The Influence of Digital Rhetoric on Follower Trust in the Instagram Account @malakaproject.id

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of the internet has transformed communication, particularly through social media platforms like Instagram, where digital rhetoric plays a crucial role in shaping follower trust. This study addresses the problem of understanding how different rhetorical elements influence trust among followers of the Instagram account @malakaproject.id, particularly among young adults from Generation Z. The research aims to explore the impact of logical arguments (Logos), emotional appeals (Pathos), and credibility (Ethos) on follower trust. To achieve this, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing primary data collected through questionnaires and secondary data from relevant literature. The methodology includes validity and reliability testing of the questionnaire items, with data analysis conducted using multiple linear regression, T-tests, and F-tests to assess the relationships between rhetorical elements and follower trust. The findings reveal that the content on @malakaproject.id significantly enhances followers' trust, with logical arguments (Logos) having the most substantial impact, followed by emotional appeals (Pathos) and credibility (Ethos).

Keywords*: Digital Rhetoric, Ethos, Follower Trust, Logos, Pathos*

INTRODUCTION

The frequency of internet usage globally continues to rise each year, and Indonesia is no exception. This increase in internet usage has had significant consequences, particularly in the context of social media. According to Nasrullah (2015), social media is a new medium within the internet that enables users to represent themselves, interact, collaborate, share, and communicate with others, forming virtual social bonds. Social media facilitates active participation and reciprocal exchanges among users, characterized by the dissemination of information from one to many audiences, and from many sources to many others, all conveyed online (Budiman et al., 2019). As such, social media platforms have reshaped how individuals and organizations engage with each other, share ideas, and influence behaviors, all while creating new opportunities for content creators to connect with broader audiences.

The rapid expansion of the internet is not just a technological marvel; it has become a global phenomenon, with over half of the world's population now engaging with the internet. As reported by Thompson (2024), by February 2024, the number of social media users globally reached 5.35 billion, accounting for 66.2% of the global population of 8.08 billion. This figure signifies that more than half of the global population now uses the internet, with 5.04 billion people actively engaging with social media platforms. Each year, the percentage of internet users grows, making it clear that the pace of internet expansion is global and unprecedented.

In Indonesia, this trend is equally evident. According to Hootsuite's survey in January 2024, 185.3 million people in Indonesia, or 66.5% of the total population, use the internet. This number reflects a growth of 0.8% from the previous year, translating to an increase of 1.5 million internet users. Similarly, the number of social media users in Indonesia in 2024 stood at 139 million, or 49.9% of the population. Instagram has become the second most widely used social media platform in Indonesia, following WhatsApp, according to Thompson (2024).

As internet usage continues to grow in Indonesia, social media platforms such as Instagram have become an essential part of everyday life. With over 260 million active users, Instagram in particular stands out as a powerful tool for communication, information dissemination, and community-building. Instagram provides a platform where individuals and organizations alike can share photos, videos, and live updates, making it not just a social media tool, but a dynamic space for storytelling and persuasion. This shift in communication has fundamentally altered how society engages with information, and this shift is particularly important in the context of digital rhetoric.

Digital rhetoric, a term that refers to the use of classical rhetorical strategies in digital mediums, has become increasingly relevant in today's society. Digital rhetoric includes the application of Aristotle's core principles of persuasion—logos

(logical appeal), pathos (emotional appeal), and ethos (credibility)—to digital content creation. This form of rhetoric aims to persuade audiences by blending rational arguments with emotional appeal and establishing the credibility of the source. The potential for digital rhetoric to influence and persuade social media audiences, particularly on platforms like Instagram, is a subject of growing interest in communication studies (Eyman, 2015).

Rhetoric has a long and rich history dating back to the fifth century BCE, with seminal figures such as Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato shaping the foundations of rhetorical theory. Aristotle, in particular, identified three essential components of effective persuasion: logos, pathos, and ethos. Logos refers to logical reasoning, pathos to the emotional appeal, and ethos to the credibility of the speaker. These components have remained the cornerstone of persuasive communication for centuries, not only in oral discourse but also in written forms and, more recently, in digital media.

As technology advanced, the methods of communication evolved. Initially, rhetoric was employed in face-to-face speeches and public forums. However, with the rise of new communication technologies such as radio, television, and now social media, the methods of persuasion have adapted to these new mediums. Digital platforms, particularly social media sites like Instagram, have transformed rhetoric into a global tool for communication. As Saputra (2024) notes, digital technology has expedited and facilitated communication processes, opening up new opportunities to disseminate ideas and influence audiences. This has led to the emergence of what is now known as digital rhetoric.

