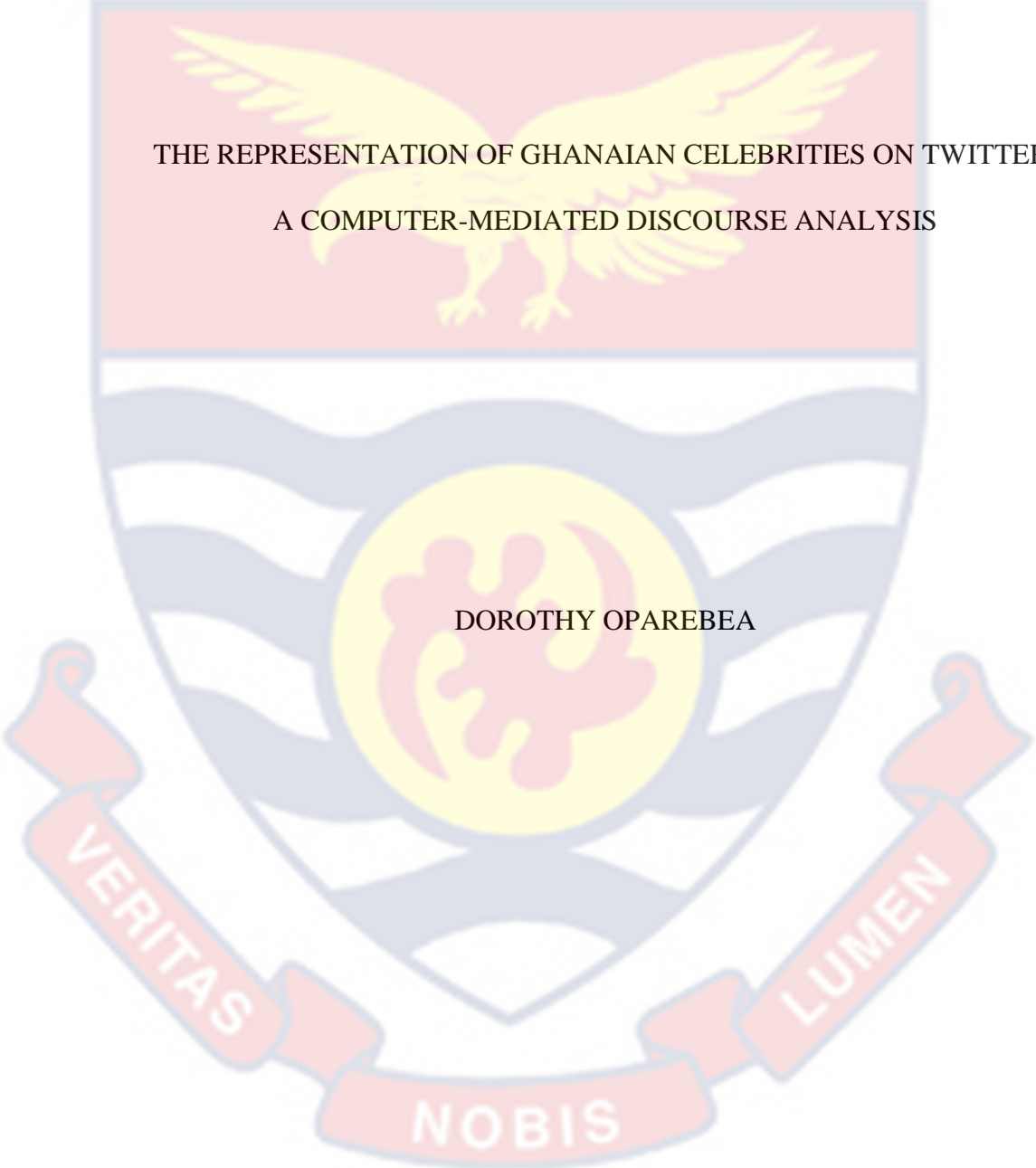


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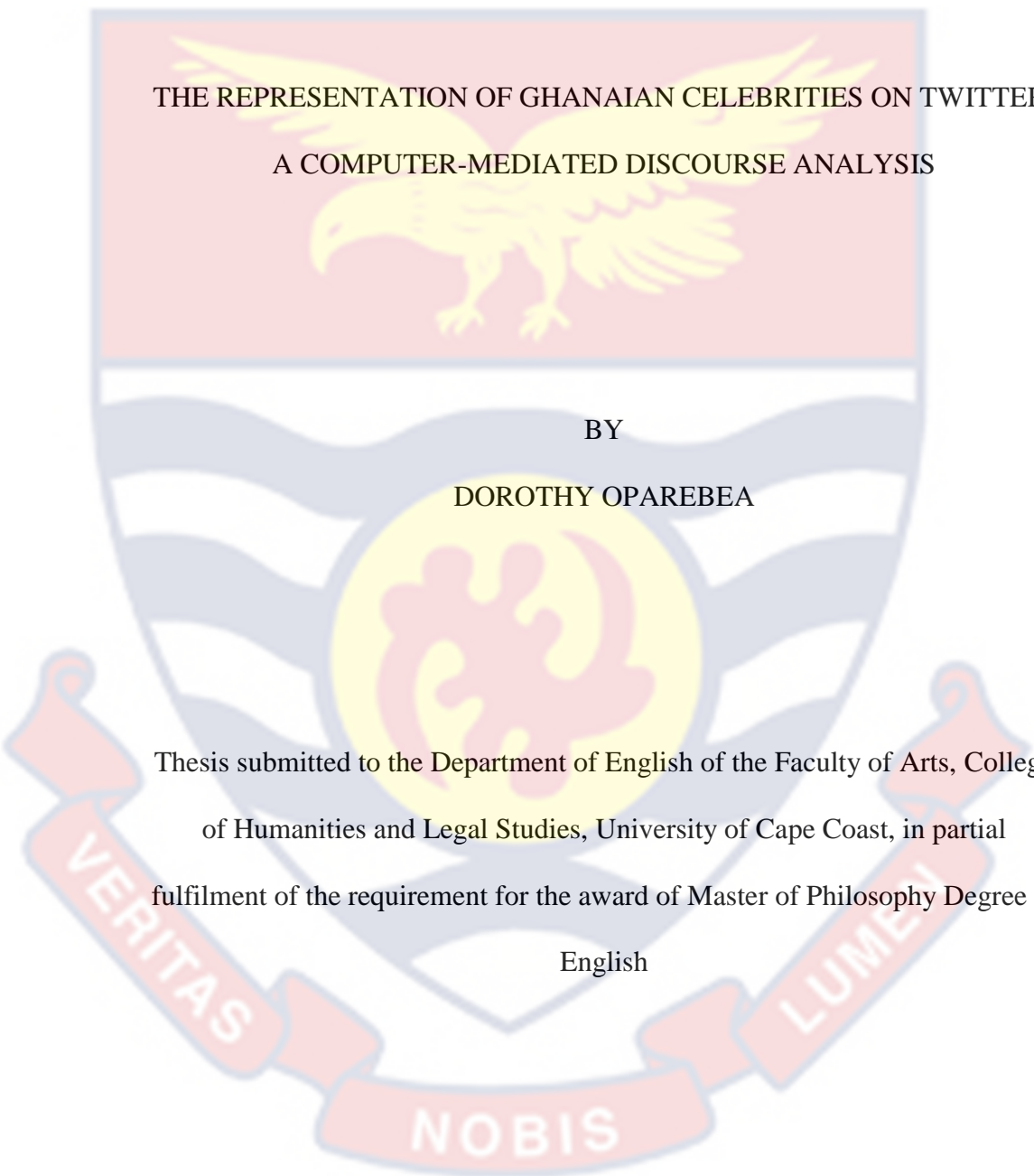


THE REPRESENTATION OF GHANAIAAN CELEBRITIES ON TWITTER:
A COMPUTER-MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

DOROTHY OPAREBEA

2022

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



THE REPRESENTATION OF GHANAIAN CELEBRITIES ON TWITTER:
A COMPUTER-MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

BY

DOROTHY OPAREBEA

Thesis submitted to the Department of English of the Faculty of Arts, College
of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial
fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in
English

MARCH 2022

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this study is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere

Candidate's Signature: Date:

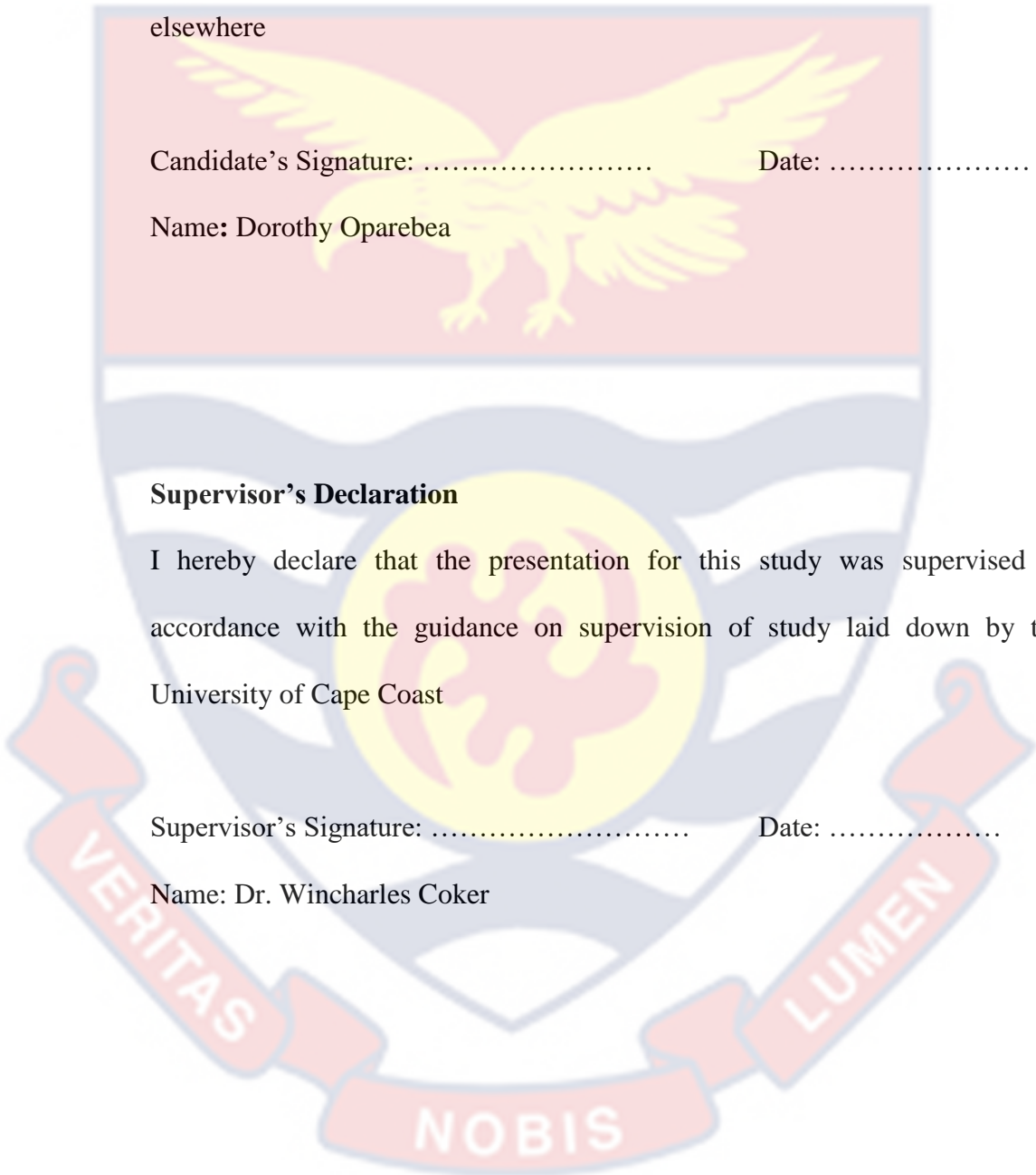
Name: Dorothy Oparebea

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the presentation for this study was supervised in accordance with the guidance on supervision of study laid down by the University of Cape Coast

Supervisor's Signature: Date:

Name: Dr. Wincharles Coker

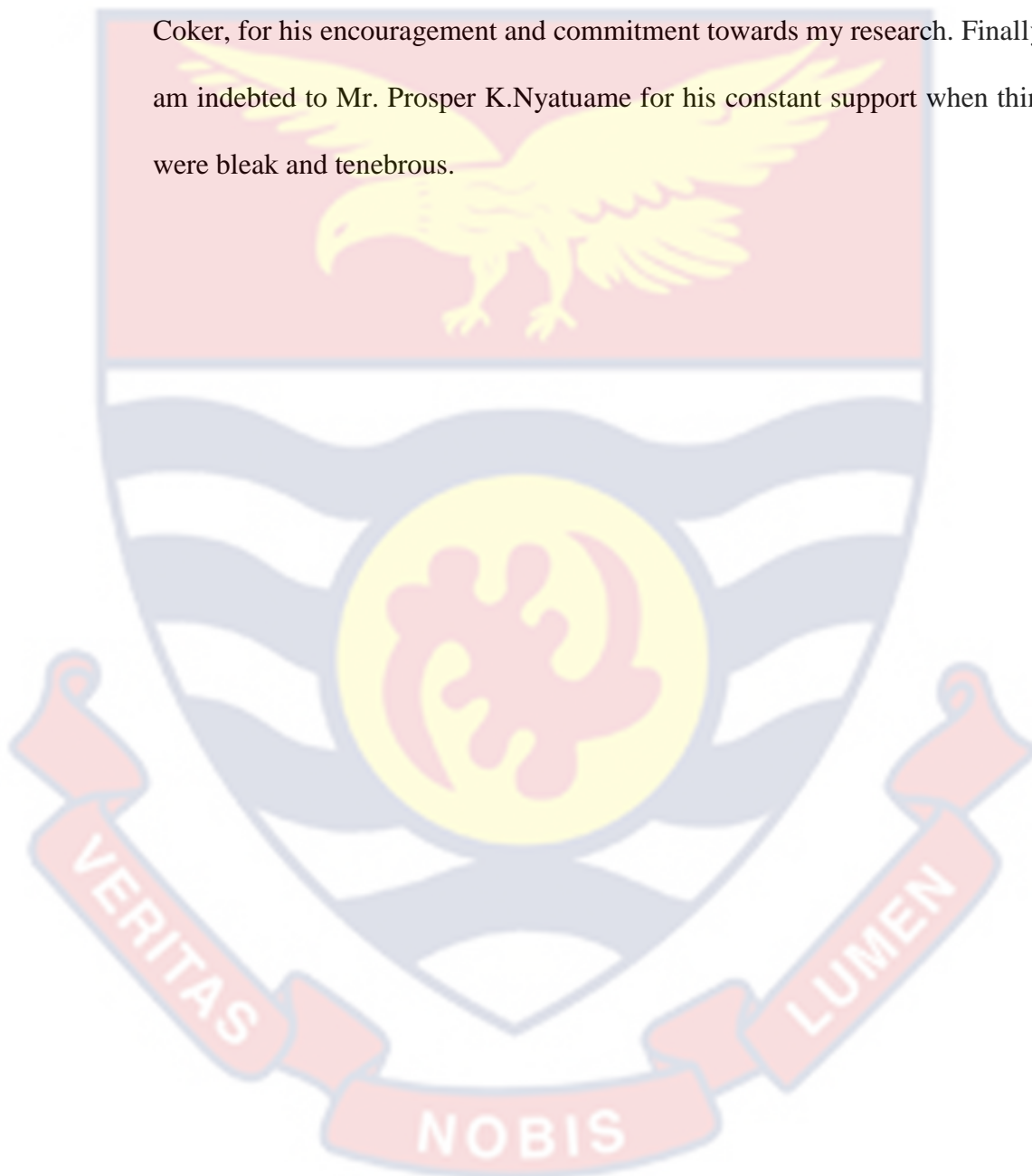


ABSTRACT

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the various ways Ghanaian celebrities are represented on Twitter by a) exploring the dominant linguistic features that characterise the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities, b) ascertaining the different ways by which Ghanaian celebrities are representing themselves, and c) examining how gender variation influences the tweets. The study touches on how celebrities creatively bypass the imposed 140 character limit to enhance expressivity and communicative competence. Qualitative research paradigm was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling method was used to select 50 Ghanaian celebrities with Twitter accounts. Goffman's (1959) theoretical perspective of self-representation and Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), as an analytical framework, were adopted to provide answers to the research questions of the study. Findings of the study revealed that Ghanaian celebrities employed adverbials, pronouns, abbreviated forms, modal/semi-modal forms tense, and aspect markers to project a good impression to their fans. The study again found out that Ghanaian celebrities employed creativity, salutation, ingratiation, damage control, and self-promotion to represent themselves on twitter. Finally, the study discovered that gender variations influence the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities although there are situations where male or female celebrities construct opposite gender identities with the view of impressing fans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would love to express my heartfelt appreciation to Prof. Joseph Benjamin Archibald Afful, former Head of Department of English, for his constructive criticism. I express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Wincharles Coker, for his encouragement and commitment towards my research. Finally, I am indebted to Mr. Prosper K.Nyatuame for his constant support when things were bleak and tenebrous.



DEDICATION

To my mother, Mrs. Rejoice Mansah Kokoti



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMD	Computer-Mediated Discourse
CMDA	Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis
SM	Social Media



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Following the introduction of social media at the dawn of 1990 (Hou, 2019; Stewart & Giles, 2020), computer mediated interactions and language use have been shaped by complex human behaviour (Herring, 2004, 2018; Masciantonio, Bourguignon, Bouchat, Balty, & Rime, 2021). In view of the affordances and constraints of social media on how people post, text and interact, linguists and researchers in language studies have developed keen interest at investigating how people depict themselves, a phenomenon Goffman (1959, p. 211) described as “impression management”.

By inference, Goffman’s (1959) theorization means that as people type, post videos or pictures on social media, they do two radical things “the expressions that he gives, and the expression that he gives off (p. 210). Lending credence to Goffman (1995) statement, Herring (2004) stated that the radical things people do online are through discourse because “language is doing, in the truest performative sense” (p. 4). Viewing this complex human behaviour from a linguistic perspective requires a critical examination of language use on social media (Yates, 1996). Herring indicated that scholars in linguistics are interested in understanding written language in relation to its structure, the meaning it conveys, how it is used, how context influences its meaning and how the meaning changes over time.

Scholars are divided in their opinion on the use of Twitter for the representation of self on social media. Oreskovic (2015) stated that as of September 2015, Twitter had 320 million users who actively used the platform

everyday (Twitter, 2016). According to Twitter, these people send 500 million messages everyday. The use of Twitter has become very popular among male and female celebrities in Ghana since it has become one of the main platforms they use to publish press releases and reach out to their fans directly (Agyei, 2019; Markwei & Appiah, 2016). The users of this social media platform tweet about any issue and/or topic within the 140-character limit. For other twitter users to receive their tweets, they follow them. However, some researchers (Borau, Feng, & Shen, 2009; Nemer, 2015) have argued that Twitter's character limitation imposes constraint on expressivity and repair of communication which ultimately affects linguistic choice and competence at effective representation of self.

In order for scholars to analyse online written language, Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) came to the fore, and several linguists have used it to study linguistic phenomena at a micro level such as the process of word-formation online (Cherny, 1999), sentence structure (Herring, 1998) and lexical choice (Ko, 1996). At the macro level, several studies have investigated phenomena such as language coherence (Panyametheekul, 2001), and language and identity (Burkhalter, 1999). In recent times, the unprecedented changes occurring within the spectrum of computer-mediated communication (CMC) have increased the adoption of CMDA in gaining insight into how and what people are using language to do online, especially within social media interface.

Several studies have been conducted to ascertain factors associated with gender differences on self-presentation in social media platforms with varied results. For example, Liu, Zhao, and Feng (2022) indicated that gender

differences in the use of linguistic features are dependent on the targeted audience and issues being discussed. However, Hjetland et al. (2022) associated such differences with varied features of social media platforms, while Svensson, Johnson, and Olsson (2022) claimed that internalizing symptoms among male and female gender is responsible for such differences. Additionally, the comprehensive study on the creation and idealization of avatar on social media by Zimmermann, Wehler, and Kasper (2022) attributed gender differences to the level of idealization, societal norms, and social media features. It is essential to know whether there are gender differences among Ghanaian celebrities as they negotiate several identities during self-presentation.

As a methodological approach, CMDA assumes that “discourse exhibits recurrent patterns”(Herring, 2004, p. 4). In several cases, these patterns are consciously crafted by the speaker or user for impression management, whereas in several other cases, as Goffman indicated, the user may be unaware or unconscious of the pattern (Herring, 2014, 2018). The adoption of CMDA will facilitate the identification of those patterns, in linguistic styles, that may not be readily visible but are meaningful and supportive to the representation of self on social media.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars have varied opinions on the use of Twitter for representation of self among users. While some scholars indicated that the technological features of Twitter foster representation of self through innovative word formation, linguistic choice and communicative competence (Agyei, 2019; Markwei & Appiah, 2016), others (Borau, Feng, & Shen, 2009; Nemer, 2015)

other researchers disagreed and claimed that Twitter's character limitation ultimately affects linguistic choice and competence at effective representation of self. Resolution of the identified contradictory evidence gap is paramount in view of its pedagogical implications.

Celebrities are cultural figures and their discursive practices on Twitter (social media) constitute public pedagogy, which Chun (2018) underscored as an important source of language learning. Horton (2021) observed that it can foster student's development of effective communicative skills, an important factor in composition writing in the context of skilfully employing linguistic features in the negotiation of personal identity, identifying intertextuality in literary works on cultural and public issues, and influencing the effective presentation of self in several socio-cultural settings.

There are some studies conducted on the language of twitter employing Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis as the analytical framework in different contexts. For instance, CMDA have been used for studies in language in classroom (Herring & Nix, 1997), radio panel discussions (Coker, 2011), discourse markers on Whatsapp conversations (Amuzu, Kuwornu & Opoku-Fofie, 2018), and digital pro-gay discourse on twitter (Onanuga, 2022). However, to the best of my knowledge, CMDA is yet to be used within the context of the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities.

