

The role of visual rhetoric in crowdfunding discourse in times of crisis

Persuasion through visual contents plays a big role in crowdfunding discourse (see e.g. Cudmore & Slattery 2019). This paper focuses on visual contents (pictures, videos, photographs) in the campaign calls of web-based crowdfunding during two worldwide economic crises: the Ukrainian war and Covid pandemic. There are several previous studies analyzing verbal discourse in crowdfunding persuasion (e.g. Kedves 2016; Palmieri et al. 2022) but visual rhetoric has been studied far less. The aim of the study is to find out what kind of role visual contents play in crowdfunding persuasion. Methodically, this study utilizes the Aristotelian classification of ethos, pathos, and logos as introduced in Tirdatov's (2014) research into the (verbal) discourse of crowdfunding. The material of this study stems from 47 campaign calls of companies and entrepreneurs suffering from economic crises: 27 Kickstarter campaigns belong to Ukrainian fundraisers applying for money during the war, while 20 campaigns on Indiegogo belong mostly to U.S. fundraisers going through the Covid crisis. The findings of this study suggest that ethos in the visual rhetoric of crowdfunding is a way of introducing fundraisers as community-caring and hard-working individuals, while pathos is utilized in terms social activism, and logos is mainly used for giving credible product information and indirectly creating an expert status for fundraisers.

Keywords: crowdfunding, rhetoric, visual rhetoric, ethos, pathos, logos

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