Digital rhetoric, as defined by Eyman (2015), refers to the application of traditional rhetorical strategies—logos, pathos, and ethos—to digital texts and performances. The goal of digital rhetoric is similar to that of traditional rhetoric: to persuade the audience, achieve effective communication, and build trust with viewers. Digital rhetoric on social media platforms like Instagram serves the same purpose: to persuade the audience, create effective communication, and generate trust in the content being presented. As Al-Hasan (2024) explain, digital rhetoric is employed to spread messages and influence audiences on social media, making it an essential tool for content creators who aim to engage their followers.

The rise of social media platforms such as Instagram has transformed the way individuals communicate and share information. Instagram, as a visual platform that allows users to upload and share photos and videos, has become an ideal space for digital rhetoric. In addition to sharing personal experiences, users often engage with content that aligns with their interests, values, or beliefs, forming virtual communities that revolve around shared content.

Social media, however, is also fraught with challenges related to misinformation and the spread of fake news. In the era of post-truth politics, where emotions and personal beliefs often outweigh facts in shaping public opinion, the power of digital rhetoric becomes even more significant. According to Syuhada

(2018), the term "post-truth" refers to a situation where facts are less influential in shaping public opinion compared to emotional appeals and personal beliefs. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Komdigi) reported that 1,923 hoax content pieces were identified and clarified in 2024, underscoring the importance of critical information evaluation in the digital age (Muhamad, 2025).

Despite the challenges posed by misinformation, digital rhetoric continues to play a crucial role in shaping how audiences interact with content online. Effective use of rhetoric—through logical reasoning, emotional engagement, and credibility—can help content creators build trust with their followers. However, there is limited research on how digital rhetoric influences the trust of followers on social media platforms like Instagram. This gap in knowledge presents an opportunity for further exploration, particularly in understanding how rhetorical strategies affect follower behavior and trust in specific content creators or influencers.

Instagram stands out as a prime platform for the study of digital rhetoric. With its visual nature and high user engagement, Instagram allows content creators to experiment with and refine their rhetorical strategies. The @malakaproject.id Instagram account, which focuses on social issues and aims to create a "new society" that is informed, critical, and empathetic, serves as an excellent case study for understanding the impact of digital rhetoric on follower trust.

Launched in October 2023, @malakaproject.id has amassed over 260,000 followers and continues to post consistent content on issues such as climate change, peace negotiations in Gaza, and the role of universities in society. The account regularly collaborates with prominent figures, including Rocky Gerung and Cinta Laura, to amplify its messages. The consistency of its content and its commitment to educational outreach have garnered significant attention from followers, indicating the effectiveness of its communication strategies.

As Instagram continues to be one of the most widely used platforms in Indonesia, the @malakaproject.id account offers valuable insights into how digital rhetoric can be employed to engage followers and build trust. The research conducted in this study will explore whether the application of Aristotle's rhetorical principles—logos, pathos, and ethos—can influence the trust of followers on Instagram and how these strategies contribute to the broader goal of promoting social change and awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of digital rhetoric, particularly in social media, has become an increasingly prominent topic in contemporary research, given the expansion of digital platforms and the rise in their usage as tools for communication, persuasion, and influence. As social media platforms like Instagram have grown in popularity,

their use of rhetorical strategies to engage and influence audiences has garnered attention. This section explores the previous studies that have laid the groundwork for understanding how Aristotelian rhetoric, including the components of logos, pathos, and ethos, applies to the digital space. Additionally, this literature review highlights how these rhetorical elements contribute to building trust among followers, particularly on Instagram.

The Use of Aristotelian Rhetoric in Social Media

Several studies have explored the application of Aristotelian rhetoric on social media platforms, particularly focusing on the persuasive elements embedded in various forms of digital content. Dhia et al. (2024) conducted a qualitative study that analyzed the content of five YouTube creators during the COVID-19 pandemic, employing Aristotelian rhetoric to assess how these influencers persuaded their audiences. The research highlighted how each content creator, despite their unique styles, used rhetoric to persuade their followers, demonstrating the relevance of Aristotelian rhetorical components—ethos, pathos, and logos—within digital media. This study emphasized the deliberate use of persuasive rhetoric in YouTube content during a crisis, focusing on how the creators employed persuasion through logical arguments, emotional appeals, and the establishment of their credibility.