Celebrities, according to Muir, Dornyei and Adolphs (2019), are role model in language learning on digital spaces and as a result, a critical examination of their use of linguistic features can boost student's digital literacy, a prerequisite for communicative competence, employability, and

socialization as global and sustainable citizen (Bandura & Mendez, 2022; Siu, 2023).

Findings of several studies revealed a caveat in literature concerning gender differences in the use of social media. While some claimed that it is due to the discourse community or topic at hand (Liu et al., 2022) and social media features (Hjetland et al., 2022), others indicated that it is due to internalizing symptoms (Svensson et al., 2022), societal norms and online activity (Zimmermann et al., 2022). Filling the identified knowledge gap is prudent because factors associated with either male or female students' negative outcomes in linguistic choices and use on social media can be adequately addressed to enhance positive outcome and gender equality. This study, therefore, employed Goffman's theoretical framework as well as the methodological approach of CMDA to fill the lacunae highlighted above.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study, with CMDA as its analytical framework, was to describe the pattern of linguistic choices in the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities. The study is oriented towards discovering how Ghanaian celebrities construct self-presentation and the extent to which gender influences their linguistic choices and ideal identities.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the various ways Ghanaian celebrities are represented on Twitter. The specific objectives of study are as follows:

1. Explore the dominant linguistic features that characterise the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities

2. Find out the different ways by which Ghanaian celebrities represent themselves on Twitter
3. Examine how gender influences the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities.

Research Questions

Contingent on the purpose of the study, these research questions are formulated:

1. What dominant linguistic features characterise the tweets of celebrities in Ghana?
2. How do Ghanaian celebrities represent themselves on Twitter?
3. How does gender influence the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities on Twitter?

Significance of the Study

Several studies have been conducted, using computer media discourse analysis to classify participants' utterances on social media as speech acts (Herring & Nix, 1997), to identify influence of age and gender on participants' discourse styles online (Hall, 1996; Ravert, 2001), and to analyse participants' language use on social media (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). Quite a few studies have focused on the content of the messages and the language behavior of the Ghanaian celebrities on Twitter and there has been little analysis on the language that Ghanaian celebrities use on Twitter. In the light of this, the present study is consistent with Goffman's (1959) view that people consciously or unconsciously use language for self-presentation, and Herring's view (2004, 2018) that "computer mediated-discourse may be...shaped"(p. 4) will provide insight into the latest development in linguistic patterns, innovative word formation in computer mediated discourse within the

Ghanaian context. Through the analysis of celebrity tweets, the study will also examine the different ways by which male and female Ghanaian celebrities create or project their online identity and self - representation on Twitter.

This research is quite different from other studies on social media discourse as it draws on Goffman's theory of Self and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (Goffman, 1959; Herring, 2018) to analyse naturally occurring data (i.e. tweets) rather than interviews and questionnaires to examine how Ghanaian celebrities present their online identity on Twitter. This will, therefore, encourage further research to be conducted on the use of other social media platforms in Ghana.

The study will provide both linguists and researchers with results that will either confirm or disconfirm the presence of the conscious effort by Ghanaian celebrities to make a desired impression on their audience, and prove Goffman's theory of face-to-face interactions to be relevant in the Ghanaian context and the context of online social networks, more specifically, Twitter. Even more specifically, by looking at the way Ghanaian celebrities represent themselves on Twitter; it can help scholars to make comparisons with other celebrities in different contexts on a common platform.

Finally, findings of the study will benefit celebrities in Ghana and provide insights on what really works as far as developing and retaining celebrity status is concerned in Ghana. The study will also be relevant to amateur or ordinary aspirants on the social media since it provides ample understanding on how strategic use of linguistic features could launch them into the celebrity culture with the potential for increased social connections and/or monetary significance.

Delimitation

In order to arrive at effective conclusions, the study was limited to some key areas. First, the present study is limited to the linguistic features and meaning of the tweets of celebrities in Ghana. The use of tweets was selected because Twitter allows users to download the history of tweets of followers in the preference section and, this provides easier access to data and data analysis.

Also, the dataset for the study was restricted to 500 tweets posted by male and female Ghanaian celebrities on twitter which represents a sample of the largest amount of tweets collected within the period. Data was retrieved from both male and female celebrities and in line with the underlying principles of CMDA, the activities of these celebrities were observed over a period of one month, starting from March 1, to March 31, 2021. These observations, according to Herring (2004, 2018), ensure making generalisation of the structures and linguistic pattern of participants.

Finally, the research is descriptive in nature which sought to describe how celebrities in Ghana construct self-representation for impression management on Twitter. The study is restricted to the use of CMDA in analysing celebrity tweets, using content analysis to identify their linguistic patterns which is the focal point of CMDA.

Definition of Terms

A **Celebrity** is a person who is well known and gets lots of public attention, or attention from other people (Nemer, 2015).

Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD) in this study refers to the type of interpersonal communication carried out on the internet or World Wide Web (Herring, 2001, 2004).

Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis is primarily focused on analysing the written language use, underscore meaningful communication and meaning-making exchanges (Herring, 2004; Panyametheekul, 2001). For this study, this is done within the context of celebrities in Ghana.

Character Limitation refers to the restriction of number of characters allowed for a post. For instance, in text messaging the messages are clocked in fewer than 160 characters. In the case of the present study, Twitter, which is known as a microblogging site, only allows its users to construct short messages of 140 characters for others to read.

Discourse Analysis is the exploration of the connection between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs (Herring, 2004, 2018).

Discourse is language in use. It is a behavioral entity made up of expressions that epitomize a recognizable communicative event (Gee, 1999). In a study conducted by researchers, language in use plays the role in a social context which follows definite functions in human situations (Brown & Yule, 1983; Van Dijk, 2002)

Self in this study refers to the evaluation of celebrities regarding their own worth as an individual in clear terms or distinction from their social or interpersonal roles (Herring, 2004, 2018).

Self-representation is the instance or act of representing oneself and in this study refers to how celebrities make meanings on social media through

showcasing themselves through “tweeting” and “retweeting” (Herring, 2018; Stone & Can, 2021).

Tweet is a message constructed within the parameter of Twitter. To make it clearer, it is the short post sent by users using 140 characters or less (Nemer, 2015; Markwei & Appiah, 2016).

Tweeting: Complementing short message texting, instant messaging (Borau et al., 2009; Nemer, 2015) and email, tweeting is a modern public outlet for netizens to broadcast themselves.

Twitter: In 2006, Jack Dorsey launched Twitter, a micro blogging and social networking site, where tweets (messages) are posted. Crawford (2009) described Twitter as an online listening tool and crowd sourcing interface.

Retweet is an act of reposting what other users have said, making these users engage in a shared conversational context without directly addressing one another. According to Danah, Golder and Lotan (2010, p. 54), “retweeting is the Twitter-equivalent of email forwarding where users post messages originally posted by others”

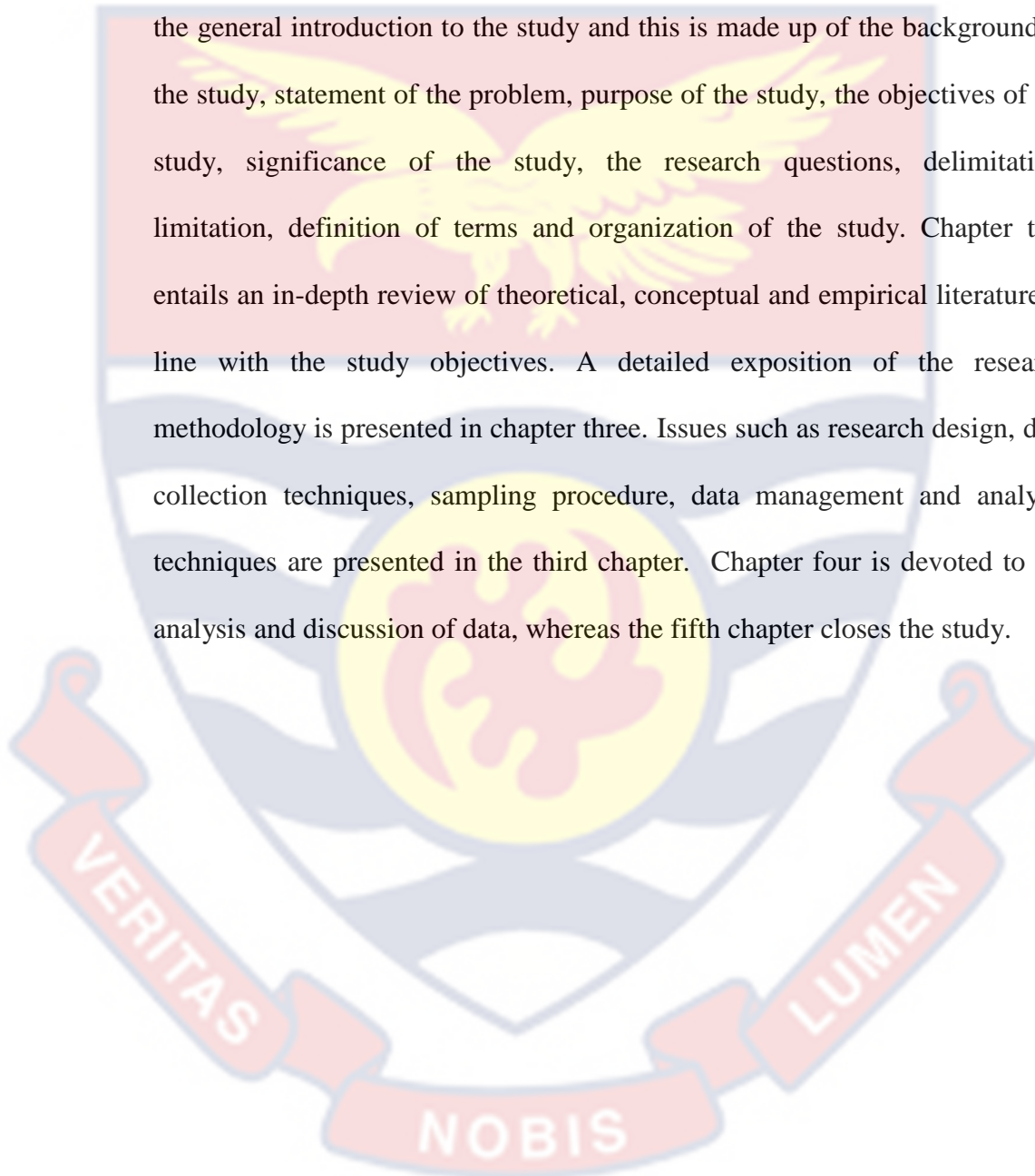
Social Media is a communication channel which is very popular, extremely fast and broad; has proven to be highly effective, as well as trusted by billions of people, to share and discover content concerning individuals, brands, information, entertainment and knowhow (Dearborn, 2014)

SNS: Social Network Sites has been defined by Kumar et al, (2013, p. 4) as “web based services that allow individuals to construct a public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and; view and traverse their list of connections and those made by

others within the system”. According to Kumar et al, (2013), the nature and designation of these connections may differ from one site to the other.

Overview of the Thesis

This research is presented in five main chapters. Chapter one details the general introduction to the study and this is made up of the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, significance of the study, the research questions, delimitation, limitation, definition of terms and organization of the study. Chapter two entails an in-depth review of theoretical, conceptual and empirical literature in line with the study objectives. A detailed exposition of the research methodology is presented in chapter three. Issues such as research design, data collection techniques, sampling procedure, data management and analysis techniques are presented in the third chapter. Chapter four is devoted to the analysis and discussion of data, whereas the fifth chapter closes the study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter provides a basis to gather conceptual, theoretical and empirical support for this study. The structure of the review is as follows: the first part focuses on the theoretical framework adopted for the study, emphasizing its usefulness to the analysis and interpretation of the data. The second part explains basic concepts relating to the study. These include the concepts of discourse, discourse analysis, computer-mediated discourse, social media, internet linguistics, self-representation and Twitter. The last part discusses empirical review which entails critiquing some studies on the construction of self-representation and impression management.

Theoretical Framework

This section focuses on Butler's (1990) Theory of Performativity and Goffman's (1959) Theory of Presentation of Self. This section of the study provided theoretical support for the study.

Butler's Theory of Performativity

Contrary to the prevailing notion that gender is stable, Butler (1990, 2004, 2011) theorized that gender is 'performative' and that it is socially constructed. This implies that a male or female could construct or negotiate gender identities through linguistic choices. In effect, while sex is as a result of birth, gender is negotiated and sustained through linguistic features socially construed as feminine, masculine or androgyny (Ton, 2018; Webb & Temple, 2015; Wood, 2009;).

Providing additional insight into Butler's theoretical perspective, Menard-Warwick, 2007) stated that, as humans, we are capable of enacting several gender identities through "multiple forms of expression within societal inscriptions" (p.32). Upon a critical examination of Menard-Warwick's expression within the context of Butler's theory, I realize that gender is something we do and not something we have or that is fixed. In my perspective, gender is borne through outward performance or discourses matching socially construed identities. This means, that, as soon as Mrs. B actively adopts linguistic choices socially construed as masculine, she is enacting masculinity though her biological sex is feminine. Considering the issue from another perspective, Mr. A could perform the roles socially construed as feminine, such as changing the diaper of his child, doing house chores. His performance on these occasions is construed as enacting feminine identities, though he is biologically masculine.

Several studies have been conducted, drawing on these performances and linguistic choices with a view to underscoring various forms of gender identities individuals are enacting. For example, Aleman (2010) examined gender influence in a traditional mass media setting, Litt (2012) on Facebook, Webb and Temple (2015) on blogs and online games, Hjetland et al. (2022) and Svensson et al. (2022) among adolescents on several social media platforms. A close reading of the studies by Litt, Webb and Temple, Hjetland et al. and Svensson et al. revealed that these were done within the context of Western culture.

It has been argued that race also has influence on gender performativity, especially with the ever-changing phases of the internet (Webb

& Temple, 2015). Hence, conducting a study on the enactment of gender on social media, such as Twitter, within the Ghanaian context, will provide ample insight into several ways gender is enacted through linguistic features. Hosseini and Tammimy (2016) carried out a similar study in Los Angeles with notable results showing how users use verbs, adverbs, pronouns, and adjectives innovatively to construct gender identities.

However, as indicated at the outset, recent studies have contended that several factors could lead to the use of innovative linguistic features and not necessarily influenced by gender. For instance, Svensson et al. (2022) discovered that both male and female persons were often influenced by internalizing symptoms in their use of linguistic features on social media. On the other hand, Hjetland et al. (2022) argued that design and character and word limitation on various social media influences participants' linguistic choices, not necessarily because they were negotiating gender identities. In their study on the recent technological innovation, Avartar, Zimmermann et al. (2022) associated gender differences with societal norms and the extent to which individual participant want to create an idealized personality, which does not necessarily depend on their gender. It is matter of taste and the features on the social media their discourse community is situated.

Considering the gap in knowledge concerning gender and use of linguistic features on social media platforms, it is prudent to ascertain the nature of linguistic features Ghanaian celebrities adopt when interacting with fans on Twitter and whether those features are influenced by gender.

Goffman's Theory of Presentation of Self

Goffman's (1959) theory underpins the focus of this study because it demonstrates that people have actual self and ideal self. Similar to actors in the theatre, when people are face to face with their audience, similar to when actors are on stage, they portray their better or ideal self, perhaps as a doctor, an engineer, a kind hearted individual, or a genius. However, as soon as they are off the screen or on public view, similar to being at the back stage, they remove the acting, appearances and return to their actual self (Goffman, 1959).

Though Goffman postulated the theory of presentation of self in face to face communication and before the advent of social media, critical evaluation of his conception of how humans want to portray their ideal self on social media or computer-mediated platform in recent times coincide with Goffman's theory. For example, each tweet is often accompanied with the objective of impression management. By impression management, Goffman means that an individual desires to give a better impression of self on other users through their tweets. This forms a primary motive of the users' tweet with the aim of constructing self-representation.

Several linguists and researchers have adopted Goffman's theoretical framework. For example, in developing her notable computer-mediated discourse analysis, Herring (2004) indicated that a prominent feature of discourse is that it "exhibits recurrent patterns" (Herring, 2004). Goffman's theory provided a clue to understanding the recurrent nature of discourse. Goffman stated that during communication, humans give or give off aspects of their self. In other words, in their construction of identity or self-representation, they use language that consciously builds the ideal self, and by

their use of language, they unwittingly use words or tweets that foster the ideal self. In the second instance, they are unconscious of the language used but they achieve the same motive of self-representation.

Herring (2018) indicated that Goffman's theory shows that discourse is not immutable but recurrent and evolving. As each user on Twitter or other social media, according to Herring, communicate with their discourse community, they often consciously project a better or ideal self to their audiences and at the same time use certain discourse pattern or linguistic style unconsciously to promote impression management. Analysis of both the conscious and unconscious discourse pattern will provide a broad or holistic basis for understanding the meaning of the users' expression and its implication for constructing self-representation (Herring, 2018; Slerka & Merunkova, 2019).

In their study in Pakistan, Hadinata, Sahrani, and Basaria (2020) discovered that insecure adolescent's conscious of their outward appearance or certain deformity found social media platform to be very useful for impression management. Following Goffman's theory, these adolescents were able to present the ideal self on social media through selfie and texts that maximize their appealing qualities and minimize their weakness and level of insecurity. These adolescents derive much satisfaction from knowing that, like actors, they have adequately portrayed positive impression and a good image to their friends, colleagues and the discourse community as a whole. By inference, though social media has attracted users from several age groups, adolescents and young adults, often keen on self-representation dominate social media platforms due to its appeal to the construction of self.

Findings of Slerka and Merunkova's (2019) study in Czeck Republic reveal that Goffman's dramaturgical theory is very applicable to online social network. The study was conducted among university students, who are mostly young adults. It is noteworthy that apart from the data retrieved online on facebook, the study was supplemented with interview so as to clarify their conception and attributed meanings of users' texts and communication. It was discovered that users shape their personal information with a view to managing the impressing they are creating and to ensure they are projecting the ideal self. As shown by Goffman's framework, people's motive of tweeting on Twitter is closely related to their desire for self-representation.

Some linguists have criticized Goffman's theory. For example, Brisset and Edgley (1990) asserted that Goffman's theory is "pedestrian, nonsystematic form of inquiry that does not possess the properties of formal theory" (p. 154). However, Brisset and Edgley's claim has been refuted because, as shown above, several linguists such as Herring (2001), Rettberg (2018), Slerka and Merunkova (2019) and Kilvington (2020) have conducted extensive studies using systematic methodology to affirm the usefulness of Goffman's dramaturgical theory of self-representation.

Formulated Theoretical Framework

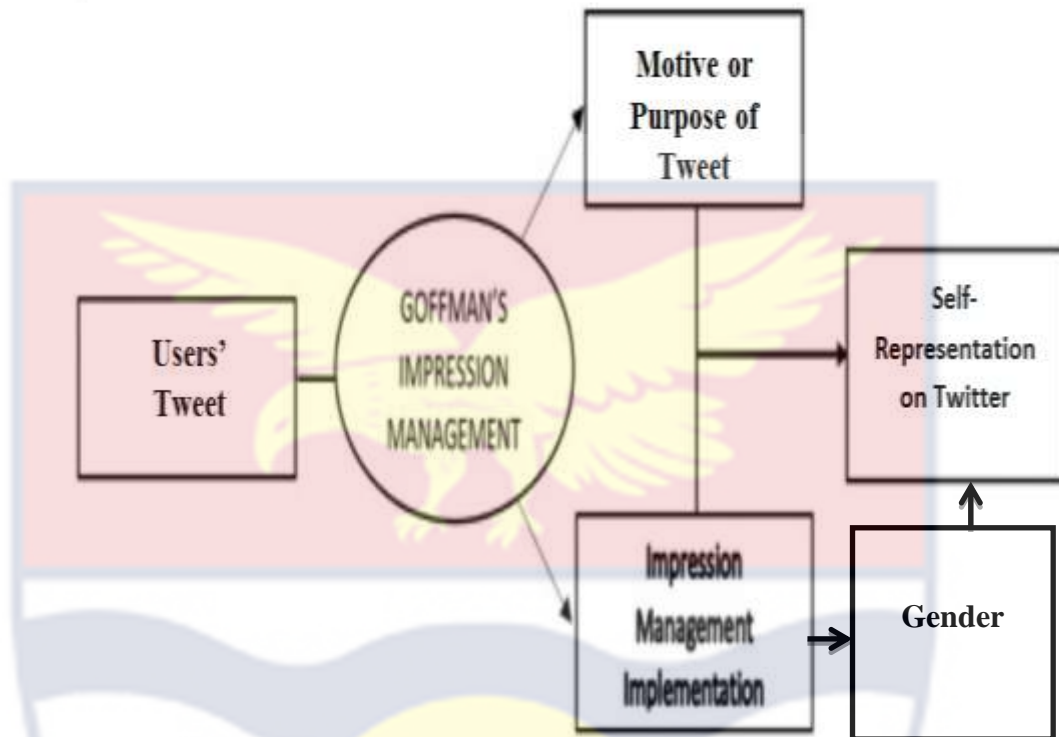


Figure 1: Formulated Theoretical Framework

Source: Researchers' Construct (2021)

The formulated theoretical framework in Figure 1 provided theoretical support to the study. A close study of the framework, as a result of the eclectic review of relevant theories, shows that for the purpose of this study, three factors could influence the linguistic choices of users as they negotiate or construct self-representation on Twitter. These include 1) motive or purpose of tweets, 2) Impression management implementation and 3) gender. The formulated theoretical framework provided meaningful insight into the overall objective of the study.

As shown in the review, online interaction and the mode of communication often influence the nature of linguistic feature users use. However, for the purpose of presenting an ideal persona online, several users are prone to use certain linguistic features. It is worth noting that

unconsciously some of these users make linguistic choices that present them as feminine or masculine socially. It is, therefore, pertinent to examine the tweets of participants to ascertain whether gender could influence the linguistic choices of users as they construct or negotiate

The study critically examines the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities with a view to either confirm or reject the formulated theoretical framework in relation to self-representation on Twitter. In this sense, each tweet is evaluated based on the motive of the user, the need to manage impression and gender. These factors give rise to the use of certain forms of linguistic styles and discourse pattern for self-representation.

