

The Use of Rhetorical Devices in Business Presentations

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na využití řečnických prostředků ve vybraných obchodních prezentacích. Mezi zkoumané řečnické techniky patří využití řečnické otázky, repetice, hyperboly, osobních zájmen a metafor. Tyto techniky podporují schopnost řečníka ovlivnit publikum a posilují dopad sdělení. Cílem této práce je zjistit, jak využití řečnických prostředků ovlivňuje účinnost a recepci obchodních prezentací ze strany publika. Analytický část práce je založena na kvalitativním výzkumu prezentací startupových firem přednesených během soutěže Startup Battlefield, kterou pořádá TechCrunch. Podrobným pozorováním bylo zjištěno, že strategické využití řečnických prostředků významně zvyšuje přesvědčivost a celkovou efektivitu obchodních prezentací.

Klíčová slova: řečnický prostředek, obchodní prezentace, rétorika, rétorická analýza, prezentační dovednosti, obchodní komunikace

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis focuses on the use of rhetorical devices in selected business presentations. The examined rhetorical techniques include the use of rhetorical question, repetition, hyperbole, personal pronouns, and metaphor. Such techniques support the speaker's ability to influence the audience and strengthen the impact of the message. The aim of this thesis is to determine how the use of rhetorical devices affects the effectiveness and audience reception of business presentations. The analytical part of the thesis is based on qualitative research of startup company presentations delivered during Startup Battlefield competition, organized by TechCrunch. Through detailed observation, it was found that strategic use of rhetorical devices significantly enhances the persuasiveness and overall effectiveness of business presentations.

Keywords: rhetorical device, business presentation, rhetoric, rhetorical analysis, presentation skills, business communication

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INTRODUCTION

Rhetorical devices are powerful tools which shape the way message is conveyed, especially in the context of business presentations. These linguistic techniques allow speakers to emphasize key points of their delivery with the ability to influence the audience. In the professional environment, the strategic use of rhetorical devices contributes to more effective and persuasive communication. Therefore, understanding the fundamental aspects of these devices is essential for strengthening the speaker's credibility.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the application of these techniques in selected business presentations. The main types of rhetorical devices examined in this work are rhetorical questions, repetition, hyperbole, personal pronouns, and metaphor. This thesis is divided into two main sections, i.e. theoretical and analytical part.

The theoretical part begins with Chapter 1, which explores the concept of rhetoric, outlining the main characteristics, a brief history of rhetoric, and it also focuses on the three properties of persuasion – ethos, pathos, and logos. This chapter is concluded with an illustration of rhetorical style, which shapes the meaning of a message. Chapter 2 explores the role of persuasion, public speaking, and business communication within business environment, contributing to the process of informing, and convincing the audience. Chapter 3 focuses on the properties of business presentations and the skills required for the effective delivery. The chapter also highlights the importance of non-verbal communication, and language in business settings. Chapter 4, the final section of the theoretical part, examines the selected rhetorical devices which are later analysed in the analytical part of the thesis.

The analytical part starts with the illustration of methods used for the analysis in Chapter 6. This chapter focuses on three selected business presentations of startup companies through online video recordings. Each presentation is analysed in terms of the introduction of the companies, exploration of each rhetorical device, and the overall presentation delivery. The analytical part is concluded with a discussion and comparison of these presentations in Chapter 7.

I THEORY

1 INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC AND RHETORICAL DEVICES

This chapter focuses on defining rhetoric as the art of effective communication, examining its historical origins and conceptual structures. It addresses the rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos, and their connection to the language.

1.1 What is Rhetoric?

Valesio (1980, 7) defines rhetoric as “the functional organization of discourse, within its social and cultural context, in all its aspects, exception made for its realization as a strictly formal metalanguage – in formal logic, mathematics, and in the sciences whose metalanguages share the same features. In other words: rhetoric is *all* of language, in its realization as discourse.” This suggests that it is the art of using language effectively in specific contexts, where ideas are structured to serve a particular purpose within cultural and social settings, having a certain effect on the audience.

The term “rhetorical style” refers to the persuasive choice of words and sentence construction to create a meaningful impact on the audience, with style being the most prominent among rhetorical canons, i.e., invention, judgment, arrangement, memory and delivery. (Fahnestock 2011, 8-9) Rhetoric encompasses a range of meanings, one of which defines it as “the human use of symbols to communicate” (Foss 2009, 3) According to Foss (2009, 3), the aspects of communication are divided into three main properties, which are humans, symbols as the medium for rhetoric and communication as the purpose of rhetoric. The language is applied by individuals, the creators of the communication, with every symbol serving as a culturally rooted tool for interaction with others.

During the speech, there are three components which contribute to the overall conversation: the speakers, the topics they discuss, and the listeners. (Aristotle 2021, 18) The topics must convey certain rhetorical arguments, also called *enthymemes*, which serve as a form of rhetorical reasoning. According to Aristotle (2021, 8), enthymeme is a rhetorical demonstration of the modes of persuasion, functioning in the form of *sylogism*, i.e., deductive argumentation.

1.1.1 A Brief History of Rhetoric

Rhetoric, broadly understood as the use of language to persuade or influence hearers, is a social practice whose origins date back to the beginnings of the human society, refined by the ancient Greek thinkers. (Aristotle 1926, 7) Thinkers like Aristotle laid the theoretical

groundwork of classical rhetoric for understanding how language shapes human thinking and behaviour, and as stated by Corbett (1990, 3), Aristotle referred to rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation.” According to Covino and Jolliffe (1995, 15), rhetoric can be understood as the *means of persuasion* and Aristotle discovered three main arguments, described as rhetorical appeals, which are *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*.

1.1.2 Ethos, pathos, logos

The art of the persuasion has been recognized as a fundamental aspect of effective communication, with its origins deeply rooted in ancient Greek. The Aristotle’s model provides detailed analysis of the arguments. These arguments, i.e., ethos, pathos and logos, also known as the rhetorical appeals to communication, are still relevant in the modern use, from political speeches to marketing strategies, and beyond. Even today, when effectively situated within social, cultural, and political framework of a text, rhetorical strategies such as speaker’s credibility (ethos), the engagement of the emotions of audience (pathos), and the reliance on logical reasoning (logos) remain central to persuasion. (Pelclová and Lu 2018, 1)

Ethos, also known as “appeal to authority”, represents the speaker’s character and a role in persuasion, as the audience is more inclined to trust someone who they view as truthful and relatable. According to Pelclová and Lu (2018, 47), “ethos is the broadest sense denoted an effective presentation of a speaker’s character”. Pathos, known as “appeal to emotion”, focuses on the audience’s emotions to establish connection, while logos, known as “appeal to reason”, relies on the reason and evidence to persuade the audience. Classical rhetoric, situated within its sociocultural framework, can enrich the analysis of persuasive strategies in public discourse while providing insights into sociocultural presuppositions that speaker must consider to effectively persuade an audience in a given context. (Pelclová and Lu 2018, 44) According to Bloor and Bloor (2007, 22), *presupposition* is “an assumption made by writer/speaker concerning the knowledge or views of the reader/listener.”

1.1.3 Rhetorical Style

Corbett (1990, 381) described style as “the dress of thought”. Rhetorical style refers to the specific way in which an individual uses language and it is one of the fundamental elements of the Cicero’s model of rhetorical canons. According to Brooke (2009, 29), the five canons provide a clear demonstration of rhetoric, where *style* and *invention* remain to be the central

focus of the rhetoric and composition studies, whereas *memory* and *delivery*, despite several attempts to revive them, are regarded as the legacies of the past, with *arrangement* occupying the middle ground.

There is a variety of different styles which are suitable for appropriate situations, much like how dialects are recognizable through an individual's linguistic patterns. (Corbett 1990, 381-381) According to Aristotle (Eyman 2015, 70), "style was primarily a question of matching the appropriate forms of language to the discourse at hand, but he also had several suggestions for developing effective style (including an emphasis on correctness, use of appropriate metaphor, and an avoidance of excessively ornamental prose)". None of the classical rhetoricians supported the notion of style being an ornament, instead they were holding onto the idea that there is a relationship between the matter and the form, where "matter must be fitted to the form, and form to the matter". (Corbett 1990, 381) In other words, the manner in which something is communicated should correspond to the nature of the message itself.