Fadhillah & Irwansyah (2021) explored how President Joko Widodo's virtual speech during the COVID-19 pandemic utilized Aristotelian rhetoric to persuade the Indonesian public. They found that the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in the speech was central to fostering trust and guiding public behavior in response to the pandemic. The study affirmed that Aristotelian rhetorical elements continue to be effective in digital communication, even in formal settings such as political speeches. These findings are particularly relevant for this study, as they demonstrate the enduring power of rhetorical theory in influencing audience behavior in a digital context.

Digital Rhetoric and Its Role in Social Media Persuasion

Eyman (2015) defines digital rhetoric as the application of traditional rhetorical strategies—logos, pathos, and ethos—in digital formats, such as text and video, to persuade or influence audiences. This concept emphasizes that while the medium may have changed, the fundamental principles of persuasion remain relevant in the digital age. As social media platforms provide a space for real-time interaction and content sharing, digital rhetoric has become an essential tool for influencers, brands, and individuals seeking to persuade or shape public opinion.

Digital rhetoric, particularly in platforms like Instagram, allows content creators to interact directly with their audiences through photos, videos, and captions, providing an opportunity to employ persuasion in a more personal and immediate way. According to Pramudita et al. (2025), the integration of logos,

pathos, and ethos in social media content fosters deeper emotional engagement, builds trust, and influences follower behavior. This aligns with the findings of Saputra (2024), who notes that digital rhetoric on platforms like Instagram aims to foster effective communication, influence perceptions, and enhance the credibility of the content creator. The success of these strategies relies on the ability to craft content that appeals logically, emotionally, and credibly to an audience.

Building Trust through Digital Rhetoric

Trust is a critical component in the relationship between social media influencers and their followers. As Dhia et al. (2024) argue, the establishment of credibility (ethos) is essential for persuasive communication, particularly in digital spaces where audiences cannot directly interact with content creators. Similarly, Fadhillah & Irwansyah (2021) demonstrated that the credibility of a speaker, when communicated through well-crafted rhetoric, significantly impacts the trust of an audience. In the context of Instagram, where followers often rely on influencers for information, entertainment, or education, the role of ethos in building trust cannot be overstated.

The concept of trust is also closely linked to the ability of content creators to maintain consistency and integrity in their communication. As noted by Horne (2016), trust is built upon factors such as competence, integrity, and goodwill. When these elements are conveyed through digital rhetoric—whether through factual data (logos), emotional appeals (pathos), or credibility (ethos)—followers are more likely to trust the information presented. This is especially true for platforms like Instagram, where the nature of the interaction is often less formal, and trust is essential for sustained engagement.

The Influence of Social Media on Followers' Trust

In the context of Instagram, research has demonstrated that the credibility of the information presented on social media significantly influences followers' trust. Aliyah & Ismail (2024) found that credibility plays a central role in determining how followers perceive the information shared by influencers. Their study on the Instagram account @herbyuss revealed that the credibility of the account was directly linked to the level of trust followers placed in the information shared. This is further reinforced by Muflih et al. (2024), who studied the influence of personal branding on Instagram influencers' ability to affect their followers' behavior. They found that an influencer's credibility, established through consistent messaging and trustworthiness, led to higher levels of follower engagement and trust, particularly when it came to health-related topics such as vaccination.

Gaps in the Literature and Relevance to Current Study

While there has been substantial research on the application of Aristotelian rhetoric in digital media, particularly in YouTube videos and speeches, there is a notable gap in understanding the specific influence of logos, pathos, and ethos in

social media content, especially on platforms like Instagram. Previous studies, such as those by Fadhillah & Irwansyah (2021) and Fadia (2023), have explored the role of rhetoric in influencing audience behavior, but they have not explicitly focused on the three pillars of digital rhetoric—logos, pathos, and ethos—and their individual or combined effects on follower trust in social media settings.

This study aims to address this gap by focusing on the Instagram account @malakaproject.id, which consistently publishes content on social issues. Given the account's growing follower base and its use of Instagram's visual and interactive features, it serves as an ideal platform to explore how the three pillars of digital rhetoric can influence followers' trust. By investigating the specific roles of logos, pathos, and ethos in building trust, this research will contribute new insights to the field of digital rhetoric and social media communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, focusing on statistical data analysis to examine the influence of digital rhetoric on follower trust on Instagram. The research method employed is survey research, which involves collecting data through a questionnaire from a sample of followers of the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. The study investigates the impact of three independent variables: Logos (logical reasoning), Pathos (emotional appeal), and Ethos (credibility), on the dependent variable of follower trust.

The population for this research consists of the 256,000 followers of @malakaproject.id, and 123 active followers were selected as the sample using systematic random sampling. The study uses the Likert scale to measure responses, where participants rate statements about the rhetorical elements on a scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The research aims to test the hypothesis that these rhetorical elements (Logos, Pathos, Ethos) affect the trust followers place in the content shared by influencers on Instagram.

