



Persuasive Strategies in Email Marketing: An Analysis of Appeal and Influence in Business Communication

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Abstract: This study examines the employment of persuasive strategies in informational emails that market products and/or services, illustrating how these strategies influence target customers and persuade them to make purchases. A corpus of 850 emails, encompassing over a million words, was compiled and analyzed using a mixed-method approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative measures. The emails were collected between 2020 and 2021. The categorization of persuasive strategies was directed by predefined operational definitions and criteria, informed by Aristotle's model of persuasion. The analysis identified 11 persuasive strategies utilized within the email corpus. Notably, the findings revealed that the offering appeal and the appeal to authority are the most commonly used strategies, whereas the contrasting appeal and romantic expressions are the least employed. These results underscore the importance of persuasive strategies in business communication, especially within informational emails. The insights derived from this study carry significant implications for businesses in crafting compelling marketing messages. Furthermore, the findings contribute to English for Business Purposes courses, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, by offering guidance on constructing persuasive business emails.

Keywords: Informational Emails, Persuasion, Persuasive Strategies, Digital Business Communication, Target Audience

1. Introduction

Email communication is pivotal for business professionals in contemporary workplaces (Dursun et al., 2020; Evans, 2012; Ho, 2018). Serving as a principal mode of interaction, email has solidified its role as an indispensable instrument for executing business operations and facilitating the exchange of information among colleagues, clients, and other stakeholders. Media Richness Theory (MRT), proposed by Daft and Lengel (1986), postulates that communication mediums differ in their capacity to foster understanding and diminish uncertainty. The theory highlights the concept of media richness, which pertains to the inherent informational capacity of communication media to enable the accomplishment of internal tasks, coordination of diverse activities, and interpretation of external environments (p. 3).

Presently, email predominates computer-mediated communication (CMC) in workplace settings (Letmathe & Noll, 2024; Scott & Timmerman, 2005; Zhang et al., 2017). Halenko et al. (2021) contend that email is a particularly favored mode of communication, appreciated for its rapid delivery and relatively unobtrusive nature compared to other CMC forms. Park et al. (2021) note that business professionals utilize emails for their immediacy, broad reach, and the enduring record they provide of correspondence. Nevertheless, the widespread adoption of email communication poses challenges for business professionals, especially in marketing, where persuading customers to purchase products and services is paramount (Evans, 2012; Gimenez, 2006). Given the global use of English as the lingua franca in business communication, marketing professionals must employ effective linguistic strategies tailored to email exchanges (Millot, 2017). Beyond Baron's (1998, p. 144) concept of a 'unified grammar of email', business emails serve various communicative functions—such as persuading, informing, and offering—each with distinct features. For instance, a request email typically employs politeness strategies considering the recipient's authority, social standing, and rank. Conversely, a marketing email directed at an external, less familiar party should incorporate marketing tactics, including rhetorical and persuasive strategies.

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Thus, email writers, particularly marketing professionals, must embrace strategies differing from those in face-to-face interactions (Kumar, 2021; Rodriguez & Sangle-Ferriere, 2023). The art of email marketing is capturing customer attention for products and services in the retail sector. Extant literature has explored various facets of online communication, including the role of metadiscourse in bolstering persuasive workplace emails (Ho, 2018; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Yang, 2021), the dynamics of email message propagation (Phelps et al., 2004), and persuasive techniques in both traditional and digital marketing contexts (da Silva, 2021; Rabab'ah & Khawaldeh, 2016; Rabab'ah et al., 2020).

Despite extensive studies into the art of persuasion in online communication, the specific mechanisms and tactics that underpin its efficacy in marketing emails remain inadequately understood, a gap underscored by Taylor et al. (2020), particularly within the realm of informational marketing that includes copywriting and entrepreneurship. Addressing this gap, our study meticulously analyzes persuasive strategies in a corpus of 850 informational marketing emails from 30 distinct companies. Drawing from seminal works in persuasion theory, communication studies, and marketing literature, our theoretical framework is influenced by Aristotle's categorization of persuasive appeals into ethos, pathos, and logos. Our categorization of persuasive strategies is informed by operational definitions from prior persuasion research in business marketing (Braca & Dondio, 2023; Brito-Rhor & López, 2021; Cialdini, 2001; Etgar & Goodwin, 1982; Greene & Brinn, 2003; Hoang et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2020; Jäger & Eisend, 2013; Kopfman et al., 1998; KP & Dharmaraj, 2023; McKinley et al., 2017; Myrick, 2017; Qiu et al., 2022). This study's amalgamation of theoretical insights and empirical data seeks to elucidate the most effective persuasive strategies that engage target consumers with email marketing campaigns.

Specifically, the study poses the following research questions:

1. Which persuasive strategies are most frequently utilized in email marketing?
2. How are these strategies employed within email communication to influence the recipient's decisions or beliefs?

The findings offer insights into the mechanics of persuasion in email communication and furnish actionable guidance for marketing professionals endeavoring to enhance the effectiveness of their email strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical framework

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of persuasion, which is categorized into three major types: ethos, logos, and pathos. Logos centers on engaging with logic and rational arguments. Ethos pertains to the credibility and integrity of the speaker or author, emphasizing their trustworthiness. Pathos, on the other hand, targets the emotions and sentiments of the audience, whether they are readers or listeners. These three significant categories of persuasion can be realized through numerous strategies, as illustrated in previous research, such as sex appeal, celebrity appeal, personal appeal, social appeal, rational appeal (reasoning), appeal to adventure, statistics and facts, anecdotes, enticement, goal links, openers, offers, qualifiers, values, questions, description, brands, youth, and modernity (Alkhalidi & Alghazo, 2023; Boyland et al., 2012; Busse, 2018; Gantz et al., 2007; Mueller, 1987; Rabab'ah & Khawaldeh, 2016; Rabab'ah et al., 2020; Vilaro et al., 2017).

