, and **what** is its use?

The marketer is providing education on how people could help themselves with the flu and cold. They use the questions as the parallel features signalled by using the word 'what' to depict what needs to be understood by the audience about Echinacea medication for flu. By presenting the ideas in this form, the marketer may make the audience curious to know about Echinacea and its uses to help cure the flu and cold.

When writing their content, marketers have plenty of ideas and have several ways to put them down for their customers and other audiences. According to LET, marketers tend to make specific linguistic choices to influence the audience in their writings. This means that even in using parallel features in presenting ideas, it may be among the choices marketers make for their message to be delivered in a more exciting flow and with an excellent aesthetic manner for understanding and memorability. From the analysis, this linguistic feature was used 42 times across all content items.

## Colloquial Language

Colloquial language does not follow formal communication rules, whether in spoken or written communication. According to Vasiloaia (2009), colloquial language is the non-formal language use style that presents a casual social relationship between the writer and the audience. This language is characterised by informal terms of addressing things and directly addressing the reader inappropriately. The analysis found that marketers also used informal language to deliver their message to the audience. For example, in CT13, the marketer used the following clause with a contraction within *'if you're 45 years old*. Contractions are usually discouraged on formal occasions as they do not correlate with the formal use of language. However, one of the tips for writing better online content is to reduce the formality of the content. In the social media environment, communication taking place there is often in a friendlier tone; hence, it requires marketers to have their communication skills updated (Nikitina, 2012) to communicate efficiently.

Another informal feature was depicted in CT17, which comes from the Weight Shake Factory Facebook page. The content talks about the reasons why overweight people do not lose weight. The marketer used the following clause, *'WHY OVERWEIGHT PEOPLE DON'T LOSE WEIGHT?'* in the content's title. The marketer used a contraction, which presents an informal language use. Such uses are usually avoided when people write in other fields, like academics. Still, in marketing, they are encouraged to make the content look less formal for the audience's smooth engagement.

Another example comes from CT19, which comes from the Weightshake Factory page. In the content, the author educates the audience about essentials and their importance in body metabolism. The marketer used the following sentence with some colloquial signals within it:

Some **low-carb** diet advocates argue that we **don't** need carbs at all.

Using the short form in a text without first presenting its long form is not standard, especially if the short form is not widely used in communication. The marketer used the short form *'carb'* to represent

*'carbohydrates,'* which is not common among many English language users. It may be for stylistic purposes to capture the attention of the audience. The marketer also used the contraction *'don't'* instead of *'do not'* in the same sentence. This justifies that the tone presented in CT19 was less serious, as the content consisted of several signals of colloquial language.

Furthermore, in CT20, there is also usage of colloquial language. CT20 comes from the Young and Raw page, which educates people about Cell Replenishing Green Juice. The marketer used the following extract: *"Well, I've got it, baby! And everyone can have it, with a little juice."*

The marketer used the contraction *I've* instead of *I have* as in other examples explained above. This also reflects the kind of language used, which was less formal. Besides, the author used the word *'baby'*, which is colloquial and pragmatically may arouse various meanings. The way the word is used typically does not correlate with the standard definition of *'little child'*, as it is expected that a baby cannot read that kind of content presented. Besides, due to the growing and changing nature of language, various basic meanings may also change. The word *'baby'* may also be used by lovers when addressing each other. However, the term has been used to make a friendlier conversation with the audience on this occasion. Calling the reader *'baby'* can be interpreted as an attempt by the marketer to create familiarity with the audience by making the conversation less formal and more engaging. Leech (1966) contends that compelling content is presented in a less formal language to promote readability by creating familiarity with the audience.

Using colloquial language in marketing campaigns, especially on social media like Facebook, encourages creating a friendlier atmosphere and creating a casual social relationship between the author and the audience (Vasiloaia, 2009). LET states that communicators use linguistic features of their choice to influence the audience (Burgoon et al., 1975). The colloquial linguistic choices help marketers to create their content to achieve the desired results. The study found 20 uses of this linguistic feature.

## The Use of Simple Sentences

A sentence simply carries a complete thought. It is a group of words that has a subject and a predicate. Sentences vary in some ways and are the basis of categorisation. However, for this study, McGovern's description of a sentence that fits in content based on length was considered. According to him, a sentence to be used in content must range from 1 to 15 or 20 words (this description best fits CM in online communication, and it does not mean simple sentence structure).