For data collection, the study utilizes primary data from the questionnaires and secondary data from relevant literature. The research includes validity and reliability testing of the questionnaire items. Validity is assessed through convergent and discriminant validity methods, while reliability is tested using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values to ensure the consistency of the data.

Data analysis involves multiple linear regression to explore the relationship between rhetorical elements and follower trust. Additionally, T-tests and F-tests are used to assess the individual and simultaneous effects of the independent variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is employed to evaluate the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance in follower trust. This approach ensures a robust analysis of the influence of digital rhetoric on trust in social media contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 123 respondents, with 65 females (52.8%) and 58 males (47.2%). The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents were aged between 21-24 years (49.6%), followed by those aged 17-20 years (21.1%), 25-28 years (22.8%), and the least number of respondents were in the 29-40 year age group (6.5%).

As for the respondents' occupations, the largest group was students, comprising 54.5% of the total respondents. The next largest group was private employees (22.8%), followed by those in government service, military, or police (2.4%), and 15.4% were employed in other fields. In terms of educational background, most respondents held a higher education degree (D4/S1) with 71.5%, followed by those with a high school education (20.3%). Fewer respondents had a diploma (D3) or a master's degree (S2).

Finally, the respondents' duration of following the Instagram account @malakaproject.id was fairly spread out. A significant portion (21.1%) had been following the account for 4-6 months, 22% for 7-9 months, 19.5% for 1-3 months, and 21.1% for over a year. The smallest group (16.3%) had been following the account for 10 months to a year. This data helps to better understand the demographic profile of the respondents, which is essential for analyzing the effects of digital rhetoric on followers' trust in the account.

Logos (X_1)

Table 1. Average and Conclusion of Logos Variable Category (X_1)

Indicator	Likert Scale					Respondents	Total	Percentage Index	Conclusion
	5	4	3	2	1				
Reasoning/Argument									
X_1.1	56	64	2	0	1	123	543	88.2%	Very High
X_1.2	58	65	0	0	0	123	550	89.4%	Very High
X_1.3	16	44	48	11	4	123	426	69.2%	High
Data and Statistics									
X_1.4	29	89	4	1	0	123	515	83.7%	Very High
X_1.5	46	53	24	0	0	123	514	83.5%	Very High
X_1.6	31	56	18	9	9	123	460	74.8%	High
Facts and Field Evidence									
X_1.7	43	42	37	1	0	123	496	80.7%	Very High
X_1.8	70	53	0	0	0	123	562	91.4%	Very High
Average							508.3	83.7%	Very High

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

In this section, respondents were presented with 8 statements concerning the logic and clarity of the content provided by @malakaproject.id. A Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) was used to rate the responses, with reverse scoring applied for negative statements. The Logos (X_1) dimension was divided into three subcategories: Reasoning/Arguments, Data and Statistics, and Facts and Evidence.

1. Reasoning/Arguments

    Respondents were asked about the strength and logic of the arguments used in @malakaproject.id's content. The results showed that 45.5% strongly agreed, and 52% agreed that the content contained strong and logical arguments, resulting in an overall agreement index of 88.2%. This indicates a very high level of agreement among respondents regarding the soundness and logical consistency of the content's arguments.

2. Strength of Arguments

    When evaluating whether the strength of @malakaproject.id's arguments strengthens its overall message, 47% strongly agreed, and 53% agreed, resulting in a total score of 550 and an index of 89.4%. This demonstrates a very high level of agreement that the arguments presented by the account enhance the effectiveness of its messaging.

3. Subjectivity of Arguments

    For the negative statement, "The arguments presented are subjective and not objective," 13% of respondents strongly disagreed, and 36% disagreed. This resulted in a total score of 426 and an index of 69.2%, indicating that most respondents did not agree with the notion that the arguments lacked objectivity.

4. Data and Statistics

    Regarding whether @malakaproject.id presents data and statistics in its content, 24% strongly agreed, and 72% agreed, leading to a very high index of 83.7%. In contrast, respondents disagreed with the statement that the data presented did not correlate with the topic, as reflected by an index of 83.5%. This suggests that respondents perceived the data presented as relevant and integral to the content's themes.

5. Facts and Evidence

    When asked about the factual basis of the content, 35% strongly disagreed with the statement that the content was based on personal opinions without factual evidence, leading to a very high index of 80.7%. Additionally, 91.4% of respondents agreed that the content was based on current social issues, reflecting a very high level of agreement that the content was both factual and relevant to contemporary topics.