Levine (2003) offers a contemplative perspective on persuasion, describing it as the psychological forces that gently guide individuals to consider changes they might not have contemplated independently. Similarly, Wahl and Morris (2018) liken persuasion to a journey, where the objective is to subtly guide or reinforce an individual's attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. This indicates that persuasion serves dual purposes: it either modifies or reinforces preexisting attitudes and actions. It's crucial to recognize that persuasion extends beyond advertising, as underscored by Rabab'ah et al. (2020). The more writers use persuasive appeals in an argument, the stronger and more convincing it becomes. According to DeKay (2010), emails incorporate design features to achieve rhetorical objectives, suggesting that emails warrant serious study by rhetoricians and business communication researchers due to their ubiquity in contemporary business environments.

2.2. A Review of Email Communication Studies

In online communication, paralinguistic cues are absent, prompting email senders to rely on contextual cues to activate relevant schemata in readers' minds as they process persuasive information (Walther et al., 2015). Harris et al. (2017) observe that due to the absence of paralinguistic and attitudinal cues in online interactions, it is essential to be cognizant of the properties of emails and their impact on the processing of online information. Such knowledge is vital for organizations and individuals; they need to know how to craft their electronic messages to persuade others and change their behavior. For instance, Thomas et al. (2019) analyzed 573 emails used in the health and security fields and developed a scale to evaluate persuasiveness within these messages. The scale consisted of three factors: effectiveness, quality, and capability, demonstrating that studying message types within an argumentation scheme can significantly illuminate these factors.

In the context of the workplace, Ho (2018) examined 659 business emails from Hong Kong, exploring the use of metadiscourse markers in online communication as tools for persuasion. The study found that hedges, engagement markers, self-mentions, and boosters are the most utilized tools to enhance rationality, credibility, and

emotional impact. Cheung (2008) analyzed sales emails to examine how persuasive content, as a direct marketing strategy, affects the development of trustworthiness and persuasive power in sales promotion. The researcher randomly selected 80 emails from recipients in Hong Kong over six months and analyzed the persuasive strategies used. The findings led to the proposal of a conceptual framework consisting of a move scheme for analyzing sales emails. In this scheme, Cheung (2010) posited that the move scheme is a persuasive evidential scheme validated by sales specialists with over a decade of experience in the market. This scheme includes 10 moves: setting the scene, establishing credentials, introducing the offer, building goodwill, offering incentives, using pressure tactics, triggering action, soliciting a response, reinforcing the offer, and building rapport.

Building on Cheung's (2008) move scheme, Ahangar and Dastuyi (2017) analyzed persuasiveness in Iranian advertisement emails by examining 40 sales emails from various companies. The findings indicated that the most frequent persuasive move was 'introducing the offer,' with a prevalence of 46.89%. Additionally, the research identified two new persuasive strategies that were repeated within the selected emails: the frequent use of questions and mottos. Ahangar and Dastuyi (2017) concluded that their findings could aid sales markets and service providers in understanding and employing these strategies to enhance outcomes and sales techniques. Similarly, Mustafa et al. (2012) found that the primary persuasive move, based on Cheung's (2008) move scheme, was 'introducing the offer' in their analysis of 29 texts in online sales letters. The credibility and persuasiveness of these online sales letters significantly influenced their ability to generate sales.

Principles of persuasion have been extensively discussed in various studies. Cialdini (2007) proposed six principles: authority, social proof, liking/similarity, commitment/consistency, scarcity, and reciprocity. Following Cialdini's work, Ferreira and Teles (2019) analyzed these principles in phishing emails and found that authority and reciprocity were the most prominent. Their thematic content analysis showed that the pronouns 'you' and 'your' were used predominantly with the principle of authority, whereas 'we,' 'us,' and 'our' were common in reciprocity. Akbar (2014) examined 207 phishing emails and found that authority was the most common persuasion strategy, followed by scarcity, consistency, and likeability. Contrarily, Ferreira and Lenzini's (2015) analysis of 52 phishing emails yielded different results, with liking/similarity as the top-ranked principle, followed by scarcity and authority.

These studies illustrate the complexity of persuasion and the diversity of its applications in the era of digital communication. Taylor (2020) provided 25 strategies to change the way emails are composed, emphasizing the importance of a strong first impression, establishing a connection, using the customer's name, showing empathy, positioning oneself in the reader's shoes, exuding confidence and competence, using verbs instead of nominalizations, keeping emails straightforward, letting the reader hear the writer's voice, favoring the active voice, employing positive language for positive outcomes, and adjusting the tone of emails. For email composers to craft a persuasive, impactful message, they must consider the reader's perspectives, attitudes, and goals. Cheung (2010) indicated that incorporating persuasive elements in sales emails aligns with the sender's objectives and ambitions. Taylor et al. (2020) also demonstrated how online content reading is driven by communicative aims, highlighting the need to align with individual objectives for messages to be delivered compellingly. Zalake et al. (2021) investigated the influence of Cialdini's (2007) persuasion techniques on personality traits, finding that tactics based on likability and reciprocity were most effective, underscoring the significance of integrating elements such as goals and personality traits to create messages that genuinely captivate and persuade.

The literature reveals that previous researchers have probed the art of persuasion across various disciplines, particularly in advertising, phishing, and sales emails. This extensive body of work, contributed to by scholars such as Akbar (2014), Chen et al. (2021), Cheung (2008, 2010), Dastuyi (2017), Ferreira and Teles (2019), Ferreira and Lenzini (2015), Ho (2018), Mustafa et al. (2012), Taylor (2020), and Thomas et al. (2019), offers insights into the subtleties of persuasive communication. However, it is vital to note a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the comprehensive analysis of persuasive strategies employed in e-marketing informational emails. The present research aims to uncover the persuasive appeals used in emails targeting customers for marketing information purposes. These marketing emails must employ unique persuasive techniques to be taken seriously, techniques that spur customers into action.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Corpus

The corpus of the study consists of over half a million words, covering 850 e-marketing informational emails sourced from 30 distinct businesses. Notable companies included are Code Red Lifestyle, Settle, LLC, JS & M Sales & Marketing Inc, Digital Marketer, Mike Dillard Media, Rapid NLP LLC, Jeff Walker (Product Launch Formula), Eben Pagan Training, among others.