Conceptual Framework

This part of the literature review discusses some key concepts that are related to the objectives of the study in order to provide adequate grounds for conducting the study.

Concept of Self

People all over the world have formed various views about themselves and this may have an impact on how they behave and react to situations. Goffman (1959), thus indicates that when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about them or to bring into play information about them that they are already possessed. This information that others have about an individual will enable them to know in advance what he should be expected of them and what they may also expect of him (Goffman, 1959).

Experts and linguists have different conceptions about what constitutes the self. For example, Mehrad (2016) states that the concept of self is the

totality of a complex, organised and dynamic system of learned opinions, attitudes and feelings that hold to be true of one's personal existence. She further claims that self-concept comprises two key parts 1) personal identity (includes personality traits and other characteristics that make each person unique) and 2) social identity (includes the groups one belong to including the community, religion, college, and other groups). Again, Ackerman (2021) cited Neil (2005) that "self – concept is an overarching idea we have about who we are – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and in terms of any other aspect that make up who we are" (p. 23). She explains that people are able to form and regulate their self-based knowledge they have about themselves. The concept of self is, therefore, multidimensional and can be broken down into individual aspects.

While Mehra (2016) views self as composed of two levels, personal and social, Ackerman (2021) indicated five levels, namely religious, social, physical, emotional and social. In spite of the varied conceptions, the two definitions coincide with the focus of this study. It shows that self is multidimensional, influenced by environmental and biological factors and, more importantly, by social interaction. Notwithstanding, upon a critical evaluation of the definition, Mehrad (2016), and Ackerman (2021) missed an important component for this study: the relationship between self and meaning.

How does what we think and feel about self makes or mar meaning in our lives? Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt and King (2016) provided the answer by linking self with meaning. Schlegel et al. (2016) stated: "expression of the self provides an important basis for experiencing meaning in life" (p. 16).

This is in consonance with the focus of this study because celebrities are interested in presenting an ideal self with the sole aim of “experiencing meaning in life”. This impels celebrities to using a forum, social media, which facilitates the capability of making the inner self feel very good and valuable.

Celebrities are aware of their popularity, which positively influences their thoughts, feelings, and attributes, and makes them feel good and gives meaning to their lives. Celebrities want to sustain this popularity by continually portraying the ideal self. Social media offers a veritable means of doing just that. Celebrities use all manner of discourse patterns to ensure that the better or ideal self is presented to their fans so as to make the inner self feel good and thus derive meaning in life.

In view of the aforementioned, the working definition of self for this study is presented as the totality of individual’s thoughts, feelings and beliefs about oneself as influenced by environmental factors, social interaction and the desire to derive meaning in life.

Representation of Self

Hall (1997) delineated representation as the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. This is explained as the connection between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events. In his notable work, “Representation”, Hall described three approaches to how representation of meaning through language works: the reflective approach, intentional approach, and constructive approach. He conceived representation as a reflection of reality since “language functions like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it

already exists in the world” (p. 24) and in relation to intentional approach, Hall indicated it means “what the author intends they should mean” (p. 5). The constructive approach recognizes the social character of language by acknowledging that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. While I agree with Hall on the third approach describing representation as “constructive”, I disagree with the first two categories.

The basis of such disagreement is that it is inadmissible to ascertain what the author intends in different contexts, cultures, and settings. Likewise, it is not possible for an object that is represented to mirror reality, since reality and intentions and meanings are subjective and can vary from one person to the other due to their interpretations and experiences of reality. For example, Kofi could write a letter suggesting endearment to Adjoa, while Adjoa will understand and accurately interpret Kofi’s letter to imply his love for her, Esi could read the same letter and interpret it as an insult, because she is married and she is Kofi’s class teacher. This illustrates how individuals, experiences and contexts could influence reality and meaning.

How one defines him or herself in relation to others mostly influences how one feels, thinks and behaves and this is related to the construction of one’s identity. Hence, when constructing self-representation, the audience forms a significant index for consideration. Schlenker (1985) described self-representation as involving an attempt “to control images of self to others” (p. 34). In other words, one tries to portray the ideal self that contains the features and characteristics one desires and that would appeal to his or her audience.

However, linguists and researchers have differences of opinion in relation to the two expressions: “representation” and “presentation” when considered within the context of computer-mediated discourse. While some claim that they are different concepts (Fiske, 2010; Hall, 1997), others view them as meaning the same thing (Boyd, 2011; Rettberg, 2017), nonetheless a few prefer to use a neutral term (Warfield, 2015). However, for this study representation is used broadly to describe how people use words or tweets to self-represent themselves’, in other, words, they control their audience to appreciate and like their projected ideal self. Within the context of this study, self-representation is seen from the perspective of celebrities constructing an object or a symbol of self in a fashionable way that attracts their audience to their persona, by virtue of presenting their better or ideal self through language use.

Lowe-Calverley and Grieve (2018) corroborate the view held by this research that social media offers a veritable opportunity for self-representation because it is designed to immediately receive feedback on whether the constructed self meets the acceptance of the audience or their rejection; hence, effort at self-representation is heavily influenced and dictated by the audience and the use of novel discourse pattern. Illustrating the value of audience in self-representation, Barbovschi (2018) discovered that adolescents see the number of likes on their post as signifying acceptance of the constructed self by their audience. As explained at the outset, context, experiences, culture and most importantly the type of audience dictate what language should be used and how self-representation is to be constructed (Hollenbaugh, 2021; Rettberg, 2017).

Discourse

Language is performative and always being used to construct meanings and representations (Cook, 1990; Herring, 2001, 2004; Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2018). The manner by which language is used among people is referred to as ‘discourse’ because it underscores how each speaker or writer expresses self and construct meaning (Fairclough, 2001; Hollenbaugh, 2021). Hence, understanding the self-concept of an individual requires analysis of language use, by evaluating the individual’s discourse, ideological processes, linguistic styles, and patterns (Herring, 2004; Hollenbaugh, 2021).

At present, there is difference of opinion among linguists and researchers on the best approach to understanding discourse, the ideological process of representation and construction of meaning (Bolander & Locher, 2014; Herring, 2001). For example, while Cook (1990) understood discourse from the perspective of one or more well-formed grammatical sentences, Beetz (2012) indicated that it could go beyond well-formed grammatical sentences. On the other hand, Akmajian, Demers, Farmer & Harnish (2010) intimated that discourse should be understood from how language is used and the linguistic style adopted. Hence, Akmajian et al. (2010) provided a clue to how discourse should be viewed; that is, “the study of units of language and language use comprising more than a single sentence, linked by some systems of related topics” (p, 54).

However, Akmajian et al’s (2010) definition does not touch on speakers’ proficiency and the ability to combine several units of language for innovative word formation as well as constructing a persona online. Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams (2011), on their part, indicated that when a speaker or writer

is proficient in a language, he or she possesses requisite skills to use the language in expressing complex thoughts and ideas through effective selection and combination of phonemes into morphemes, morphemes to words, and words into phrases, clauses /sentences.

Evaluating Fromkin et al. (2011) within the perspective of this study, reveals that celebrities should be proficient enough to employ appropriate language units in the form of tweets, which should be loaded with linguistic styles and compelling discourse patterns that readily convey their thoughts and feelings to their audience as they construct self-representation. In other words, the inability of celebrities to prudently use language that will appeal to their audience and make them accept the constructed self, makes their effort at constructing self-representation become futile. This presupposes that since self is not static and changes, the use of relevant discourse patterns is continuous and ongoing; and celebrities must be abreast with their audience to know their likes and dislikes. Discourse analysis provides ample opportunities to understand the linguistic styles and discourse patterns of a celebrity and how it helps in self-representation.

Discourse as a Social Practice

Discourse analysis has been understood differently from various perspectives. Snape and Spencer (2003) define discourse analysis as a method of “examining the way knowledge is produced within different discourses and the performances, linguistic styles and rhetorical devices used in particular accounts” (p. 200). Snape and Spencer used expressions such as “the way knowledge is produced” (p. 10) (not fixed), “different discourses and the performances (ongoing and not immutable), and “particular accounts” (varied

contexts, shaped by social change) (p. 11). This means discourse analysis is very useful in the identification of power relations, social structure, and context (Fairclough, 2001), and the influence of religion and communism (Iarskala-Smirnova & Romanov, 2008). Discourse analysis underpins the focus of this study because it helps in understanding how celebrities use language to construct self-representation, within the context of social media (Twitter).

Literature reveals that most of the earlier works done in discourse analysis were basic in nature (local micro-level linguistic features) and ineffective in providing analysts with enough information on why certain discourses are structured to dominate others, how language can be structured to become a tool for self-representation, persuasion, propaganda, manipulation, marginalization, offence and defense (Jaworski & Coupland, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Since the ability to persuade and win public opinion is synonymous with impression management, it is appropriate to be concerned with discourse structures so as to isolate how reality is constructed via delicate and skillful use of language.

Celebrities often use language to create a persona online; therefore, by means of discourse analysis, this study critically examines the tweets of celebrities to understand the type of discourse patterns they employ in impression management as they construct self-representation. On certain occasions, celebrities use language to convey hidden or covert desires, of which, the distinctive discourse pattern (speech act or linguistic styles) may not be obvious (Goffman, 1959; Herring, 2001, 2018), at least, based on a

cursory examination of the text or tweet, which a discourse analyst readily isolates and underscores.

Computer - Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA)

Though developed by Herring (2001), several linguists have used CMDA to study linguistic phenomenon at micro level such as the process of word-formation online (Cherny, 1999), sentence structure (Herring, 1998) and lexical choice (Ko, 1996). On macro level, several researchers have conducted investigation into phenomenon such as language coherence (Panyametheekul, 2001), and language and identity (Burkhalter, 1999).

In recent times, the unprecedented changes occurring within the spectrum of computer-mediated communication (CMC) have increased the adoption of CMDA in gaining insight into how and what people are using language to do online, especially within social media interface. CMDA became popular among researchers and linguists in view of its incisive approach to analyzing electronic and online discourse and in understanding the revolutionary trend in language use among users of the burgeoning Internet in the mid-1990s. The coinage, “computer-mediated” highlights the technical and situational component of CMDA and also highlights its uniqueness to written and spoken discourses. For that matter, linguists are able to provide accurate and detailed description of different forms of computer-mediated discourse such as tweets.

In a study, Herring (2004) indicated that certain issues influence the orientation of CMDA. These include contextual issues such as the identity of participants, the time and location as well as the ethnography of communication. Herring further indicated that other inherent features CMDA

examines include topic, genre, tone and norms of the particular discourse community. In summarizing the focus of CMDA, both Georgakopoulou (2006) and Herring (2018) summarized that it is essentially a special form of discourse analysis associated with electronic and online discourse, primarily directed towards identification of obvious and most importantly, less obvious discourse pattern, and why users could have used it. Herring (2004) further asserted that scholars in linguistics are interested in understanding written language in relation to its structure, the meaning it conveys, how it is used, how context influences its meaning and how the meaning changes over time.

At present, CMDA focuses on four aspects of language use which are the structure, its meaning, the nature of interaction, and social behavior. Herring claims that the analysis of structural phenomena in discourse entails usage of special orthography, sentence structure and innovative word formations. In relation to meaning, Longacre (1992) stated that CMDA places emphasis on expressions, meaning of words, and larger functional units. Analysis at the interactional level involves topic development, turn-taking in varied settings, and how interactive exchanges are negotiated among users. At the social level, according to Herring (2004), it entails issues involving conflict and power and linguistic expressions.

It is this unique features and tools of CMDA that have become the focus of this study. For example, it assumes that “discourse exhibits recurrent patterns” (Herring, 2004, p. 4) implying that while discourse patterns could be consciously crafted by the speaker or user for impression management, there are several other cases where the user may be unaware that he or she is using a

distinctive discourse pattern which provides a basis for him/her to be noticed in the crowd and attract several followers.

Hence, Herring suggested that with CMDA, a researcher can painstakingly isolate both the obvious and less obvious discourse patterns through in-depth content analysis of the text or tweet of the user. This underpins the focus of the study because celebrities are often driven by the desire to manage the impression they give to their fans and, thereby, through carefully selected tweets, they construct self-representation that will promote their persona and image online. As a result, this study adopts CMDA to critically examine how celebrities succeed in self-representation as they strive to present a better version of self on Twitter.

Social Media

Initially referred to as “Matisse” in 1994 in Tokyo online media (Aichner, Grunfelder, Maurer, & Jegeni, 2021; Bercovici, 2010), social media platforms and active users have grown significantly and became so popular that over the years it encompasses several platforms such as blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks (SNs), video gaming, etc. Consequently, Aichner et al. (2021) observed that as of January 2020, though, 110,000 publications discussed social media, none could provide an exhaustive definition of the term. This agrees with Jacka and Scott’s (2011) argument that there is no single standardized definition for social media.

For instance, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 which allows the creation and exchange

of user-generated content. Defining social media from the perspective of communicative exchanges, Dearborn (2014) defined it as a communication channel which is very popular, extremely fast and broad, and has proven to be highly effective as well as trusted by billions of people, to share and discover content concerning individuals, self-representation, information, entertainment and knowhow.

One string that runs through all these definitions is that social media involves some forms of communication between individuals over the internet. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), the evolution of internet has resulted into its use as a means of communication and self-representation connecting people with their families, peers and colleagues. Thus, in line with Bano and Jha (2012), the working definition of social media for this study is that Social Media is a category of online discourse that provides an enabling environment for people to create contents, share them, bookmark them, network and virtually interact at a prodigious rate.

This study is also concerned with Fredman (2013) and Ersoy (2021) categorization of social media - interactive and non-interactive social media. The non-interactive social media, such as television programs, recorded programs on Pen Drive, Compact Discs or DVDs, does not underpin this study because its platform is void of interactive features that allow two-way or dialogic communication. On the other hand, interactive social media strengthens the focus of this study because it is designed to fast track real time two-way or dialogic communication between users. Interactive social media includes but not limited to video games, game play sites, all interactive screen-based media such as Whatsapp, MySpace, Twitter and Facebook.

Examining the use of social media within the context of Ghanaian celebrities, Brown (2010) and Schroeder et al. (2010) discovered that the popular forms of social media platforms used by Ghanaian celebrities are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Whatsapp. The driving factors for the adoption of social media are the progressively ubiquitous access, convenience, functionality, and flexibility of social technologies. These factors have made the adoption of social media very easy and have tremendously improved mankind's life by exposing him to different ways of creating and sharing information. An additional benefit of social technologies provided on the internet is that they are frequently free or require marginal investment, thereby eliminating a potential barrier to adoption (Brown, 2010).

According to Hu (2013), Social media has become an essential part of life of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. In a study, Hu (2013) identified the following four features of social media which were derived from the social media technology: 1) integration, 2) time 3) effectiveness, 4) least effort and orderliness. This broad categorization offers a veritable platform for social discourse and self-representation.

Twitter

Twitter was launched in July 2006 by the podcasting company Odeo, and was initially described as a “sort of ‘group send’ SMS application” (Arrington, 2006). Arrington (2006) initially framed the public page – the timeline of tweets that forms the centerpiece of a registered user's public presence on Twitter – as a side note and a “privacy issue” with the service. However, the public (or semi-public) nature of Twitter discourse quickly

became one of its defining features, together with features such as the 140-character message length constraint and hashtags (Murthy,2013).

As noted, the name of the platform – originally “Twtr,” subsequently expanded to “Twitter” – is evocative of the chirping of birds. One of the service creators and the company’s CEO, Jack Dorsey, has said that the design of the platform was inspired by the “squawking” of vehicle dispatchers and delivery drivers, constantly sending out small status updates within their networks about where they are and what is going on (Sarno, 2009b).

Crawford (2009) described Twitter as an online listening tool and crowd sourcing interface and concluded that word-of-mouth communication is the central idea of Twitter messages. Twitter can be used to maintain connections with friends and family, obtaining vital individual and professional data, seeking assistance and as a means of killing boredom (Lariscy et al., 2009). Twitter has therefore emerged as a type of online discourse which paves the way for its users to create themes, share them, bookmark them and network at amazing rate.

Twitter has also gained a stronghold in popular culture. Social uprisings show that news items or contents shared on Twitter spread faster than news items from media houses in recent days. In some cases Twitter as a social media tool has replaced conventional media if publication is expanded to such a way that the mainstream media channels prefer not to reflect the actual volume of the protests. Just like most celebrities all over the world, by quite a large number of male and female celebrities in Ghana utilise twitter.

Researchers in psychology has mentioned that in addition to a growth in entertainment media content that focuses on personal achievement and

competition (e.g., reality TV shows), there is more to social media and the entertainment industry. According to researchers, the pervasive offer to post, tweet, and broadcast oneself in mass via tailored new technologies may both reflect and feed a cultural movement toward individualistic ideals and a desire for fame (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012).

Twitter provides a compelling case when it comes to attempting to assess the meanings of the speech–writing interface in the era of online, socially mediated communication. The very name of the platform is an aural metaphor, likening the linguistic production and interaction of its users to the chirping of birds. If the medium, in the spirit of McLuhan (e.g., 1964/2003), is taken to be the message, this aural metaphor is a declaration of the sender’s intent. Beyond a transfer from the domain of animal noises to the domain of human language, the name also suggests a move from sound to vision. Twitter is fundamentally a text-based platform.

Over the years since the launch of the service under the name “Twtrr” in 2006 (Arrington, 2006), Twitter has gradually expanded its affordances for integrating multimodal content, from a minimalist restriction to typography and hypertext to native support for emoji and the embedding of images, audio, and video in tweets. Nevertheless, the Twitter user experience remains visual: What meets the typical user scrolling along a Twitter feed is a wall of pictures and text – an ambient soundscape of bird song, transposed into the visual field.

Review of Selected Previous Studies

This section reviews studies related to the present study on celebrities on Twitter across various cultures. The thematic approach to review of previous studies was adopted with a view to providing a credible basis for

resolution of identified research questions. The review revolves around how Twitter influences linguistic pattern of users, how users are construct self-presentation, and the extent to which gender influences linguistic choices in the course of negotiating self-presentation on Twitter.

Influence of Twitter platform on linguistic choices of users

Saha and Menezes (2016) conducted an in-depth investigation into Twitter usage in four major languages of the world: German, Russian, Spanish and English. This was done with the objective of understanding which language is very influential in message diffusion, whether the structure of a languages constrain exposure to vital information and whether Twitter has highly – connected language framework with the capability for enabling a mix of languages from different sociocultural settings. Their findings reveal that Twitter is powerfully structured as an enabler of information diffusion and accommodates users’ preferences. Twitter language network also allows for innovative word formation, which are understood by the group or discourse community within which it is created. Saha and Menezes’ (2016) findings clearly underscore the focus of this study, because, though English is used as an official language, a closer study of online users reveals that users have developed several language forms to communicate within formal and informal settings (Borau et al, 2009; Nemer, 2015).

The dynamics of English used on social media such as Twitter may differ between traditional L1 English societies and societies in which English is not an official language (Kachru, 1985; Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006; Nordquist, 2020). For example, in Kachru’s co-concentric circle of the spread of English language, he indicated that the sociocultural settings of every

country influence English usage. I argue that this is also applicable in the tweets of users on Twitters. People texts and pictures are symbol of their sociocultural and linguistic settings. For example, while a graduate of University of Cape Coast in America could quickly understand when his friend writes to him in the US or the UK, that effort at accomplishing a task was 'cos 90' (wasted effort because $\cos 90$ means 0), his friend in the UK will be looking for a calculator to understand the meaning of 'cos 90'. In a similar vein, from country to country and culture to culture, users on Twitter have developed innovative word formation that makes diffusion of information spread at a faster rate alongside the thought being conveyed.

The subject of Twitter's language, therefore, has received a lot of attention in the popular press; a continuing debate is on its position in the spectrum of well established "casual communication mediums" like SMS and chat on the one hand, and more formal mediums like emails, blogs, magazines and newspapers on the other. One argument, according to Borau et al. (2009) and Nemer (2015), is that the severe length restrictions on tweets induce a grammatically incorrect and aberrant language riddled with acronyms, hashtags etc. that have similarities to the language used in SMS and chat. An alternate view is that Twitter is really a length-restricted version of the language of more formal media.

Zappavigna (2011, 2012) researched the hashtag (#>), and proposes that hashtags, which were originally used on the Twitter platform as explicit subject or content markers, have taken on pragmatic purposes. Because of the ways in which the Twitter interface allows users to search for character strings preceded by the hashtag and engage with people who use specific hashtags,

the symbol is now often employed to express evaluative emotion or advertise subjective affiliation.

Wikström (2014) examines different communication tasks linked with the hashtag on Twitter, noting that the symbol is used to participate in online communal activities, designate meta-commentary, or negotiate pragmatic categories such as self-presentation and face maintenance. In that sense, hashtag use exemplifies how user interaction with communication technology interfaces can lead to the creation of unexpected communicative behaviors (Wikström 2014: 148–150).

Emoticons are “visual cues formed from ordinary typographical symbols that ... represent feeling or emotions” (Walther & D’Addario, 2001, cited in Rezabek and Cochenour 1998, p. 207; Dresner & Herring 2010 & Vandergriff, 2014). Emoticons, for example, have not featured as frequently in corpus-based studies of language as other components such as dictionary terms or grammatical kinds. The relative lack of attention paid to the prevalence and communicative function of emoticons may reflect their somewhat limited domains of use, which are more commonly encountered in CMC text types such as chat, instant messaging, online message boards, or the anonymous imageboards known as “chans,” but less frequently in blogs and the online equivalents of print media such as news reports or academic writing (Ptaszynski et al., 2011).

Schnoebelen (2012) investigates the expression of the affective content on Twitter, particularly through the use of emoticons and their co-occurrence with lexical items. He suggests that emoticons have broader discourse functionality than simply the representation of emotional states, and finds that

on Twitter use of particular emoticon types correlates with word choice. Non-standard orthography, whether the result of error or used as an expressive resource, is another feature prevalent in CMC genres such as chat or Instant Messenger communication (Herring 2001; Paolillo 2001; Tagliamonte and Denis2008) as well as on Twitter.