1.2 Summary

This chapter begins with a definition of rhetoric and an overview of its fundamental purposes and theoretical foundations (See Chapter 1.1) Rhetoric, as the use of language within a specific context, emphasizes its purpose to influence and persuade a communication. I highlight the importance of rhetorical style, understood as an arrangement of language, and then discuss the concept of enthymeme as a form of rhetorical reasoning based on deduction. I introduce key perspectives from classical thinkers, particularly Aristotle, who laid the groundwork for understanding rhetoric as a means of persuasion. In Chapter 1.1.2, I move on to the rhetorical appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, which represent the persuasive strategies used in communication to influence the way audience interpret and respond to messages. This section is finished with Chapter 1.1.3, which explores the five fundamental canons of rhetorical style. Style is not decorative, but it shapes the meaning of the message, explaining that the content and its expression are appropriately aligned. Chapter 2 will discuss rhetoric in business environment, including topics such as persuasion, public speaking, and business communication.

2 RHETORIC IN BUSINESS

This chapter explores the role of rhetoric in the business environment. It is divided into three main sections: persuasion, public speaking, and business communication, each examining how rhetorical strategies contribute to the effective delivery of a message to the listeners.

2.1 Persuasion

“Effective persuasion depends on the speaker’s ability to convince the audience to follow the recommendations or instructions made in the speech.” (Coopman and Lull 2024, 297) Individuals who have the ability to influence others often hold leadership positions, having the necessary evidence to support a credible argument. According to Coopman and Lull (2024, 330), an *argument* is commonly understood as a disagreement, however in the context of public and persuasive speaking, it does not carry a negative connotation. An argument is a statement which is used to support certain claim. “A *claim* is the position or assertion a speaker wants the audience to accept, and *evidence* refers to the supporting materials – narratives, examples, [...] – that the speaker presents to reinforce the claim.” (Coopman and Lull 2024, 331) Thus, argumentation is vital as it encourages critical thinking and plays a role in specific areas, such as politics and everyday discussions. Persuasion is sometimes misinterpreted as a manipulation. However, *manipulation* “means using dishonest tactics to take advantage of other people”. (Coopman and Lull 2024, 298) Thus, Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and Cialdini (2007) discovered models which ensure that persuasion remains honest and respectful, rather than manipulative.

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) developed The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which discovers the effectiveness of persuasive communication and how individuals process the persuasive messages. This model includes two main routes: the *central route*, focusing on the thoughtful consideration of the presented arguments, whereas the *peripheral route* is introduced when a simple cue, such as an attractive speaker, influences people without them carefully evaluating the main message. (Petty and Cacioppo 1986, 3)

Furthermore, Cialdini (2007) introduced a new concept of six psychological principles which elaborate on the mechanisms of persuasion. The first principle is a *reciprocation*, which is a rule about the need to return a favour or a gesture, where the rule creates an obligation within human culture, compelling individuals to return these acts of kindness. (Cialdini 2007, 17-18) However, this rule is not just about returning the favours, but also about returning the same attitude towards the other person. Secondly, the next rule is about

commitment and consistency, where the desire plays a crucial role in decision making. “Once we have made a choice or taken a stand, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment.” (Cialdini 2007, 57) This principle is based on the tendency of individuals to be consistent with their already set beliefs, creating a pressure to stay committed to those beliefs. Third principle is the *social proof*, which refers to the tendency to imitate the actions of others, as it is often easier and more reassuring to follow the behaviour of majority. (Cialdini 2007, 115-116) The next principle is called *liking*, where we are influenced by the people we like. On the other hand, this rule can be easily manipulated by strangers seeking to influence other for their own benefit. (Cialdini 2007, 167) *Authority* is the next principle exemplifies the obedience to the authority. The final stage is the *scarcity*, which elaborates on the principle “that opportunities seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited”. (Cialdini 2007, 238)

2.2 Public Speaking

The roots of public speaking in Western culture can be tracked back to the Sophists, who were the educators in ancient Greece between 500 and 300 BCE. These educators taught students how to express themselves in a democratic society. (Coopman and Lull 2024, 7) “Public speaking is as much about performance as it is about passing on information.” (Haunts 2022, 9) Establishing a credibility is relevant in the field of public speaking, because it is another speaker’s skill which enables them to gain the trust of the audience, to seem more reliable and trustworthy. A public speaker delivers their speech on a stage, referring not only to a platform at a conference, but also to any setting where the speaker addresses an audience. (Haunts 2022, 4)

According to Haunts (2022, 5-7), among the benefits of the public speaking are: critical thinking, personal satisfaction, increased self-confidence, improved communication skills, etc. Critical thinking is enhanced through detailed research and structured planning, as the speakers must demonstrate clarity of the topics according to the level of the audience, whether they are beginners, intermediate learners or experts.

Delivering a public speech often comes with a sense of anxiety. According to Coopman and Lull (2012, 34), the anxiety can be transformed into productive energy by using body language, gestures, and a stronger voice to emphasize key points. Adrenaline fuels the speaker throughout the speech, making the applause at the end feel even more confident and satisfied. When dealing with nervousness, *reframing*, also called “cognitive reappraisal”,

involves the process of shifting the perception of a negative situation into a more positive perspective. (Coopman and Lull 2024, 30) In public speaking, by applying the method of reframing, speakers increase their confidence, resilience, and their ability to embrace the challenges more effectively.

To deliver a successful presentation, it is important to choose a presentation style which will have a positive impact on the audience. Haunts (2022, 20-24) introduced four types of presentation styles: *highly visual style*, where slides contain minimal texts and charts, and serve to support the speaker's message rather than serve as the main focus; *the data-rich style* convey key messages by using visuals and data that support the main conclusion; *the free-flowing style* relies on conversational approach to engage the audience without slides; and lastly *the motivational style*, which appeals to the emotions of the audience by using storytelling method to encourage personal growth.

Lipschutz (2025) introduced The iceberg model called "The 3As", focusing on the process of how to present ideas effectively, where the iceberg refers to the *culture*. The first 'A' stands for "Acknowledge", which emphasizes understanding the cultural differences, therefore lack of awareness of the cultural norms could lead to a miscommunication. According to Lipschutz (2025, 13), the iceberg is used to illustrate how visible aspects of the culture, such as spoken words, are just the surface, while the hidden aspects, such as beliefs and values, shape the communication. The tip of the iceberg refers to "*What* they say", and under the surface refers to "*Why* they say what they say". (Lipschutz 2025, 13)

The second 'A' indicates the stage "Analyse". After realizing that the hidden aspects beneath the surface might have different meanings for others, individuals should analyse the unseen layers. Hall (1976) identified high-context and low-context, which are tools for analysing effectively. According to Hall (1976), the *high-context* cultures rely on implicit communication derived from unspoken gestures, requiring people to "read the atmosphere" to understand the context, whereas the *low-context* cultures prioritize explicit verbal communication. (Lipschutz 2025, 19-20)

The third 'A' represents the stage "Adapt". When delivering a speech, it is important to adapt to the audience, whether addressing an individual or a global audience, ensuring that the speaker understands them and is being understood. (Lipschutz 2025, 39)



Figure 1 Illustration of the iceberg model

(source: Lipschutz 2025, 4)

2.3 Business Communication

Communication is the process of conveying an idea through a message to the receiver, where the communication requires at least three key components: the source, the message, and the destination. (Schramm 1954, 3) Therefore, business communication is the process of exchanging information within or outside of an organization to achieve certain business goals.

According to Schramm (1954, 3), the *source* can be “an individual (speaking, writing, drawing, gesturing) or a communication organization (like a newspaper, publishing house, television station or motion picture studio)”, the *message* can be anything meaningful, and the *destination* can be “an individual listening, watching, or reading; or a member of a group, such as discussion group, a lecture audience, [...], or an individual member of the particular group we call the *mass audience*, such as the reader of a newspaper or a viewer of television”.