To refine the research scope, informational emails from 2020 and 2021 were collected. These years were selected due to the surge in marketing informational emails, particularly those focused on content writing, which likely experienced significant growth and dynamism in communication trends amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Luo (2021) highlighted the pandemic's substantial role in altering marketing landscapes and escalating the demand and usage of digital communication tools. These emails were obtained from promotional communications sent to a personal email account held by one of the researchers and established specifically for this research. Additionally,

some were sourced from marketing specialists' and business owners' websites where they were publicly available. The emails predominantly pertain to information marketing, mainly promoting books, educational programs, and training services.

3.2. Method of Data Analysis

Our approach to data analysis was mixed-method, integrating both descriptive quantitative and qualitative analyses for the corpus of 850 emails. Based on Aristotle's theory, which delineates three major categories of persuasive strategies—ethos, pathos, and logos—we categorized persuasive strategies within each email. This was guided by operational definitions adapted from prior research on persuasion in business marketing (Braca & Dondio, 2023; Brito-Rhor & López, 2021; Cialdini, 2001; Etgar & Goodwin, 1982; Greene & Brinn, 2003; Hoang et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2020; Jäger & Eisend, 2013; Kopfman et al., 1998; KP & Dharmaraj, 2023; Myrick, 2017; McKinley et al., 2017; Qiu et al., 2022). These definitions, refined for the study's purposes, provided a framework for classifying the 11 persuasive strategies identified in our analysis.

The analysis unfolded in two stages. The first was a meticulous descriptive quantitative review of the 850-email corpus. From the literature and Aristotle's persuasion theory, we initially identified over 25 persuasion strategies. However, following detailed examination and consensus among researchers, we condensed these into 11 primary strategies. We then manually categorized each email according to the identified persuasive strategies and quantified the frequency of each category within the corpus.

In essence, our analytical strategy merged manual categorization with quantitative evaluation, enabling us to discern the subtle patterns of persuasion embedded within the corpus. After the quantitative analysis, a qualitative examination was conducted to corroborate the findings. We selected exemplary email excerpts representative of the 11 persuasive strategies, presenting their operational definitions and discussing their use in persuasive contexts. This qualitative assessment involved pinpointing persuasion strategies within highlighted quotes and examining their correlation with Aristotle's modes of persuasion—ethos, logos, and pathos. This granular analysis shed light on the nuances and intricacies of each strategy within the corpus, enriching our overall examination.

4. Findings

4.1. Frequency and Percentages of Persuasive Strategies in E-marketing Emails

Addressing the first research question on the prevalence of persuasive strategies in email marketing, Table 1 presents the findings in frequencies and percentages. The data provides insight into both the most and least commonly utilized strategies.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of 11 persuasive strategies in a corpus of 850 e-marketing emails

No.	Persuasive Strategy	Frequency	% Freq.
1	Offering appeal	1,725	33.5%
2	Appeal to authority	721	14.0%
3	Scarcity appeal	659	12.8%
4	Snob appeal	512	9.9%
5	Celebrity appeal	498	9.7%
6	Fear appeal	430	8.3%
7	Statistical Proof appeal	280	5.4%
8	Humor appeal	209	4.1%
9	Social appeal	80	1.6%
10	Contrasting appeal	24	0.5%
11	Romantic appeal	14	0.3%
	Total	5,152	100%

Source: Study Corpus of Emails

One of the most distinctive features of Table 1 is that the most frequently employed persuasive strategies are the offering appeal and the appeal to authority, accounting for 47.5% of the total frequency. However, the least utilized strategies are the contrasting appeal and the romantic appeal, each recording less than 1%. The offering strategy constitutes 33.5% (1725 instances) of the total 850 emails. Following closely, the appeal to authority strategy also exhibits a significant presence, representing the second most frequent strategy at 14% (721 instances). These substantial percentages underscore the significance of these persuasive strategies in informational emails. Conversely, the contrasting appeal and romantic appeal strategies emerged as the least utilized, constituting 0.5% (24 instances) and 0.3% (14 instances) of the total emails, respectively. These findings demonstrate the profound significance of persuasive strategies in business communication, particularly within the realm of informational emails.

The salient significance of the offering strategy, coming in at number one, aligns with previous theories of persuasion. Cialdini (2001) emphasizes the persuasive power of authority, where individuals with recognized expertise and credentials can sway opinions. This concept is in harmony with Aristotle's notion of ethos, leveraging the audience's respect and trust in authority to elicit a response and facilitate persuasion. These

perspectives resonate with empirical research (Ahangar and Dastuyi, 2017; Osakwe et al., 2020; Mustafa et al., 2012). Osakwe et al. (2020) found that within the banking sector, the most appealing marketing strategy is offering appeals, which indicate institutional reputability. Similarly, Ahangar and Dastuyi (2017) highlighted the prominence of 'introducing the offer' as a dominant persuasive strategy, which accounted for 46.89% of their corpus analysis of email advertisements. This finding is congruent with the results of Mustafa et al. (2012), who also recognized 'introducing the offer' as a fundamental persuasive element in their scrutiny of 29 online sales letters. The recurrence of this strategy underscores its significance in the composition of persuasive online commercial communication.

Additionally, the appeal to authority ranks as the second most prevalent strategy, comprising 14% (721 instances) of the dataset. This is consistent with Cheung's research (2008, 2010), which identified 'establishing credentials' through an authority appeal as the most significant, representing 3.24% of the analyzed communications. Ahangar and Dastuyi's (2017) study further supports this, positing that demonstrating a company's authority or expertise is crucial in sales emails. This notion is corroborated by Winter et al. (2021), who found that messages perceived to emanate from a credible source are more likely to prompt action from recipients.

Winter, S., Maslowska, E., & Vos, A. L. (2021). The effects of trait-based personalization in social media advertising. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 114, 106525.

In section 4.2, we present the findings from the qualitative analysis through excerpts from the corpus, answering the second research question: How are persuasive strategies employed in email communication to influence the recipient's decisions or beliefs?