Finally, a study conducted by Yuheng, Kartit&Subbarao (2011) present these key insights on the linguistic features of twitter: (1) the language that Twitter uses is interestingly more conservative and less informal than SMS and online chat; (2) Twitter users appear to be developing linguistically distinct styles; (3) Twitter's use of temporal references is similar to SMS and chat; and (4) Twitter has less variation in effect than other more formal mediums. Thus, Twitter's language can be viewed as a projection of a more formal register into a size-restricted area.

Suitability of Twitter for the Discursive Practices of Celebrities

Celebrities all over the world have taken up the use of social media platforms to enhance their interaction with fans. Twitter, one of the most widely used social media platforms by celebrities in Ghana, has become an interesting digital communication platform which allows an active community of involved communicators to send, receive and react to messages posted on the social app.

According to Mathews (2006), much of the success of the media and entertainment industry is dependent on the successful positioning of its major assets: megastars. The new emerging stars in Ghana's entertainment industry appear to concur with this line of thought, as new strategies are designed to regulate people's perceptions of celebrities and their reputations. Some

Ghanaian megastars hire management teams, consultants, and image architects to help them position themselves and their art through traditional media features and social media marketing (Junia, 2018).

According to Marshall (2014), social media has transformed the celebrity model from the “representative system” to “presentation system”. That is, social media is presentation media employed by individuals to make and publish contents that supports their presentation of the self to others (Tanupabrungsun & Hemsley, 2010). Although celebrities still benefit from the mainstream media attention, they are increasingly using social media platforms for promotional discourses, to bypass the mainstream media, and to interact and communicate with the public directly (Marwick, 2013 & Ward, 2016). The use of Twitter, therefore, enables fans to have direct access to the personal lifestyle of celebrities and interact with them on a daily basis by creating the sense of “being there” with the celebrities (Stever & Lawson, 2013).

Marwick and Boyd (2011) undertook a lengthy longitudinal study on Twitter to better comprehend how celebrities communicate with fans, friends, and other practitioners. They gathered information from the top 270 celebrity Twitter accounts (as measured by Twitterholic.com during May and June 2009). They collected these celebrities' tweets and tracked the overall number of tweets, average tweets, and frequency of prominent Twitter behaviors in order to better understand how the most-followed people used the site.

They linked up with certain celebrities by sending "at-replies," observed over a hundred accounts of famous persons and their supporters, and conducted a thorough qualitative investigation of 20 verified celebrity Twitter

accounts. Their key conclusion was that, while celebrity practice is theoretically open to everybody, it is neither an equalizer nor a democratizing discourse. Indeed, in order to exercise celebrity successfully, fans must comprehend the power dynamics inherent in the relationship.

Finally, Twitter has been characterised as encouraging non-celebrity users to engage in "microcelebrity" (Marwick & Boyd, 2011a). Microcelebrity is a set of self-presentation tactics in which people create and sustain a carefully designed identity by publishing content with purposeful intimacy and viewing their viewers as fans (Abidin, 2014; Hearn, 2008 & Senft, 2008). According to Marwick and Boyd (2011), Twitter users achieve status and followers by marketing themselves/their ideas as a form of pleasant persona tailored to appeal to varied and loyal audiences (p. 127). For celebrities', social media presence may contribute to these habits. Indeed, Twitter promotes itself as a platform for "following your friends, experts, favorite celebrities, and breaking news." Not unexpectedly, a study found that celebrity curiosity and perceived access to celebrities is a big motivator for Twitter adoption (Hargittai & Litt, 2011).

Celebrities' Mode of Constructing Self-presentation on Twitter

As new media technologies have become part of us, the theory of identity construction too has consequently moved beyond what it used to be to the virtual world where internet users construct, modify and alter their preferred identities online. The above assertion is affirmed by Walton and Rice (2013), who posit that the internet age offers varying forms of presenting multiple selves. Orsatti and Reimer (2012, p. 14) explain a 'performative lens' of identity in social media terms as how one's identity is perpetually

articulated, co- constructed and ‘lived’ through participation in social media-enabled work practices, where one’s identity is not something given to be (re)presented but arises holistically and is shaped and changed through everyday participation in social media.

Social media is driven by a specific kind of identity construction – self-mediation – and what users post, share, and like effectively creates a highly curated and often abridged snapshot of how they want to be seen (Hou, 2019; Khamis et al., 2016). Since it is designed for public consumption rather than personal reflection, it enables celebrities to assert strong identities that can underpin and animate high public profiles for maximizing prominence, recognition and loyalty (Khamis et al., 2019; Stewart & Giles, 2020). Social media technologies have made the concept of self-presentation easy and affordable since self- promotion on a wide scale is impossible without the affordable services that the internet provides (Marwick, 2010). Furthermore, Marwick likened self-representation to the strategic creation of identity to be promoted and sold to others. This brings to the fore, the intersection of self-representation, impression management and identity construction.

According to Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh and Greenwell (2010), celebrities can perform activities, mediated by the affordance of social media platforms that allow them to construct identity and build and maintain audiences at scales that satisfy niches of interest. Likewise, Tanupabrungsun and Hemsley (2018) posit that the use of Twitter by celebrities enables them to mediate identity construction and interaction with fans while enabling environment that are co-constructed by celebrities, fans and the platform itself. In the study, a theoretical lens of media richness was used to study the ways

that different groups of celebrities enact “micro – celebrity” by mapping three richness and dimensions (contextual, interactional and informational) into groupings of Twitters affordance. Using the Media Richness Theory, Tanupabrungsun and Hamsley (2010) found out that there are variations on how different groups of celebrities emphasize different dimensions of richness. For example, their findings suggest that pop stars have a broader range of tweet behaviour than athletes and scientists mainly because some pop stars see Twitter as an opportunity to bypass not only mainstream media but also their own image- management (as cited by Turner, 2013).

Previous studies have applied Goffman’s framework; such studies include, but not limited to, the study by Papacharissi (2002). She applied Goffman’s framework to her study to determine how social media activists present themselves through their personal home pages. The findings from the researchers study show that self-presentation comes about through design elements in the likes of font types and the hyperlinks as well as banners adopted; thereby enhancing the perception of audience to acquaint themselves with their personal preferences. To determine whether the self-portrayed on this social media platform is accepted, some tweeter users adopted a tool called “guestbook”.

In a similar study by Papacharissi (2012) to determine the self-performance of social media activists on Twitter via trending hashtags, the researcher concluded from the study that social media activists’ self-performance is assumed via re-organizing grammar and language conventions to conform to the messages in the range of characters. To buttress this point,

some researchers (Marwick & Boyd, 2014) mentioned that self-presentation on social media, in the likes of Twitter is a matter of going concern; it is word oriented than picture oriented.

In essence, the only static thing on a Twitter platform are the chances offered to choose a profile picture, a header picture and a description of one's self in the bio section. On a Twitter platform, Self-presentation is usually considered as an ongoing, fast and intensive task, usually with a very constricted number of add-ons to portray one's identity. In as much as Twitter is basically a public platform for millions of users, we can expect celebrities will construct several versions of themselves that are thoughtfully organized. Additionally, by virtue of its unique settings and features, on Twitter, "users maintain impressions by balancing personal/public information, avoiding certain topics and maintaining authenticity" (Marwick & Boyd 2014, p. 15).

Another study conducted by Stever and Lawson (2013) used a grounded theory approach to analyse a sample of the Twitter accounts of 12 entertainment media celebrities. According to the two researchers, Twitter can be used to learn about para-social interaction, the unreciprocated interaction between individuals of differing status and knowledge of one another. The results showed that there was a great deal of variety from celebrity to celebrity in the ways Twitter was being used. They revealed that many celebrities used Twitter to communicate both with other celebrities and with members of the public or fans about their work as well as personal likes and dislikes, conveying information that revealed personal activities that are not typically shared in other forums.

Stever and Lawson (2013) indicate that, although fans connecting with celebrities via Twitter have some limited access to communicate with the celebrity, it can be concluded that the relationship is still para-social in spite of the occasional reply a fan may receive. Their analysis, therefore, showed that for celebrities who were using Twitter, the dialogue is serious, meaningful, and appears to have impact for those participating

Marshall (2010) determined how the megastars of the self both presage and work as a tutelage tool for developing and expanding the world of presentational media. Marshall (2010) explains that what is often understood as social media via social network sites is also a form of presentation of the self and produces this new hybrid among the personal, interpersonal, and the mediated individuals engage in an expression of the self that, like the matters of self with megastars, is not entirely interpersonal in nature nor is it holistically intermediated or representational. Inferring from previous studies on self-representation, Marshall (2010) investigates this convergence of presentation of the self through a study of social network patterns of presentation of celebrities and the very over coded similarity in the patterns of self-presentation of millions of users. Marshall relates these forms of presentation to the longer discourse of the self that informed the production of celebrity for most of the last century.

Marshall further elaborated in his article that "...celebrity culture has been a very elaborate discourse on the individual and throughout the twentieth century it has served a certain pedagogical function. Its capacity to train populations to consumer culture only partially captures the educative power of celebrity culture". This underscores the important role of celebrities in view of

their capacity to influence the populace through linguistic choices. Marshall continues: “more profoundly, celebrity culture articulates a way of thinking about individuality and producing the individual self through the public world. The longer historical trajectory of celebrity discourse maps this increasing focus on the production of the self that has been partially designed to identify the power of individuals in the process of cultural production, as well as the ideological importance to identify individual power in an era of democratic capitalism”. Marshall (2010), thus, links cultural production and democratic capitalism with celebrity discourse, thereby highlighting how celebrities influence cultural orientation and governance in a country.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), like other online contexts in which individuals are consciously able to construct an online representation of self—such as online dating profiles and MUDS Twitter constitute an important research context for scholars investigating processes of impression management and self-presentation. In one of the earliest academic articles on SNSs, Boyd (2004) examined Friendster as a locus of publicly articulated social networks that allowed users to negotiate presentations of self and connect with others. Donath and Boyd (2004) extended this to suggest that “public displays of connection” serve as important identity signals that help people navigate the networked social world, in that an extended network may serve to validate identity information presented in profiles.

Consistent with the practices of everyday expression and conversion, the form of connectivity on Twitter varies, depending on conversation participants and topics covered. Exogenous or organically formed conversations tend to generate more independent contributions and are more likely to sustain

stronger ties (Naaman *et al.*, 2011). The majority of Twitter posts either are “me-now” status messages or contain information shared and reproduced across networks, thus distinguishing between “informers” and “me-formers” (Naaman *et al.*, 2010).

Informers tend to have more followers and refer to others via @replies in their posts more often (Hou, 2019). Research results confirm that expression and connection via Twitter reproduce existing ties and patterns in sociality but also vary in conversationality, depending on both actual and imagined audiences (Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011; Yardi & Boyd, 2010). Embedded in everyday interpersonal communication rituals, Twitter can be understood as one of the many tools of mobility that enable a recalibration of social cohesion (Ling, 2008).

As exercises in sociality, performances of the self on Twitter generate a level of intimacy that may sustain and further cultivate social ties. When communicating with networked audiences, Twitter users frequently craft polysemic messages, encoded with meanings that are decoded differently by each potential audience member (Hou, 2012; Papacharissi, 2012; Stewart & Giles, 2020). One such strategy for polysemy is social steganography or the practice of hiding in plain sight (Giles, 2020; Boyd, 2010).

Through the practice of steganography, individuals may create messages that are reassuring to some audiences but convey vastly different meanings to those in the know. This strategy can help individuals balance expectations for authenticity with conflicting needs for privacy, publicity, and sociality. It thus facilitates the heightened self-monitoring and self-awareness technologies that social saturation invites. Steganography (2018) lends credence to the assertion

of Khamis et al. (2016) that sustaining consistency during presentation of self is notoriously difficult to accomplish. Hence, it is pertinent to conduct in-depth investigation on the strategies, in terms of language use as well as implicit and explicit meanings, Ghanaian celebrities employed to retain the loyalty, interest and admiration of their followers and newcomers.

The nature of gendered discourses on Twitter

Social media sites like Twitter enable consumers to share more personal and private information with others than ever before. Due to gender norms, Derlega et al. (1981) argued that one's gender plays a role in the information one uploads or exposes about himself or herself. They contended that women prefer backstage posts and personal information disclosures as well as the sharing of personal evaluative information about themselves, whereas men prefer frontstage post disclosures, which assist positive impression management. To put it another way, men and women appear to have different standards for deciding how much information they can expose about themselves to others on social media. These distinct set of rules as indicated by Patronio (2002) can be extended to the difference in the way both genders tweet about issues on Twitter in relation to how they project their identities and self-representation.

Walton and Rice (2013) conducted a study in which they used the Theory of Self-disclosure to analyse over three thousand tweets in order to provide good support for hypotheses about relationships between gender and Twitter feed identity on some mediated disclosure and boundary management issues derived from interpersonal disclosure theory and microblog research. They discovered that disparities in mediated disclosure are driven by how

gender and online identity are socially constructed as well as a balance of individual qualities and communicative situations.

Even the most restricted and regulated communication via Twitter, however, reflects interpersonal notions about disclosure and communication privacy management. In their literature review, Rossenfeld, Civikly, and Herron (1979) discovered contradictory results, with some authors indicating that men disclosed more information than women, yet several others claimed that women disclosed more than men. However, Rossenfeld et al. (1979) further discovered that there is group of authors concluding that men and women disclosed information equally. In line with Dindia and Allen (1992), there are minimal gender disparities in the amount of self-disclosure, which are mostly mediated by the target's gender and the type of the connection or contact. For example, whether women had a sexual or platonic relationship with the target, they revealed more than men.

A number of studies on women's representation in the media have revealed that, as compared to men, women have been trivialized, stereotyped, and under-represented in media coverage (Armstrong, 2004; Tuchman et al., 1978; Zoch & Turk, 1998). According to MediaWatch (1995), women were less likely to be news subjects across various media platforms such as newspapers, television, and radio; women were especially less likely to be news subjects for topics such as politics, government, and economy, but most likely to be news subjects for health, social issues, arts, and entertainment; women were comparatively, less likely to be interviewed on television programs or cited as sources (Yun et al., 2007; Freidan, 1963; Nelson & Bridges, 1999), it is not surprising that such gender disparities are reproduced

and sustained within the social media practice of male and female Ghanaian users.

Many studies in media portrayals have focused on a particular medium or a specific niche of coverage (magazines, newspapers, regional news) to ascertain the findings on the different ways of gender portrayal. One of such studies was conducted by Armstrong and Gao (2010) on gender portrayal across two media platforms 'television and online news'. Based on the continuing disparity between male and female representations on the social media platforms, this study seeks to compare how the tweets of male and female celebrities in Ghana differ in the way they create or project their identities and self – representation

A study by researchers (Armstrong & Gao, 2010) discovered a favorable association between male and female depictions in tweets and portrayals in news material by conducting a content study of national, regional, and local newspaper and television tweets. Furthermore, male mentions were found to be more likely to appear in national news stories than in regional or local news stories, and in print media more frequently than female mentions. As a result, it appears that news organizations have not established new dissemination techniques for using Twitter.

Some renowned researchers have followed this line of research, discovering that these discrepancies, which favour male sources uniformly, extend across media platforms. An exploratory research by Zoch and Turk (1998) examined foreign articles in three southern US daily newspapers from 1986 to 1996 and discovered that males were employed as sources nearly four times as often as females. According to a 2002 survey of governor's races in

nine states, female political experts made up 10 percent of all experts used (Freedman & Fico, 2005). While Tuchman and colleagues concentrated on television, some news historians have discovered that female sources have made headway in the visual medium. In a survey of television news sources, for example, it was discovered that approximately 20 per cent of women appeared as sources on '60 Minutes', but women were employed as sources in approximately 40 per cent of parts on the less-mainstream news program, 'Hard Copy' (Grabe et al., 1999).

Rao et al. (2010) constructed a dataset of microblog posts by 1,000 persons on the Twitter social media platform to investigate gender disparities. They then created a predictive model by combining millions of n-gram data with more standard word and phrase classes. Their best model has an accuracy of 72.3 percent, significantly beating a model that just used word class features. Female authors were more prone to employ emoticons, ellipses (...), emotive lengthening (*nooo way*), repeated exclamation marks, perplexed punctuation (combinations of? and!), the abbreviation omg, and transcriptions of backchannels such ah, hmm, ugh, and grr, according to post hoc analysis. The only phrases they strongly associated with males were affirmations like "yeah" and "yea".

However, an important side note to these findings is that the author pool was constructed by locating people who had social network links to plainly gendered entities such as sororities, fraternities, and hygiene items. Gender assumptions were thus integrated directly into the data collection approach, which is intended to focus on individuals with very specific forms of gendered identities. Burger, Henderson, Kim, and Zarrella (2011) adopted a

different strategy to creating a corpus containing gender metadata, following links to Twitter from blogs where gender was explicitly stated in the profile (they also performed some manual quality assurance by reading the associated Twitter profiles). They reached a prediction accuracy of 75.5 percent when utilizing numerous tweets from each author, and 67.8 percent when using a single message per author, after analyzing more than 4 million tweets from 184,000 authors in many different languages (66.7 percent English). Surprisingly, both of these were greater than the accuracy of human raters, who guessed gender from individual texts with an accuracy of 65.7 percent. The post hoc analysis produced results that were largely comparable to those of Rao et al. (2012): emoticons and expressive words such as "aha, ooo, haha, ay!" were connected with female authors, with only a few terms correlated with male authors. The character sequences *ht*, *http*, *htt*, *Googl*, and *Goog* were among the most prominent male-associated features.

Chapter Summary

The main objective of conducting a critical examination and evaluation of related extant literature in view of the aims of the study has been comprehensively achieved in this chapter. The study discovered that, by and large, not much study had been conducted in the area of computer-mediated discourse relating to celebrities self-presentation on twitter particularly among Ghanaian celebrities. Hence, the study adopts CMDA which allows for qualitative content analysis to critically examine and evaluate retrieved data.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter covers the methodological procedures employed in the present study. These entail the description of research design and the precise domain of the study. The chapter provided relevant information on the procedures employed for data collection as well as sampling method and tools adopted for analysing data. The limitations encountered during the course of the study and the attempts made to resolve them were highlighted at the concluding part of the chapter.

Research Design

The study adopted the qualitative research paradigm. According to Erickson (2018), qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. This shows clearly that qualitative research revolves around meaning; hence, its adoption to conduct an in-depth inquiry into how celebrities in Ghana make sense of their lives by using language to craftily construct self-representation that in some cases they, themselves, are unaware of or may be unconscious of the discourse pattern they adopt for impression management.

The qualitative inquiry focus of the study is also in line with Altheide's (1996) expression "...is to understand process and character of social products in their own right, as well as what they claim to represent" (p. 42). By his statement, Altheide affirms that the adoption of qualitative research design facilitates the preservation of the complex processes of the social world. This confirms the orientation of the present study because the researcher is

interested in describing, and critically evaluating the linguistic patterns of Ghanaian celebrities' tweets through CMDA with the view of understanding how they consciously and unconsciously construct self-representation. The application of qualitative research design enabled the analysis and description of how gender variations influence the tweets of celebrities in Ghana.

Data Site and Justification

The study is directed towards collecting data on social media platform with specific reference to Twitter. Twitter has been described as encouraging the enactment of “micro - celebrity” (Marwick & Boyd, 2011a) among non-celebrity users. Marwick and Boyd (2011) indicated that Twitter offers a platform for celebrities and non-celebrities to interact and conduct impression management through self-representation with the objective of stage managing self and presenting the likable and adorable self to diverse and loyal audiences (p. 127). Hargittai and Litt (2011) indicated that these have attracted several celebrities, including Ghanaian celebrities.

Unlike several other social media, Twitter imposed 140-character limit for all users, which Borau et al. (2009) and Nemer (2015) asserted that it restricts expressivity, yet Twitter users are increasing in leaps and bounds, and at present, very popular among celebrities. It is pertinent therefore to use it as the data site because, given the seeming limitation on expressivity, constructing self-representation would require the creation of unique discourse patterns to help Ghanaian celebrities stand out amidst millions of users in Ghana. Another germane reason for using Twitter as a social media platform is that it fosters self-mediation – and what users post, share, and like effectively creates a highly crafted and often abridged snapshot of how they

want to be seen (Hou, 2019; Khamis *et al.*, 2016). It enables celebrities to assert strong identities that can underpin and animate high public profiles for maximizing prominence, recognition and loyalty (Khamis *et al.*, 2019; Stewart & Giles, 2020).

Dataset and Data Collection Procedure

The data sets that were needed for the study comprised tweets and retweets posted by top Ghanaian celebrities (specifically: actors/actresses, religious leaders, sports personalities, TV/radio personalities, politicians and musicians) who have achieved offline status and successfully made adequate use of Twitter. For the purpose of data collection, a Twitter account was created with the aim of observing over a hundred celebrities in relation to their tweets and retweets. After verifying a number of 120 Twitter accounts with celebrity status in Ghana over a period of one month (March, 2021), a careful data collection was done with a view to carrying out quantitative analysis of usage (frequency of usage). This analysis provided some basic insights into the number of times some celebrities tweet in a day and the language that is used in the tweets. Fifty (50) top Ghanaian (25 males and 25 females to ensure gender equality) celebrities who mostly tweet in English language and have often posted, at least, 10 tweets daily were selected to provide data for the study.

As the owner of a Twitter account, I had the opportunity to request the download of the tweet history of the targeted Ghanaian celebrities within the preference section of their account, so I manually collected the tweets of the 50 selected celebrities, using the mobile phone camera and scanner within a period of three months (June – August, 2021).

Collecting a corpus of tweets and retweets of celebrities is agreeable to Herring's (2004) assertion that there is the need for close observation of what people do on the social media over an extended period of time before an accurate evaluation and identification of their discourse pattern, especially the less obvious discourse pattern, can be understood. The images of individual tweets made by the selected celebrities were captured and later a scanner was used to convert those captured images into texts and consequently used for the analysis.