This is supported by the results of a brief interview conducted by the researchers to reinforce the findings from statistical calculations. The informants in this study were Asa Bijak Iswara and Mutya Nur Ramdhani. Both informants stated that logos, or logical evidence, was the main reason they trusted the content displayed by the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. Based on the interview results, it is suspected that when trusting the information presented by the Instagram account @malakaproject.id, followers tend to focus more on the logical evidence presented. This is because, according to the informants, @malakaproject.id

consistently includes sources not only from websites or news outlets but also from studies (journals). Accurate sources undoubtedly add value to the content, as on social media, it is often difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction (Post Truth).

Pathos (X$_2$)

Table 2. Average and Conclusion of Pathos Variable Category (X$_2$)

Indicator	Likert Scale					Respondents	Total	Percentage Index	Conclusion
	5	4	3	2	1				
Motivating Delivery									
X$_2$.1	76	34	12	1	0	123	554	90,1%	Very High
X$_2$.2	79	42	1	1	0	123	568	92,4%	Very High
X$_2$.3	32	48	43	0	0	123	481	78,2%	High
Emotional Experience									
X$_2$.4	39	80	1	3	0	123	524	85,2%	Very High
X$_2$.5	47	73	3	0	0	123	536	87,2%	Very High
Passionate Language									
X$_2$.6	47	72	3	1	0	123	534	86,8%	Very High
X$_2$.7	48	70	5	0	0	123	535	87%	Very High
X$_2$.8	26	59	26	8	4	123	464	75,5%	High
Average							524,5	85,3%	Very High

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

Pathos was assessed using 8 statements, focusing on the emotional appeal and engagement of the content. Like the Logos dimension, respondents rated each statement using a 5-point Likert scale. Pathos (X$_2$) was divided into three subcategories: Motivational Delivery, Emotional Experience, and Enthusiastic Language.

1. Motivational Delivery

    Respondents were asked whether the content of @malakaproject.id discouraged critical or logical thinking. A strong 61.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with this notion, resulting in a total score of 554 and an index of 90.1%. This shows that the content is widely viewed as encouraging critical thinking, rather than discouraging it.

2. Impact on Awareness and Social Responsibility

    When asked whether the content positively impacted respondents' awareness and concern for social and environmental issues, 64.2% strongly agreed, and 34.2% agreed. This resulted in an index of 92.4%, indicating that the content was highly effective in raising awareness and encouraging social responsibility.

3. Narrative Clarity and Motivation

    The negative statement about whether the speakers and guests used convoluted narratives was met with 26% strongly disagreeing and 39% disagreeing, yielding an index of 78.2%. This shows that most respondents felt the content was clear, motivating, and not overly complex.

Emotional Experience (Pathos)

The emotional experience component of Pathos (X_2) was assessed by asking respondents about the emotional impact, motivation, and enthusiasm conveyed through the content of @malakaproject.id.

1. Content Related to Personal Experiences

    When asked whether content related to personal experiences was beneficial for followers, 31.7% strongly agreed, and 65% agreed, resulting in a very high percentage of 85.2%. This indicates that the majority of respondents found content involving personal experiences to be highly valuable and engaging.

2. Relevance of Examples to Raise Awareness

    Respondents were asked whether the examples used in the content helped raise awareness. A significant 38.2% strongly agreed, and 59.4% agreed, leading to an index of 87.2%. This suggests that the content was deemed effective in using relevant examples to raise awareness about important social issues.

3. Enthusiastic and Engaging Message Delivery

    Regarding the enthusiasm with which the message was delivered, 38.2% strongly agreed, and 58.6% agreed, resulting in an index of 86.8%. This indicates that the respondents perceived the message delivery as highly enthusiastic and engaging.

4. Effectiveness and Clarity of Language

    When asked about the clarity and effectiveness of the language used, 39% strongly agreed, and 57% agreed, leading to an index of 87%. This reflects the respondents' view that the language used in the content was very effective in conveying social issues.

5. Excessive Enthusiasm of the Speaker

    For the negative statement about the speaker's enthusiasm causing the message to appear exaggerated or inconsistent with the facts, 21.1% strongly disagreed, and 48% disagreed, resulting in an index of 75.5%. This shows that most respondents did not feel that the speaker's enthusiasm was excessive or led to an inaccurate message.