4.2. Persuasive Strategies in Informational Emails

4.2.1. Offering

The offering strategy incorporates promotional factors influencing consumers' intentions to purchase, such as incentive type and promotion timing (Qiu et al., 2022). It utilizes incentives, discounts, or other promotional offers to sway recipients toward a particular behavior or mindset. Within the corpus, the primary keywords associated with the offering strategy include Discount, Sale, Free Gift, Bonus, Save Money, Get More for Your Money, Best Value, Deal, Opportunity, Promotion, and Exciting Offers. Excerpts 1 and 2 below demonstrate the use of this strategy in the corpus.

Excerpt 1

Subject: Is this what you're thinking?

"Get this program during the special launch window, through this Sunday, October 17, at 11:59 PM MST, and you'll get \$50 off, plus a private invite to a group Zoom Q&A with Cari, only for people who get the program before the launch deadline, where you can ask her your weight loss surgery questions" (CodeRed, 2021).

Excerpt 2

Subject: Fear Is Temporary, Regret Is Forever... Action Favors The Bold.

"I am going to offer you my own \$597 Rob Gilbert Story Magic Training For FREE. You'll own two full trainings worth 1000s for only \$37" (Senoff, 2021).

Excerpts 1 and 2 exemplify the offering strategy. In Excerpt 1, key elements distinguishing this strategy include a discount, "get \$50 off," and the offer of a bonus, "plus a private invite to a group Zoom Q&A with Cari." In Excerpt 2, the use of terms like "give," "own," and the mention of prices, "\$597" and "\$37," make the offering strategy explicit. This strategy aligns primarily with Aristotle's *logos*, as it depends on logical appeals, such as clear incentives and benefits like discounts and bonuses to persuade potential customers. The logical approach forms the foundation of the strategy, making a compelling case for the offer's value. It also resonates with *pathos* by eliciting emotions of excitement associated with seizing a limited-time offer. Therefore, the offering strategy emerges as one of the most direct and potent persuasive tactics in marketing, effectively conveying pricing specifics, bonuses, and complimentary items to engage and entice potential customers.

4.2.2. Appeal to Authority

The appeal to authority strategy is an emotional appeal that relies on convincing individuals through endorsements or recommendations by authoritative figures who have established credibility through education, expertise, and qualifications (Cialdini, 2001). This strategy predominantly utilizes experts, testimonials, reviews, or endorsements from reputable sources as its principal means of persuasion. Commonly associated keywords include Testimonials, Reviews, and Experts.

Excerpt 3

Subject: Fiendishly Simple Content Creation

I will just leave you with this comment from "Email Players" subscriber Fotis Chat who told me — after reading that July 2019 "Email Players" issue - to relay the following: "You single-handedly murdered any excuses

I might had for not pumping out lots of content...I honestly think that whoever doesn't become a content machine after reading this issue, shouldn't be in business (Settle, 2021).

Excerpt 3 employs testimonials as the foundation for endorsing the product. In this email, Settle uses a testimonial from an 'Email Players' subscriber. The language used in the testimonial is notably enthusiastic and emotionally charged, appealing to the reader's emotions and aligning with the technique of pathos. Phrases such as 'You single-handedly murdered any excuses' and 'shouldn't be in business' create a strong impact, potentially urging potential customers to consider the 'Email Players' issues. Similarly, Senoff relies on references to experts to illustrate the appeal to authority strategy. In an email about 'Finding Gold in Computers and Cell Phones,' Senoff references Dave, a 35-year scrap expert, to add credibility to his 'Scrap Magic System.' This suggests that customers can gain valuable insights from an industry authority. The phrase 'secrets of the pile' implies that Dave's expertise is a key to unlocking industry secrets, making the product more appealing to potential customers. This strategy, leveraging trust in authoritative figures for persuasive impact, aligns well with Aristotle's ethos.

4.2.3. Scarcity

The scarcity strategy refers to a scarcity caused by high demand or limited supply of a product or service (Huang et al., 2020). This approach is logical because it is based on supply and demand: when something is rare, customers perceive it as more valuable due to its limited availability. It is also emotional because it provokes a response such as fear of missing out on a valuable opportunity or product. The corpus reveals that certain keywords denote scarcity, including 'limited supply,' 'limited time offer,' 'urgency,' 'don't miss out,' 'sell out,' 'last chance,' 'almost gone,' 'act now,' 'order now,' 'book now,' 'reserve your spot,' 'limited space,' and 'high demand.'

Excerpt 4

Subject: Hurry—LAST Chance

(Don't Miss Out). We are getting started, John! The LinkedIn team is gearing up to deliver their [LinkedIn B2B funnel blueprint](#) training in just a few minutes. They are going to share with you how to get [consistent clicks, calls, and customers on demand!](#) Plus, how to drive high-quality leads and sales without cold calling, door knocking, or being viewed as a salesperson anymore. Don't miss out - we're starting soon. [Click here to jump in!](#)

Ryan

P.S. This is your last chance to build an automated client acquisition machine for your B2B business at 82% off. ---Hurry over now! (Ryan, 2021).

In Excerpt 4, Ryan Deiss, Co-Founder & CEO of Digital Marketer, promotes the 'LinkedIn B2B Funnel Blueprint Training' with an attention-grabbing headline: 'Hurry—LAST Chance'. This headline aims to instill a strong sense of urgency, effectively tapping into the emotions of potential customers—aligning with the persuasive technique of pathos. Using specific language like 'Don't miss out,' 'we're starting soon,' 'last chance,' and 'Hurry over,' the email conveys scarcity and encourages prompt action, resonating with both logical and emotional aspects of the scarcity strategy. Thus, the email adeptly employs scarcity to motivate potential customers to engage with the training program.

4.2.4. Snob Appeal

The snob appeal strategy promotes premium and exclusive products to evoke a sense of luxury and sophistication. It appeals to recipients' aspirations to be seen as part of an exclusive or elite group, with the intention of persuading them to adopt a specific behavior or attitude. This strategy often relates to the products or services of exclusive or high-status groups, employing luxury imagery or language and creating an aura of exclusivity.