There are two types of business communication, i.e., *verbal* and *nonverbal* communication. “Verbal communication is the use of words arranged according to the rules of grammar.” (Thill 1993) On the other hand, nonverbal communication includes body language expressed either by the representative or by the audience, whether it is positive or negative. According to Thill (1993, 100), nonverbal communication plays a role in establishing a rapport with unfamiliar audiences, as it helps overcome their instinctive “fight or flight” response and reduces potential threats through body language. There is another definition of communication described by McLean (2015), i.e., “communication is an activity, skill, and

art that incorporates lessons learned across a wide spectrum of human knowledge. Perhaps the most time-honoured form of communication is storytelling.” (McLean 2015, 5) Communication skills, both verbal and written, are ranked among the top ten most desirable proficiencies by employers each year. (McLean 2015, 7)

Each definition integrates the idea that communication in business is not only about exchanging information, but also about building professional image for both employers and employees. Hartley and Chatterton (2015, 53), appointed different view of the communication based on the discoveries of Philip Clampitt (2010), where he discovered three distinct perspectives on the communication: “the arrow, the circuit, and the dance”. According to Clampitt, there are *arrow managers*, who engage in one-way communication, relying on precise messages to convey information, while *circuit managers* adopt a two-way communication approach, emphasizing the significance of feedback; and both approaches are incorporated by the *metaphor of dance*, which is similar to communication through co-ordination and specific rules. (Hartley and Chatterton 2015, 38-39)

2.4 Summary

This chapter focuses on three main parts, including persuasion, public speaking, and business communication. Chapter 2.1 begins with the exploration of persuasion and its importance in influencing the listeners, particularly in leadership roles. I introduce the idea that argumentation is crucial in supporting the claims with evidence and highlight the difference between persuasion and manipulation. This is followed by the Petty and Cacioppo’s Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which presents two routes of persuasive communication, and Cialdini’s six principles, which demonstrate psychological concepts of persuasive communication. In Chapter 2.2, I begin the topic of public speaking with its historical roots and then emphasize the importance of speaker’s credibility. The discussion addresses not only the benefits of public speaking, but also highlights challenges, such as speech anxiety, which can be mitigated through the application of reframing method. I conclude this section with the “The 3As” iceberg model by Lipschutz. This is followed by the introduction of business communication (see Chapter 2.3). I focus on the differences between verbal and non-verbal communication. This section is concluded by the Clampitt’s concept of arrow, circuit, and the dance, illustrating different approaches in communication. Chapter 3 covers business presentation, focusing on its delivery stages and the use of language in business settings.

3 BUSINESS PRESENTATION

This chapter will examine the primary purposes of business presentations, illustrating the key components of effective and successful presentations. It will also address topics, such as presentation skills, the non-verbal communication, and language in business presentations.

3.1 What is a Business Presentation?

A presentation is a structured and organized communication, which serves to deliver information and ideas to the public. “Business presentations are common in the boardroom and for sales pitches to important buyers.” (Carney 1992, 73) According to Bradbury (2010, 3), a presentation includes a broad spectrum of events, from training sessions which focus on precise information transfer to speeches, emphasising memorable messages, with various formats like media interviews, where the main aim is to foster effective communication.

Business presentations are powerful tools for sharing the ideas and influencing the decisions. They serve diverse purposes, from pitching innovative concepts and providing updates on the performance of a company. Typically, there is an appointed person or a group of people as the face of the company, delivering the most clear and accurate information. Bradbury (2010, 45), discovered five outlines when delivering successful business presentations, i.e., “gather opinions, publicise an idea or situation, sell an idea or course of action, highlight a problem (and seek a solution), pass on information”.

With a good preparation, conducting the presentation can leave a profound impression on the audience. A skilled presenter has the opportunity not only to inform, educate or entertain the audience, but also persuade them to take certain actions. Preparation is the most important part before delivering the presentation itself, and according to Bradbury (2010, 11), there are five prompts to remember to deliver a good presentation: “outline your purpose, analyse your audience, identify the need, collate your information, prepare your communication”.

Confidence plays a crucial role in delivering a successful presentation, as it impacts the speaker’s ability to influence the audience. The inability to communicate well and present the ideas of the company properly comes out of *speech anxiety* as it refers to “fear of speaking in front of an audience”. (Coopman and Lull 2024, 23) According to Theobald (2016, 14-16), there are two primary categories of presentations: *internal* business

presentation and *external* business presentation, as both of these indicate the setting, whether the presentation occurs within the company or outside of it.

3.2 Presentation Skills

Presentation skills are one of the fundamental aspects of business communication. It is the ability to deliver a message to the audience through structured speech, with persuasiveness and clearness. Gruwez (2014, 12-13) illustrates some of the frequent mistakes in preparing the presentations, e.g., “too many details, too long, unclear message, bad content, not critical enough, slides for the speaker instead of the public”. Therefore, it is necessary to think of the content, audience, appropriate aids, and effective ways of presenting the ideas, in order to effectively attract the audience. This chapter explores the stages of presentation delivery, including the ability to manage audience, the content organization, and the media.

Building the presentation takes many steps, and Gruwez (2014, 35-36) discovered four main phases, i.e., “the thinking, the logic, the story, and the media”, and these phases illustrate the steps people should take to deliver an effective presentation. These four phases serve to convince the audience as they reflect the Aristotle’s model of rhetoric, where the thinking refers to *ethos*, as people should take some time to think about the presentation. Secondly, the logic which refers to *logos*, where people should think logically about the concept of the presentation and key information they want to deliver to the audience. Thirdly, the story refers to *pathos*, where the story needs to seem more appealing to the audience. And lastly, there is the final phase: the media, which implements the key ideas to the slides of presentation itself.

3.2.1 The Audience Adaptation

What matters most is not the speaker’s own beliefs or values, but understanding the perspectives of audience. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 23-24) The effectiveness of the communication is based on the adaptation of the presentation to the interest and needs of the audience. To develop a successful presentation, it is necessary to appeal to the target audience. In public speaking, the target audience is considered to be the group which the speaker aims to educate or persuade. (Coopman and Lull 2024, 86) Considering the audience, it is necessary to ask these questions: “Who are they?”, “What matters to them?”, “What do they know about your topic?”, and “What do they want to know?”. (Johnson 2007, 29) According to Coopman and Lul (2024, 82), before preparing the presentation, it is

necessary to do the *audience analysis*, as it is a process of gathering information about people to discover their wants, needs, opinions, and how much they already know about the topic. By actively engaging with the audience and listening to them on both intellectual and emotional level, listeners become more willing to listen to the speaker. (Gruwez 2014, 48)

Understanding the target audience is always beneficial, because their characteristics and perspectives may vary, even among individuals within the same community. Coopman and Lull (2024, 88-90) illustrate two methods of gathering information, needed for the research of the target audience we aim to engage: demographic and psychographic information. *Demographic* information relies on the statistical data which focuses on the characteristics of a group of people, e.g. gender, age, or educational background. In many situations, the direct access to the relevant information about the audience is unavailable before an event, therefore the most reliable way to gather the information is through the host or organization of the event themselves. (Coopman and Lull 2024, 89) On the other hand, *psychographic* information provides insight into how people think, reflecting their attitudes, beliefs, and values in relation to particular contexts.

3.2.2 The Content

Another step is to carefully consider the topic and content that the speaker intends to deliver to the audience. Brand and Chen (2010, 20) claimed that the content is determined by the purpose and the audience, therefore the speaker should think about these questions: “What is my purpose?”, and “What information do I want or need my audience to know in order to meet my purpose?”. According to Gruwez (2014, 74), once the presenter has identified the key message they want to communicate, they should provide both objective and subjective content to strengthen their arguments. In other words, *objective content* consists of logical and rational information designed to convince the audience, whereas *subjective content* includes emotional examples that serve to illustrate the speaker’s ideas. Coopman and Lul (2012, 98-103) suggests that it is important to research the topic of the presentation by examining presenter’s own experience, and then by gathering additional information through books, journals, websites, etc. The content of the presentation is divided into three main parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. *The introduction* aims to greet the audience while providing an outline of the topic which will be discussed, *the body* focuses on the main points of the discussion while illustrating some visuals, and *the conclusion* summarizes the key points and there is a space for questions. (Brand and Chen 2010, 21-22) When delivering a speech, some presenters might use the “storytelling” tactic,

which illustrates a compelling narrative to make the information more memorable or interesting. (Theobald 2016, 41-42)

3.2.3 The Design

Implementing visual aids into the presentation offers many advantages to the listeners. By including visual elements such as slides, images, or graphs, presenters can convey complex information more clearly and maintain the interest of the audience throughout the presentation. “Up to 65 % of people learn best visually, and this can be attributed to the fact that there is significant portion of the brain dedicated to visual function.” (Li, Qian, and Mariappan 2023, 64) When using visual aids, they should be used wisely to support the presentation without distracting the audience, as certain humorous elements can shift the audience’s attention away from the speaker’s message. PowerPoint is the most common tool for presentations, and its impact depends on maintaining the same design across the slides and using a simple and readable font size. (Theobald 2016, 59) Placement of the monitor on the desk is also necessary if the speaker wants to maintain connection with the audience while not turning around to look at the projection screen. (Johnson 2007, 39)

3.3 Non-Verbal Communication in Business Presentations

Nonverbal communication refers to a communication effected by various “means other than words” which signals certain signs. (Knapp, Hall, and Horgan 2014, 9) Body language, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice cover the main attributes of the nonverbal communication and it affects either the sender or the receiver of a message positively or negatively. This suggests that non-verbal signals are important in persuasion, as it helps the speaker to make the audience to believe and be influenced by the message.

