48

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SUBLIMINAL AND OVERT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES ON THE HOTEL BUSINESS PLATFORM

Abstract

Social media play a significant role in our social life, and take up a large proportion of our time. The technological revolution has also affected the business sphere. After providing consumers with more control on social media platforms, entrepreneurs were forced to use overt as well as subliminal marketing strategies. 'The kind of claims contemporary ads make and the seduction strategies they use do sound more sophisticated nowadays' (Freitas 2014, 429). This article covers linguistic, visual and other persuasive means marketing uses in overt and subliminal strategies, and what their intentions are. To simplify the research process in this extensive field, the hotel business platform was selected for analysis. Linguistic, visual and persuasive means are used in hotel business social media marketing strategies. The analysis was accomplished from two perspectives: overt linguistic and visual advertisement strategies, and subliminal strategies that were divided into three areas (user-generated content, social media contests, and campaigns and influencer marketing).

KEY WORDS: social media, marketing strategies, advertising discourse, linguistic means, visual arguments.

Anotacija

Socialinės medijos šiomis dienomis vaidina svarbų vaidmenį visuomenės gyvenime ir užima didelę dalį mūsų laiko. Ši technologinė revoliucija taip pat paveikė ir verslo sritį. Vartotojams suteikus daugiau kontrolės socialinių medijų platformose, verslininkai buvo priversti naudoti tiek atvirą-sias, tiek paslėptąsias reklamos strategijas. Tyrimo tikslas yra nustatyti, kokias kalbines, vaizdines ir kitas įtaigos priemones naudoja reklamos ekspertai paslėptosiose ir atvirosiose reklamos stra-tegijose. Siekiant supaprastinti šios plačios srities tyrimo eigą ir sumažinti apdorojamų duomenų kiekį, analizei buvo pasirinkta viešbučių verslo platforma. Kalbinės, vaizdinės ir įtaigos priemonės yra naudojamos viešbučių verslo socialinių medijų reklamos strategijose. Nors šios priemonės ir individualiai perteikia tam tikrą reikšmę, pagrindinė reklamos vertė atsiskleidžia tik esant visų trijų priemonių samplaikai. Analizė buvo atlikta iš dviejų perspektyvų – atvirųjų ir paslėptųjų strategijų. Atvirosiose strategijose iš reklamų išrinkti kalbiniai bei vaizdiniai pavyzdžiai. Uždarosiose strategi-jose šaltiniai suskirstyti į tris sritis – vartotojų generuojamas turinys, socialinių medijų konkursai ir kompanijos bei nuomonės formuotojų reklama.
PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: socialinės medijos, reklamos strategijos, reklamos diskursas, lingvis-tinės priemonės, vaizdiniai argumentai.

Social media play a significant part in the life nowadays of our modern con-sumer society: from reading newspapers and watching news, to simply commu-nicating with friends and relatives online. The business and marketing sphere is directly dependent on its customers being effectively integrated into social media in order to reach greater audiences by using the wider spectrum of formats that social media offer. 'Assessing attitudes in a more focused way, or using them as part of decision–making processes is often important' (Edwards 2013, 31). The primary target of every business is also clear to customers: to market their prod-uct or service as persuasively as possible in order to attract customer's attention, and finally make a sale. 'Their marketing campaigns seek to encourage "customer loyalty" by establishing a clear and distinctive image and identity which will make their products or services stand out from equivalent brands produced by other companies' (Thorne 2008, 293). However, modern marketing platforms also require innovative and clever marketing strategies, considering the fact that customers on social media have incomparably more control over businesses than ever before.

The hotel business platform is no exception when it came to transitioning from traditional media to social media. The concept of *media* is defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary Online* as 'newspapers, magazines, television, and radio, considered as a group'.However, this concept describes traditional (broadcast) media, while the Stanford University professor Dave Evans (2008, 33) describes *social media* as a means to democratise information and make people content publishers and even editors instead of content readers. There are two marketing types distinguished: direct (traditional) and interactive/internet (social media)

marketing. *Direct marketing* is carried out between two or more people on a personal level, while *indirect* (*social media*) *marketing* is aimed at a bigger audience with its power to modify the form and content in real time (Bakanauskas 2012, 24). In giving this amount of control to customers in order to succeed, businesses tend to exploit certain social media *strategies*. *Cambridge Dictionary Online* describes a strategy as 'a detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics, business, industry, or sport, or the skill of planning for such situations'[1]. For hotel business marketing, this includes distinguishing your target audience, using certain social media platforms for those audiences, and different formats for every social group, giving feedback, collecting data and drawing conclusions from them for a future example.

The *aim* of the paper: social media marketing and marketing in general pursue the same objective, to attract customers' or future customers' attention in order to make a successful sale. Linguistic devices, visual/multimodal media and various social media dispersal methods are used as part of a strategy to attract attention, persuade clients, and to ensure their stable flow and loyalty in the future. The strategies in this research are divided in two: overt and subliminal. For the great extent of this topic, the selected field of social media marketing is the hotel business platform. This research analyses numerous examples of the most common linguistic devices, visualisation techniques and persuasive techniques, in order to find out what each subliminal and overt strategy uses. This aim will be achieved by completing the *tasks:* to identify and discuss the concept of the format of social media marketing and its rhetorical linguistic and visual strategies according to theoretical sources; to identify and analyse which linguistic, visual and overall persuasive means are used as overt and subliminal social media marketing strategies; to identify social media marketing's intentions from examples given that have rhetorical/persuasive value and attract attention and customer involvement in hotel businesses.