This is reinforced by the results of a brief interview conducted by the researchers with Asa Bijak Iswara and Mutya Nur Ramdhani to strengthen the statistical findings. Both respondents, who are also informants in this study, stated that pathos, or emotions and feelings, was the primary reason they continued to follow the Instagram account @malakaproject.id to this day. Based on the interview results, it is suspected that content that touches emotions and feelings, such as content that motivates and raises awareness, is a strong factor for followers to continue following the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. According to the informants, they gained new insights into current issues that were always updated,

as well as some posts that were able to change their mindset. This indicates that social media, through the content it presents, can evoke the emotions of its followers.

Ethos (X₃)

Table 3. Average and Conclusion of Ethos Variable Category (X_3)

Indicator	Likert Scale					Respondents	Total	Percentage Index	Conclusion
	5	4	3	2	1				
Expertise									
$X_3.1$	39	61	21	2	0	123	506	82,3%	Very High
$X_3.2$	50	69	4	0	0	123	538	87,5%	Very High
$X_3.3$	38	61	23	1	0	123	505	82,1%	Very High
Integrity									
$X_3.4$	62	47	14	0	0	123	540	87,8%	Very High
$X_3.5$	56	62	3	2	0	123	541	88%	Very High
$X_3.6$	54	62	2	4	1	123	533	86,7%	Very High
Authority									
$X_3.7$	32	51	37	3	0	123	481	78,2%	High
$X_3.8$	33	81	6	2	1	123	512	83,3%	Very High
Average							519,5	84,5%	Very High

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

Ethos was evaluated based on the credibility of the content, focusing on the expertise, integrity, and authority of the speakers and the content provided by @malakaproject.id.

1. Expertise

    When asked whether the content lacked proper analysis, 31.7% strongly disagreed, and 49.6% disagreed, leading to an index of 82.3%. This indicates that respondents believed the content was well-researched and credible.

2. Credibility of the Speakers

    In terms of the speakers' credibility, 40.7% strongly agreed, and 56% agreed, resulting in a very high index of 87.5%. This shows that respondents highly valued the expertise and credibility of the speakers.

3. Preparation and Experience of the Speakers

    Regarding whether the speakers were adequately prepared and experienced, 30.9% strongly disagreed, and 49.6% disagreed, resulting in an index of 82.1%. This indicates that respondents did not believe that the speakers lacked preparation or experience.

4. Message Organization and Integrity

    Respondents were asked whether the content appeared disorganized. A significant 50.4% strongly disagreed, and 38.2% disagreed, yielding an index of 87.8%. This indicates that the content was widely seen as well-structured and coherent.

5. Educational and Credible Content

In terms of the credibility of the content, 43.9% strongly agreed, and 50.4% agreed, resulting in an index of 86.7%. This shows that respondents strongly agreed that the content was educational and based on valid data and facts.

This is supported by the results of a brief interview conducted by the researcher with Asa Bijak Iswara to reinforce the statistical findings, where the respondent, who is also an informant in this study, stated that he initially came across the Instagram account @malakaproject.id through a video from the Malaka YouTube channel that appeared on his YouTube feed. He then tried watching the video and found that the discussion in the video was presented in an engaging way. The dialogue in the video made the topic more interesting and informative. After that, he searched for more information about Malaka and looked for the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. After viewing several posts, he decided to follow the account. Meanwhile, Mutya Nur Ramdhani stated that her reason for following the Instagram account @malakaproject.id was due to her interest in its educational content, particularly in the areas of politics and logical thinking.

Based on the interview results, it is suspected that the credibility of the source is not the main and only reason a person follows an Instagram account. While source credibility (ethos) may not be the most dominant reason for followers' trust in the Instagram account @malakaproject.id, it cannot be denied that the credibility and reputation of the narrators still play a role in attracting people's interest in Malaka or the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. Although statistical calculations show that logos has the greatest influence on variable Y, followed by pathos and ethos, the differences in the Beta Coefficients (Standardized Coefficients) of the three independent variables are not significant. This indicates that all three variables play an important role in influencing followers' trust, and it is not solely focused on one independent variable.

Authority

The Authority dimension focused on the perceived credibility of the speakers and the content provided by @malakaproject.id.

1. Credibility of the Speaker

    Regarding doubts about the speaker's credibility, 26% strongly disagreed, and 41.5% disagreed, resulting in an index of 78.2%. This shows that most respondents did not doubt the speaker's credibility.

2. Impact on Perspective and Perception

    When asked if the content influenced their perspectives and perceptions, 26.8% strongly agreed, and 65.9% agreed, resulting in an index of 83.3%. This shows that the content had a significant impact on the respondents' views regarding the topics discussed.