The study of nonverbal communication focuses on the three main sections. “The environmental structures and conditions within which communication takes place” referring to both *physical* and *spatial* environment, “the physical characteristics of the communicators themselves” including the speaker’s body shape and clothes, and “the various behaviours manifested by the communicators” which illustrate the speaker’s body movement and position. (Knapp, Hall, and Horgan 2014, 10-11)

Birdwhistell (1970) is considered to be “the father of kinesics”, as this science explores the movements of the body, gestures and posture. (Ivy and Wahl 2009, 174) Body posture, the way a person maintains an eye contact, and positions themselves can reveal important

insights into a person's attitudes towards themselves and others. (Mehrabian 2017, 16) Speakers might also strengthen the attention of the audience by using specific hand gestures. According to Birdwhistell (1970, 8), the human face has the ability to produce approximately 250,000 distinct expressions. Facial gestures correspond to various emotional states, such as happiness, anger, etc. Ivy and Wahl (2009, 205) discuss that based on the studies, facial expressions are *innate*, meaning they are present since birth; *learned*, developed through cultural, social and familial influences; or combination of both. A smile is an innate facial expression, however certain types of smiles, such as *forced* or *fake smile*, are learned through the adaptation of the natural smile. (Ivy and Wahl 2009, 208) When it comes to the voice, the listeners can “detect physical, emotional, and attitudinal states through *tone of voice* (sometimes referred to as *prosody*), meaning all the elements that the human voice can produce and manipulate”. (Ivy and Wahl 2009, 285-286)

3.4 Language in Business Presentations

“Language is a code, a collection of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings that are arranged according to the rules of syntax and are used to communicate.” (McLean 2015, 26) Language refers to the relevant choice of words, according to the situation in a specific context, under certain circumstances, where the main aim is to convey a meaningful message. The diversity of cultures, each with distinct values and beliefs, has led to the development of many languages, shaping identity of the individuals. (McLean 2015, 22) Language variety refers to the different ways of the use of language based on the regions, formality or cultural background.

Hartley and Chatterton (2015, 57) exemplified three concepts of the language variety, i.e., register, dialect, and accent. *Register* refers to the right choice of words in the right situations, *dialect* is a “language variety which is characteristic of a region or a socioeconomic group”, and *accent* is associated with a different pronunciation. (Hartley and Chatterton 2015, 57-59) In the business environment, the *corporate language* consists of specialized and national language and it defines the formulation of ideas within an organization, and Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze (2014, 497) claimed that “more and more companies have begun to put in place implicit language guidelines for virtual communication, including email, texting, Webex and video conferencing in order to avoid misinterpretations”. The use of specialized terminology in the business field helps organizations convey complex ideas effectively to the audience, which possess specific

knowledge in that area. *Jargon* is the most common type of language in the business sphere, as it is “an occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession”. (McLean 2015, 31) Following the exploration of language as a contextual system within a specific culture, it can be further observed how language can be structured through the rhetorical devices.

3.5 Summary

This chapter begins with a definition and primary properties and functions of business presentation within business settings (see Chapter 3.1). In this section, I introduce Bradbury’s five objectives and another five prompts to remember while presenting a successful speech. This is followed by a description of two types of presentations, which are internal and external. Chapter 3.2 focuses on the presentation skills and the key steps to consider when delivering a presentation. This part examines the audience, the content, and the design of a presentation, which are three important elements and stages of presentation delivery. In Chapter 3.3, I explore on the non-verbal communication, focusing primarily on the body language, gestures, facial expressions, and voice. This chapter is concluded with a Chapter 3.4, which illustrates the properties of language within specific contexts and cultures. The next chapter examines the selected rhetorical devices in business presentations.

4 RHETORICAL DEVICES IN BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS

Stylistic devices, often referred to as “rhetorical devices” are powerful methods or tools applied in writing and speaking to connect with an audience. “It can be described as an intentional intensification of semantic and structural properties of a language unit to become a generative model. In the sphere of public speaking and business communication the term “rhetoric device” is frequently used.” (Butyrkina and Temkina 2020, 304) These devices are essential in rhetoric as they are commonly used in speeches, presentations, and everyday discourse. Rhetorical devices, whether used as transition tools or tools which strengthen the evidence, must be employed thoughtfully, as a misuse or inappropriate placement can weaken the uttered message or confuse the audience. (McGuigan 2011, 3) According to McGuigan (2011, 9-10), there are four aims of rhetoric devices, i.e., to persuade, to inform, to express, to entertain. The skilful blending of these four aims is what makes rhetoric powerful. The use of rhetorical devices involves applying unique methods through which business communication operates persuasively. “The scope of business rhetoric is not territory to claim and defend; it is a question about the unique methods by which business discourse performs rhetorically.” (Cyphert 2010, 355) “The word *communication* [...] refers to the process of one individual’s stimulating meaning in the mind of another individual by means of a message. This definition covers three types of communication – accidental, expressive, and rhetorical.” (McCroskey 1968) According to McCroskey (1968, 22), rhetorical communication is intentional and aims to create a specific meaning in the recipient’s mind. The recipients form a meaning in their minds by the speaker’s ability to use the rhetorical techniques: ethos, pathos, and logos.

The selection of rhetorical devices covered in this chapter was based on their occurrence in the selected business presentations.

4.1.1 Rhetorical Questions

According to Corbett (1990, 453), rhetorical questions refer to “asking a question, not for the purpose of eliciting an answer but for the purpose of asserting or denying something obliquely”. In other words, it is the action of asking a question without seeking a response, but to indirectly emphasize either agreement or disagreement. Thus, it can serve as a powerful tool for persuasion, guiding the audience toward the desired response. This type of rhetorical device is widely used in both spoken and written form. McGuigan (2011, 30) claims that rhetorical questions are similar to *hypophora*. In hypophora, the speaker presents

a question and immediately provides an answer to inform the audience of something they may not know, whereas rhetorical questions emphasize the speaker's assumption that the audience already knows the answer. The effectiveness of the rhetorical questions depends on the engagement of the audience, as it can either help people pay more attention to the less important topics or distract them from the topics if they hold different views. (Blankenship and Craig 2006, 112)

4.1.2 Repetition

Repetition is the process of reusing words or phrases to strengthen the speaker's message to make it more memorable. "Mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it. By 'mere exposure' is meant a condition which just makes the given stimulus accessible to the individual's perception." (Zajonc 1968, 1) To put it another way, by repeatedly encountering something, such as the speaker's words, can increase the familiarity and lead to a more positive attitude toward it. There are specific forms of repetitions, including *anaphora* and *epistrophe*. Anaphora is the type of repetition, where the speaker uses the same word or phrase at the beginning of the following sentence. For example: "*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal, ...*" (McGuigan 2011, 185) On the other hand, epistrophe is a repetition of the words or phrases used at the end of the sentence. For example: "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, ...*" (McGuigan 2011, 185) By repeating words, listeners get a sense of *climax*, which is "the arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of increasing importance". (Corbett 1990, 441)

4.1.3 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is "the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect". (Corbett 1990, 451) It is commonly used by the speakers to evoke emotions and create a strong impression of the audience, even in everyday speech. Hyperbole is not meant to be taken literally, therefore it is necessary to ensure that the purpose of the hyperbole is clear, as it might cause a distraction among the listeners. (McGuigan 2011, 13) According to Corbett (Corbett 1990, 452), hyperbole can be useful rhetorical device when applied with control, creating a natural flow of the speech with the right touch of

emphasis or humour. Corbett (1990, 451) provides an example of hyperbole: “*His eloquence would split rocks.*”