The *object of the research* is online accommodation advertisements. The *methodology* of the research: the examples are analysed from three perspectives: textual rhetorical linguistic means, visual arguments, and persuasive manipulative marketing strategies. The selected examples from the collected data are analysed in the paper with a comprehensive explanation of every linguistic, visual or persuasive characteristic; the intentions they hold and the effects they have on the customer.

The *motivation for the research:* social media marketing, compared to traditional media, faces not only the problem of excessive customer involvement, but also a variety of platforms and formats that its advertisements are presented on.

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[1] Cambridge Dictionary Online.

To enhance the persuasiveness of the service marketed, hotel business platforms use various linguistic devices, such as alliteration, idioms, hyperbole, metaphor, etc, visual and multimodal devices, and other persuasive features of social media platforms. In most cases, businesses and politicians tend to hide the message between the lines. However, not only are subliminal strategies the best strategy of choice: traditional, overt messages to the customer still perform their duty when incorporated with the right social media platform. The theoretical background for the research revolved firstly around the fundamentals of social media marketing analysed by B. Alexander (2006), P. Anderson (2007), E. Constantinides (1997, 2005), D. Evans (2008), M.A. Stelzner (2009) and D. Zarella (2010). The discourse of advertising analysis in all three media of linguistics, music and visual material was analysed thoroughly by G. Cook (2001) and E.S.L. Freitas (2014). Subliminal marketing strategies and user–generated content usage were analysed by G. Kress (2014) and J.R. Bughin (2007), and specific features of hotel business social media marketing was disclosed by C. Adams and L. Ortiz (2013).

The *materials of the research:* the study is based on a linguistic analysis and the analysis of visual arguments of advertisements published in online sources, and various articles related to the accommodation social media marketing sphere. The majority of examples relating to hotel social media marketing are taken from the following social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Hotels.com, Booking, Expedia and TripAdvisor. To achieve exact results, the analysis comprises 172 linguistic and rhetorical examples, 407 visual feature examples, and 25 social media user–generated posts.

The main focus of this research is based on social media advertising, where the Internet is a combination of substance, because the advertisements are re-layed by various devices and change primary substances from spoken, written and sign language during the carrying process. Like social media marketing itself, the features of its advertising language are very intricate. The growth of consumer control over marketing and the ability to filter the content created an urge to use more complex linguistic and rhetorical strategies, at the same time as maintaining the same goal. According to Thorne, 'an impact–based approach aims to attract attention linguistically or visually' (Thorne 2008, 299). Kjeldsen (Kjeldsen 2012, 239) asserts that pictures possess ambiguity; however, rhetorical figures are used help to distinguish possible interpretations and intended arguments. Most advertisements today rely on visual and multi–modal segments to attract consumers' attention; however, as Goddard (1998, 15-16) states, 'readers are not simply reading images in isolation from the text that accompanies them because the full meaning of the image no matter how shocking or eye catching it

was is not available until the reader has made sense of the textual information.' Social media advertising uses linguistic techniques/rhetorical devices from all subfields of language (*phonology*, *graphology*, *grammar*, *morphology*, *syntax*, *lexis* and *semantics*) as persuasive and attention-grabbing strategies. The following paragraphs present the main rhetorical devices and linguistic techniques used in social media marketing advertisements on accommodation business platforms. The examples presented were drawn from the overall data collected during this research.

Linguistic, rhetorical and visual means in hotel social media advertising. Linguistic and rhetorical means and *visualisation techniques* were based on 35 picture and video advertisements from various hotel social media pages. A total of 172 examples of linguistic, rhetorical and manipulative techniques were found. Altogether, 407 of the persuasive and rhetorical elements in multi-modal advertisements were found. The following part is dedicated to textual rhetorical examples in social media advertisements.

Textual rhetoric in social media advertising

Examples were selected from social media platforms of hotel businesses from almost all continents. Most examples were taken from hotels in English-speaking countries, such as the United States and Great Britain. However, some exotic resorts in India, China, the Philippines and Thailand were also included.

As Edwards puts it: 'nothing is more central to the understanding of human social interaction than language' (Edwards 2013, 42). The results of the research show that hotel advertisements in social media use a vast number of grammatical, orthographic, semantic and syntactic rhetorical devices and linguistic techniques. Advertising accommodation on social media platforms in this paper is used as an *overt social media marketing strategy*. For the advertising language to be understandable, it only requires a *semantic meaning*; however, Cook (2001, 103) describes the *pragmatic meaning*, which only describes what a word or an utterance means in a specific context. Advertising in a particular market using not only determinate but also indeterminate meaning allows for more creativity in advertisements, at the same time as being persuasive and coherent with the main idea. Metaphors are one of the key rhetorical devices in advertisements. According to Smetonienė (2004, 33), the main purpose of advertisers is to learn about consumers' thought processes behind visualising certain texts or images and even psychological aspects of them. Despite the fact that some of the examples have hidden messages, the examples chosen are still an open form of marketing. The advertisements that were analysed usually use short sentences and monosyllabic or two-syllable words. *One or two-syllable words*, as well as *conversion*, are frequent in advertising in social media. Short word formation and *anthimeria*

make the text easier and faster to read, especially when advertisements appear on a news feed. Slogans possess a number of idioms and metaphors, as well as other semantic devices. Sentences usually use personal pronouns and sometimes domestic language or even slang to create the feeling of equality and unity with the customer. The table below displays the results of the analysis of hotel advertising language.