Followers' Trust (Y)

Table 4. Average and Conclusion of Followers' Trust Category (Y)

Indicator	Likert Scale					Respondents	Total	Percentage Index	Conclusion
	5	4	3	2	1				
Competence and Experience									
Y_1	33	85	5	0	0	123	520	84.6%	Very High
Y_2	25	61	34	2	1	123	476	77.4%	High
Y_3	33	50	37	3	0	123	482	78.4%	High
Consistency									
Y_4	26	43	33	16	5	123	438	71.2%	High
Y_5	44	78	1	0	0	123	535	87%	Very High
Y_6	49	49	19	1	5	123	505	82.1%	Very High
Goodwill									
Y_7	68	51	2	1	1	123	553	89.9%	Very High
Y_8	27	42	42	10	2	123	451	73.3%	High
Average							495	80.5%	Very High

Source: Processed Data by Researchers (2025)

Followers' Trust was assessed through 8 statements categorized into three dimensions: Competence and Experience, Consistency, and Good Intentions.

1. Competence and Experience

    Respondents were asked if they trusted @malakaproject.id as a reliable and trustworthy source of information. 26.8% strongly agreed, and 69.1% agreed, with an index of 84.6%, indicating a high level of trust in the platform's competence.

2. Recommendation and Reference

    When asked if they would recommend @malakaproject.id as a primary source for social issues, 20.3% strongly agreed, and 49.6% agreed, leading to an index of 77.4%. This indicates that many respondents were willing to recommend the account as a trustworthy source.

3. Doubts about Accuracy

    Regarding doubts about the accuracy of information due to the platform's short existence, 26.8% strongly disagreed, and 40.7% disagreed, resulting in an index of 78.4%. This shows that the majority did not question the accuracy of the information despite the account's relatively recent establishment.

4. Consistency of Quality Content

    Respondents strongly agreed (35.8%) and agreed (63.4%) that consistent quality content influenced their trust in @malakaproject.id, yielding an index of 87%. This indicates that consistency in content quality is a key factor contributing to trust.

5. Alignment with Vision and Mission

    Most respondents disagreed (79.6%) with the statement that the content was not aligned with @malakaproject.id's mission to educate and empower youth, resulting in an index of 82.1%.

6. Commitment to Education and Awareness

When asked about the commitment to improving education and awareness for Indonesia's future, 55.3% strongly agreed, and 41.5% agreed, resulting in a high index of 89.9%. This shows strong belief in the platform's commitment to educational and social causes.

7. Objectivity of Content

Respondents disagreed (34.2%) and somewhat disagreed (34.2%) with the statement that the content was influenced by personal biases, leading to an index of 73.3%. This suggests that most respondents believed the content was objective and not biased.

The average score for Followers' Trust was 80.5%, classified as very high. Respondents expressed strong trust in the content provided by @malakaproject.id, especially in relation to the platform's consistency, educational commitment, and alignment with its vision and mission. The data revealed a high level of credibility, authority, and trust in the content, with the majority of respondents rating the platform's content as reliable, consistent, and impactful.

Data Analysis Results

Multiple Linear Regression

The study analyzed the data using multiple linear regression, which is appropriate when there are two or more independent variables. The regression model produced by the Smart PLS 4 software is as follows:

$$Y = -0.109 + 0.324X_1 + 0.357X_2 + 0.301X_3$$

Where:
X_1 = Logos
X_2 = Pathos
X_3 = Ethos
Y = Followers' Trust

The key findings from the analysis show that the constant (α) value of -0.109 suggests that if Logos, Pathos, and Ethos are all zero, followers' trust will decrease. However, this negative constant does not significantly impact the overall model, as it is used solely for prediction purposes. The coefficient for Logos (X_1) is 0.324, indicating a positive effect on Followers' Trust; a 1% increase in Logos results in a 0.324 increase in trust. Similarly, Pathos (X_2) has a coefficient of 0.357, demonstrating a positive impact on trust, where a 1% increase in Pathos leads to a 0.357 increase in trust. Ethos (X_3) also shows a positive relationship with Followers' Trust, with a coefficient of 0.301, meaning that a 1% increase in Ethos causes a 0.301 increase in trust. These findings indicate that all three variables positively influence followers' trust.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures how well the independent variables explain the variation in the dependent variable, Followers' Trust. The results showed an R^2 value of 0.535 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.524. This means that 52.4% of the variance in Followers' Trust can be explained by the variables Logos, Pathos, and Ethos, while the remaining 47.6% is influenced by other factors, such as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), which is hypothesized to also impact trust in the platform.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis tests were conducted using both the F-test and T-test. The F-test revealed a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the combined effect of Logos, Pathos, and Ethos significantly influences Followers' Trust. Additionally, the T-test showed that the p-values for Logos (0.002), Pathos (0.005), and Ethos (0.007) were all less than 0.05, signifying that each of these variables has a statistically significant impact on Followers' Trust.