4.1.4 Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns serve to create a connection between the speaker and the audience by fostering a sense of relationship, where the main goal is to engage the audience. Communication occurs when there are at least two people present: “*I* speaks to *you*”, and according to the pronoun system of English, “it offers first person to the speaker (singular *I* or plural *we*) and second person to the addressee (singular *you* and plural *you*)”. (Fahnestock 2011, 279) According to Fahnestock (2011, 279), the pronoun *I* is used to point out a personal experience or when the speaker is in the role of an authority. A pronoun *you* is used in two forms: direct and generic. *Direct* pronoun explicitly addresses an individual or a group of people, whereas the *generic* pronoun addresses the audience in general rather than an individual. In contrast, the pronoun *we* is used in the *inclusive* sense to unite the speaker to the audience, or *exclusive* sense to refer to the multiple speakers while excluding the audience. (Fahnestock 2011, 284-285)

4.1.5 Metaphor

A metaphor is one of the figures of speech, illustrating another tool of rhetorical devices. Metaphor is largely connected to simile. Corbett (1990, 444) defined these two persuasive tools, explaining that metaphor is an *implied* comparison between two distinct things which share common characteristics, e.g. “*On the final examination, several students went down in flames.*”, while simile makes the same comparison *explicit*, e.g. “*He had a posture like a question-mark.*” Simile can be recognized for incorporating words such as “like” or “as”. A metaphor is more than just a stylistic device, it also shapes the audience’s perception of the facts, by creating more emotional and psychological depth of that particular idea. (McGuigan 2011, 52)

4.2 Summary

The final section of the theoretical part of this thesis focuses on stylistic devices. Chapter 4 explores the primary functions of the persuasive tools used in speech and writing to influence the audience within the settings, including public speaking and business communication. Each chapter in this section reflects individual rhetorical device, consisting of rhetorical questions, repetition, hyperbole, personal pronouns, and metaphor.

II ANALYSIS

5 METHODOLOGY

The following chapter outlines the primary aim of the thesis by examining the methodology applied in the analytical section of the study. Specifically, this analysis focuses on the implementation of rhetorical devices in selected business presentations conducted by startup companies, exploring how these companies apply such strategies, in order to enhance product promotion and persuade potential investors or customers. The analysis will be conducted on the method based on the qualitative research, which includes textual analysis, and then observation. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016, 14-15), *qualitative research* involves examining people and events in their natural environment and context. Through this method, researchers aim to interpret the “phenomena” based on the meanings which individuals associate their personal experiences with. Browne (2016, 91) explains that “Close textual analysis (CTA), refers to an interpretive practice, the aim of which is to explain how texts operate to produce meaning, effect persuasion, and activate convictions in public contexts”. Furthermore, *observation* is a method of consistently watching people, events, and behaviours with the aim of gathering information. According to Spradley (Spradley 1980, 58), there are five types of observations, including complete, active, moderate, passive, and nonparticipation. In this case, nonparticipation is the method used in this thesis, where I as the observer do not engage with the participants.

By applying these methods, each presentation will be analysed in terms of its use of rhetorical devices, and delivery style.

6 ANALYSES OF SELECTED BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS

This chapter focuses on analysing rhetorical devices, and delivery techniques in startup presentations within entrepreneurial environments. Startup companies refer to newly established business companies with the potential to develop an innovative product or service under the conditions of uncertainty. According to Barwińska-Małajowicz, Walawender, and Knapková (Skalna and Gąsior 2024, Chapter 2.1.), unlike traditional businesses, startup companies are characterized by “low operating costs, greater risks, potentially greater returns on investments, and aptitudes for above-average development”, while developing a strategic business model with unique idea. The analysis examines online videos of startup pitches, which are publicly available on the internet.

6.1 Presentation 1

The first presentation to be analysed is delivered by a company called Collider, which secured a second place at the event Startup Battlefield Disrupt New York 2017, a technology-focused conference. The video recording of this presentation is available on the TechCrunch YouTube platform. Collider presented its innovative product called the Orchid, which is a machine that enables 3D printing to produce customized objects from various materials through injection moulding process. (TechCrunch 2017) As mentioned in Chapter 3.1, Theobald (2016) identified two types of business presentations: internal and external. In this context, the presentation is classified as an *external* business presentation, as the speech requires careful preparation before being delivered at a formal event or conference, shaping the company’s and individual’s image. (Theobald 2016, 16)

Each presentation needs to have its representative speaker, and in this case, Cacky Calderon introduces the product while following a structured speech format. The speaker begins by introducing the company and its product, then encourages the audience to imagine a certain scenario, elevating engagement. For illustration, see (1):

(1) Imagine you have an idea [...] that could be a new product, improve a process on your factory line, or make something you are already selling even better.

The speaker maintains a clear and calm tone, ensuring that everything is well-explained. Although she briefly pauses for a few seconds near the end of the speech, showing a moment of nervousness, she remains confident throughout the whole presentation.

6.1.1 The Use of Rhetorical Questions

As was mentioned in Chapter 4.1.1, rhetorical question is a strategic technique used to encourage the audience to think about the question without directly answering it. Unlike direct questions, rhetorical questions do not require a response, as they serve to strengthen the speaker's message and to encourage the audience to form their own interpretation. "Usually, a rhetorical question is phrased in such a way that it requires either a simple "yes" or "no" answer." (McGuigan 2011, 30) In this presentation, several illustrations of rhetorical questions are mentioned. For example, see (2) and (3):

(2) *Is it any surprise that hardware innovation is moving slower than software?*

(3) *What if hardware could be as iterative, as adaptable, as agile as software?*

Both examples demonstrate questions which do not seek a response, but they rather encourage the audience to either agree with the statements about the software, or to consider a new way of thinking about hardware. The persuasiveness can be seen when the speaker compares software with hardware, suggesting that the Collider's technology is the better option. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986, 432), rhetorical questions can either increase or decrease how much people think about the message, depending on how relevant the message is to the listeners personally. In this case, the public consists of judges, investors, professionals in the industry sector, and individuals with an interest in the topic. Therefore, the subject matter is highly relevant to them which increases the level of engagement.

6.1.2 The Use of Repetition

The usage of repetition is commonly used in the professional environment and during public speaking, as it strengthens the message and makes it more memorable to the audience. Example (3) illustrates not only the use of rhetorical questions but also includes repetition through the repeated use of the word "as". As mentioned in Chapter 4.1.2, repetition might take different forms, including anaphora and epistrophe. See illustrations (4) and (5):

(4) *It 3D prints the Mold. It injects the Mold with off-the-shelf manufacturing materials.*

(5) *Our build volume is about the size of two show boxes which you can fill with the same parts, with different parts.*

The speaker frequently uses phrases like "Let me show you" to shift the attention of the listeners to the screen. However, the usage of anaphora or epistrophe is not so common in this case, as the speaker uses them unintentionally and not in the persuasive way. As a result,

the examples (4) and (5) does not include any sense of climax which would increase the importance of the information.

6.1.3 The Use of Hyperbole

Hyperbole uses the effect of exaggeration in order to give an emphasis. In this presentation, hyperbole is used strategically to present their product, the Orchid, at the top. The phrase: *“The future of 3D materials choice is here”*, illustrates the Collider’s attempt to provoke the idea that they are shaping the future of the industry. For more illustrations, see (6):

(6) *Custom Prosthetics can cost thousands... Alongside a national Prosthetics company, Collider can change the quality of someone’s life with customization.*

McGuigan (2011, 13-14) points out three functions of hyperbole: to emphasize a statement, to capture the listener’s attention, or to illustrate differences between things. In the example (6), there is an occurrence of two hyperboles. The first one exaggerates the statement while creating contrast by emphasizing that Collider’s offering appears to be more affordable. The second hyperbole uses the appeal to emotion, suggesting that this product is the optimal choice. Overall, these statements highlight the problem and elevate the solution.