Table 1

Textual rhetorical, linguistic and persuasive devices in hotel advertising

Alliteration	Allusion	Anaphora	Anthim	Antisthecon	Assonance	Chiasmus	Superlative adjective	Ecphonema	Ellipsis	Emotional manipulation	Slang	Favorable connotations	Gramm. parallelism	Hyperbole	Idiom	Imperative sentence	Isocolon	Litotes	Metaphor	Motivation	One or two syllable words	Oxymoron	Personal pronouns	Personal experience	Personification	Phrasal constructions	Pun	Rhetorical question	Rhyme	Simile
2	1	4	2	1	2	1	10	5	2	1	2	20	8	11	27	21	7	2	1	4	3	1	8	2	6	5	3	5	4	1

The table above presents 172 examples found in the texts of hotel advertisements. The most common devices were idioms, imperative sentences, hyperbole, favourable connotations, superlative adjectives and personal pronouns. The least common means were: allusion, antisthecon, chiasmus, metaphor, oxymoron and simile.

A total of 27 *idioms* were found in 35 advertisements, making them the most frequently used rhetorical device in the research. Some examples are:

1. '*It will take your breath away.*'
2. '*Somewhere between Heaven & Earth.*'
3. '*And fed me like I've never been fed before.*'
4. '*Made me feel like this was paradise.*'
5. '*The Royal Horseguards was built in an era when money was no object, and things were made to last.*'
6. '*We are right in the heart of the two biggest cities in the country.*'

These selected examples of idiomatic expressions refer to the genre of hotel business advertising. All the expressions convey positive and highly figurative meanings, such as: *It will take your breath away, fed me like I've never been fed before.* The expressions give the impression of an extremely high-quality service that is comparable to such strong sensations as are described in the examples.

However, the target audience of the advertisement (as in all highly expressive examples) is aware of the discourse style of advertising, and should not expect the experience in the true sense of the word.

In examples 2, 4 and 6, the idiomatic expressions revolve around features of the location. This is a common concept in accommodation advertising, since the whole business fundamental is to offer the best place to stay. The expressions in the first two examples contain words such as *heaven* and *paradise*. These are common symbols in literature that represent positive concepts, such as peace, order, calm and even cleanliness, exactly the features of a hotel that every guest is expecting to be provided with during a stay. The expressions in the sixth example revolve not so much around the features of the location but about the location itself. The phrasal expression *right in the heart of the two biggest cities in the country* indicates the convenience and infrastructural location of the hotel. The expression *heart of the city* might have several meanings: the geographic centre of a city, or the cultural and emotional centre. Either way, the hotel offers great access and a location near the city's sights.

The fifth idiomatic expression conveys a historical meaning, but not a comparative one which might be comprehended as a metaphor. The hotel was built in *an era when money was no object, and things were made to last.* The advertisers created an image of an old hotel with a history and rich traditions. The phrasal construction *things were made to last* resembles in a certain way another popular phrasal construction *the good old days*, which is commonly used by older generations to point out that everything was better in the past. This might also be used as a persuasive method for a target audience of older customers that are looking for an experience recalling old times.

Word structures and sentences used in different forms, especially *imperative sentences* (21 examples) are some of the most frequently used forms in advertising. Imperative sentences create the sense of a direct conversation and an insignificant feeling of telling the consumer what to do. The involvement of the addressee is also considered to be the purpose of *rhetorical questions* and *epiphonema*. Some are presented below:

1. '*Set amongst lush tropical surroundings [...]*'
2. '*Go to www.hfhotels.com and start planning your next adventure now.*'
3. '*Take a drive to the countryside for our mouthwatering dishes at affordable prices.*'
4. '*#TravelForReal.*'
5. '*Meet us at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center.*'
6. '*Hotel Carpe Diem. Catch the second.*'

7. *'If you're looking for a luxury hotel that's uniquely interesting, make up your own mind at slh.com.'*

[Ecphonema] *'We have the BEST STEAKS around!'* (Ripple Hill Hotel, South Africa).

[Rhetorical sentence] *'While in Raffles, why not visit Singapore?'* (Raffles Hotel).

With regard to the social media marketing revolution and the greater power of the consumer, this 'telling-what-to-do' type of demanding sentences would seem inefficient. However, the mood that these sentences hold is motivational and invitational, rather than commanding. Nonetheless, several of the sentence structures are in the slogans of the advertisements. Example 2 has a mood of urgency with the adverb *now*, and redirects the receiver to the hotel website, creating a notion of some offer that is limited, temporary and only available at that moment. Example 7 also includes the website of the hotel to *make up one's own mind.*

Phrases like *meet us* or *set amongst* create a feeling of easy and effortless travelling. They are trying to make the consumer forget the build-up steps, such as booking the suite, paying for it, and travelling to the destination, by omitting them from the context.