Excerpt 5

Subject: Turn your 2021 sales into 2022's profits

"You'll learn how to leverage your sales for hyper growth and install a Growth Flywheel that spins off new customers and sales 24/7...You'll see why the most successful entrepreneurs on the planet (Buffett, Blakely, Musk, and more) don't actually RUN their businesses and why you shouldn't either...And the exact steps you need to take to finally hit your "number" and realize the freedom and wealth you deserve" (Ryan, 2021).

Excerpt 6

Subject: The creepiest-looking Marketing Book ever sold

On this pen ultimate day of my "Seasons Emailings" sale, for the next 18 hours, I'm giving a meaty discount on my book: "The Affiliate Launch Copynomicon".

This extremely expensive & creepy-looking book contains information that has helped me spank internet businesses with 10 times bigger lists, name recognition, and status than me as an affiliate... (Settle, 2021).

In Excerpt 5, Ryan markets his business coaching service, the '5-day Top To Bottom Challenge,' aimed at transforming 2021 sales into greater profits in 2022. By mentioning successful entrepreneurs like Buffett, Blakely,

and Musk, Ryan connects his service to an exclusive and successful cadre, appealing to the target audience's desire for sophistication, luxury, and financial success. The use of terms like "freedom" and "wealth" aligns with the exclusivity associated with snob appeal. In Excerpt 6, Ben Settle employs snob appeal to market his book, 'The Affiliate Launch Copynomicon,' using distinctive language to suggest that owning the book can lead to superior results, echoing logos. The reference to the book's high price and unique appeal to status and recognition employs both logical and emotional aspects to reinforce the effectiveness of the snob appeal strategy.

4.2.5. Celebrity

Myrick (2017) describes the celebrity strategy as using famous personalities to endorse or be subtly associated with specific behaviors. The fame and likability of celebrities often leverage the promotional influence of well-known figures, such as politicians, singers, actors, etc., to endorse products and services. While there may be overlap between snob and celebrity appeal, it's important to note that snob appeal often highlights the endorsement of high-end products by elite entrepreneurs, emphasizing exclusivity rather than relying solely on celebrity association.

Excerpt 7

Subject: How to get paid \$25 million for 35-minutes of content?

The short answer:

Become a royal family celebrity and make a deal with Spotify. I read a story not long about how Meghan and Harry did just that — getting paid £18m (about \$25 million US) while only, at the time, delivering about 35-minutes of content. If that doesn't prove the formula of Celebrity positioning + dumb corporate money = massive payout I don't know what does. But you, like me, probably don't have that kind of celebrity positioning. Thus, we gotta do it the hard way: Create content people want to buy. And if creating high-ticket content you can sell for hundreds, thousands, and possibly even tens of thousands of dollars is the plumb you're after picking for your business in 2022 & beyond look no further than the upcoming December Email Players issue. The topic: The Profit elBenbo's 7 Commandments for creating high-ticket content (Settle, 2021).

Excerpt 8

Subject: From Chicken Sheet to Florette Baby Leaf Caviar Oyster Salad . . .

....I feel very fortunate to have Rand answer 104 of my student's most pressing questions on the subject of how to make money licensing intellectual property (Senoff 2021).

In Excerpt 7, Settle references the success of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry to demonstrate the potential of celebrity influence. He contrasts their situation with that of the average person, suggesting that success for the latter comes from hard work and quality content, thereby promoting his 'Email Players' newsletter. Settle's use of the celebrity strategy emphasizes the potential for financial gain through celebrity status, but also offers a pathway to success for those without it. In Excerpt 8, Senoff markets his licensing training program by featuring Rand Brenner, a well-known expert in the field. He leverages Rand's credentials to add credibility to his program, appealing to his audience's aspirations and desire for success, and thus using the celebrity strategy effectively.

4.2.6. Fear

The fear strategy is designed to leverage individuals' fears who already have a preference for the promoted product or behavior, encouraging them to take further action (Jäger & Eisend, 2013). This appeal involves using threats and warnings to instill fear in recipients to persuade them to adopt a specific behavior or attitude. It relies on negative and occasionally evocative language to create a vivid and fearful mental image. The corpus has shown that it often incorporates keywords such as 'threat,' 'warning,' 'danger,' 'risk,' 'harm,' 'negative consequences,' 'vulnerability,' 'fear of failure,' 'fear of missing out,' and 'fear of the unknown.'

Excerpt 9

Subject: Want a free ticket to the virtual Kick Sugar Summit?

You know as well as I do that all over the world, non-communicable diseases are skyrocketing. From diabetes to depression, from cancer to cataracts, from high blood pressure to heart disease, from obesity to osteoporosis, the rise in these disease rates is astonishing...but the cause is no mystery to Code Red Rebels. The common denominator is our society's runaway consumption of refined carbohydrates, especially SUGAR. If all you ever ate was a teaspoon or two a day, not a big deal (unless it triggers you). But most people eat WAAAAY more than that. Especially when you factor in the fact that carby foods turn to glucose (sugar) once they're digested. In the KICK Sugar Summit, you'll learn the science of sugar, sugar addiction, and sugar addiction recovery. The speakers (including me!) will arm you with the insights and strategies you need to break free. (Code Red, 2021).

In this email, Cristy, a nutritionist from Code Red, employs a fear appeal strategy to promote her nutrition program. She begins by highlighting the threat posed by a range of non-communicable diseases. Listing these diseases, she evokes fear in the recipients, raising health concerns. Cristy uses emotionally charged language, describing "skyrocketing disease rates" as astonishing, which taps into recipients' emotions and heightens their

sense of vulnerability. This fear of health risks associated with diseases becomes a compelling motivator for recipients to take action. Cristy identifies the consumption of refined carbohydrates, especially sugar, as the main culprit behind these health issues, positioning her nutrition program as a solution to combat the fear-inducing risks. By offering insights and strategies through the KICK Sugar Summit, where she will be a speaker, she encourages the audience to attend, providing a means to address their concerns and take control of their health.