Conclusion of Hypothesis Testing

H_1: Logos (X_1) significantly affects Followers' Trust (Y). This hypothesis is accepted.

H_2: Pathos (X_2) significantly affects Followers' Trust (Y). This hypothesis is accepted.

H_3: Ethos (X_3) significantly affects Followers' Trust (Y). This hypothesis is accepted.

H_4: Logos (X_1), Pathos (X_2), and Ethos (X_3) together significantly affect Followers' Trust (Y). This hypothesis is accepted.

H_0: The null hypothesis (no effect of Digital Rhetoric on Followers' Trust) is rejected.

Research Discussion

This research employed a quantitative approach to examine how Digital Rhetoric (Logos, Pathos, and Ethos) influences Followers' Trust on the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. Using Smart PLS 4 for analysis, the study confirmed that all three components of Aristotle's rhetorical theory significantly influence trust.

The findings suggest that the content on @malakaproject.id, which incorporates logical arguments (Logos), emotional appeals (Pathos), and credibility (Ethos), significantly increases the followers' trust. Logos, in particular, was found to have the largest impact on trust, followed by Pathos and Ethos. This aligns with Aristotle's rhetorical framework, demonstrating its relevance even in modern digital contexts.

Furthermore, the respondents were primarily young adults (Generation Z), many of whom were students or had higher education, which supports Malaka's

mission of educating the younger generation. This indicates that @malakaproject.id is on the right path toward achieving its vision of creating an informed and engaged generation for Indonesia's future.

Overall, the research supports the effectiveness of applying Aristotle's rhetoric in digital platforms, particularly in influencing followers' trust through well-balanced content that engages the audience logically, emotionally, and credibly. The study also highlights the need for continued commitment, consistency, and integrity in maintaining such engagement.

CONCLUSION

The analysis using multiple linear regression in Smart PLS 4 revealed that the significance value for the Logos variable (X_1) was 0.002, which is smaller than the 5% significance level ($0.002 < 0.05$). This finding indicates that Logos significantly influences Followers' Trust. The research demonstrated that Logos, encompassing reasoning, arguments, data, statistics, facts, and evidence, effectively impacts followers' trust in the Instagram account @malakaproject.id. Consequently, incorporating Logos into each piece of content is crucial for enhancing the credibility of the account.

Similarly, the significance value for Pathos (X_2) was 0.005, also smaller than the 5% significance level ($0.005 < 0.05$), confirming that Pathos has a significant influence on Followers' Trust. The study highlighted that Pathos, which appeals to emotions, plays a key role in shaping followers' trust in the account. Therefore, using Pathos in content creation is an effective strategy for engaging followers.

Ethos (X_3) also significantly affects Followers' Trust, with a significance value of 0.007, which is below the 0.05 threshold ($0.007 < 0.05$). The research found that Ethos, related to the credibility of the source, is essential in fostering followers' trust. Ensuring that speakers, guests, and the overall integrity of the account align with the values of @malakaproject.id is critical.

The Adjusted R^2 value was 0.524, meaning that 52.4% of the variance in Followers' Trust is explained by the independent variables (Logos, Pathos, and Ethos). The remaining 47.6% is influenced by external factors, such as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), which were not covered by the study.

The results of the T-test indicated that all three independent variables—Logos (X_1), Pathos (X_2), and Ethos (X_3)—had significant impacts on Followers' Trust, as their p-values were below the 0.05 significance level. Additionally, the F-test results showed a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the independent variables together have a significant influence on Followers' Trust.

Among the three variables, Logos (X_1) exhibited the largest regression coefficient (0.283), suggesting that it has the most substantial effect on Followers' Trust compared to Pathos (X_2) and Ethos (X_3).

This study confirms the relevance of Aristotle's rhetorical theory in the context of digital media. The findings support the effectiveness of Logos, Pathos, and Ethos in influencing persuasion, demonstrating that emotional appeal, logical argumentation, and credibility are critical components of content that foster trust. The content shared on @malakaproject.id effectively engages followers emotionally, presents logical arguments, and maintains credibility, which collectively contribute to the trust followers place in the account.

In conclusion, the study affirms the significant role of digital rhetoric, particularly Logos, Pathos, and Ethos, in shaping followers' trust on social media. The results not only validate Aristotle's classical rhetorical theory but also highlight the importance of integrating these rhetorical elements in the creation of persuasive and credible content.

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