All examples with imperative sentences also create a feeling of equality and being on the same level as the listener, a frequent technique used by political and business personalities. This manner of direct speech and one-to-one conversation is used as a persuasive device creating a connection between the speaker and the audience, to make the latter take advice. The term that is most suitable for generalising this sub-chapter is provided by Cook (2001:151) as *cohesion*: 'linguistic devices which create links between sentences and clauses'. Several of these devices used in social media marketing and advertisements rely on the repetition of phrases and clauses, or using units of the same or identical length, such as *isocolon*, for instance:

'Two cities, nine hotels, millions of people, countless emotions' (Hotel Fenix, Lisbon)

or *grammatical parallelism*, eg:

'Fashioned by History. Established by Guoman' (The Royal Horseguards Hotel, London).

Marketing agencies tend to use *connotations* that are *favourable.* This is especially frequent among accommodation business advertisers that have their own set of connotations 'for a whole speech community or for groups or individuals within it'.[2] Favourable connotations on the hotel accommodation business

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2   Cook, G. (2001). *Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge.

platform usually create a feeling of additional value to the service or the good. *Epithets* are also a case of positive lexical features of the hotel business discourse. A total of 20 examples of favourable connotations were found in the research. Some of them are presented below:

1. *'Fast, easy, discreet checkin & checkout, luxury suites, outstanding dining, 24-hour fitness center and more.'*
2. *'Exclusive offers from the world's most luxurious hotel.'*
3. *'Distinguish yourself with inspired atmosphere, sumptuous dining and exceptional service.'*
4. *'Salads, seafood station, delicious entrees to tempt any palate, a carving station and loads of scrumptious desserts.'*
5. *'Celebrate Christmas with a lavish brunch.'*
6. *'Luxury rooms'*
7. *'Premium, Royal and Superior'*
8. *'We are on a journey to make your travels uncomplicated, unforgettable, brilliant.'*
9. *'Exclusive offers from the world's most luxurious hotel.'*

After analysing lexical constructions in hotel advertising, it can be concluded that this particular genre of advertising uses a very peculiar lexicon. Advertising is considered by Goddard to be an adjective-heavy genre of discourse (Goddard 1998, 105; 48). In almost every example, words like *exceptional*, *exclusive*, *superior* and *royal* create a sense of getting a better service than anyone else, or even *being* better than everyone; and words like royal even strengthen the mood with a notion of experiencing being a noble person. *Luxury* or *luxurious* is a term almost specific to the accommodation business describing posh and high-class service and suites. Expressions like *easy*, *uncomplicated*, *fast* and *discreet* serve as anti-stress mood creators, and persuade consumers to visit without the stress of travel or expense concerns.

The next commonly used linguistic technique is *hyperbole* (11 examples). Some of them are presented below:

1. *'Countless emotions.'*
2. *'INTRODUCING A NEW ERA OF GLAMOUR.'*
3. *'On your own private island.'*
4. *'Passion. It's in everything we do.'*
5. *'Giant smiles.'*

The *hyperbolic* expressions presented in the examples operate on the same principle as the idiomatic expressions listed earlier. The advertisers use hyperbole as an expressive tool to present a positive experience to the consumer. However, like idioms, these expressions are highly figurative, and targeted at an

audience that is familiar with the discourse of advertising. In the first example, *countless emotions* is a phrasal construction used in many spheres of advertising, especially in the service sector. It represents the more-than-monetary value of things: experience and emotions. The third example was taken from a hotel social media account in the Maldives. The expression *your own private island* should not be taken literally; however, it creates a feeling of privacy and remoteness. The last two examples are intended to describe the quality of the members of staff in the hotel. *Giant smiles* and *perfection* in everything the staff do create a domestic, comfortable mood, so that travelling away from home might also feel stress-free.

Goddard (Goddard 1998, 103-104) states that 'advertisers tend not to make specific comparisons between their product and others by naming and referring to their rivals.' Comparative references tend to dominate in businesses that provide certain products, especially those with a high presence in the market. On the other hand, businesses that provide services, such as accommodation, tend to advertise with more *superlative adjectives* in their chosen language (ten examples). Some of them are presented below:

1. '*Have the best dim sum breakfast in Shanghai without leaving your hotel*' (Renaissance Hotel, Shanghai).
2. '*Meeting your highest expectations*' (Milandor Hotel, New York).
3. '*The Watergate Hotel is steps away from DC's most popular destinations and attractions*' (Watergate Hotel, Washington DC).
4. '*Exclusive offers from the world's most luxurious hotel.*'
5. '*Baystone Hotel & Spa where I was welcomed by the most amazing people and the most amazing room. Where the perfect views greeted me.*'

The superlative adjectives in these examples come together with other rhetorical and linguistic devices, such as *idioms* and *hyperbole*, and they share the same function in the context of the advertisement, to give an impression of the great quality of services the hotel offers, even though they might be exaggerated (*hyperbole*) or simply untruthful or biased (*idiom*). For example, the take that *the Watergate Hotel is steps away from DC's most popular destinations and attractions* is biased, considering the fact that a personal opinion of which destination is the most popular might vary drastically each time. And *have the best dim sum breakfast in Shanghai* is also a false statement, considering the fact that the individual palates of every human work in different ways, and also considering the fact that this is a hotel restaurant that offers a variety of foods at the same time, and there are a number of restaurants in Shanghai that specialise in making *dim sum*. However, the video advertisement lasts only a short time, and the receiver is not given time to scrutinise every individual statement, but only to sense certain

emotions: the high quality of the food, the great location of the hotel, meeting great people and staff, and experiencing positive emotions.