4.2.7. Statistical Proof

McKinley, Limbu, and Jayachandran (2017) demonstrate that the presentation of numerical data or statistical evidence enhances message recall, stimulates greater cognitive engagement (Kopfman et al., 1998), and conveys a perception of higher informational value (Greene & Brinn, 2003). Numerical data and statistics bolster credibility and trustworthiness by providing concrete proof of the benefits of a new product or service. This strategy includes the use of statistics, data, numbers, percentages, charts, and graphs.

Excerpt 10

Subject: Here's How Dan Makes \$50,996/Mo In Crypto, Whether The Market Goes Up Or Down...(Links fixed!)

Monthly average results...The brilliant part about Dan's, "Plan" is that he doesn't swing for the fences using leverage like most new traders. Instead, he picks up "pennies and dollars" a few hundred times per day with micro-trades. And boy do these tiny trades add up! In fact, here's what he made over the past 11 months

2021: January: \$41,283 February: \$161,017 March: \$20,958 April: \$24,444 May: \$49,106 June: \$11,029 July: \$34,693 August: \$54,205 September: \$81,902 October: \$37,994 November: \$44,330

The grand total? \$560,961. That's an average of \$50,966 per month in PROFIT, and he'll log you into his account and show you all of these numbers so you can see them for yourself. (Dillard, 2021).

In this email, Mike Dillard, an entrepreneur specializing in cryptocurrency assets, introduces and endorses Dan Hollings' cryptocurrency investment strategy. Dillard employs a statistical strategy, as evident from the title, to promote Hollings' investment approach. The use of statistics forms a data-driven persuasion tactic to convince potential customers of the product's success, resonating with the appeal of logos. These figures offer tangible proof of the product's effectiveness. Dillard bolsters the credibility of the strategy he'll log you into his account and show you all of these numbers so you can see them for yourself (Dillard, 2021)." offering access to the account as evidence of the successful trading strategy. Showcasing the profits by Hollings provides real-world evidence of its efficacy. Dillard aims to logically persuade recipients that this strategy can generate significant profits, making it an attractive investment opportunity.

4.2.8. Humor

The humor strategy refers to the appeal of resolving incongruity effectively when consumers understand the playfulness (Hoang et al., 2023). This approach uses humor, often through an unexpected resolution, to address incongruity amusingly. It aims to induce laughter and make recipients more receptive to the persuasive message. Linguistic rhetorical devices associated with humor in the corpus include witty phrases, short jokes, alliterations for comedic effect, irony, satire, parody, puns, caricatures, funny stereotypes, double entendres, and innuendos.

Excerpt 11

Subject: Save The Drama For Your Mama . . . 42 Minutes Only . . .

You've got just under an hour to grab your \$597 Rand Brenner Licensing Secrets for \$47 Please don't email me tomorrow because you have FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out). Tomorrow, you'll have to pay the regular \$597 price. And I am always amused at all the excuses and reasons why people missed out on this offer. Save Your Cries And Lies For Your Mama. Go to <http://www.hardtfindseminars.com/LS.htm> (Senoff, 2021).

Excerpt 12

Subject: The Greatest One-Liners In History . . .

(Short jokes) "Think fast ~ I bet you have no more friends than an alarm clock.

~ I said to a guy, "Do you know where Broadway is?" He said, "Yes," and walked away. ~ When you forget someone's name, say "I forgot your first and last name." ~ A man went to Las Vegas in a \$7,000 Cadillac and came home in a \$75,000 bus. ~ And this is one of my favourites. ~ I just discovered a new birth control device. ~ My wife takes off her make-up." Think fast~ I bet you have no more friends than an alarm clock. [...] telling simple one-liner jokes in rapid-fire succession. I've got some one-liners of my own in my Golden Folder promotion. ~.....The meat of this promotion is what you want. Go to <http://www.Hardtfindseminars.com/GF.htm> to get my Golden Folder (Senoff, 2012).

Both excerpts come from the same marketer, Senoff, but each employs distinct elements of the humor strategy. In Excerpt 11, Senoff humorously incorporates the satirical phrase 'Save Your Cries And Lies For Your Mama' to create an amusing sense of incongruity. He begins with a logical appeal, emphasizing the time sensitivity of the

offer and the consequence of inaction. Senoff then humorously addresses the common excuses people make for missing offers, maintaining a persuasive tone while connecting with readers' emotions.

In Excerpt 12, Senoff leads with short jokes to capture readers' attention and encourage continued reading. Although his main goal is to promote his Golden Folder, the inclusion of jokes engages readers' interest and seamlessly transitions to his offer. These jokes are intended as attention-grabbers that serve to make the subsequent promotional material more enticing and memorable to the audience.

4.2.9. Social Appeal

The social appeal involves sharing information about the actions of others to encourage recipients to emulate those behaviors (Braca & Dondio, 2023). It uses recommendations and refers to widely used practices to persuade individuals to align with prevailing social norms and preferences. This persuasive strategy often employs quantifiers like 'many' and 'dozens' to reinforce its effectiveness.

Excerpt 13

Subject: Closing today...

So many people who joined me in The Plan two months ago have been getting incredible results as well! (Dillard, 2021).

Excerpt 14

Subject: It worked :)

And it didn't work just for me... It's worked for dozens of you who've shared your results as well, like my friend Tim, who's been making around \$15,000 per month already... (Dillard 2021).

These excerpts effectively use social appeal by referencing the success and experiences of others, often employing quantifiers like 'many' and 'dozens', and hyperbolic language to encourage readers to follow suit or adopt the suggested behaviors and practices. Excerpts 13 and 14 are email communications from the same marketing company, both harnessing the power of the social appeal strategy. Mike Dillard introduces his cryptocurrency trading products, specifically highlighting his proven crypto investment strategy that has garnered widespread attention. In Excerpt 13, the focus is placed on the actions of many individuals, aptly expressed as 'so many people,' thereby accentuating their extraordinary achievements when using Dillard's crypto investment products, resulting in "incredible results." This deliberate emphasis on the success of others skillfully taps into customers' emotions (pathos), fostering a strong desire for similar accomplishments. Similarly, Excerpt 14 highlights the effectiveness of the product by showcasing its successful results not only for the speaker but also for 'dozens' of subscribers, reinforcing the product's appeal and encouraging readers to desire similar success.