6.1.4 The Use of Personal Pronouns

In Chapter 4.1.4, the use of personal pronouns “I”, “you”, and “we” is discussed, contributing to the relationship between the speaker and the audience. For illustrations, see (7) – (10):

(7) *Today I am thrilled to announce that this machine makes metal parts.*

(8) *You want to test that idea...*

(9) *We’re Collider and we’re introducing...*

(10) *We’d like you to have a beta, so please reach out.*

In the example (7), the speaker implements the pronoun “I” which evokes the feeling of an authoritative figure. Although, the speaker is representing the company, she uses this pronoun to position herself as the voice of the organization, which expresses a strong sense of personal involvement. The example (8) shows the implication of direct form of the pronoun “you”, as the speaker refers to the specific individuals of a group in the audience. Examples (9) and (10) refer to the usage of exclusive and inclusive form of the pronoun “we”. The first illustration indicates that the speaker refers to members of the company, as

it also emphasizes sense of authority and expertise. Whereas, the other illustration shows a call-to-action, where the speaker invites the audience to test their product.

6.1.5 The Use of Metaphor

When it comes to the metaphor usage, the speaker incorporates it only once. See (11):

(11) *Collider got it to a green state in a matter of hours.*

In this case, “*green state*” does not imply environmental sustainability, but rather refers to a specific stage of production, in which the product is developed but not yet fully finished.

6.1.6 The Use of Non-Verbal Communication

As illustrated in Chapter 3.3, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice signal various aspects, including confidence, emotions, and engagement, which might have either positive or negative impact on the audience or the speaker. Regarding the *physical* environment, the speaker presents on an open stage with a dedicated area available for demonstrations of the product. Additional positive features include bright lighting and minimal distractions from the external factors. On the other hand, the *spatial* environment reflects the speaker’s use of personal space. (Knapp, Hall, and Horgan 2014, 11) During the presentation, the speaker remains in one place while frequently using hand gestures to emphasize key points or direct the attention of the audience to the screen. Her open body posture throughout the speech signals confidence and professionalism. Clothing is one of the key characteristics of the communicator, representing not only their personal image but also the company itself, where the speaker’s appearance shapes the first impression of the audience. In this presentation, the choice of a plain black t-shirt and dark jeans creates a neutral and minimalistic look which does not distract the audience from the main points. When it comes to facial expressions, the speaker smiles throughout the speech, which makes her appear more approachable and likeable to the audience. Smiling enhances strong emotions of joy. Thus, her enthusiasm reflects a strong desire to introduce this product to the world. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3.3, it might be difficult to distinguish between a natural and forced smile, making it uncertain in this context. Additionally, the speaker maintains a strong eye contact with the audience and avoids looking at the screen or other distractions, building a connection with the listeners. Lastly, her voice maintains a calm and steady tone, with precise articulation of the words, making the speech flow naturally without any signs of nervousness.

6.1.7 Presentation Delivery

This chapter will discuss the content relating to the stages of presentation delivery, as outlined in Chapter 3.2. The stages consist of the audience, the content, and the design. As far as the audience is concerned, the members of the company had to do the audience analysis to understand who they would be addressing, as the audience includes the judges, investors, founders, engineers, and potential customers. Furthermore, the information of the Collider's presentation is structured into both objective and subjective content. The objective covers technical and logical information, for example: *"Orchid is 5 to 60 times faster"*, where the use of numerical comparisons shows significant facts, and subjective covers emotional information, for instance: *"Collider can change the quality of someone's life"*, where the speaker uses the appeal to emotion. Regarding the overall structure of the presentation, it covers the three main parts, i.e., the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The speaker begins the speech by greeting the audience and briefly introducing the product. She then provides an extended introduction highlighting the significance of hardware and software. After nearly a minute and a half, she introduces the product Orchid by explaining how it works step by step. Finally, she concludes the speech by illustrating the product's advantages and by encouraging the audience to reach out to Collider. During the speech, there is a subtle use of storytelling by framing phrases like: *"Imagine you have an idea [...], you want to test that idea..."*. However, it does not develop into a full narrative that could have a stronger impact on the audience by creating a sense of empathy. Last step of the presentation delivery is to consider the design. Collider provides both PowerPoint presentation and pre-recorded video. The presentation highlights key facts with clear and easy-to-understand slides, and the video features a live demonstration, showing the functions of the product.

6.2 Presentation 2

The second presentation to be analysed is performed by a startup company Colormass (TechCrunch 2017), which was one of the six finalists of Startup Battlefield at the event Disrupt SF 2017. While Pi was announced as the winner with Oneva being in the second place, the exact placement of Colormass was not officially revealed. This presentation is also available on the channel of TechCrunch on YouTube. Colormass specializes in providing a system which simplifies the creation of 3D product visuals. This system allows users to use multiple applications, including rendering images, configurations, augmented reality, and data export functions. (Colormass 2024) This is an external business presentation performed

at a conference. In this presentation, the representative speaker's name is not officially mentioned. The beginning of the presentation starts with a general statement which evokes the sense of relatability between the speaker and the audience. See (12):

(12) *Everyone here goes shopping.*

This example indicates a rhetorical strategy which aims to create a certain connection, by referring to a shared activity among people at the conference. In terms of delivery, the speaker maintains a slow pace of the speech, ensuring that the message is easily understood by everyone. Despite Colormass being a German-based startup company from Berlin, the speaker demonstrates a high level of English language skills with clear pronunciation.

6.2.1 The Use of Rhetorical Questions

As for rhetorical questions, this presentation consists of a few examples of this persuasive device. For illustrations, see (13) and (14):

(13) *Seems easy enough, right?*

(14) *What if, instead of this, you could just simply sign into a web map and start creating your images inside the browser?*

The first example is followed by a comparison with other ads, promoting products featured in catalogues, websites, etc. While these products are designed to encourage consumer purchases, the speaker suggests that the process of creating these visual images is more complex than it may appear. By comparing the perception and reality, the rhetorical question functions as an alignment of the speaker's viewpoint with the audience. It can be observed that the second example serves as an illustration of framing a problem and introducing a solution. In addition, this question leads the speech into the introduction of company's product.

6.2.2 The Use of Repetition

In this presentation, repetition is intentionally used as a persuasive device, and appears in various forms, notably as anaphora. For illustrations, see (15) and (16):

(15) *You produce the product, you pack it up, you ship it across the ocean, you look for a shooting site...*

(16) *They no longer have to think about when the product is going to be ready. They no longer have to think about what they can squeeze into to have photographs.*

Both examples show the case of anaphora by repeating the word “you”, and phrase “*they no longer have to think about*”, which draws the attention to the rhythmic listing of the steps in the process. On the other hand, there is also an illustration of an unintentional use of epistrophe which does not have a sense of persuasion, e.g. “*You can look for the perfect angle for your next shot. Once you’ve found the angle...*”

6.2.3 The Use of Hyperbole

In this case, there are few occasions where the speaker uses hyperbole to exaggerate the message. As for the purpose of hyperbole, it is not meant to be interpreted seriously (see Chapter 4.1.3). Therefore, it is necessary to make a clear statement. See (17) and (18):

(17) *This means, it is nearly impossible to scale their processes.*

(18) *Software, however, can be everywhere.*

By placing hyperboles in two following sentences after each other, it allows the speaker to further emphasize the potential of the software. On the other hand, there is a concept of the opposite of the hyperbole, which is called understatement. “*Understatement* is a rhetorical form in which the force of descriptive statement is *less* than what one would normally expect.” (McGuigan 2011, 15) This example is illustrated in (13), where it is not only a rhetorical question, but also understatement. It also provokes a sense of irony.