According to Cook (Cook 2001, 110-115), *personal* and *possessive pronouns* are a frequent case in the discourse of advertising in order to create a less formal and personal feeling. In the data analysed, personal pronouns (especially 'you') make up a large number of the examples (eight examples). Some of them are presented below:

1. '*You'll ask yourself why you didn't do this earlier ...*' (W Retreat&Spa Hotel, Maldives).
2. '*If your're looking for a luxury hotel that's uniquely interesting, make up your own mind at slh.com*'
3. '*IF YOU'D LIKE TO EXPERIENCE A TRUE OASIS OF DELIGHT IN THE DESERT HERE IT IS*' (Jumeirah Hotel & Spa).
4. '*But stay at one of our 13 hotels* [...] *and you'll find everything just right as you want it to be. And that's no fairy tale.*'
5. '*The Room You Need*'

The *personal pronoun* '*you*' was very common amongst the selected advertisements in the analysis. The use of the personal pronoun, as well as the above-mentioned *imperative sentences*, are a common rhetorical strategy also used by politicians to create the same notion of a one-to-one conversation, and a feeling of equality with the speaker. The personal pronoun presented in the examples is in some cases followed by the auxiliary verb 'will', which indicates events in the future. By this, the advertisement creates a feeling of promise: '*and you'll find everything just right as you want it*', and the certainty that a visit to the hotel will happen as a fact: '*You'll ask yourself why you didn't do this earlier...*'

Antisthecon (intentional misspelling) in advertisements usually provides a humorous effect or creates a pun; however, it is rare, and this is the only instance found:

'*THE NEW TWIST ON LUXURY*' (TRUMP HOTEL INTERNATIONAL & TOWER VANCOUVER: THE NEW TWIST ON LUXURY).

Multimodality and visualisation

'Recognizing the *partiality of language* entails that all modes in a *multimodal ensemble* are treated as contributing to the meaning of that ensemble; language is always a *partial* bearer of the meaning of a textual/semiotic whole' (Kress 2014, 38). Examples of visual and multi-modal rhetorical devices and persuasive features in social media advertising were classified into 27 categories. For the analysis to be accurate and comparable to its textual counterpart, the same 35 advertisements were analysed from a visual rhetorical point of view. The results

of the research show that hotel advertisements on social media possess a vast number of visual rhetorical and multimodal persuasive features. The table below displays the results of the analysis of hotel advertising visual material.

Table 2

Visual and multimodal features in hotel advertisements

Picture	Drawing	Long shot photography	Front camera angle	Filtered photography	Several junxtapositioned images	Image made to appear natural	Outdoor	Indoor	Furnishing	Image illustrates text	Bulleted list	Font size: large	Sidebar	White space to text ratio: large	Font size: small	Point of view: in the scene (subjective)	Colour: bright	Colour: dark	Close up photography	Side camera angle	White space to text ratio: small	Special effects	Point of view: outside the scene (objective)	Black and white	Characters	Bottom camera angle
33	3	17	24	17	11	27	25	20	18	11	2	13	4	20	25	22	27	7	17	13	7	8	14	2	19	1

The table above presents 407 examples of visual argument and rhetorical features found in hotel advertisements. The most common features were the use of *pictures*, *images appearing natural*, *dominant bright colours*, *outdoor images* and *small fonts*. The least common features were *bottom camera angle, black and white pictures*, *bulleted lists*, *drawings* and *sidebars*. However, the most common features in the analysed advertisements are usually specific to most advertising spheres. Picture usage, especially in bright colours, is dominant in all advertising, especially in the service sector, in order to present the consumer with a real image, as well as presenting the images as natural. A small font started to dominate in the social media era, because visual effects create a stronger impression and are perceived faster than textual information. The purpose of this research is to distinguish specific linguistic and visual features used in social media advertising in the *accommodation business*. Therefore, setting aside the most common features of the whole advertising sphere, three major specific features of hotel advertising visual presentation were distinguished: *indoor images*, *displaying characters* and *furnishings*.

Of the 35 advertisements, 20 contained at least one *indoor image*. An example would be the St Regis Hotel Advertisement, New York. Internet access:

https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/07/business/media/a-st-regis-new-york-face-lift-spurs-a-glamour-campaign.html

Indoor images are one of the pivotal features of a successful hotel advertisement. The consumer is given a chance to have a glimpse at the suite before visiting the hotel. Displaying the suites, restaurant rooms, saunas, spa centres, etc, gives an impression of openness, and even hospitality. Advertisements other than the booking sites usually display the highest-quality and most expensive rooms only in order to create the impression that all the suites will be of the same quality regardless of the price. Constantinides (Constantinides 2014, 43) states that 'no hotel marketer should attempt today to promote his services by showing beautiful pictures of his hotel rooms or beautiful surroundings or make claims about the hotel services that have nothing to do with reality',[3] because the social media forums and review sections are media for the rapid spread of opinions; however, some accommodation businesses tend to take a risk anyway.