A total number of 5000 tweets were collected, using this approach within the period of three month. However, analyzing these tweets is cumbersome so, I adopted the first stage of the sampling technique. I created a 10 percent proportionate stratified random sampling technique to sample tweets from each selected celebrity in order to provide a number of 500 tweets for the analysis. This is in line with Neuman's (2006) recommended criteria for determining the sample size for a given population or corpus of elicited data. He indicated that for a population of 1000 or more, 10 percent of the total corpus is used. The 500 tweets, therefore, represent the textual content posts written by 50 male and female Ghanaian celebrities on their commercial and personal lifestyle. Videos and photos were not included in the data although they often are a part of the story being told. This is because the research did not want to move away from the focus of the study and in order to remain consistent with the underlying principle of Herring's (2004) CMDA upon which the analysis of data is based.

In other studies on Twitter, researchers (Lasorsa *et al.*, 2012; Papacharisi, 2012) used trending hash tags or online “twitter ranking lists” to select from a plethora of research subjects — often based on the number of followers they have. This study, however, employed a different method in selecting its subjects with regard to the number of tweets and retweets posted by individual celebrities within 24 hours and those who tweet in the English language. This is in following the lead of previous studies (Papacharissi, 2012; Hou, 2019; Stewart & Giles, 2020) that adopted similar approach with reliable and well-validated result and outcome.

Sampling Size and Sampling Method

After the comprehensive analysis of the collected data multi-stage sampling technique was employed. The first stage entailed the use of purposive sampling method to select Ghanaian celebrities (participants) that was followed on Twitter to provide the corpus for the study. Purposive sampling technique is defined as “the process of selecting sample by taking subject that is not based on the level or area, but it is taken based on the specific purpose” (Arikunto, 2010, p. 183). In effect, participants are selected based on the needs or lacunae the study is to fill. Nikolopoulou (2022) put it simply as a sampling technique where participants are selected on purpose because they possess certain characteristics or attributes that would enrich the focus of the study. Sarantakos (2005), Creswell and Poth (2018) and Mohajan (2018) claimed that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method, often dictated by the rational judgment of the researcher on those individual or groups of people that can provide the best information so that the overarching objective of the study can be attained.

In spite of its several benefits, Poth (2018) and Nikolopoulou (2022) indicated that purposive sampling technique is prone to high level research biases, especially observer or detection bias, wherein researcher's report is influenced by his or her opinion, prejudice or expectations. I have made a concerted effort at forestalling such occurrence by adhering closely to ethical considerations which emphasize neutrality. In situations where a participant's tweet is not ambiguous or unrelated I refrain from using it. Moreover, when participants tweet something contrary to my expectation or opinion, it is reported as such without tampering.

Based on its several benefits, I adopted purposive sampling method since it is very suitable for this study. It facilitated the selection of the best suited participants for the study and more importantly, it reduced the time and unnecessary burden of randomly selecting those not meeting the criteria for the study.

Using purposive sampling, I selected fifty (50) Ghanaian celebrities (N = 50) who actively use the micro-blog Twitter to serve as participants for the study. The 50 celebrities – 25 males and 25 females – were representative of the entire population of Ghanaian celebrities who have accounts with Twitter. The rationale for selecting the 50 participants was in line with the studies of Punch (2013) and Latham (2013) that posited that since it is not possible to study every celebrity in Ghana as they interact on Twitter with other users, it is paramount that a sample must be selected.

Sarantakos (2005) also posited that participants selected should be representative of the entire population related to the study. Providing a clue to the selection, Latham (2013) indicated that in qualitative study, once the

saturation point (usually 12 participants) is reached, it is assumed that the sample is enough. However, for the usefulness and reliability of research, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) and Sauro (2015) recommended that fewer participants (5 to 25) are appropriate for qualitative study. This informed the decision to select 25 male and 25 female participants to provide data for the study.

Method of Analysis

The primary method of analysing data for the study is content analysis in accordance with Herring (2004) who indicated that content analysis is the primary approach to CMDA. Highlighting the relevance of content analysis, Herring (2004) stated that it can facilitate the capability of understanding the character, the process of social life, and arrive at a meaning of a celebrity's posts on Twitter. By means of content analysis, adequate analysis and deciphering of the characteristics, patterns, forms and organizational aspects of celebrities' tweets as social product and as an important element of self-representation could be achieved. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) posited that people, whether as individual or as a group, often reflect their conscious and unconscious attitudes, beliefs, ideas and values in their communication when critically examined and observed through content analysis.

Fraenkel and Wallen further indicated that content analysis is unique in its approach because it is un-obstructive because the researcher can surreptitiously examine and observe a social phenomenon. However, Krippendorff (2004) declared that the major weakness of content analysis is that it is sometimes difficult to ensure validity of research findings. Notwithstanding the declaration of Krippendorff (2004), several other studies,

including Herring's (2018), through incontrovertible arguments, have supported the findings and justification based on the ability of the researcher to replicate the study. Hence, the adoption of content analysis by the use of effective open and axial coding is used to identify emergent discourse patterns through the use of unique and innovative linguistic styles of celebrities as they conduct impression management through self-representation on Twitter.

Coding Procedure

The coding processes adopted were consistent with Saldana's (2009) coding manual which is suitable for grounded theory research. The processes are encapsulated in Figure 1.

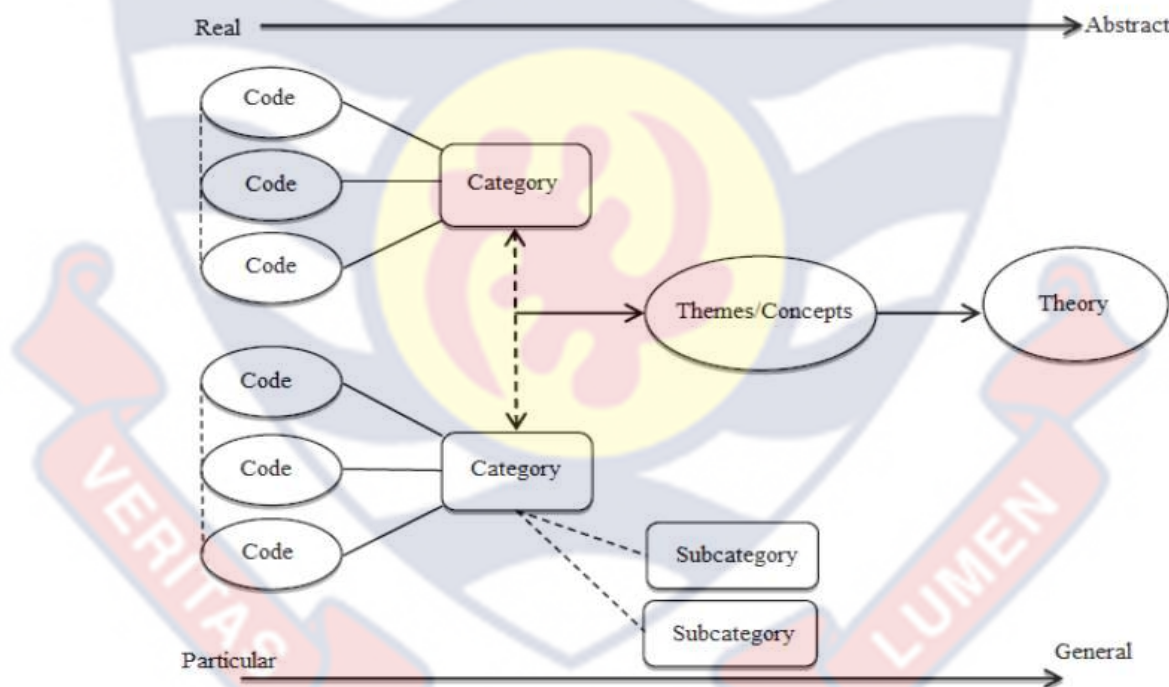


Figure 2: The Coding Process

Source: Saldana (2009)

A careful study of the diagram revealed that the process accentuates from real to abstract and also the particular to the general. This means codes emerging from the tweets of celebrities reflect their ideas, opinion and

experiences. In this senses, each of the tweets is particular to individuals and representative of a reality. Therefore, if other participants exhibited similar codes, they were grouped under the same title. By adopting this process, individual and shared concept emerges.

In line with Punch (1998), open coding process was initially carried out. This was done by scanning the data line by line thoroughly. Emergent linguistic styles and features of individual celebrities were identified and underscored. Axial coding, as recommended by Punch (1998) and Saldana (2009), as shown in Figure 1, was also done so as to relate and compare emergent themes of celebrities to identify categories and subcategories within participants' tweets. By employing both open and axial coding, relationships, distinctiveness and less obvious discourse pattern of participants can be identified. Consistent with the findings of Maxwell (2005) and Herdlung (2013), regarding the critical appraisal of qualitative data and in this case, the downloaded tweets of Ghanaian celebrities, the data was note – coded with a view to highlighting emerging themes, categories and patterns useful in the resolution of the research problem. Critical examination of the data from the 50 celebrities revealed interesting categories, themes and patterns. In order to create an initial code or a priori indicator, I highlighted relevant texts in the celebrities' tweets, using markers with different colors. For example, relevant tweets that tally with the focus of the study are highlighted, using olive color marker.

In relation to texts pinpointing an aspect of how celebrities use expressions to portray self, I used a marker with red color. However, with a recurring theme underscoring how gender influences the tweets of celebrities

in Ghana, I employed a green marker. In carrying out the line by line coding I also used a yellow marker for adverbials, blue marker for pronouns black marker for abbreviated forms, violet marker for tenses and aspects and orange marker for modals and semi – modals. Additionally, innovative word formation was highlighted with brown marker while unusual short tweets with powerful implication for self-representation were cycled using a red pen (however, if the tweet was highlighted with red, then a blue pen was used).

Upon the application of the above approaches to coding the retrieved data, I was able to generate a sample of a priori indicator or initial code with a view to adequately addressing the research questions. An example is indicated in Table 1:

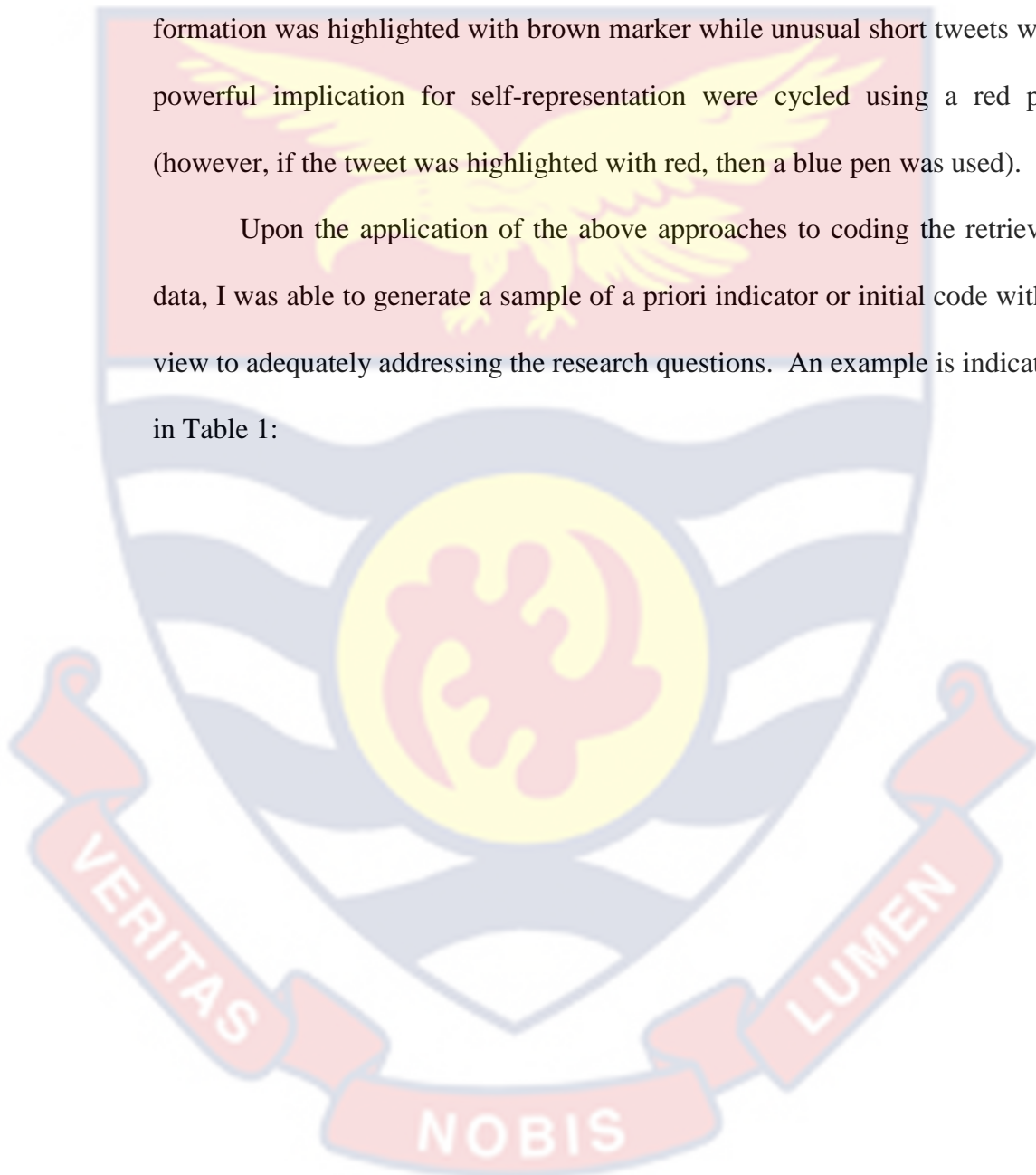


Table 1 - A Priori Indicators/Initial Codes

Indicator/Initial Code	Selected Excerpts from Tweets	Celebrities
Celebrities tweet on pertinent issues	“Thanks be to God for the grace to be a preacher. I remember with gratitude the 34,000 souls that gave their lives to Christ at...”	CELEB@ 23
	“Here is my brand mini commercial that was made in Ghana, West Africa. I hope to share it enough...”	CELEB@10
	“Lol I’m not even where I want to be in life but at my age and what I have achieved lol, all I can say is “Thank you Jesus, I’m proud of myself...You can discredit my efforts and hard work, but as long as it doesn’t affect my bank account...WE GOOD”	CELEB@ 13
	“Even the fake version of me is expensive”	CELEB@ 14
Forms of Self-Representation	“There is nothing stronger than a broken woman who has rebuilt herself”	CELEB@12
	“Sometimes you just have to die a little inside in order to be reborn and rise again as a stronger and wiser version of you”	CELEB@55
	I am eternally grateful to the lady who taught me how to have a quiet time with God every morning...has greatly influenced my life, and that is why I...write this book...you too can benefit from it...”	CELEB@23
	“Africa is coming to Accra this October! Connekt with brilliant young minds, get empowered. You can’t miss out on this opportunity. Apply today”!	CELEB@34
	“I’m grateful for Another year of strength, another year of wisdom, another year of progression and another year of being able to give back to the world that has given me so much. Thank you”.	CELEB@28
Sustenance of Status on Twitter	“New Music!!! Check my nee one out...#cominghomeft@...”	CELEB@18
	“Just know that He can take you out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock. May He do for you what you imagine. I AM ETERNALLY GRATEFUL”	CELEB@25
	“Been in and out shape but I’m going beast Mode from today...Do same... hard but necessary”	CELEB@42
	“The growth of my spiritual life is of importance to me. I will abstain from all manner of acts that will quench my spiritual life”.	CELEB@09

Method of Inquiry – CMDA

Though CMDA has its earliest root in the mid-1980s, it was first coined by Herring in 1995 as a methodological approach (Herring, 2001, 2004; Murray, 1985). Due to its technical and situational appeal, CMDA became popular among researchers and linguists in view of its incisive approach to analyzing electronic and online discourse and in understanding the revolutionary trend in language use among users of the burgeoning Internet in the mid-1990s. The coinage (computer-mediated) highlights the technical and situational component of CMDA and also highlights its uniqueness to written and spoken discourses. By this framework, linguists are able to provide accurate and detailed description of different forms of computer-mediated discourse such as tweets and retweets.

In her study, Herring (2004) indicated that certain issues influence the orientation of CMDA. These include contextual issues such as the identity of participants, the time and location as well as the ethnography of communication. Herring further indicated that other inherent features that CMDA examines include topic, genre, tone and norms of the particular discourse community. In summarizing the focus of CMDA, both Georgakopoulou (2006) and Herring (2018) disclosed that it is essentially a special form of discourse analysis associated with electronic and online discourse, primarily directed towards identification of obvious and most importantly, less obvious discourse pattern, and why users could have used it.

Herring (2004) again states that scholars in linguistics are interested in understanding written language in relation to its structure, the meaning it conveys, how it is used, how context influences its meaning and how the

meaning changes over time. In recent times, the unprecedented changes occurring within computer-mediated communication (CMC) has increased its adoption for insight into how and what people are using language to do online, especially within social media interface.

At present, CMDA focuses on four aspects of language use: the structure, its meaning, the nature of interaction and social behaviour. Herring stated that the analysis of structural phenomena in discourse entails usage of special orthography, sentence structure and innovative word formations. In relation to meaning, Longacre (1992) indicated that CMDA emphasises expressions, meaning of words and larger functional units. Analysis at the interactional level involves topic development, turn-taking in varied settings, and how interactive exchanges are negotiated among users. The social level, according to Herring (2004) entailed issues involving conflict and power and linguistic expressions of play.

As a methodological approach, CMDA assumes that “discourse exhibits recurrent patterns” (Herring, 2004, p. 4). In several cases, these patterns are consciously crafted by the speaker or user for impression management, whereas in several other cases, as Goffman indicated, users may be unaware or unconscious of the pattern (Herring, 2014, 2018). It is for this reason that the present study is concerned with identifying the dominant linguistic patterns employed by Ghanaian celebrities in their tweets and retweets and how they are using linguistic styles, whether obvious or less obvious, to construct self-representation as a means of impression management.

Rationale for Adopting CMDA in the Analysis of Tweets

The selection of CMDA for the study is premised on four useful considerations. First, as indicated by Herring (2001, 2003) and Thurlow (2003), CMDA is mostly concerned with analysing naturally occurring data. This is consistent with the research design adopted for this study which sets out to elicit data in a naturally occurring setting. Data elicited is not as a result of some experimental approach, where celebrities respond to certain prompts, rather it is a corpus of interactional exchanges where celebrities are doing their own thing and constructing self-representation without being prompted or controlled by anyone. Second, unlike spoken discourse, users on Twitters are constrained by the imposed 140 character limit. This limitation contributed to users employing informalities, abbreviations and contractions in their tweets and re-tweets (Baron, 2004; Borau *et al.*, 2009; Herring, 2004, 2018). Considering this manner of tweeting by celebrities, longhand transcription, which is usually associated with spoken discourse, is not needed because physically present with participants using data collection instrument such as participant observation, personal interview or focus group discussion is not needed. This makes data collection to be truly naturally occurring and very fitting for CMDA.

The third consideration for adopting CMDA is that it is instrumental to capturing the complex facets of discourse and multidisciplinary (Fairclough,1992; van Dijk, 1997). As Herring (2001) posits, it adopts the concepts, theories and methods of other linguists in various disciplines as it examines, evaluates and determines meanings of texts, expressions or tweets on computer-mediated communication. Finally, the adopted theoretical

framework for this study, that is Goffman's theory of self-representation, is consistent with the focus of CMDA, thus justifying the adoption of CMDA for analysis of elicited data. This means that the adoption of CMDA and the theoretical framework makes sense since they provide ample insight into the discourse pattern of celebrities as they use language to construct self-representation as a means of impression management on social media.

Challenges

Varied conceptions on user privacy on Twitter made it difficult to collect valuable data from celebrities that could have enriched the findings of the study. Though most of the celebrities' tweets were driven by publicity and impression management, their expectation and level of awareness on issues involving privacy differs. It was not possible to gain access to the accounts of some Ghanaian celebrities with large followers because they protected their accounts. Gaining access to these accounts will require a paid Application Programming Interface (API) and agreeing to a long list of privacy terms (Chen, Duan & Yang, 2021), which were impractical within the context of this study. Notwithstanding I overcame this challenge by using search API, which does not attract any cost and authorized by Twitter for downloading data from user accounts (Ahmed, Bath & Demartini, 2017).

In view of the challenges concerning the inclusion of larger sample for the study, it was difficult to use mixed methodology, which could have provided ample opportunity for larger sample (Ahmed et al., 2017; Alizadeh, 2021) of Ghanaian celebrities to complete self-report survey with a view to complementing and verifying results of the qualitative data.

I was confronted with the challenge concerning who actually authors the tweets of the celebrities. While some accounts are clearly identified as written by a team, others are written by ‘ghost twitterers’ in the voice of the celebrity (Cohen, 2009). Some celebrities lack the time and/or interest to maintain a social media account but in essence, see it as a good marketing tool. Therefore, they employ managers who discourage direct access to fans; and still others are under contract to a team, studio or production which expressly forbids candid tweeting (Wallenstein & Belloni, 2009). As soon as I discovered a tweet was used as a marketing tool, either through direct information from the user or Tweeter, the account was excluded and delisted from participating in the study.

Another major challenge was in relation to the changing nature of Twitter platform. The symbols, character limitation (previously 140 and now 280 is allowed) terminology, and icons are constantly changing. Hence, using Twitter platform was very challenging since each of these terms must be demystified and clearly explained to promote readers’ understanding. For example #FF represents #FollowFriday, used by users including celebrities to recommend other users to their followers. Similarly, the new ‘magnifying glass’ icon is useful for accessing the ‘search’ and ‘explore’ segment of Twitter platform, where a researcher can gain access to several twitter handles, topics, or texts relevant to the focus of the study.

Ethical Consideration

Though Twitter is considered by several researchers as a public space, it is vital to ascertain what is legally permitted in connection with personal tweets, expectations of users and their conception regarding privacy. It is, therefore,

pertinent to consider how users create, engage, and share content online and whether any harm could be done if the data of a particular user was used.