In one of his emails titled 'I'm no gynecologist, but I'll take a look anyway,' Senoff effectively utilizes the social appeal strategy to market his product, a collection of 527 classic advertisement transcripts known as 'World's Greatest Ads Transcripts.' This marketing approach prominently features hyperbole, as seen in phrases like 'Ads that generated hundreds of thousands of happy customers.' This hyperbolic language underscores the extraordinary success achieved by these advertisements, aiming to evoke happiness among those who utilized them (pathos). The repetition of positive effects and outcomes associated with these ads reinforces their impact and desirability, intensifying the audience's aspiration for similar success.

4.2.10. Contrasting Appeal

The contrasting appeal is a marketing strategy that shapes consumer attitudes and perceptions toward a brand or product by effectively showcasing its strengths and weaknesses (Etgar & Goodwin, 1982). The primary goal is to emphasize the product's distinctive qualities, thereby influencing consumer perceptions and ultimately driving purchase decisions. This strategy is practiced through various techniques, including direct product comparisons, price comparisons, highlighting Unique Selling Points (USPs), and presenting comprehensive feature lists.

Excerpt 15

Subject: This had me in tears

(Direct Comparison; Unique Selling Points (USPs) " techniques." "When you take your life back with Code Red, then decide to eat something we don't eat in weight loss mode, and it gives you bloating, heartburn, a stomachache, mood swings - or whatever it does - it reminds you of the rotten way you used to feel, and why you don't miss it. I am NOT advocating eating something like that to "remind yourself." NEVER assume that's what I mean. What I'm saying is, if you're thinking of going off the rails, or you're doing the grind and wondering whether it's worth it, think back to what you're leaving behind, and what you don't wanna go back to. (I actually talk about this a lot in this week's new podcast, so make sure you listen!) Then honestly ask yourself, "Do I miss how I used to feel? Do I miss those hideous 'fat clothes' I was stuck with because nothing cute fit? Do I miss being in so much pain I can't climb a flight of stairs without taking fistfuls of Tylenol?" If the answer is no, do what you've gotta do to embrace and enjoy your new way forward. Instead of fighting to hold on to something that made you miserable, fight to TAKE YOUR LIFE BACK (Code Red 2021).

In Excerpt 15, Kristy from Code Red skillfully employs a contrasting appeal strategy. She contrasts two scenarios: adhering to her health program versus ignoring dietary guidelines and choosing unhealthy options. With emotive language, she highlights the adverse consequences of the latter, such as 'bloating, heartburn, stomachache, mood swings.' Kristy plays on the recipient's emotions, vividly describing this path as 'rotten,' characterized by 'fat clothes' and pain. In stark contrast, she emphasizes the benefits of her program with 'embrace and enjoy your new path forward.' She advocates for change with 'TAKE YOUR LIFE BACK,' emphasizing the empowerment and transformation offered by her program.

4.2.11. Romantic Appeal

Brito-Rhor and López (2021) noted that consumers are more susceptible to persuasion when their romantic emotions are triggered. This approach uses romantic imagery, language, or themes to elicit positive feelings associated with love, passion, and desire. This strategy taps into emotions such as love, passion, romance, attraction, beauty, sex appeal, mystery, intrigue, desire, seduction, fantasy, and emotion to create a persuasive narrative.

Excerpt 16

Subject: It shocked me when he said this

Miles went to Spain earlier this month, and this time he went without me. That was by choice because I didn't want to go. On the day he left, we were standing there as he got ready to leave when he up and told me he didn't want to go without me, and that he would miss me. It caught me off guard because Miles isn't someone who usually says that kind of stuff. I started to cry a little (in a good way!), and he gave me a hug. It really meant a lot to me that he said it. I guess it goes to show that you never know, for sure, what someone's thinking. It doesn't help that your mind loves to jump in with the worst-case scenario, does it? It's SO freaking easy to not even notice when your mind is going down that worst-case scenario rabbit hole. Next thing you know, you've worked yourself into a frenzy or a meltdown and created a problem that's only there because you created it. This experience with Miles reminded me of how easy it is to assume stuff about other people...even people we know really well [...] Today, I wanna challenge you (and myself) to one thing: Next time you catch yourself making an assumption about what someone else is thinking, doing, or feeling, stop the runaway "worst-case scenario" train and ask them. See what happens. "But Cristy, what if I'm right and it IS the worst-case scenario?" What if it not only isn't the worst case scenario, it's the BEST case scenario? Think it over (Code Red 2021).

In Excerpt 16, Cristy from Code Red artfully interweaves an emotional personal experience into her email message. She recounts an incident with her husband, Miles, tapping into feelings of love and passion (pathos). She shares a moment of vulnerability, which becomes a lesson on avoiding negative assumptions and opening up communication. This personal story may not directly relate to the health program she markets, but it establishes a personal connection with her audience. Cristy becomes relatable by sharing a deeply personal experience, humanizing her marketing approach and strengthening the bond between her brand and her audience.

5. Discussion

The analysis presented above has addressed the two aforementioned research questions. Drawing on Aristotle's means of persuasion, our qualitative analysis identified 11 prevalent persuasive strategies within the corpus. These strategies include social, celebrity, authority, snob, offer, scarcity, statistical proof, contrasting, fear, romantic, and humor. The descriptive quantitative analysis reveals that the most commonly employed persuasive strategy is 'offer,' followed by the 'authority' strategy. Collectively, they account for 47.5% of the total frequencies. 'Offer' stands out as the number one strategy, comprising 33.5% (1725 instances) of the corpus. The predominant adoption of the 'offering' persuasive strategy, as evident at the forefront of our corpus, closely aligns with the findings of prior research studies (Cheung, 2008; Ahangar and Dastuyi, 2017; Mustafa et al., 2012). Cheung (2008) introduced a comprehensive framework, known as a move scheme, for the analysis of sales emails, emphasizing the pivotal role of 'introducing the offer' as a key component in persuading recipients. Although she acknowledged the 'offer of incentives' as a separate move, our analysis categorizes it as an integral part of the overarching 'offer' appeal. Our study elucidates how this strategy is frequently implemented through mechanisms such as product discounts, free gifts, or bonuses offered as incentives. Ahangar and Dastuyi's (2017) research also underscored the prominence of 'introducing the offer' as the most prevalent persuasive move, constituting 46.89% of their analysis of 40 Iranian advertisement emails. Similarly, Mustafa et al. (2012) identified 'introducing the offer' as a primary persuasive move in their examination of 29 online sales letters. These findings corroborate our study, highlighting the pivotal and central role played by the 'offer' strategy in capturing the attention of potential customers in the domain of digital business communication.