Another commonly used visual feature is *displaying characters* (19 examples in 35 advertisements) such as the St Regis Hotel Advertisement, New York: https://www.pinterest.at/pin/484770347368740284/

In the accommodation business, profitability is directly dependent on one major factor, customer flow. Hotel advertisements usually contain one (in some cases both) of the following two elements: facilities or customers. However, in most cases the 'customers' in the pictures are paid actors, but the important factor is what emotions they present. In this particular example, the people represent a young couple (possibly even newlyweds) playfully jumping around the outdoor pool, creating the impression they are walking on water. Instantly, the advertisement targets several audience groups: newlyweds, couples, younger people. Jumping around barefoot, smiling, and the loose tie represent stress-free and comfortable sensations. The fact that neither of the characters is looking at the camera creates a sense of genuineness.

The last commonly used visual feature is *furnishings* (18 examples). An example is presented below: Clayton Hotel Advertisement, Great Britain: https://www.facebook.com/claytonhotels/photos/a.10150578689497301/10154400918722301/?type=3&theater

As well as *indoor pictures*, the display of *furnishings* is a technique to introduce a customer or a future customer to the facilities of the hotel. Usually, images of suites with furnishings are full of bright tones: clean sheets, and rooms full of light. Light and the colour white symbolise cleanliness and hygiene. In this particular example, a fictional cartoon character is sleeping in a bed under a

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[3] Constantinides, E. (2014). *Foundations of Social Media Marketing*. Twente: University of Twente.

white blanket. The facial expression of the character indicates that he or she is comfortable and happy, and that all the customers feel the same way. Warm colour tones dominate in the picture, and the steaming breakfast in bed symbolises comfort and top-level service.

To conclude, this empirical analysis was devoted to overt social media marketing strategies. By selecting social media *advertising* as a major part of social media marketing, the research into textual rhetorical and visual features was narrowed down. A total of 35 images and video advertisements from social media platforms were analysed. This resulted in finding 172 textual rhetorical examples and 407 visual/multimodal features. Social media advertising as a discourse was also analysed, and the main perception turned out to be that individually textual rhetorical and visual features of hotel advertising almost cannot be distinguished from other genres of advertising. As Edwards puts it: 'the work often alternates between the obvious and the impenetrable' (Edwards 2013, 45). The whole effect of the advertisement and its context can only be revealed and understood not in any of these individual *modes* of text and multimodality alone, 'but only in their combination'.[4]

Subliminal social media marketing strategies. This part of the research presents an explanation of the process of analysis and the overall results obtained, with the addition of the most suitable selected examples from the collected data. Examples for this empirical part were collected from the main social media platforms on the Internet, such as Facebook and Instagram. The research in this empirical chapter of the paper consisted of 25 subliminal social media strategy examples from social media posts from various hotel social media accounts, as well as comments and reviews/recommendations from private accounts that were divided into three parts devoted to *user-generated content*, *influencer marketing and campaigns* and *contests on social media platforms.*

User-generated content. Only positive and favourable responses and reviews were considered to be a successful social media marketing strategy. User-generated content has a significant marketing value on social media. Special offers and overt advertising are persuasive if done correctly; however, one positive or negative review from an outsider can greatly affect the choice of the consumer. Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms used for all the businesses, and the most commonly used platform with a review and recommendation section for business accounts. Businesses can filter the content in the sections to avoid offensive language or spamming. According to the same principle, social media administrators have a possibility to filter negative reviews about unpleasant experiences and an unsatisfactory level of service. For this reason,

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[4] Cook, G. (2001). *Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge.

most of the hotel review and recommendation sections analysed had no negative responses on the front pages. On the other hand, the positive responses from users have a significant marketing value. Satisfied customers describe their experiences in an informal manner, creating trust and persuasion around their story. For example, an extract from Kelly's Resort Hotel review and recommendation section: https://www.facebook.com/pg/KellysResortHotel/reviews/?ref=page_internal

In this example, a Facebook user under the name of 'Majella Dooley' shares her experience after a visit to the Kelly's Resort Hotel in Ireland. As the user states, the experience was pleasant, and she is planning to visit the hotel again. The user mentions that her family members 'have been there many times' as a statement that the high quality of the services does not change over time. She repeatedly mentions 'the view' to strengthen the positive impression of the scenery. The user also mentions that the hotel is 'child friendly', and that they are 'well looked after'. This functions as marketing for a specific target audience: families with small children. However, the user also mentions positive experience in 'the Marine Bar adult place with a restaurant'. The last sentence mentions that she is recommending this without even having a 'share'. That expression makes the recommendation seem objective, as the review comes from an outside source and not a member of staff. After describing the available spa procedures and the convenient location that is 'right on the beach', the user has given a favourable review for all the facilities and services at the hotel. This post also included a tagged Facebook account name of the hotel, and for that reason this positive experience can be found in any Facebook search that includes the name of the hotel or by anyone in Majella Dooley's contact circle. The user's comment also included several textual rhetorical devices that are characteristic of advertising discourse, such as isocolon, grammatical parallelism (*the view*, *the view*, *the view*) and favourable connotations (*the food was amazing*; *fab pool treatments amazing*) and rated the hotel with the highest five-star rating. Having this type of platform for publication and sharing businesses makes marketing almost effortless thanks to positive reviews from their users. On the other hand, administrators of hotel social media accounts (especially large ones) cannot cope with the flow of content quick enough to filter the negative reviews. Also, purposely leaving several negative reviews works as a marketing strategy as well, creating a feeling of honesty, as long as the ratio of negative to positive reviews is favourable.