In connection with anonymity, I ensured that tweets of celebrities could not be traced to the individual by paraphrasing with pseudonym. This is important because it is not possible to decipher whether some users expected their tweet to be published in an academic setting. Hence, I refrained from rendering tweets of celebrities verbatim with a view to protecting their identity and users' expectations on privacy.

It may appear that Twitter's privacy policy, "what you say on the Twitter Services may be viewed all around the world instantly. You are what you Tweet" (Kent, 2015, p. 8), provided a basis for using tweets without informed consent. However, in view of the varied expectation of users which are varied and subjective, I studied how selected celebrities tweets, what they liked to talk about, their expectations regarding tweets and other issues that could unwittingly raise ethical issue prior to use of search API to retrieve valuable information from individual's Twitter accounts.

Chapter Summary

The primary focus of this chapter was to outline the methodology adopted for the present study. It delineated the procedure for data collection and data analysis which comprise quantitative and qualitative approaches. Multistage sampling technique was adopted; this comprised both purposive sampling technique and proportionate stratified random sampling technique, making the approach to data collection holistic since it entailed the use of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Ample information was given concerning the various stages and appropriate methods were adopted in

the selection of the tweets and retweets for the study. Though certain problems were encountered, they were surmounted to enable collection of useful and well-validated data. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of results and discussion, based on the analysis of retrieved data.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses data on how celebrities in Ghana construct self-representation on Twitter. The research questions guiding the study form the basis for conducting in-depth analysis and discussions of retrieved information. This part of the study is divided into three sections. The first reports how CMDA is used to answer the first research questions. The second section provides analysis and discussion related to the second research question and the third section focuses on the third research questions.

Dominant Linguistic Features in the Tweets of Ghanaian Celebrities

The framework of CMDA is used to analyse research question one. A close examination of the entire data clearly showed that celebrities were generous in the use of some linguistic features; some linguistic features were used extensively while others were sparingly used. I have, therefore, carefully selected some key linguistic features that represent most of the features of the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities. These are categorized as follows: adverbials, pronouns, abbreviated forms, modals and semi – modals, tense and aspect markers.

The analysis and discussion of the identified categories of the linguistic features Ghanaian celebrities used in their tweets are presented below. Content analysis of the tweets of celebrities based on the framework of computer mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) was used in understanding each of these linguistic features. The gender implications of the linguistic features were also highlighted.

Adverbials

The data revealed several instances where Ghanaian celebrities employed adverbials in their tweets. The use of adverbials is significant because it deepens knowledge regarding the mode, time, and recurrent nature of a tweet (Nordquist, 2019; McGuire, 2021). It also demonstrates a degree of involvement and sentiment in relation to a discourse or an important issue (Allohami, 2020; Haider et al., 2018; Nordquist, 2019). It is noteworthy that celebrities employed several forms of adverbials with a view to modify a sentence or an adverb. Interestingly, they also used agent or self-oriented, attitudinal and expectation adverbial generously. These adverbial in the data are highlighted in the Extract 1:

Extract 1

<i>“I delbr8li ch m nam”</i> (I deliberately changed my name).....	1
<i>“I dntplgnthr int10nali”</i> (I didn’t plan going there intentionally)...	2
<i>“wats hapng arnd hea”</i> (What is happening around here).....	3
<i>“I tld hm agn n agn”</i> (I told him again and again).....	4
<i>“Hfuli, I wlsi u moro”</i> (Hopefully, I will see you tomorrow).....	5
<i>“Even my friend will come”</i>	6

An in-depth analysis of Extract 1 comprising tweets (1) – (6), reveals that most of the celebrities used adverbials in their tweets. The use of these adverbials coincides with the findings of Nordquist (2019) that as a modifier, adverbials occupy an important position, especially, in relation to marking agent or self-oriented discourse in (1) and (2) (“deliberately” and “intentionally”). These are particularly relevant in view of the focus of this study - celebrities are inclined to use linguistic features that highlight or stress

self as demonstrated in the use of self-oriented adverbials. This form of adverbial is very different from locative adverbial in (3) (*‘here’*) where reference is made to the location or place the action is occurring.

However, it is similar to attitudinal adverbial (*‘hopefully’*) and expectation “even” which often touched on the feelings or personal belief of the user. In Examples (5) (*“hfuli I wlsi u moro”*) and (6) (*“even my friend will come”*), the celebrities underscore their commitment to the referent as well as demonstrate conviction of a positive outcome. The attitude and expectation underlying the tweets in (5) and (6) will contribute to improve the relationship between the celebrity and the referent and this is in consonance with Goffman’s theoretical framework that celebrities are able to present an admirable and appealing picture of self.

In (5) and (6) of Extract 1, the celebrities used the two statements to inform their audience that I trust you, I have confidence in you, I am committed to you, and I appreciate you. The celebrity in (5) (*“even my friend will come”*) was unfettered by the 140 character limit on Twitter platform and the tweet of this celebrity is inconsistent with the findings of Borau et al. (2009) and Nemer (2015) that the imposed character limit constrains expressivity and limits repair of communication which ultimately affects linguistic choice and competence at effective representation of self. The celebrity succeeded in communicating his thought and expressing his conviction to his friend.

The data also revealed that celebrities used adverbial marking frequency of a naturally occurring activity. In (4) (*“I tld hm agn n agn”* (I told him again and again), the celebrity indicated how frequently he warned the referent

about an impending issue that required her urgent attention. By indicating (“again”) twice, it shows that the celebrity wants the referent to do something about the issue and is convinced that it will be beneficial.

The employment of an adverbial to mark the frequency of an important message tallied with the focus of this study and this demonstrates the desire of the celebrity to express her concern and caring disposition towards the referent, a noble attribute. Even when the referent did not respond, she repeated it severally to help her make an informed decision. This corroborates the findings of Nordquist (2019) and Allohami (2020) that adverbials often underscore the level or degree of involvement of the celebrities in an issue, or discourse. It also reflects the celebrities’ attitude and conception of self, especially, in connection with the type of identity being constructed, whether it is positive or negative. Therefore, the generous use of adverbials by celebrities supports both the theoretical framework and conceptual orientation of this study.

Consistent with the findings of Nordquist (2019), the data reveals that adverbials were placed at several positions in the phrase and sentence, with a view to underscoring the purpose for which they were used. Extract 2 highlights the various positions they were placed:

Extract 2

Sentence Initial:

“[Hfuli], I wlsi u moro” ([Hopefully], I will see you tomorrow).....Si1

[“Even] my friend will come”Si2

Sentence Final:

“I tldhmagn n [agn]” (I told him again and [again]).....Sf1

Pre-verbial:

“I [delbr8li] ch m nam”(I [deliberately] changed my name).....Prv1

Post-verbal:

“watshapngardhea” (What is happening around [here]).....Pov1

It is noteworthy that in the data, celebrities did not use locative or manner adverbials as sentence initials which, Nordquist (2019) indicated, are often clumsy and ungrammatical. Critical evaluation of celebrities’ avoidance of locative or manner adverbial at sentence initial is evidence of the role of CMDA in facilitating identification of naturally occurring phenomena.

Herring (2004, p. 4) indicated that “discourse exhibits recurrent patterns”. While it is true that celebrities are aware or consciously craft these recurrent patterns or features to aid self-representation, Goffman’s theoretical framework reveals that in an effort to conduct impression management, users or celebrities may be unaware or unconscious of the recurring linguistic features they are using to construct appealing virtual persona (Herring, 2014, 2018). In this instance, the methodological framework of CMDA made it possible to detect or identify it in their recurrent pattern of using adverbial. Celebrities used adverbial appropriately and grammatically without placing a locative or manner adverbial at sentence initials. In effect, in order to attain

self-representation, celebrities unknowingly use adverbials for impression management and self-representation. Observation of the data shows that majority of the celebrities' sampled were averagely educated and must be familiar with grammatical rules in English; hence, they consistently used adverbials to foster impression management, culminating in a boost of their self-representation.

Pronouns

A careful study of the data reveals that celebrities used pronouns extensively in their tweets. The extensive usage can be attributed to the unique and excellent attribute of pronouns to economize words as well as demonstrate the level of involvement in discourse (Allohami, 2020; Shan, 2021). The following tweets in Extract 3 represent of the forms of pronouns celebrities adopted to promote self-representation.

Extract 3

<i>“tis is wt u rqtd” (“This is what you requested”)</i>	7
<i>“tosdyswhn men wr boys” (“Those days when men were boys”)</i>	8
<i>“sohwmh is ptrl now” (“so how much is petrol now”)</i>	9
<i>“Gd sees evrtg (“God sees everything”)</i>	10
<i>“Akos, is dis urfrnd” (Akosua, is this your friend)</i>	11
<i>“Thtbl s 4 Koyo” (“That ball is for Koyo”)</i>	12
<i>“...as 4 thtKobinahstgs r alys diff” (“...as for that Kobina his things are different”)</i>	13

Careful examination of Extract 3, comprising (7) to (13), reveals that celebrities' use of pronouns. The use of demonstrative pronouns is found in (7) (*“[tis] is wt u rqtd”*“*[This] is what you requested*”) and (8)

(“*[tos]dyswhnmen wr boys*” “*[Those] days when men were boys*”) and these (“*this*” and “*those*”) are linguistic features that promote cohesion in written text including tweets.

As proximal demonstrative pronouns, “*this*” in (7) underscores nearness in distance, because the celebrity informed the referent about something tangible that she requested. Unlike proximal demonstrative pronoun, the distal demonstrative pronoun in (9) refers to an event or action far in time. In essence, the celebrity refers to the time they were teenagers, which could be over 15 years ago. The extensive use of demonstrative pronoun, as shown in this study, is consistent with the findings of Peeters, Krahmer and Maes (2021) that demonstratives occupy an important position in discourse, because they facilitate efficient communication between the writer and his/her audience or fans.

Peeters’ et al. (2021) state that demonstratives are “the very cornerstone of our capability to refer” (p. 410). In line with Peeters et al. (2021), the tweets in (11) “*Akos, is [dis]urfrnd*” “*Akosua, is [this] your friend*), and (12) “*Thtbl s 4 Kojo*” “*That ball is for Kojo*”) are nominal referent that enhance the capability of the celebrity to clarify referent. For example, in (11) “*this*” clarifies the identity of Akosua’s friend, whose name was unknown. Similarly, in (12) the ball belonging to Kojo was identified through the use of the distal demonstrative pronoun “*that*”.

It is noteworthy that the data coincide with the arguments of Jarbou (2010), Winner et al. (2019) and Peeter et al. (2021) that the view that speakers or celebrities’ choice of demonstrative are influenced by the distance of the referent is too simplistic. For example, though it is only one

occurrence, the tweet in (7) (“as 4 [tht] Kobinahs tgs r alys diff”) shows that even though Kobina was within the vicinity (also online) of the interlocutor or celebrity, distal demonstrative was used for Kobina. Hence, Evans, Bergqvist and San-Roque (2018), Winner et al. (2019) and Peeters et al., (2021) argued about psychological factors in terms of “cognitive status of the referent in the mind of the speaker and/or the addressee as assumed by the speaker”(Peeters et al., 2021, p. 412).

In the case of the celebrity in (13), even though Kobina was in proximity virtually, he did not view Kobina as within proximity perceptually or conceptually due to his view of Kobina; hence, he used a distal demonstrative (“*that*”) for him. This could mean the celebrity and Kobina are neither socially close nor do they share common view on an issue.

As a result, Enfield (2003), Evans et al. (2018), Winner et al. (2019), and Peeters et al. (2021) indicated that instead of the simplistic view that only physical distance of the interlocutor or addressee influences the use of demonstratives, there are three factors that influence the use of demonstratives especially within social media platform: 1) external physical factors such as the location or position of the addresser or addressee to the referent, 2) psychological factor such as the feelings or view of the addresser or addressee to the referent, and 3) referent-attribute or intrinsic factors such as the number in grammatical terms). A critical evaluation of the data reveals that celebrity’s use of demonstratives tallies with the three factors as shown below:

Physical factor: (11) “*Akos, is dis urfrnd*” (*Akosua, is this your friend*)

Psychological factor: (13) “*as 4 tht Kobinahstgs r alys diff*”

Referent-attribute or intrinsic factor: (7), (12) “this ball” and “these balls”

The skilful use of demonstratives by celebrities agrees with the focus of the study. One factor that contributed to such usage is that demonstratives convey attitude, personal opinion about others, and facilitate online interaction, then by being proficient in its use, celebrities can portray a better online persona with their audience or fans.

The data in (9) “*so hw [mh] is ptrl now*” (“*so how [much] is petrol now*”) and (10) “*Gd sees [evrtg]*” (“*God sees [everything]*”) highlight another form of pronoun. Both “*much*” and “*everything*” are indefinite pronouns. In using the indefinite “*everything*” the celebrity in (10) highlighted the limitless power of God to see both good and bad. Everything is not specific and thereby demonstrates to the audience that God’s eyes are penetrating and could even see what is hidden.

By inference, the choice of indefinite pronoun is practical and meaningful since the limitless capacity of God’s eyes makes him see whatever people are undergoing. Similarly, the use of “*much*”, which also doubles as a quantifier, by the celebrity underscores the fluidity and uncertainty of the cost of petrol in the country. Hence, the use of indefinite pronoun in this instance is appropriate.

The several occurrences of indefinite pronouns in the data support Muryasov’s (2021) statement, “indefinite pronouns (pronominal indefinite) have a particularly rich set of structures” (p. 147). This study shows that despite the general view that noun phrases are the “most frequently occurring phrase type” (Radford, 2004, p. 14, 348), the rich set of structures of indefinite

pronouns made it possible for them to replace noun phrases in situations where the reference is general or unknown, as shown in the data such as in (9) and (10) (Muryasov, 2021).

Abbreviated Forms

A careful perusal of the data revealed that abbreviated forms were extensively used by Ghanaian celebrities in their tweets. The data clearly demonstrated that most of the celebrities were very creative and novel in their use of abbreviated forms. The following excerpt from the data underscores how the tweets of celebrities offered them opportunity to use one or two words to capture what could have been a sentence or phrase. These are highlighted in

Extract 4:

Extract 4

wlcmsn (will come soon).....(14)

hwaryu (how are you).....(15)

bw (best wishes).....(16)

m n y (me and you).....(17)

A close reading of sampled tweets (14) to (17) in Extract 4 provides ample insight into participants' skilful use of abbreviated forms. For example, one word in (14) "wlcmsn" was used to convey a phrase "will come soon" thereby saving space and time. Likewise, just three letters in (17) "m n y" were used to express "me and you"; this must have been used by a twitter savvy celebrity since three letters. The excerpt also shows that celebrities employed an acronym in (16) "bw" for "best wishes".

A close reading of the excerpt reveals that though some celebrities use Ghanaian Pidgin English for abbreviation (such as "c hia" for "come here"),

most of the celebrities employed abbreviated forms that conform to Standard English. This is noteworthy in view of the increasing use of Ghanaian Pidgin English among the youth and educational settings in Ghana (Mireku-Gyimah, 2018; Suglo, 2012).

It was observed that there are several other abbreviated forms which comprise grammatical modifications and contractions. These were skilfully abbreviated to convey important and deeper information or meaning, as highlighted in Extract 5:

Extract 5

“Y n I i t 2gether” (“*You and I in it together*”).....(18)

R U fn (*Are you fine*).....(19)

Wl Cm 2moro (*Will come tomorrow*).....(20)

Extract 5 comprising tweets (18) to (20) were thought provoking as far as abbreviated forms are concerned. For instance, the abbreviated form in (18) “*Y n I i t 2gether*” is quite complex and demonstrated how a celebrity saved time and space using alphanumeric words to capture the thought in a whole sentence (*You and I in it together*). It is similar to “*will you come tomorrow*” clipped to “*wl y cm 2moro*” “*will come tomorrow*”. Irrespective of the above, Extract 6 showed that some celebrities employed common abbreviated forms:

Extract 6

lol(lot of laughter).....(21)

gm (good morning).....(22)

4u n m (for you and me).....(23)

txt (text).....(24)

ok(okay).....(25)

Both amateurs and Twitter savvy users are familiar with the abbreviated forms in Extract 6 (tweets 21-25) and these afford users the opportunity to quickly convey information to anyone in the audience, since the forms are commonly used in social media platforms. For example in (21), “lol” signifies something funny that calls for laughter or in (24) “txt” for “text”. Likewise in (22), “gm” for “good morning” is often used as salutation purposes.

The observed abbreviated forms that Ghanaian celebrities employed in the data coincide with five of the nine semantic categories of Bush’s (2005) categorization of abbreviated forms. For example, the use of acronym in 21 (“lol” for “lot of laughter”, and in (21) “gm” for “good morning”), abbreviated phrase in (14) (“wlcmsn”) for “will come soon”, and “Susn” “see you soon”), homophonic single grapheme (“R” stands for “are” and “U” stands for “you”), alphanumeric (“2morro” for “tomorrow” and “I8crabs” for “I hate crabs”) and grapheme changes (“txt” for “text” and “bak” for “back”).

The abbreviations in Extracts 4, 5 and 6 are consistent with Wood’s (2009) statement that social media users, including tweeters, often use abbreviations creatively and innovatively for the purpose of quickly communicating their thoughts. This also corroborates Allohmi’s (2020) findings that the spatio-temporal factors in social media platforms make users creatively abbreviate words.

One aspect of this spatio-temporal reason, according to Hong-mei (2010) and Serwat et al. (2021), is the 140 character limit on Twitter platform. This compels celebrities to omit syllable, clipped words, creatively and innovatively abbreviate words. However, this finding contradicts the result of studies by Borau et al. (2009) and Nemer (2015) which shows that Twitter’s

character limitation imposes constraint on expressivity and limits repair of communication which ultimately affect linguistic choice and competence of effective representation of self.

Modals and Semi-modals

A conscious study of the data revealed that celebrities use modal and semi-modal verbs extensively. Extract 7 is representative of the forms of modal and semi-modal verbs celebrities used in their tweets.

Extract 7

<i>“I cn cm 2moro” (“I can come tomorrow”)</i>	26
<i>“I cud hvwtnesd it” (“I could have witnessed it”)</i>	27
<i>“It wldhvbn good” (“It would have been good”)</i>	28
<i>“I tk we shldrvt 1n” (“I think we should remove this one”)</i>	29
<i>“Uogt t hvkn this (“you ought to have known this”)</i>	30
<i>“I wl b gmsn” (“I will be going soon”)</i>	31
<i>“He mst be cful” (He must be careful”)</i>	32
<i>“I wiprabt it” (I will pray about it”)</i>	33
<i>“I nd t td cusly” (“I need to tread cautiously”)</i>	34

Extract 7 with sampled tweets (26-34) showed that modals used by celebrities can be classified into four categories. The first category is the modal indicating necessity or obligation. The tweets in (29) (“I tk we [shld] rvt 1n” “I think we [should] remove this one” and (32) “He [mst] be cful” He [must] be careful”) are representative of the first category. The second category is modals marking possibility or ability. This is seen in tweets (26) (“I [cn] cm 2moro” “I [can] come tomorrow” and (27) “I [cud] hvwtnesd it” “I [could] have witnessed it”). The third category is the prediction or volition

modal. In the data, excerpts (31) “I wll b gmsn” “I [will] be going soon” and (33) (“I [wi] prabt it” I [will] pray about it”).

The fourth category is the hypothetical modals. This is seen in tweet (28) “It [wld] hv bn good” “It [would] have been good”) and “Hw[wud] U hv don it” “How [would] you have done it”). Semi-modals contain multiple words which is vastly different from pure modals. In Extract 7, tweet (30) “U [ogt t] hvkn this “you [ought to] have known this”) and in (34) “I [nd t] td cusly” “I [need to] tread cautiously”).

The four categories of modals as well as the semi-modals identified in the data were creatively used by celebrities with significant implications for the study. A careful study of Extract 7 comprising tweets (26) – (34) shows that modal verbs often provide insight into the speaker or users’ attitude, desire in continuing a relationship, incompetence and ability (Allohami, 2020; Luu, 2018; Nordquist, 2019). While pure modals usually comprise a verb as the base form with its aspect negated with “not”, semi-modals, on the other hand, often comprise multiple words functioning as modal in a sentence (Luu, 2018; Nordquist, 2019; Shan, 2021).

An in-depth study of celebrities’ use of modal reveals that it fast tracked their capacity at conducting impression management. For example, in Extract 7, as shown in tweets (28) (“It [wld] hvbn good” “It [would] have been good”) and in (33) “I [wi] prabt it” I [will] pray about it”, the celebrity used the hypothetical and prediction modals as a form of cooperative politeness to create a basis for hope and cordial relationship with the referent. In the first instance, the celebrity did not want to say the referent acted wrongly; rather

she employed the hypothetical modal to show that a different result could have occurred if it was done differently.

This is consistent with Luu's (2018) view that people use modals as a form of cooperative politeness to lower face-threatening acts. The prediction or volition modal in (32) "I [wi] prabt it" I [will] pray about it") conveys a measure of hope to the referent and reflects the celebrity's deep concern. This is also in line with the findings of Nordquist (2019) and Allohami (2020) that modals often reveal the attitude or feelings of a speaker. By being positive and employing modals to demonstrate cooperative politeness to avoid face-threatening acts, celebrities successfully portray the better virtual persona through impression management.

Hence, in agreement with Goffman's theoretical framework, these celebrities' choice of linguistic features (modals) made it possible to succeed in constructing self-representation. An important aspect of self-representation is to create an appealing persona through carefully crafted tweets to present the better attributes of the celebrity, and as shown, these celebrities employed modals to underscore their willingness to cooperate and foster cordial relationship by refraining from face threatening acts (Luu, 2018; Shan, 2021).

Tense and Aspect Markers

Celebrities are focused on the present when tweeting and as a result, the data reflect several cases of verbs used in the present tense. Though past participle was used, they were rare. It is noteworthy that celebrities exhibited lexical diversity in their use of aspect markers to underscore informational discourse and time, especially in relation to the time they were online. The data shows that they used aspect markers and tense within several structures

including personal pronouns, such as the first and second pronouns. The following tweets (35-38) in Extract 8 highlight celebrities' use of aspect markers and several forms of tense to underscore their tweets.