Following the 'offering' strategy, the 'Appeal to Authority' strategy emerges as the second most prominent approach. The significance of the authority appeal has been notably demonstrated in the realm of email communication, particularly in the context of phishing emails (Ferreira & Teles, 2019; Akbar, 2014; Ferreira & Lenzini, 2015). Building upon the principles articulated by Cialdini (2007), Ferreira and Teles (2019) discovered that authority stood out as the primary strategy in their analysis of phishing emails in the domain of social engineering. Akbar (2014) conducted a comprehensive analysis of 207 phishing emails, revealing a consistent

prevalence of the 'authority' strategy, regardless of the email's target or intended purpose. Ranked third in our analysis is the scarcity appeal, constituting 12.8% of the corpus. It is worth noting that other scholars have underscored the importance of this appeal, albeit using different terminology. For instance, Cheung (2008) referred to it as 'using pressure tactics,' ranking it as the sixth move in her proposed schema. Correspondingly, Ferreira and Lenzi's (2015) examination of 52 phishing emails retrieved from their personal email accounts revealed that Scarcity was the second most employed strategy, following Liking/Similarity. Likewise, Akbar (2014) found that Scarcity held the second position in prominence after the Authority appeal in his analysis of various phishing emails.

Subsequently, the extensive body of literature (Cheung, 2008/2010; Mustafa et al., 2012; Akbar, 2014; Ferreira and Lenzi, 2015; Dastuyi, 2017; Ho, 2018; Thomas et al., 2019; Ferreira and Teles, 2019; Taylor, 2020; Taylor et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021) has predominantly concentrated on various contexts of persuasion, including advertising, phishing, and sales emails. Within this broader landscape, our analysis seamlessly aligns with prior research, reaffirming the enduring importance of persuasive strategies within email communication. While our findings align with prior research in recognizing the importance of persuasive strategies, our study extends the existing body of knowledge by specifically scrutinizing e-Marketing informational emails as a distinct category. This emphasis on a specialized context underscores the nuanced nature of persuasion within this domain, adding a novel dimension to the literature. The unique focus on e-Marketing informational emails highlights the need for tailored strategies in this particular context. Our research not only corresponds with previous research but also enriches the current understanding of persuasion in marketing strategies by shedding light on its diverse applications in e-Marketing informational emails. Although our research centered on the persuasive strategies within the domain of marketing informational emails, it's important to note that these strategies can exhibit significant diversity and may vary across different discourse contexts. Therefore, future research should consider analyzing a broader range of discourse contexts to enable more comprehensive generalizations. Additionally, our analysis predominantly focused on emails originating from American culture and did not incorporate cross-cultural variations. It is essential to acknowledge that what proves effective in one culture may not necessarily hold the same impact in another, as cultures often employ unique persuasion tactics tailored to their specific cultural contexts. Furthermore, the fast-paced evolution of technology and consumer preferences, particularly in marketing, may limit the lasting relevance of our findings over time. Future research should consider variations in persuasive strategies across the literature review and take into account the evolution of these strategies.

6. Conclusion

The main objective of the current study was to uncover the diverse range of strategies utilized in contemporary marketing informational emails to influence their target customers and engage effectively. It also aimed to assess whether significant differences exist among these strategies. Additionally, it sought to evaluate the alignment of these persuasive strategies with the existing literature on marketing tactics. Our mixed-method approach, combining descriptive quantitative and qualitative data analysis, led us to identify a collection of 11 prevalent persuasive strategies within the corpus. The categorization of these strategies in each email was informed by predefined operational definitions derived from prior research on persuasion in business marketing, which we subsequently adapted to align with the objectives of this study.

The findings unveiled the answer to the first research question: Which persuasive strategies are more frequently used in email marketing? The most commonly employed persuasive strategies were offer and authority, while the least utilized ones were contrasting and romantic strategies. The quantitative analysis indicates that the 'offer' strategy is the predominant persuasive technique, succeeded by the 'authority' strategy, together constituting 47.5% of the total occurrences. Specifically, 'offer' emerges as the leading strategy, accounting for 33.5% (1,725 instances) of the dataset. As for the second research question: How are persuasive strategies employed in email communication to influence the recipient's decisions or beliefs? The qualitative analysis comprehensively elaborated on the mechanisms of each of the 11 persuasion strategies. For instance, while the top strategy of 'offering' is frequently implemented through mechanisms such as product discounts, free gifts, or bonuses offered as incentives, the appeal to authority refers to experts, testimonials, reviews, or endorsements from reputable experts as its principal means of persuasion. Such a mechanism leverages trust in authoritative figures to persuade the audience effectively, which aligns well with Aristotle's concept of ethos.

These findings serve to demonstrate the profound significance of persuasive strategies in business communication, particularly within the realm of informational emails. The present study provides businesses with valuable insights into the most frequent persuasive strategies which play a pivotal role in crafting persuasive and impactful marketing messages to manipulate and change the minds of email recipients. Illuminating the underlying mechanisms and strategies that drive this process in marketing emails enhances our understanding of how marketers can effectively utilize persuasion strategies to forge strong connections with their target customers and influence customer behavior. We recommend businesses, as well as education and training sectors, incorporate the diverse range of our proposed persuasive strategies to make email content more compelling and appealing to a broad audience.

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