Influencer marketing. Examples of *influencer marketing* on social media platforms were taken from Instagram influencer accounts with a follower base not lower than 5,000 accounts. The selected influencer accounts are not only from English-speaking owners, since the textual content of the message is of less im-

portance than other elements of the post: location, mentioning the hotel's social media account or mentioning the name with a hash (#) sign, or hashtag. Hashtags allow users to find certain social media posts marked with a particular hashtag. This facilitates the search process, and helps the message spread with the right algorithm. Influencers are usually well-known Internet or entertainment personalities that audiences respect, and in some cases even seek to get the same social media recognition themselves. For this reason, the follower base might ignore other criteria, such as a higher price, inconvenient location or even poor service, and still use the hotel services entirely out of respect for the *influencer* or for social media recognition. Several examples are presented below. Harry Gallagher's (@night.scape) Instagram post from 12 March at the Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort West Village: https://www.instagram.com/p/B9pKBIVhfQA/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

In this example, we can see a photograph uploaded by the English social media influencer and video content creator Harry Gallagher on his Instagram account under the nickname 'night.scape'. At the time when the example was taken his Instagram account had a follower base of almost 240,000 accounts. The message alongside the photograph does not contain any information or review about the hotel facilities: the only positive review was about his trip to Finland in general. However, the most important features of an influencer marketing post are present: the Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort West Village location tag and Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort West Village. The photograph itself is perfectly edited and appealing to look at. The positive experience of the influencer *gives his audience the impression* that one of the factors that made his journey to Finland satisfactory was also the accommodation in the Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort Village Hotel, and may make the audience interested in visiting the social media account of the hotel, and even consider the possibility of visiting the resort itself. Another example of social media influencer marketing is Alexandra Dieck's (@lexiconofstyle) Instagram post from 12 March at the Four Seasons Hotel restaurant The Garden: https://www.instagram.com/p/B9nWC9CJhDz/

As in the previous example, this social media influencer uploaded a photograph of her having lunch at the restaurant of one of the most famous hotel chain facilities in the United States, the Four Seasons. The account of Alexandra Dieck has a follower base of 120,000 accounts. This example also has the location of the hotel, and also mentions the Four Seasons Instagram account in the message. However, the message this time contains a positive review: *best healthy lunch with the nicest cappuccino in NYC*. Like the overt advertisements, the message contains a common linguistic technique of superlative adjectives. Also, the message contains two phrases with a hash sign before them with the hotel initials

'fs', standing for 'Four Seasons'. The influencer herself is known for her style and fashion choices on social media. In the photograph, we can see a famous designer brand 'Balenciaga' handbag on the lunch table, an informal green outfit, and sunglasses indoors. These traits strengthen her image on social media, and increase the overall respect and high value of her choices for accommodation or dining.

Campaigns and contests on social media platforms. Examples of hotel *social media campaigns or contests* have been taken from official hotel Instagram accounts with no specific criteria for the size of follower base. After a comparative analysis of the selected social media records, similar features were distinguished, such as: a) free accommodation for the winner (five out of five examples); b) a request to follow the hotel Instagram account in order to participate in the contest (four out of five examples); c) a request to tag or mention a friend in the comments section in order to participate in the contest (four out of five examples); d) mentioning a specific campaign *#hashtag* in the comments section in order to participate (two out of five examples); e) proof of past accommodation in order to participate in the contest (one out of five examples).

The subliminal social media marketing strategies analysed in this part have a certain principle: to make marketing effortless and benefit from user-generated content. However, this last marketing strategy requires marketers to create an idea for a contest or a new campaign and share it on social media platforms. On the other hand, this marketing strategy creates much more user-generated content: comments, growth in social media followings, and engaging other non-followers to participate. Two examples are presented here. The Liberta Seminyak Hotel in Bali, Indonesia, shared an Instagram competition to win a free two-night stay: https://www.instagram.com/p/BhED-P6lzfi/ and the Hilton Garden Inn Union Town Hotel shared an Instagram competition to win a Valentine's Day dinner and accommodation for two: https://www.instagram.com/p/B7_UE_7FBzi/

To conclude, this empirical section was dedicated to subliminal social media marketing strategies. By selecting social media *user-generated content*, *social media contests* and *influencer marketing* on social media platforms as major strategies, the analysis of their features was narrowed down. A total of 25 social media posts, reviews and comments from Facebook and Instagram were analysed. This resulted in finding common features for subliminal social media marketing, such as: *specifying the location of the hotel*, *mentioning hotel social media accounts*, *using #hashtags with the initials of the hotel name* and *creating a contest with prizes in order to get follower attention*. The whole principle of subliminal social media marketing strategies is for marketers to avoid being focused on themselves, and allow

users to generate content and share it between them. This creates the impression of an honest and unbiased user community that is trustworthy.