Extract 8

<i>“Wiz hsbna mlonrsn...25” (“Wizkid has been a millionaire since...25”)</i>	35
<i>“tsv in Gh is getintuhoo” (“to survive in Ghana is getting tough”)</i> ..	36
<i>“R csmtg is nxtwk” (“Our caucous meeting is next week”)</i>	37
<i>“shsbrgt the soln” (She has brought the solution”)</i>	38

A close reading of Extract 8, as shown in (35) to (38), reveals the various uses of tense and aspect markers by celebrities. Though, there are several other tweets, these selected few are representative of celebrities' use of these forms of linguistic features. In (35) “wiz hsbna mlonrscn...25” (Wizkid[has] been millionaire since...25”), the celebrity used the present perfect tense to underscore when a musician (Wizkid), became a millionaire and at present the richest musician in his country. By using present perfect tense, the celebrity, also a young millionaire, employed the helping verb (*has*) to highlight that the musician's status commenced when he was 25 and sustained it till his present age (31).

In (38) “*s hsbbrgt the soln*” (*She has brought the solution*”) the rare occurrence of past participle is underscored in the data. The celebrity points to the fact that the referent has completed an action that will ensure the problem is resolved. The sentence is more complex than a simple past tense, because “*has*”, an auxiliary verb, is complementing the verb “*brought*”. Notwithstanding, “*brought*” also doubles as simple past tense.

The finding of this study in connection with past participle and past tense is in relation to the findings of studies by Nordquist (2019), Allohami (2020) and Shan (2021) that a sentence such as in (38) comprises compound verb. In this sense, it comprises the auxiliary verb (*has*) and the main verb (*brought*). The use of past participle by the celebrity shows the level of creativity and expressivity. This means the 140 character limit on Twitter does not inhibit the celebrity's expressivity or interactional capacity. This is inconsistent with the findings of Borau et al. (2009) and Nemer (2015) on the limitation of Twitter as a social media.

A close reading of (36) (*"t sv in Gh is getintuhoo" "to survive in Ghana is getting tough"*) and (37) (*"R csmtg is nxtwk" "Our caucaus meeting is next week"*) highlights the use of aspect markers and time in the data. For example in marking informational discourse, the celebrity in (36) used the simple present tense to mark an on-going situation or condition in Ghana *"is getting tough"*. The action is unrelenting. Similarly, in (37) the celebrity provided information to the members of his fraternity about an upcoming meeting stating *"is next week"*.

In all, the data in Extract 8 with tweets 35 – 38, showed that tense and aspect markers were generously used by Ghanaian celebrities. One primary factor that influenced the use of tense and aspect markers is celebrities' interest in current issues and activities going on online. As a result, present tense and present perfect were used extensively. Similarly, past tense and past participle were also used. The data also showed that some celebrities used complex sentences that comprise compound verbs and time aspect to mark

discourse. This is noteworthy since complexity of sentence shows lexical diversity and high level interactional and communicative ability.

Summary

In relation to the first research question: “*what dominant linguistic features characterise the tweets of celebrities in Ghana?*” The data has shown that Ghanaian celebrities used several linguistic features demonstrating lexical diversity and high level of creativity and interactional capability on social media platform. The following linguistic features were identified based on their frequency of usage in the data: 1) Adverbial, 2) pronouns, 3) abbreviated forms, 4) modal and semi-modal, and 5) tense and aspect markers. The study also discovered that celebrities did not use locative or manner adverbials as sentence initials which grammarians indicated are often clumsy and ungrammatical. Critical evaluation of the tweets revealed that celebrities’ avoidance of locative or manner adverbial at sentence initial concurs with a naturally occurring phenomenon that speakers or social media users are unaware they are using it continually in their posts.

Findings of the study further revealed that celebrities’ use of demonstratives is consistent with the findings of notable studies on factors influencing the use of demonstrative pronoun as shown below:

Physical factor: “*Akos, is dis urfrnd*” (*Akosua, is this your friend*)

Psychological factor: (13) “*as 4 thtKobinahstgs r alys diff*”

Referent-attribute or intrinsic factor: (7), (12) “*this ball*” and “*these balls*”

By skilfully using demonstrative pronouns, celebrities were able to convey their feelings, attitudes, and personal opinions about others as well as

facilitate online interaction, and thereby being proficient in its use, celebrities can portray a better online persona with their audience or fans. Findings of the study revealed that the linguistic features adopted by celebrities allowed them to adequately express themselves as well as construct self-representation.

Self – Representation by Ghanaian Celebrities on Twitter

The primary focus of this section is to provide adequate response to the second research question. Analysis of the data reveals that Ghanaian celebrities are using novel ways to represent themselves in order to retain their popularity index. The study highlighted certain recurrent patterns in their linguistic features showing their methods, skills and approaches to self-representation on Twitter despite the imposed 140 character limit on users' tweet. In order to provide answers to how celebrities use the content of their tweets to construct self-representation, I have divided celebrities' skills and methods into five broad categories, as outlined below. Under each of these categories, I have provided some excerpts that represent celebrities' skills at sustaining their self-representation on Twitter.

1. Salutation
2. Creativity
3. Ingratiation
4. Damage control
5. Self - promotion

Salutation

Salutation or greeting is extremely important in every human society and the Ghanaian setting pays serious attention to it and, therefore, it is considered disrespectful not to greet people. Highlighting its importance,

Tikya (2021) stated that it is characterized as the initial step towards starting an interaction and the continuous step of maintaining or retaining the interaction. Hence, salutation is the most impressive approach celebrities adopted to construct an appealing persona or impression management to enhance self-representation. In Extract 9, the following salutations were selected as a representative sample of celebrities' greetings.

Extract 9

<i>"Gdbls u my ppl" ("God bless you my people") (sup/decl)</i>	39
<i>"Good morning family, guess what" (Initi/supp)</i>	40
<i>"I pray that the gift of God in you will continue" (supp/decl)</i>	41
<i>"Congratulations my dearest" (ocasn/supp)</i>	42
<i>"Had a great time @kalydayspace, thanks to y'all" (sup/decl)</i>	43
<i>"Sorry oo my ppl, I travelled small, hope ev'ry one is fine" (reme/init)</i>	44

A careful perusal of Extract 9 comprising tweets (39) to (44) highlight an important approach celebrities used for their self-representation on Twitter. Self-representation is developed and sustained through impression management which requires what Goffman (1981) and Ferguson (1981) referred to as 'interactional rituals' for the purpose of maintaining social function. Hence, in the data, celebrities used various forms of what I will refer to, for the purpose of this study, as "everyday rituals". These rituals are important because through "the symbolic component the actor shows how worthy he is of respect or how worthy he feels others are of it" (Goffman, 1972, p. 328). As a result, these 'everyday rituals', according to Goffman (1959) helps the actor, and in this instance, Ghanaian celebrities to initiate and

sustain a state of ritual equilibrium or a state where they can sustain cordial relationship with their fans and other users, which is the essence of self-representation. For example, in (39) to (42) celebrities employed supportive rituals for the purpose of ritual equilibrium or sustaining their self-image or representation online. One of the celebrities (39) stated: “*Gdbls u my ppl*” (“*God bless you my people*”).

However, while Goffman (1972) categorized every rituals into two: supportive ritual, and remedial ritual, Halliday (1979) provided a more detailed description or categories for greetings. For example, while the greeting in (39) is declarative, the greeting in (40) “*Good morning family, guess what*” is initiation words, and the greetings in (42) “*Congratulations my dearest*” is an occasion phrase. Halliday went further to have what he describes as terms of address, politeness strategy and interrogative sentences. It is worth noting that one of the celebrities (44) adopted remedial ritual in view of the following salutation: “*Sorry oo my ppl, I travelled small, hope ev’ry one is fine*”. Remedial ritual, according to Goffman (1972) is very important because, as the name suggests, the actor or celebrity used it to “re-establish a state of ritual equilibrium” (Goffman, 1972, p. 328).

A careful examination of the data also revealed that there are no interrogative sentences used by the celebrities for the purpose of maintaining their online persona or self-image. This is insightful because going by the theoretical framework of this study, Goffman indicated that people are like actors on the stage interested in showing only the most appealing aspect of their person to other users. As a result, interrogative sentences, while they may serve useful purposes in some settings, such as being used for polite

requests, interrogative sentences, according to Nordquist (2019) could be misconstrued as a command or face-threatening act, if the user used negative polar interrogatives. By inference, considering the controversial nature of interrogative sentence, most of the celebrities refrained from using them since they are primarily concerned with sustaining appealing and attractive online persona. This is in line with the findings of Rettberg (2009) and Herring (2004, 2018) that self-representation requires the use of linguistic features that foster self-image that makes a celebrity likable to others while lessening or refraining from face-threatening acts.

Undoubtedly, as shown above, supportive or declarative salutation and greetings were extensively used by celebrities to continually conduct impression management and sustain ritual equilibrium with their fans and online users. It is noteworthy that while Goffman classified everyday rituals into two, Halliday (1979) classified it into several broad categories with a view to capture the various forms of salutation and greetings associated with several cultures around the world. Halliday (1979) offers a more clarifying and insightful classification of salutation and greetings which augmented the knowledge/information regarding salutations and greetings through and, more importantly provides ample conceptual support for the focus of the study. It deepens insight into the various ways celebrities use salutation or greetings to convey a likable and appealing persona to their fans and followers on Twitter.

Creativity

A careful study of the data reveals that celebrities are highly creative and innovative in their use of linguistic features in their tweets and how they comment on several issues on twitter. By means of their creativity, celebrities

transcend the imposed 140 character limit to promote their self-image and provide a positive self-representation. They adopt innovative word combinations, condensed forms, and skilful use of tweets to boost their followers. For example, in Extract 10, the following words combinations are very insightful.

Extract 10

@5 n 7 b15 (at 5pm in Suite 7 by October 15)45

B 6am wwl (“By 6am we will leave”).....46

A close reading of Extract 10 revealed innovative word combination. These Ghanaian celebrities are social media savvy and very skilful in its usage. The alphanumeric sentence in (45) @5 n 7 b 15 (at 5pm in Suite 7 by October 15) is very impressive and innovative because with only 7 letters, information that would have required 24 letters was conveyed. It saves space and time which is essential in computer-mediated communication. Another interesting aspect of such word combination is that it is an encrypted sentence that those outside the caucus cannot decipher. For example, in (46) B 6am wwl (“By 6am we will leave”), it is difficult to decipher what “wwl” means without being in the group.

The use of these forms of word combination confirm the findings of Allohami (2020) that technologically savvy users often create a form of shorthand to bypass the 140 character limit. This group of Twitter users often writes volumes when the message is interpreted by those in the group. This finding once again disproves the claims of Borau et al. (2009) and Nemer (2015) that the imposed 140 character limitation constrains expressivity and communicative ability of registered users on Twitter social media platform.

This finding corroborates the tenet of the theoretical framework for this study which shows that when online, users often present a better, highly intelligent and pleasing attributes of self through impression management. The capability of writing several information using innovative word combinations would not have been necessary in face-to-face communication or interactions. However, in a bid to sidestep the 140 character limit on Twitter media platform, celebrities create novel letters to represent phrases, sentences, and sometimes paragraphs (Herring, 2018; Rettberg, 2009).

Ingratiation

An in-depth analysis of the data revealed that majority (43) of the celebrities employed ingratiation, which Yan et al. (2020) considered a “powerful impression tactics that helps ingratiation achieve their intended goals”. The main objective or goals of celebrities is to maintain their celebrity status through positive presentation of the attractive and ideal self to their fans and twitter audience. The use of ingratiation is consistent with Goffman’s theory regarding the earnest desire of people to highlight the better self to friends or others, by issuing posts that flatter, conform to general opinions and enhance the public image of others. Consider the following tweets in Extract 11 (47-51) of the retrieved data:

Extract 11

Eei!yu are my angelanytime..... (47)

in fact, you are toooo muucchhh, no size.....(48)

...you guys are my inspiration, what can I do without all of you...(49)

...ooh thanks so much, my one and only.....(50)

Woooo, you are a living legend and encyclopedia.....(51)

An in-depth analysis of (47) to (51) in Extract 11, clearly demonstrated that celebrities made deliberate efforts at eliciting the favour of their fans or foster a close relationship with individuals and group of users through the use of flattery to appeal to their ego. For example, in (47) “*Eeii!yu are my angel anytime*”, the celebrity employed an exclamatory remark (“Eeii!”) to draw the attention of others to her expression of praise to the referent. The use of the phrase “my angel anytime”, though a compliment, is an exaggeration because angels are supernatural. Interestingly, the celebrity and her fan are Muslims and both of them are fully aware that in Islam, angels are infallible creatures whereas humans are fallible (Kassim, 2007; Reynolds, 2009).

The use of the expressions “*toooo muuccchhh*”, “no size”, “without all of you”, “my one and only” and “living legend and encyclopedia” in (48) to (51) are all exaggerations, over-bloated complements and at best flattery, orchestrated to curry favour, present the better or ideal self and entrench the relationship. Consider, for example, the phrase “no size”: it is only appropriate for God, no other creature can be honestly referred to as “no size” (Fetterman, Evans, Exline & Meier, 2021). Additionally, the use of the phrase “what can I do without all of you” is an exaggeration because there are several things the celebrity can do without those guys. It is worthy to note that the expression “*livinglegend and encyclopedia*” is also an exaggeration. It is designed to flatter the celebrity’s fan. It is incorrect because unlike encyclopedia that houses all forms of information human working memory is subjective, selective and only stores information that are primarily useful to the individual (Malenka, Nestler, Hyman, & Holtzman, 2015).

Damage Control

The data revealed that several (27) celebrities engage in self-representation through damage control. Damage control refers to the deliberate effort of celebrities to correct negative impression, negative post or actions. Unlike salutation, this segment focuses mainly on several ways celebrities employed resourceful approaches to control the extent of damage their action or inaction may have caused.

Hence, I discovered three major ways celebrities use damage control to sustain self-representation: 1) apologize for their mistake or error, 2) provide background information or an alibi, and 3) justify why they acted the way they have done. In the data there were occurrences of apology by celebrities (17), provision of explanation for their actions (19) and justification for their action or negative behaviour (21). It is noteworthy that most of the celebrities proffer justifications for their action when they made wrong impression on their audience. For example, one of the celebrities stated: *“you don’t always find out the fact”* to justify his action. Another stated: *“ohh please, I was sleeping...and could not have known what happened”*. In the two utterances, it is clear that the celebrities have skilfully and adequately provided useful information to correct wrong impression about their online personae and have gained the understanding of the opposition and the audience.

The orchestration of damage control for the purpose of self-representation coincide with the concept of self, and the rituals of interaction postulated by Goffman (1972), Ferguson (1981) and Halliday (1979). These rituals are often oriented towards sustenance of cordial relationships and better representation of self in a group or online platform such as Twitter.

Self-promotion

As the caption suggest, majority (47) of the celebrities are often engaged in self-promotion. In view of its relatedness to self-representation, most of the celebrities adopted it to sustain and manage positive impression. It also helped them to present a better and ideal self. Celebrities exhibited this approach to self-representation in two ways as underscored in Extract 12:

Extract 12

that is it...last year I donated 5k to the same orphanage.....(52)

yeah my ppl, I was at the accident scene and was able to send 3 people to the hospital and I heard two of them have been discharged.....(53)

That was splendid!I was with them on that trip to Las Vegas.....(54)

Extract 12, comprising (52) to (54) clearly, demonstrates celebrities' effort at self-promoting themselves. For example in (52), the phrase “*last year I donated 5k to the same orphanage*” informs the audience about his philanthropic orientation and his goodwill to fatherless or motherless children. It underscores his generosity to the deprived in Ghanaian society. The celebrity in (53) used the phrase: “*...was at the accident scene and was able to send 3 people to the hospital and I heard two of them have been discharged*” to clearly demonstrate his helpful and kind disposition. By means of the phrase, a clear message was conveyed: he is helpful and may help me if I am in trouble. Such a conclusion is reasonable, because if he can do it accident victims, who he is not familiar or know their background, then he can be of help to me too. This increases the celebrity's bond with his audience and become cognizant of his better or ideal self. On the other hand, the excerpt in (54) highlights an important way celebrities demonstrate that they are in the

exclusive group or are financially buoyant. Traveling to Las Vegas in a convoy of other celebrities demonstrates ones' status as a celebrity and more importantly deepens her fans' conviction about her popularity.

The finding is consistent with the result of a study by Rettberg (2009) and Herring (2018) that the affordances of social media facilitate the promotion of self and self-representation because unlike in face to face interaction, users can issue statements or tweets that cannot be fully verified and thereby present a better or ideal self to the audience.

Influence of Gender Variations on the Tweets of Ghanaian Celebrities

This section analyses gender influence on celebrities' posts on Twitter. The result of the analysis presented in this section is in relation to research question three. The primary focus of this question is to ascertain the type of influence gender differences exerts on the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities while interacting on Twitter with their fans or audience. In effect, this section provides ample insight regarding 1) why should an investigation be conducted into gender influence on Twitter as a social media platform? Are there some linguistic features associated with each of the sexes on social media? And if such linguistic features exist, what possible reasons could be influencing their usage by each of the sexes? Answers to these minor issues paved way for an adequate response to the third research question. I have highlighted some tweets that are representative of celebrities' posts with the view to examining the type of gender identity they construct. An in-depth analysis of the data, which involves the interaction between male and female celebrities with their fans or users on Twitter, is essential in view of the following tweets in Extract 13.

Extract 13

“*Pls o, its btr you gt al d fct*” (*Please o, its better you get all the fact*).....55

(Celeb@32, Male)

“*I dtlk it whnppl...*” (*I don’t like it when people...*).....56

(Celeb@36, Female)

“*I am a die-hard fan of Messi*”57

(Celeb@41, Male)

“*fnddnt wry, it shl be wl*” (*friend, don’t worry, it shall be well*)....58

(Celeb@39, Female)

Extract 13 with (55) – (58) entails statements of three celebrities on different occasions while online on Twitter platform. The male celebrity is seen exhibiting both feminine and masculine gender attributes while the female celebrity exhibited a masculine gender identity. The excerpt above underscores the need for an in-depth investigation into why the male celebrity exhibited two gender identities despite being a male. Likewise, why the female celebrity did exhibited masculine gender identity.

The differences in gender identity exhibited by the male and female celebrity are consistent with Tannen’s (1990) conception that to understand the nature of communication between male and female or along gender line, it is vital to conduct a cross-cultural analysis. By this, she claimed that women and men have distinct dialect or “genderlect” and it is prudent to understand how both sexes communicate with a view to developing mutual respect and understanding between the sexes (Tannen, 1990).

Tannen's study was conducted within the context of face-to-face interaction and similar studies have corroborated Tannen's findings on "genderlect". For example, Holmes (2007) posited that in human society, discussions and interactions are usually arranged around the notion that women and men are vastly different in terms of their capabilities, interests, desires, orientation, anatomies, language proficiency and communicative competence. Providing a clue to Tannen and Holme's findings, Ngula (2019) argued that as humans we do not see people as neutral entity, because all our activities, viewpoints, judgment and related activities are influenced by the societal norm regarding gender. Along with De Fina (2013) and Slezek (2018), Ngula (2019) stated that our language, both verbal and non-verbal, is usually influenced by gender and sexuality.

Emphasizing the need for continuous investigation into gender differences on social issues, Hall (2000) and Slezek (2018) indicated that gender identity is performative, dynamic, marked with fluidity and instability. With this, Hall and Slezek argued that it is vitally important to regular conduct investigation into the possibility of the influence of gender differences on several platforms or strata of human endeavor. Hall (2000) and Slezek (2018) claimed that people are prone to exhibiting different forms of gender identity. In fact, De Fina (2003) indicated that as a construct, gender identity is intricately complex that an individual at a certain occasion could exhibit feminine gender attributes while on another occasion or between intervening occasions exhibit masculine gender identity.

Providing a clue to why gender is unstable or prone to changes, Butler (1999) in consonance with Dietrich, Skakin, Khaleel, and Peute (2021),

observed that our gender does not often reflect what we are or our attributes, instead it is societal view of our actions in terms of its effect on people, our surrounding and the group we belong. This means both Butler (1999) and Dietrich et al. (2021) agreed that our being male or female does not necessarily dictate our gender identity, it is what we do, how we act, and how we communicate and interact with others as we carry out our activities.

While all the studies highlighted above were conducted within face-to-face situations or interactions, it is important to ascertain whether these claims about the influence of gender differences exists within social media platforms or they are restricted to face-to-face interactions. The findings of studies by Eckman, Fisher and Stifter (2012), Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) and Asogwa, Okeke, Gever and Ezeah (2020) indicated that there are several cases of gender differences on how male and female interact on social media. Eckman et al. (2012) discovered that “the way genders interact has stayed constant” (p. 3). This implies that differences in how male and female interact will always exist whether the medium is computer-mediated or face-to-face.

As indicated at the outset of this section, the gender identity that the male celebrities constructed coincides with the theoretical framework for this study since it coincides with Butler’s (1999) model that gender is performative and dynamic. It is also consistent with the findings of Eckman et al. (2012) and Dietrich et al. (2021) that gender is not stable and socially constructed, making it possible for an individual to negotiate several identities through their discourses, reflected in linguistic choices. For instance, in-depth analysis of (52): “*Pls o, its btr you gt al d fct*” (*Please o, its better you get all the fact*) revealed that Celeb@32, a male, made a statement synonymous with feminine

gender identity because in spite of the accusation leveled against him, he did not respond with expressions to establish his known status or strive to justify his behaviour, instead he prefaced his expression with “*please*” and added a statement that showed that he wants to continue a cordial relationship with the referent by stating “*it’s better you get all the fact*”.

By his tweet, Celeb@32 constructed a female gender identity because femininity is associated with making connections and sustaining relationships through the use of hedges or a statement indicating cooperative politeness (Tannen, 1990). Lending credence to Tannen’s (1990) statement, Slezek (2018), Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) and Asogwa et al. (2020) indicated that women often refrain from fighting or using statements that could break their relationship with others. Similarly, the young male celebrity in (38) could have retorted and used words that reflected his anger or a threat to his status, which is often associated with masculinity but, the young male celebrity in order to provide a good representation of himself, constructed feminine gender identity.

