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Literature Review

Style used: MLA

Tentative title: “Pixelated Pixies: Applying Neo-Aristotelian Criticism to AI Influencers’ Social Media Content”

The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) influencers on social media platforms has brought new dimension to social media and digital content creation. With this relatively new concept making its emergence into the technological world, it is critical that we begin to examine the persuasive capacities of this digital content through a Neo-Aristotelian lens. This study will fill a gap in the scholarship by examining the persuasive strategies employed by AI influencers via social media platforms and the implications of this new notion of rhetor for public discourse and digital culture.

Some examples of AI influencers include Instagram models such as @LilMiquela, @Imma.gram, Milla Sofia, and Lu Xu just to name a few. This research will include an examination the different types of audiences these influencers attract based not only on the appearance or visual characteristics, but also through their AI-generated rhetoric. A neo-Aristotelian critique will be applied to this rhetoric. This study seeks to better understand how AI influencers appeal to emotions (pathos), as well as logic and reason, and how they establish and communicate credibility (ethos) given that they are not individuals with agency but AI-generated personae. These influencers could have very different effects depending on viewers’ opinions, preferences, and perspectives.

This paper will explore the persuasive capacity of AI influencers through the lens of Neo-Aristotelian theory. It will examine the persuasive strategies employed in terms of their ethos (credibility and character), appeals to pathos (emotional appeal), and use of logos (rational argument) (Foss 34.) In other words, the research conducted in this study will aim to provide a better understanding of how these digital avatars build persuasive narratives, manipulate and influence their viewer’s emotions, and establish credibility among their audience in this highly digital age.

For the methodology being used, I will employ a qualitative content analysis to examine samples of AI influencer-produced content across various social media platforms. The analysis will focus on identifying and categorizing instances of ethos, pathos, and logos in the selected content with the goal of identifying the AI influencer’s persuasive strategies. For the study, I will incorporate research from a variety of scholarly sources that bring in relevant content relating to Neo-Aristotelian theory, social media, and artificial intelligence. The AI influencers and avatars themselves will serve as the data set for my study, which will be discussed later in the research.

**Literature Review**

Social media play a major role in how people receive their information. They also greatly impact the ways people think, what they choose to support and/or buy, and even their beliefs and viewpoints. It is important to consider the emotional appeal and persuasive capacity that social media posts and content have on their viewers. Furthermore, the strategies or reasons behind this persuasive and emotional appeal must be examined. In an article focusing on why and how certain messages in politics go viral while others do not, it is explained how certain content can appeal to viewer’s emotions more and thus have a stronger chance of going viral (Fine 958.) While the topic of politics does not concern my particular study, some similarities can be drawn in terms of emotional appeals and content going viral. For instance, one of the main parts of Neo-Aristotelianism is examining the pathos (emotional appeal) that these AI influencers have on their viewers.

At the most basic level, it is important to acknowledge how artificial intelligence is being integrated into social media. Moreover, it is greatly influencing the people and the world around us. This can be seen in many ways whether it be through AI-generated content in the form of art, writing, photographs, and more. This article explores the ways in which AI in various forms can be used to influence an audience, and it discusses AI-generated “robots,” as well (Massimo 1).

The impact of social media and social media influencers on body image cannot be ignored. This study explores the negative impact that social media influencers can have on the self-esteem of viewers and how it can affect those viewers’ self-image (Colak 595.) It would be especially interesting to consider this topic when it comes to AI-generated influencers, and how this could be affecting other people’s body image even though these influencers are not “real” people. This also brings in the topic that many people might not be aware that the AI influencers are simulated personae. One could even concur that this further proves the persuasive capacity of AI influencers that we are analyzing through Neo-Aristotelianism. One could argue that because of the emotional appeal (pathos) that the influencer has on their audience members, they are persuading them to do certain things or even change themselves.

AI poses some positive and negative influences on society. There is no denying that while it may have its benefits, there are also reasons to be concerned about some of the more detrimental impacts that AI could have. One of these is that AI is exceeding human intelligence. People must acknowledge its ability to complete cognitive functions associated with the human mind such as reasoning, learning, and problem solving (Pearl 35.) Through a Neo-Aristotelian lens, it would be interesting to explore how these abilities are used for the creation of AI influencers, and whether this is a negative or positive concept. It is also important to consider some of the negative outcomes or impacts this could have. Regarding some of the “human capacities” that AI employs, it could be worthwhile to note these in the paper. This article discussed a lot of AI-generated content but did not discuss the topic of AI-generated influencers. Therefore, the paper could fill in the gaps in this research by covering them.

With the seemingly never-ending advancements in social media and technology, this is also changing the way in which people receive their news. In other words, many people have opted to get their news information through social media rather than traditional news sources. While the rise of social media news has its pros and cons, AI has been proposed as a potential way to help decrease the spread of misinformation (Montoro-Montarroso.) However, this also begs the question of whether AI could be contributing to the spread of false information and news. This could play into the topic of AI influencers and whether they are fully “honest” in their presentation. Many of these influencers are very forthcoming about the fact that they are not real and AI-generated, but on the other hand, others are not and have some of their audience or viewers fooled into thinking they are real people.

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