Finally, as a generalisation of the analysis carried out, the following *results* were established:

1. The social media marketing roles of consumers and entrepreneurs in the past 20 years have shifted drastically towards consumers, giving them more control. Consumers in the modern market are the key evaluators and co-creators. However, the bigger picture of marketing strategies claims that social media marketing is the last step in a successful strategy chain. Social media marketing for the public eye appears as an instrumental part for successful marketing; however, without a fundamentally sound product, electronic marketing essentials and a convenient and fully functional website, the importance of social media marketing would be significantly lower. Social media marketing tools are divided into two approaches: *passive* and *active*. The *passive approach* concentrates on collecting data and creating social media consumer communities. The collected data is used for market analysis and future improvements and problem prevention. The *active approach* concentrates on direct advertising, product/service improvement, and customisation and customer involvement. With advertising being the prime overt tool of social media marketing, its rhetorical devices, linguistic means, visual and multimodal techniques and other persuasive features create a highly unique discourse. Every individual element of these four categories conveys a specific message; however, only a combination of *modes* delivers the full message, and grants advertisements genuine marketing value.

2. The analysed social media marketing strategies were divided into *subliminal* and *overt*. Overt strategies and their features were sorted out by analysing the discourse of advertising. The most commonly used rhetorical and linguistic devices were: idioms, imperative sentences, superlative adjectives, favourable connotations, hyperbole and personal pronouns. The visual and multimodal features that were most common were: *the use of pictures*, *images appearing natural*, *dominant bright colours*, *outdoor images* and *small fonts*. However, these features are common to most spheres of advertising. Hotel advertising in particular possesses *indoor images*, *displaying characters* and *furnishings*. Subliminal strategies and features of them are noticeable in a user society environment. The most common and effective strategies on social media platforms were: *user-generated content*, *influencer marketing* and *contests and campaigns on social media*.

3. The main objective of hotel social media marketers is to attract customers. Customer attraction can be achieved in various ways:

- Attention-seeking devices. The first impression is to catch the eye of the consumer. Visual devices distinguish themselves from other social media

material. Linguistic means tend to be unusual in everyday language. Visual: *bright colours*, *large font size*, *special effects*. Linguistic/textual: *antisthecon*, *ecphonema*, *rhetorical questions*.

- Emotion provocative devices. After attracting attention, marketers tend to use expressive language and images. These devices evoke feelings such as laughter, admiration, desire, and even envy. Visual: *characters expressing emotions, dark or bright colours, close-up camera angle.* Textual/linguistic: *idioms*, *metaphors*, *puns*, *simile*, *repetition devices*, *hyperbole*, *litotes.* Other features (subliminal marketing): *influencer marketing*, *social media contests.*
- Emotional-manipulative devices. Some devices and features of language and content not only evoke emotions, but manipulate them in their favour, or even generate feedback actions. Linguistic devices: *motivation*, *personal experience.* Other features (subliminal marketing): *user-generated content*.

In conclusion, despite the fact that in present-day social media marketing the consumer has taken over most control from businesses, the marketers and advertisers tend to find effective strategies to attract customers. Both overt and subliminal social media marketing strategies used in the proper context, for the right target audiences and on suitable platforms, maintain their business value for accommodation enterprises.

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PASLĖPTOSIOS IR ATVIROSIOS SOCIALINIŲ MEDIJŲ REKLAMOS STRATEGIJOS VIEŠBUČIŲ VERSLO PLATFORMOSE

Santrauka

Socialinės medijos šiomis dienomis vaidina svarbų vaidmenį visuomenės gyvenime ir užima didelę dalį mūsų laiko. Ši technologinė revoliucija taip pat paveikė ir verslo sritį. Vartotojams suteikus daugiau kontrolės socialinių medijų platformose, verslininkai buvo priversti naudoti tiek atviras, tiek paslėptas reklamos strategijas. Šis straipsnis yra apie tai, kokias kalbines, vaizdines ir kitas įtaigos priemones naudoja reklamos ekspertai paslėptose ir atvirose reklamos strategijose ir ko yra siekiama pasitelkiant šias priemones. Norint supaprastinti šios plačios srities tyrimo eigą ir sumažinti apdorojamų duomenų kiekį, analizei buvo pasirinkta viešbučių verslo platforma.

Viešbučių verslo socialinių medijų reklamos strategijose yra naudojamos kalbinės, vaizdinės ir įtaigos priemonės. Analizė buvo atlikta iš dviejų perspektyvų – atvirųjų ir paslėptųjų strategijų. Atvirosiose strategijose iš reklamų buvo išrinkti 172 kalbiniai ir 407 vaizdiniai pavyzdžiai. Uždarosiose strategijose – 25 šaltiniai, suskirstyti į tris sritis – vartotojų generuojamas turinys, socialinių medijų konkursai ir kompanijos bei nuomonės formuotojų reklama. Šioje sisteminėje apžvalgoje buvo taikomi du metodai – analitinis ir aprašomasis.

Teiginys, jog kalbinės, vaizdinės ir įtaigos priemonės yra naudojamos viešbučių verslo reklamose kaip strategijų dalis, buvo patvirtintas. Nors šios priemonės ir individualiai perteikia tam tikrą reikšmę, pagrindinė reklamos vertė atsiskleidžia tik esant visų trijų priemonių samplaikai.