6.2.4 The Use of Personal Pronouns

In this presentation, the speaker primarily uses the pronoun “you”, as it is a major factor in persuasive technique, to create a direct connection with the audience. See (19):

(19) *These carefully styled images that you see, make you want to buy that new chair, bed, or even this hoverboard.*

Other than that, the speaker uses the pronoun “we” to introduce him, the company, and the product, as can be observed in the example: “*We can now scale a business that was not scalable before*”. The pronoun “I” is used to position the speaker as the authorized entity, demonstrating the speech, e.g. “*Let me show you what I mean*”. In addition, in the second half of the presentation, there is also a predominant use of the pronoun “they”, as it refers to the comparison between the customers who are already using Colormass, and customers who are using the traditional methods of producing images. This illustrates a persuasive technique which aims to invite the audience to use the company’s product. For illustration, see (20):

(20) *They can just sign in and create their next image.*

6.2.5 The Use of Metaphor

Implied metaphor functions as a comparison between things, for more, see Chapter 4.1.5. However, in this case, there is no implied comparison. Instead, a metaphorical expression appears in the form of verb “*squeeze*”, which figuratively represents the process of fitting something in, e.g. in a schedule. See illustration, see (21):

(21) *You no longer have to squeeze things in.*

6.2.6 The Use of Non-Verbal Communication

Based on the division of aspects of non-verbal communication (See 3.3), this chapter examines those elements as they appear above in Presentation 1. Regarding the physical environment, the speaker presents on an open stage besides the judges, addressing the audience directly in front of him. On the other hand, the spatial environment analyses the speaker’s position on the stage and posture. It can be observed that he is standing relatively stiffly in one spot throughout the presentation, but he frequently shifts his weight from one leg to another. It appears that this body language reflects a relaxed and casual attitude, which either suggests a degree of nervousness, or lack of confidence or full engagement with the product launch. While standing in one place, most of the time he uses hand gestures to emphasize his words. For instance, when he is talking about “*squeezing*” products into a photograph, he illustrates the movement of squeezing with his hands. The presentation is interrupted by a fly; however, the speaker is not distracted by this inconvenience and continues with his speech. Concerning the choice of clothing consists of plain black t-shirt with a logo of Colormass printed on it with burgundy trousers. Therefore, it emphasizes simplicity with subtle promotion of the company’s product, and thus it reinforces the brand’s identity. On the topic of facial expressions, the speaker smiles through the delivery of speech which makes him seem approachable, and raises his eyebrow while illustrating specific points, which adds another sense of enthusiasm and emphasis. When it comes to the eye contact, the speaker remains a strong eye contact with the audience and judges. However, he looks at the slides presented in front of him, which might signal unpreparedness or attempt to stay synchronized with the visual content.

6.2.7 Presentation Delivery

Regarding the delivery style, it is important not only to consider rhetorical devices, but also how the message is being presented. The following analysis will focus on the three main aspects of presentation delivery, including the audience, the content, and design, as identified in Presentation 1.

Considering the audience, this conference also includes the judges, investors, or industry professionals, interested in the scalability and innovation, which are relevant to the business sphere. The public also consists of potential customers who are not technically trained, as the speaker uses phrases, such as: *“You had zero experience in 3D, and now you created an image that only a 3D artist with five plus years of experience could before”*. The speaker mostly includes objective information in the speech. Thus, this information functions as a factual illustration of the company and its product, i.e. a clear explanation of how the product works. For instance: *“The image’s section is divided into project and set”*. The implementation of subjective information is very rare, as there are no such phrases that would encourage the appeal to emotion. However, subjective content can also refer to opinions, or personal statements, such as: *“Up until today, we have worked on a private beta application with a few selected customers among which we are happy to have one of the largest retailers in the United Kingdom...”*. Additionally, the presentation follows a clear structure, maintaining the introduction, the body, and the conclusion of the whole speech. The speaker begins his speech by a phrase illustrated in the example (12), by stating a general statement which captures the attention of the audience. Then continues, by illustrating the process of building product images. The core of the presentation leads the audience through the platform of Colormass. A conclusion of the speech is framed by a phrase: *“Sign up for a beta list and start creating your images without a camera”*, which encourages the audience to use the company’s product. When it comes to the design, for nearly two and a half minutes, there is a video recording of the company’s website, where the speaker uses screen visuals to complement his explanations on how to use their platform. Therefore, visual aids play a big part in the presentation of Colormass.

6.3 Presentation 3

The third and final presentation is conducted by a company called RecordGram (TechCrunch 2017). This startup company was the winner of the competition Disrupt New York 2017 at Startup Battlefield. The video recording is also available online on the YouTube platform of

TechCrunch. RecordGram is a social networking studio designed to support musicians in creating original songs, with the main aim of making the music industry more accessible and affordable. The users are provided with the opportunity to engage in the process of discovering new beats, while composing lyrics and producing music videos. Since this presentation is presented at a conference, it can be classified as an external type of presentation. In this case, the main speaker Eric Mendelson not only introduces the company, but for the first time among the analysed presentations, he also introduces himself as the CEO of the company.

6.3.1 The Use of Rhetorical Questions

In the RecordGram presentation, the use of rhetorical questions is not so frequent as in the two presentations mentioned above. The speaker implies questions only during the technical difficulties, e.g. *“Could we get a better connection?”*. Conversely, there is an occurrence of one rhetorical question. See illustration (22):

(22) *I’m sure everyone knows about Musically and AutoRap by Smule.*

This example does not seem like a rhetorical question as it does not follow the usual interrogative structure. However, the speaker implies this example strategically to reflect on the existing knowledge of the listeners. It can be observed that the speaker does not expect any response. Therefore, this illustration of persuasive technique presents the company’s innovation as a familiar product in the industry that people relate to.

6.3.2 The Use of Repetition

Referring to the use of repetition is intentionally demonstrated when the speaker lists the various functions of the company’s product. See (23):

(23) *Our users can discover beats. They can write songs to those beats. They can record songs to those beats, and they can also shoot a video to that song they just created...*

The two of the speaker’s co-founders show a live demonstration of how the product works. They create a song by using beats and phrases that catch the attention of the audience. The lyric of the song focuses on the process of repeating key phrases, i.e. *“This is why I’m hot”*. This illustrates both anaphora, through the repeated use of *“This is why”* at the beginning of sentences, and epistrophe, through the repeated use of *“I’m hot”* at the end of those sentences.

6.3.3 The Use of Hyperbole

In this presentation, the speaker includes hyperbole in his speech multiple times. See illustrations (24) and (25):

(24) *There are millions of people that have a burning desire to be a music artist.*

(25) *RecordGram breaks down barriers and empowers anyone...*

The example (24) illustrates an exaggeration of the size of people who would relate to this problem of not being able to produce music. “*Burning desire*” is used metaphorically to put emphasis on the emotional appeal of the listeners. Other than that, example (25) illustrates overgeneralization, creating a sense of accessibility.

6.3.4 The Use of Personal Pronouns

The speaker predominantly uses an exclusive pronoun “we” to refer to the team while excluding the audience. The usage of this pronoun emphasizes the authority and credibility of the company. These examples also indicate the general facts of the company. See (26):

(26) *We charge produces \$99 a month.*

Moreover, personal pronoun “I” establishes a personal connection and responsibility of the speaker. The speaker implies this personal pronoun at the beginning when introducing himself as the CEO of the company. Other than that, he also implies his engagement in demonstrating the product. See (27):

(27) *Now, I want to demo you the product.*

6.3.5 The Use of Metaphor

When it comes to the metaphor, this presentation implements its usage more frequently than the other presentations. See illustrations (28) and (29):

(28) *RecordGram breaks down barriers and empowers anyone ... [to have] the ability to awaken their inner musician.*

(29) *We believe that the phone is becoming the new television. We also believe that the phone is a new recording studio.*

The first example shows a metaphorical use of the phrase “*awaken their inner musician*”, implying that the app can bring users into to the world. It helps individuals to visualize abstract concepts of the product’s functions. The second example links the idea of the

company to a familiar concept. It also shows the company's subjective belief rather than implying literal and realistic facts.

6.3.6 The Use of Non-Verbal Communication

The following chapter focuses on analysis of non-verbal communication. In this particular presentation, there is a range of observable aspects of non-verbal communication, including body language, facial expressions, etc. The speaker is presenting on an open stage accompanied by two of his colleagues from the team who stand slightly further besides him. Throughout the speech, the speaker remains his position at one place, which makes him look confident and it emphasizes his leadership role. Referring to the fact that the camera focuses on the upper half of the speaker's body, only hand gestures and facial expressions are available for observation and analysis. The speaker uses a pointer and his fingers to point and emphasize specific facts. The usage of the pointer might signal a distraction, however; he uses it only to switch on the slides in the presentation. Regarding the choice of clothing, the speaker chose very informal clothes, consisting of a colourful jacket with flamingos, plain grey t-shirt, pair of jeans and a baseball cap with the RecordGram logo printed on it. Although the company operates within the creative side of the music industry, the speaker as the CEO, is expected to dress more appropriately, and align with the professional setting of the event. This suggests that the audience could be easily distracted by the speaker's appearance. In terms of facial expression, the speaker did not smile at all, which might make it more difficult for the speaker to build a rapport with his audience. He also frequently drew his eyebrow together, which signals either seriousness or concern. The lack of emotion combined with this overly confident appearance may have a negative impact on the way the audience perceive the speaker. Furthermore, Mendelson maintained a strong eye contact throughout the presentation, creating a connection with not only the audience, but also the judges. When it comes to the voice, the use of intonation added more emphasis in the speech, as he used the rising voice when mentioning important or interesting facts. The speaker's delivery was loud and clear, but also quite fast, making it harder to fully absorb the information. Additionally, the speaker used hesitation sounds, such as 'errs' and "uh".