The way online readers consume content has changed the way marketers frame and format their content. Simplicity in the content makes it reader-friendly and easy to navigate for readers. Readers do not need to tense and strain to comprehend and understand the content (Nikitina, 2012). Marketers have to adapt to the new ways by making their content blocks short and straightforward for conciseness and effectiveness. The study finds extensive use of short and straightforward sentences. Marketers employed simple and short sentences in their content to deliver their messages. The following content from CT13 presents a snapshot of simple sentences. CT13 comes from Christine Honore's Forbes page, and the content talks about the importance of someone's limits to avoid heart surgery.

### **Christine Honore Forbes**

28 Agosti 2018

To avoid Heart surgery in the future, know your limit.

Do your due diligence before your workout. Some paid Fit Trainers will not tell you the facts that are important for your heart, but you need to know this! Know your heart's limitations.

The primary way of calculating one's maximum heart rate is by subtracting one's age from 220. For example, if they are 35 years old, subtract 35 from 220 to get a maximum heart rate of 185. The finding is the maximum number of times your heart should beat per minute during exercise.

Anything more will force your heart to build extra muscles to accommodate your needs at

that time, but when you get older and are not living up to your heart's expectations, you will start having heart problems and eventually... Heart Surgery.

Workout smart! How do I know? I am also (CET)

Marketers tried to write short sentences for easy understanding and readability. Not all the sentences were short, but many contents contained several short sentences for easy readability. In CT13, the use of short sentences was depicted with no more than ten words:

-To avoid Heart surgery in the future, know your limit.

-Do your due diligence before your workout.

When the marketer explains the best way to avoid heart surgery, she uses short sentences to make the message more understandable and easier to read. Short sentences help in conciseness and clarity. This language use makes the work less tedious for readers (Nikitina, 2012). This is the best style to use when writing online, as readers are always hasty and hungry for specific information.

Other examples of short sentences from the same text, CT13, were depicted with fewer than four words:

Workout smart!

How do I know?

The content seems to be less tiresome and easier to navigate through. This linguistic feature typically applies to content writing, as per McGovern's (n.d.) description. Bearing in mind that online readers are always in the urge to get answers and have plenty of other sites, using longer sentences may disappoint them and make them move to other sites. Short sentences are one of the best facets of enhancing content readability and easy navigation. Moreover, the content has eleven sentences, and nine out of those, more than 80%, have fewer than 20 words. It shows that the content writer had fair use of short sentences.

Additionally, more than 50 per cent of the sentences have fewer than ten words, which adds more advantages to the readability of the content. In content writing, the shorter, the better. Simple and short sentences fit most of the online content. Some linguistic blocks may not qualify as standard sentences. The point here is that the blocks used to

package the message are considered blocks of sentences. That is why, in this context, a word can be used separately to send a particular message.

Online reading is not like reading offline; it is not for leisure and relaxation (Nikitina, 2012). It is about finding answers and relevant information to solve a particular problem. Marketers need to be optimistic and have empathy by providing solutions directly, by enhancing short and straightforward content, and simplifying the language for the audience. Brevity is the quality of language that makes the content reader-friendly and contributes to an easy understanding. It makes the content more readable (Leech, 1966). This kind of language use is intended to clarify the content and make it easier to consume. Instead of using very long sentences, the content is written in short blocks to present the educational information in a clear, easy-to-understand manner. It is crucial for CM, which aims to educate the audience.

Short sentences were the most highly used linguistic features, where 274 uses of short sentences across all content items were observed. Almost all marketers included short sentences in their content; only two marketers never used any simple sentences. The nature of communication in digital space shows that using simple and short sentences adds to the content's quality, especially in readability. That is why most marketers include such linguistic features in their content.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that short sentences, pronouns, loan words, imperatives, translations, and repetition were used to either attract customers' attention or improve memorability and readability. These findings concur with Leech (1966) and Grey (2008), who have identified similar language functions in marketing. The only difference in the use of language between the study findings and the observations by Leech (1966) is that the selling function was not brought out using language. Although imperatives were used, they were not used to encourage the consumer to buy a product. Still, they were used to encourage a consumer to change their behaviour after being educated about the benefits of a product. They were either encouraged, for example, to take water or to do exercises.

**Recommendation:** This study was based on Facebook. It sought to examine the language features used in Facebook Content Marketing (CM) with a particular interest in healthcare content. This study, therefore, recommends future research on other social media to determine the language use of healthcare CM on different social media. Further, the study recommends that studies be carried out on other industries apart from healthcare to determine specific linguistic features and persuasive techniques for a particular sector.

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