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Theo Lynn

Dublin City University, theo.lynn@dcu.ie

Pierangelo Rosati

Dublin City University, pierangelo.rosati@dcu.ie

Charles M. Wood

University of Tulsa, charles-wood@utulsa.edu

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Slogans as Persuasive Accelerants of Electronic Word-of-Mouth Communication: A Preliminary Conceptual Model

Theo Lynn

Dublin City University

Pierangelo Rosati

Dublin City University

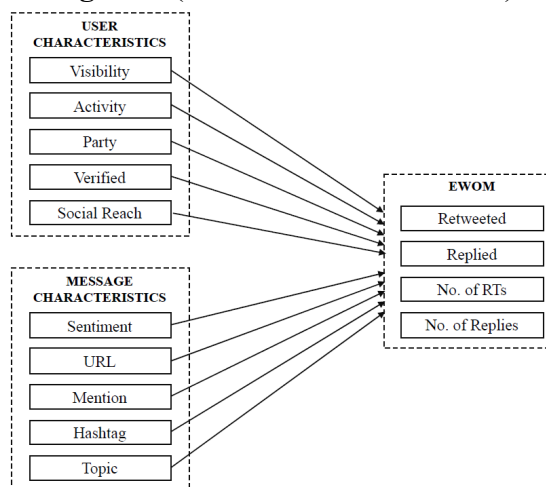
Charles Wood

University of Tulsa

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brands have been conceptualized as being made up of three different components: name, logo and slogan (Keller, 1993; Dass et al., 2014). Slogans are short, memorable phrases that are often used to sign off on advertisements. They characterize a large proportion of brand advertising and are designed to attract consumer attention, crystallize brand positioning, increase advertising memorability, and improve brand affinity (Keller, 1993). Slogans have been part of our world for millennia, and a staple in the advertising world since its inception. Less complex messages – i.e., slogans – have been associated with improved advertising effectiveness (Lowrey, 1998). Research into electronic word of mouth has grown rapidly. One reason is that online WOM elasticity has been found to be 2x larger than advertising’s (Hewett et al., 2016). One recent advancement in creating and testing models of the eWOM process examined the relationship between several source and message characteristics on amplification and engagement Gourinovitch et. al (2019). The current paper will build upon this source-and-message model (see Figure 1).

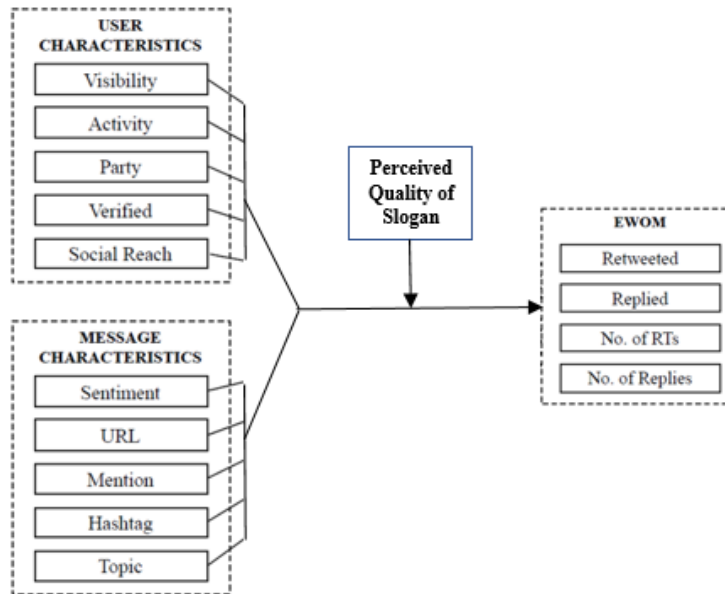
Figure 1 (Gourinovitch et al., 2019)



Slogans have rhetorical qualities that aid in gaining acceptance and dampening critique of the persuasive content (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). In some cases, their simple rhetorical nature may serve more as social expression of unified purpose than as communication to an intended audience. Slogans seem to be interpreted differently than textual information (Holbrook & Moore, 1981; Holbrook, 1982) and give the illusion of logical strength. We propose that because good slogans have persuasive strength and emotional elements, they can act as “accelerants” of eWOM. In social media, slogans most often appear in the form of hashtags, defined here as a word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the accompanying text (such as a tweet). Not all hashtags include slogans, but slogans often do appear as hashtags in social media - for example: e.g., #Yeswecan, #Justdoit, #MAGA.

Current models of word-of-mouth (WOM) persuasion and factors help explain the spread of electronic WOM (eWOM). However, little prior research has considered how rhetorical devices such as slogans may accelerate social media message acceptance and retransmission. The proposed model builds on prior theoretical work in source and message characteristics and their influence on eWOM in social media. The model predicts that message acceptance and retransmission is accelerated by high quality slogans – which often take the form of hashtags in social media – because they serve as a persuasive rhetorical device similar to enthymeme. We propose that how consumers perceive the quality of the slogan will determine if eWOM spreads slowly or quickly - a moderating effect. Our proposed model is shown in Figure 2. Future research will include a test of the full model using Twitter data.

Figure 2



Keywords: *social media, slogans, eWOM, electronic word of mouth, brands, hashtags*

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Theo Lynn is Professor of Digital Business at Dublin City University Business School. Professor Lynn specializes in the role of digital technologies in transforming business processes.

Pierangelo Rosati is an Assistant Professor in Business Analytics at Dublin City University Business School and a Co-Deputy Director of the Irish Institute of Digital Business (IIDB).

Charles Wood is Professor of Marketing at the University of Tulsa.