6.3.7 Presentation Delivery

This chapter examines the delivery of RecordGram's presentation, focusing on the audience, the content, the visual aspects, as well as the overall effectiveness of the whole presentation.

Firstly, the audience consists of the judges, investors, music professionals, and potential customers, which is the same as in the other presentations analysed above. As a professional presentation about the product launch, it consists of objective and subjective information. Here is an example of objective content, which includes an information about the product: *“RecordGram is an all-in-all mobile production marketplace, a recording studio, and a social network that allows our users to create original songs ... for under \$5.”* Another example points at the subjective content which includes an opinion about the company’s position at the market: *“We’ve poised to disrupt the music industry.”* The speaker follows a clear structure, consisting of the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. He begins the speech with a personal introduction. This is followed by a structured explanation of the product and its functions, as the main body of the presentation depends on the live demonstration of the app. Although the speaker maintains a fast pace of the speech, he does not manage to conclude the presentation on time, as one of the judges interrupts his speech by saying *“Let’s wrap it up. Final thoughts.”* Lastly, live demonstration of the product and visual aids serve to support the message of the company. Speaker’s co-founders manage to create a song by using the product to show the audience how to produce music. Despite minor issues, such as the speaker’s fast delivery and interruption by the judge, the overall presentation was delivered with confidence. It is evident that RecordGram made a strong impression, making the company’s win in the competition well-deserved.

7 DISCUSSION

The aim of this discussion is to summarize and reflect on the most essential features of the business presentations analysed in the Chapter 6. Specifically, it focuses on each selected business presentation with particular attention paid to the use of rhetorical devices, non-verbal communication, and presentation delivery.

This thesis includes the analysis of three selected business presentation of startup companies, i.e. Collider, Colormass, and RecordGram. Each presentation shares similar patterns, as they were delivered in the same professional setting, as a part of the same competition called Startup Battlefield in New York and San Francisco. These presentations are available online on YouTube at the TechCrunch channel. The main purpose of each company is the goal of introducing their innovative products to the audience, which consists of the judges, investors, professionals within the specific industry, and potential customers.

The usage of rhetorical devices across the selected business presentations indicates certain variation, as reflected in the tables below. Table 1 outlines the overall frequency of each rhetorical device applied by the companies. From the table it can be observed that the speakers employed a combination of rhetorical questions, repetition, hyperbole, and metaphor, and the number of examples across all categories remained relatively close for all three companies. In terms of rhetorical questions, both Collider and Colormass used them twice, while RecordGram applied a rhetorical question only once. Regarding the repetition, Colormass was the one with the largest use of repetition, when Collider and RecordGram utilized repetition three times. Hyperbole appeared most in the presentations of Collider and RecordGram, using it four times. Whereas Colormass appeared more reserved, applying hyperbole only twice. Lastly, metaphor was the least frequently used rhetorical device across the three presentations, where Collider and Colormass used it only once, except for RecordGram, using metaphor twice in their speech. See Table 1:

Table 1 Usage of Rhetorical Devices

	Collider	Colormass	RecordGram
Rhetorical questions	2	2	1
Repetition	3	4	3
Hyperbole	4	2	4

Metaphor	1	1	2
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Table 2 shows the usage of personal pronouns in each presentation. It can be observed that the most frequently used pronoun in all selected presentations is *you*, where Colormass used it up to forty-three times, referring mostly to the audience, and Collider used it twenty-two times. Moreover, the least frequently used pronoun is *I*, where Colormass used it only three times, Collider seven times, and RecordGram ten times. The pronoun *we* is another very frequent pronoun, where RecordGram applied it forty times in their speech, making it higher than the two other companies. See Table 2:

Table 2 Usage of Personal Pronouns

	Collider	Colormass	RecordGram
Pronoun <i>I</i>	7	3	10
Pronoun <i>you</i>	22	43	7
Pronoun <i>we</i>	16	11	40

Each representative speaker demonstrated distinct differences in terms of non-verbal communication. All the speakers remained at one place as they were introducing the company and the features of their products. When it comes to the overall delivery of the presentations, the speaker of RecordGram developed a very confident speech, which could evoke a sense of arrogance, particularly due to his lack of smiling throughout the entire presentation. In contrast, the speaker of Collider made a more positive first impression as she smiled a lot. Similarly, the speaker of Colormass maintained a friendly tone and smiled a lot, although his posture suggested a degree of nervousness. All three speakers used a lot of hand gestures, emphasizing key points, and maintained eye contact with the audience which helped to create a connection with them. In terms of appearance, the speaker of RecordGram chose clothes that could be considered inappropriate for the setting, as he was wearing a colourful jacket with flamingos with a baseball cap. In comparison with other speakers, they chose more neutral and casual clothes which is more suitable and less distracting for this event. The speakers generally spoke in a calm and clear tone. However, the speaker of RecordGram delivered his speech at a faster pace, making it more difficult for listeners to fully absorb the necessary information.

Lastly, the final section of the analysis focuses on evaluating the presentation delivery of each speaker. When examining the presentation delivery, each presentation followed mostly the same organizational structure of their speech, starting with the introduction of them as a company, followed by a detailed explanation of how their products work. Each company showed a visual demonstration of each product and its functions. The conclusion of each delivery was based on summarizing the values of each company, while encouraging listeners to invest in them. The speaker of RecordGram chose a fast-paced delivery of speech while still not managing to conclude his thoughts in the selected time limit. Others maintained a clear and calm tone successfully summarizing the key points on time. Despite these minor differences, each presentation effectively delivered its message with the aim of persuading the audience to support them in the future.

CONCLUSION

This thesis consists of two main parts, which are a theoretical and an analytical part. Theoretical part begins with Chapter 1, where I focused on the concept of rhetoric and its key elements, including ethos, pathos, and logos. Then I continued to examine how rhetorical style shapes the way messages are perceived. Chapter 2 explored the significance of persuasion and public speaking. Specifically, it focused on the importance of rhetoric in business environment and communication. In Chapter 3, I moved on to the business presentations, and the key stages of presentation preparation. In this chapter, the focus is placed on the non-verbal communication and language in business settings. I finished theoretical part with Chapter 4, which dealt with the selected rhetorical devices – rhetorical questions, repetition, hyperbole, personal pronouns, and metaphor, which serve as the core techniques examined in the analytical section of this thesis.

The analytical part examined the use of these rhetorical devices in three selected business presentations of startup companies. Chapter 6 analysed each presentation in terms of the introduction of the company, the use of rhetorical devices, and lastly the presentation delivery. The chosen method of analysis is based on qualitative research. I observed three video recordings of presentations, each performing at the Startup Battlefield competition in either New York or San Francisco. RecordGram was the winner of the competition, Collider won a second place, and Colormass was one of the six finalists. Chapter 7 discusses and compares these presentations. In this chapter, there are illustrations of tables, indicating the overall use of the rhetorical devices. The first table dealt with the use of rhetorical questions, repetitions, hyperboles, and metaphor. It could be observed that the overall number of applications remained relatively balanced among the speakers. Distinct preferences for certain devices were observed, for instance, Colormass frequently utilized repetition, while Collider and RecordGram focused on the use of hyperbole. On the other hand, metaphor was the least utilized rhetorical device across the presentations. The second table illustrated the use of personal pronouns, where the pronoun *you* was the most used across all presentations, particularly by Colormass, focusing directly on the audience. RecordGram used the pronoun *we* forty times, building a sense of alignment. In contrast, the pronoun *I* was used only eleven times by Colormass, and sixteen times by Collider. These variations illustrate how rhetorical choices can shape the tone and impact of a business presentation, influencing the audience perception.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTA Close Textual Analysis

CEO Chief Executive Officer

E.g. Exempli Gratia

ELM Elaboration Likelihood Model

Etc. Et Cetera

I.e. That Is.