However, by his statement in (57) “*I am a die-hard fan of Messi*”, he constructed masculine gender identity because he used the expression (“I”) which is a personal pronoun and indicative of assertiveness. This is in harmony with the results of Ngula’s (2019) study in connection with gender differences and influence in social interactions where he stated that the construct “gender “is dominantly used to mean social differences...in many societies men are believed to be assertive...women are believed to be unassertive, passive, calm or collaborative” (p. 2). In line with Ngula (2019), the celebrity is a man and societal norms dictates that he constructs masculine

gender identity, as gender often does not refer to individual attributes but what the society associates with a particular gender. This is reflected in Schffrin's (1996) statement that "the form of our speech, the content of our stories, and our manner of speaking (including the use of discourse markers), are all sensitive indices not just of our personal selves, but also of our gender" (p. 57). In effect, celebrities' manner of posting or tweeting alongside the content of their tweets often reflects the nature of gender identity they are constructing.

A careful study of the expressions of Slezek (2018) and Ngula (2019) indicating that gender as social differences and dependent on our stance or action at a given time or occasion can be seen in (55) and (57) of Extract 13 where at one time the young male celebrity exhibited femininity and at another occasion, when they were discussing issues about football, he constructed masculine gender by asserting his status.

A close reading of Extract 13 in (56) "I dtlk it whnpl..." ("I don't like it when people...") and (58) "fnddnt wry, it shl be wl" ("friend, don't worry, it shall be well") reveals an important aspect of gender influences on Twitter. In (56), Celeb@36, though, a female, constructed masculine identity by using the personal pronoun "I" for assertiveness as well as using direct statement "*don't like it when people*". As indicated earlier, at this instance, the tweets of the female celebrity in (39) tally with attributes the society often associates with masculinity or men.

However, the tweet of Celeb@39, in (58) coincides with the biological sex of the celebrity and she negotiated feminine gender identity. Her statement: "fnddnt wry, it shl be wl" ("friend, don't worry, it shall be well")

reflects a female constructing feminine gender identity. She stated “*friend*” and “*it shall be well*”. The two expressions underscore her keen interest in sustaining her connection with the referent. Her tweet also showed her concern and best wishes for her friend. The content of the tweet tally with Tannen’s (1990) findings that women or feminine gender identity often use conversation or tweet to secure and maintain connection and they often use words void of anger or direct statements.

Considering the tweets in (55) to (58), involving the tweets of the young male celebrity and the two female celebrities, it can be inferred that gender identity is not our attributes but our behaviour, that is, the way we act regarding an issue. Notwithstanding, there is evidence that gender influences the tweets of the celebrities. The tweets of Celeb@41 in (57) and Celeb@39 in (56) support the claims of Tannen (1990), Ngula (2019), and Asogwa et al. (2020) that women are cooperative and emphasize connections while men are assertive and place importance on status. However, the tweets of Celeb@32 in (55) and Celeb@36 in (56) are inconsistent with their findings instead, they are in consonance with the claims of Hall (2000), De Fina (2003) and Slezek (2018) that gender is performative, unstable, constantly changing and extremely complex.

A careful study of celebrities’ use of modal and semi-modal provides insight into gender differences in connection with tweets on Twitter. The following tweets in Extract 14 (59-62) highlight the type of connection between gender and celebrities’ choice of modal and semi-modal in their tweets.

Extract 14

“It wldhvbn good” (“It would have been good”).....59

(Celeb@14, Female)

“I tk we shldrvts 1n” (“I think we should remove this one”).....60

(Celeb@23, Male)

“He mst be cful” (He must be careful”).....61

(Celeb@18, Male)

“I wiprabt it” (I will pray about it”).....62

(Celeb@31, Female)

A careful analysis of Extract 14 in (59) to (62) reveals that the use of modals and semi-modals by male and female celebrities reflected gender influence. For example in (59) Celeb@14 stated: “It [wld] hvbn good” (“It [would] have been good”). Similarly, Celeb@31 in (62) “I [wi] prabt it” (“I [will] pray about it”). The statements of Celeb14 and Celeb@31 showed that they used hypothetical and prediction modals as a form of cooperative politeness to create a basis for hope and cordial relationship with the referent.

In the first instance, the celebrity did not want to say the referent acted wrongly rather she employed the hypothetical modal to show that a different result could have occurred if it was done differently. This is consistent with Tannen (1990), Ngula (2019), Eckman et al. (2012), and Karatsoli & Nathanail (2020) that women tweet on social media with the objective of connecting to other people and maintaining relationship. In the two instances, the two women used tweets that conveyed their deep involvement with the referents and wished them good tidings, thereby maintaining the socially constructed feminine gender identities which is inconsistent with Hall (2000),

Slezek (2020) and Asogwa et al. (2020) that gender is unstable or fluid and constantly changes.

The deep involvement and love for others displayed by the women influenced the use of hedges or other statements that showed their concern and solidarity. Luu (2018) claimed that modals as a form of cooperative politeness help in lowering face threatening acts. The prediction or volition modal in (62) “I [wi] prabt it” I [will] pray about it”) conveys a measure of hope to the referent and reflects the celebrity’s deep concern. This is in consonance with the finding of Nordquist (2019) and Allohami (2020) that modals often reveal the attitude or feelings of a speaker. By being positive and employing modals to demonstrate cooperative politeness to avoid face threatening acts, female celebrities successfully portray the better virtual persona through impression management.

Hence, in harmony with the formulated theoretical framework for this study, these celebrities’ choice of linguistic features (modals) made it possible to succeed in constructing an ideal representation of self and gender identity. It is noteworthy that the framework coincides with the notion that linguistic choices are influenced by gender as celebrities consciously carry out impression management on Twitter.

A closer look at the above tweets further underscores gender influence on the tweets of the male celebrities. For example, their tweets in (60) (“I tk we [shld] rvts 1n” “I think we [should] remove this one” and (61) “He [mst] be cful” He [must] be careful”) are representative of the command or obligatory modal. This harmonizes with Tannen’s (1990) finding that the focus of men, when they write or tweet, is to ensure their status, and not

connection. Tannen also stated that men could assert their authority if their status is threatened or opposed.

An in-depth analysis of the data also reveals that both male and female celebrities used demonstrative pronoun in their tweets. The following tweets in Extract 15 are representative of demonstrative pronoun in the data.

Extract 15

“wll he is not bd oo,...ths Kwame is t mch” (“well he is not bad oo, ...this Kwame is too much”).....63

(Celeb@26, Female)

“...no I don’t see him lk tat o...as 4 thtKobinahstgs...” (“no, I don’t see him like that oo,...as for that Kobina his things...”).....64

(Celeb@26, Female)

“thsgs r nt cl @ al” (“those guys are not cool at all”).....65

(Celeb@43, Male)

A close examination of Extract 15 in (63) - (65) reveals an important aspect of gender differences and influence on celebrity tweets. It is noteworthy that the three celebrities used demonstrative pronoun in different ways. This linguistic feature (demonstrative pronoun) promotes cohesion and is usually influenced by three factors which Peeters et al. (2021) described as the physical distance, psychological factors, and referent intrinsic attributes.

In harmony with Peeters et al. argument, it is appropriate to conclude that in (63), (64) and (65), though, celebrities were influenced by psychological factors, critical evaluation of their statements as reflected in Extract 15 has gender implications or influence.

For instance, Celeb@26 in (63) stated: “ths Kwame is t mch” (“This Kwame is too much”). The use of the demonstrative pronoun “this” in this context suggests that she appreciated and valued the referent and wanted to make connection. Viewing it from gender perspective, by using “this” for Kwame, the young female celebrity constructed a feminine gender identity. One of the attributes of feminine gender identity is relating stories or interesting issues concerning her hero or heroine and someone she admired (Tannen, 1990). Hence, she wants her fans and other users to be aware of Kwame as someone of untainted reputation that she admired; hence, the use of the demonstrative pronoun. Lending credence to such conclusion, Celeb@26, further stated that Kwame is “*too much*”, which, in the local parlance, signifies admiration. This is consistent with Peeters et al’s (2021) finding that if the interlocutor psychologically perceives a referent as a friend or ally, he or she uses a demonstrative pronoun that implies closeness such as “this”.

Considering Celeb@26’s statement in (64) “*as 4 thtKobinahstgs...*” (“...as for that Kobina his things...”) within the context of Ngula’s (2019) statement revealed that as human we do not see people as neutral entity, because all our activities, viewpoints, judgment and related activities are influenced by the societal norm. Though Celeb@26 has earlier praised Kwame and used “this” for him, signifying closeness. In (64), it is noteworthy that Celeb@26, refers to Kobina using “that”. By using the demonstrative pronoun “that”, Celeb@26 underscore’s psychological distance between her and the referent (Kobina). Gender influence in relation to Celeb@26 is debatable.

Considering Celeb@26's statement from Tannen's (1990) perspective, it could be construed as constructing masculine gender identity. Tannen indicated that male gender identity is marked with telling and direct statement without hedges or cooperative politeness. However, it could also be argued from the findings of Zimmermann et al. (2022), that societal norm influenced her linguistic choice since she could have been influenced by the tweet of other users regarding Kobina.

I strongly agree with Tannen (1999) and Ngula (2019) that Celeb@26 was influenced by gender in (64). Celeb@26 constructed feminine identity in spite of the comments of other users. She disputed the general notion about Kwame by stating: "wll he is not bd oo" ("Well, he is not bad oo..."). Similarly, she disputed the positive comment about Kobina by stating: "...no I don't see him lk tat o" ("I don't see him like that oo..."). A close reading of her statement in relation with the two individuals revealed that her choice of linguistic features was deliberate and for the one she admired (Kwame) she used linguistic choices that constructed feminine identity while she preferred linguistic features that negotiated masculine identity in relation to the one she doesn't admire irrespective of the prevailing opinion.

Eckman et al. (2012) and Asogwa et al. (2020) also observed that on social media, men are often interested in their status, while women are interested in building relationship through the use of hedges and statements that promote cordial relationships. Since there is no human being that is neutral, it can be said that, Celeb@26 statement was influenced can be said to be truly influenced by gender.

The fluctuating or changing identity of Celeb@26 is consistent with the result of studies by Halls (2000), De Fina (2013), Slezek (2018) and Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) that gender is never static, rather, it is performative, constantly changing so that one person could construct different persona online with different group of people or individuals. The finding is in line with the formulated theoretical framework that, through self-representation, human' often present a persona that is appealing to the audience he or she is interacting with. This is often done by choice of linguistic features. As a result, Celeb@26 presented an appealing online personality through impression management and self-representation when interacting with Kwame and his friends and to also highlight her deep connection with Kwame. However, she presented a male gender identity to dissuade others from seeing her as a friend of Kobina whom she does not admire.

Analysis of Celeb@43 statement in (65) “thsgr r nt cl @ al” (“those guys are not cool at all”) also demonstrated the influence of gender. The use of the demonstrative pronoun “those” implies psychological distance or negative perception of the referent (“guys”). The statement was also very direct and telling. In tweeting he used a rare symbol that is not often very common in the data - @. A cursory view of Celeb@43 could suggest he is constructing a male gender attribute but, he is rather constructing a female gender identity. It is noteworthy that the young male celebrity used the word “guys” which according to Cain (2016), is an expression implying friendship, familiarity and most importantly, endearment. Hence, by combining the distal demonstrative “those” with “guys” a word of friendship or endearment, it can be said that

Celeb@43 used “guys” as cooperative politeness to reduce or tone down the face threatening words “*those*” “*not cool at all*”. Cooperativeness and use of words fostering connections and lessening face threatening acts, according to Tannen (1990), is viewed as a major attribute of feminine gender identity. As a result, it is conceptually accurate to say that Celeb@43 was constructing female gender identity instead of a male gender identity by virtue of what he tweeted while online and this has a serious implication for this study.

In his effort at constructing impression management, Celeb@43 wanted his fans and other followers to know he dislikes the attitude of a group of people. However, he could not have realized the implication of the linguistic feature he used as well as the grammatical and psychological implications of “guys”. This, therefore, underscores the relevance of CMDA in identifying his discourse patterns (Herring, 2004).

Herring (2004) agreed with Goffman theoretical framework that “discourse exhibits recurrent patterns” (p 4). While it is true that celebrities are aware or consciously craft these recurrent patterns or features to aid self-representation, Goffman theory of self reveals that in an effort to conduct impression management, users or celebrities may be unaware or unconscious of the recurring linguistic feature they are using which could make or mar their efforts at impression management (Herring, 2014, 2018). Hence, though, Celeb@43 intended constructing a male gender identity, he ended up constructing a female gender identity in view of a close reading of his tweet. This finding lends credence to the result of Alsop, Fitzsimmons and Lennon’s (2002) study that “gender is part of an identity woven from a complex and specific social whole and requiring very specific and local readings” (p. 22).

Thus, by means of specific and local readings, relevant gender implications were identified.

In brief, findings of the study revealed that gender differences influence Ghanaian celebrities' tweet on Twitter. However, there are certain contradictions and inconsistencies regarding what constitute male and female gender influences or identities. The study discovered that while there are male and female celebrities that were influenced by the societal conception of gender attributes in posting their tweets, there are several others that construct opposite gender attributes.

Therefore, this study agrees with the findings of several research works that encouraged close reading, content analysis, and specific local readings of gender related issue so as to decipher whether such influences are present. This study argues that gender is fluid and constantly changing and that it is prudent to refrain from attributing certain features to masculinity or femininity, as findings of the study have demonstrated that men and women react to things in varying ways, depending on circumstances, positions and activities. However, since there is no neutral person as far as gender influences are concerned, specific local reading and critical evaluation of the content of the writing or speeches of men and women should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The study has shown that gender influences are subjective and cannot be determined, except through in-depth analysis and investigation.

Chapter Summary

The chapter reported the analysis and discussion of the findings using the framework of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) which entails content analysis of the retrieved data. The result and discussion

demonstrated that issues involving the use of Twitter require specific local readings concerning users' approach to self-representation as well as the extent to which gender influences their posts. This chapter has also disproved certain societal norms regarding gender identities as well as highlighted certain recurrent discourse patterns not readily discernible that celebrities use for self-representation so as to ensure the portrayal of an appealing online persona and self-presentation.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

This chapter comprises a summary of the entire study, conclusions reached, and result-oriented recommendations based on the outcome of the study. All these are oriented towards showing how Ghanaian celebrities construct self-representation on Twitter with a view to providing ample insight into the linguistic features, gender implications and approaches celebrities adopt in self-representation on Twitter.

Summary

The objective of the study was to investigate how Ghanaian celebrities construct self-representation on Twitter. The study was guided by three research objectives: 1) to explore the dominant linguistic patterns that characterise the tweets of Ghanaian Celebrities, 2) to find out the different ways by which Ghanaian celebrities represent themselves on Twitter, and 3) to examine how gender variations influence the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities.

The study was purely qualitative in nature as it focused on the use of Computer mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) as the analytical framework for the study. In line with CMDA, content analysis was used to examine and analyse the tweets of 50 celebrities in Ghana (25 males and 25 females) on Twitter. The use of Multi-stage sampling technique, comprising purposive and proportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the celebrities (who will provide data for the study) and select the relevant data over a period of three months. The analysis was entirely qualitative with a

view to deepening understanding of Ghanaian celebrities approach to self-representation on social media.

Key Findings

Dominant Linguistic Features in the Tweets of Ghanaian Celebrities

Based on Extracts 1-8, the study identified 1) Adverbials, 2) Pronouns, 3) Abbreviated forms, 4) Modal and Semi-modal, and 5) Tense and aspect markers. Adverbial such as “Hopefully”, “intentionally”, “Even”, “deliberately”, and “again” were used to underscore celebrities’ attitude feelings and concern about impression management and self-representation. Celebrities used distal and proximal demonstrative pronoun such as “this”, and “that” to underscore their personal opinion about fans and promote a better online persona with them.

Abbreviated forms such as “Wlcmsn”, “hwaryu” and “Y n li t 2gether”, “Wl Cm 2moro” were innovatively used to save time, transcend the 140 character limit, and maintain the ideal self with their fans. It is worth noting that celebrities did not use locative or manner adverbials as sentence initials which, grammarians indicated, are often clumsy and ungrammatical. Celebrities’ avoidance of locative or manner adverbial at sentence initial coincides with a naturally occurring phenomenon that speakers or social media users are unaware they are using it continually in their posts.

The study further revealed that physical factor, psychological factor, and referent-attribute or intrinsic factor influence the use of demonstratives by celebrities. The study discovered that the linguistic features such as demonstratives, tense and aspect markers as well as modal and semi-modal were used as a result of the purpose of the discourse, effort at conducting

impression management and gender. Findings of the study revealed that, contrary to the findings of several studies, the linguistic features adopted by celebrities allowed them to adequately express themselves as well as construct self-representation.

Self-representation by Ghanaian Celebrities on Twitter:

Result of the study in Excerpts 9-12 showed that Ghanaian celebrities used supportive or declarative salutation, creativity, ingratiation, damage control and self-promotion to continually conduct impression management and sustain ritual equilibrium with their fans and online users. The study discovered that celebrities were creative by employing innovative word combinations, condensed forms alongside skilfully orienting their tweets to boost their online persona. Ingratiation was used in the form of exaggerations, flattery and posting of tweets that conform to general opinion or underscore an impressive aspect of the celebrity's family, friends or colleagues. Damage control was employed by celebrities to maintain self-representation through the use of apologizing for their mistake, justification for their action and allusion alibi. Self-promotion was also used for impression management through linguistic features that highlight social connections such as affiliation to an exclusive group or personality as well as tweets, showing that they are financially buoyant.

Influence of Gender Differences on the Tweets of Ghanaian Celebrities:

Findings of the study in Extract 13-15 demonstrated that gender influences Ghanaian celebrities' linguistic choices as they make efforts in constructing self-representation. Celebrities used hedges, proximal demonstrative pronoun, cooperative politeness, and hypothetical and

prediction modals to construct feminine gender identity with a view to presenting admirable persona online. The study also discovered that celebrities employed personal pronouns, direct statements, distal demonstrative pronouns, command or obligatory modals to construct male gender identity.

The study further discovered that in an effort to present an ideal or admirable persona online, celebrities constructed several gender identities underscoring the dynamic and non-static nature of gender. It was also demonstrated that because of maintaining an appealing persona online, celebrities had to adopt masculine or feminine gender identity in different social settings as the need arose.

However, there are certain contradictions and inconsistencies regarding what constitute male and female gender influences or identities. The study discovered situations when a male or a female constructs opposite gender attribute. While there are male and female celebrities that were influenced by the societal conception of gender attributes in the data, there are several others that constructed opposite gender attributes. As a result, this study agrees with the findings of several studies that encouraged close reading, content analysis and specific local readings of gender related issue so as to decipher whether such influences are present.

Result of the study revealed that gender is fluid and constantly changing and that it is prudent to refrain from attributing certain traits to masculinity or femininity. As findings of the study have demonstrated, men and women react to things in varying ways, depending on the circumstances, positions or activities. However, since there is no neutral person as far as gender

influences are concerned, specific local reading and critical evaluation of the content of the writing or speeches of men and women should be considered on a case by case basis. The study has shown that gender influences are subjective and cannot be determined, except through in-depth analysis and investigation.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities were dominated by linguistic choices that fostered self-representation online. These include adverbials, abbreviated forms, modals and semi-modals and tense and aspect markers. While adverbials were used in underscoring positive attitude, feelings and concerns, abbreviated forms were innovatively written to transcend character limitation on Twitter and adequately present an appealing persona online. Simple present tense and compound verbs were also common in celebrities' tweets.

Ghanaian celebrities represent themselves through the use of linguistic choices that lend to creativity, damage control, supportive or declarative salutation, ingratiation and self-promotion. Celebrities creatively construct an appealing persona on Tweet by using innovative word combinations, condensed forms, flattery, exaggeration and choice of linguistic features that promote general opinion or highlight impressive aspect of a celebrity or his friends, family or colleagues.

Gender influences were detected in the tweets of Ghanaian celebrities because in achieving self-representation they employ linguistic choice matching either masculine gender identity or feminine gender identity under varying circumstances and discussion. In effect, in an effort to maintain their

celebrity status and good impression management, they negotiate the best form of gender identity, through their linguistic choices, that promote an appealing persona online, thereby lending credence to the socially constructed nature of gender.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are appropriate. It was discovered that most of the celebrities employed Standard English during the process of self-representation and adopted innovative forms to promote appealing persona. It is, therefore, recommended that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers should consider Twitter as a veritable platform for enhancing students' academic capacity for composition writing. This will foster the adoption of linguistic features that limit verbosity, ambiguity and enhance brevity and succinctness of expression.

The study discovered that celebrities were adept at transcending the 140 character limitation on Twitter while conveying meaningful information to their fans. It is, therefore, recommended that students should be provided ample opportunity to improve their digital literacy through increased familiarity with the unique features on Twitter. This will also enhance their communicative competence and capacity at interacting with colleagues on an international level. Stakeholders of education can also use Twitter platform to foster civility among youths and create social awareness on how youth can shun social vices and embrace virtues so as to become responsible adults in contributing to sustainable environment in Ghana.

The study discovered that gender differences influence celebrities' tweets on Twitter. Since some female celebrities constructed male gender

identities by choice of linguistic features they adopt, it is recommended that stakeholders of education should discourage the negative stereotypical norms or attitude, rife in primary and middle-school education and Ghanaian society at large, that the girl child is meant for chores and the Kitchen (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011; Rubio, 2018), should be discouraged. The Girl child should be helped to thrive scholastically with the prospect of building an egalitarian society.

This study adopted qualitative research paradigm as the research design and as a result, findings cannot be generalized. It is, therefore, recommended that a study of this stature can be conducted by using mixed-methods design. This is relevant because the use of linguistic features can be measured and evaluated statistically using quantitative paradigm while the motive or influences on use of features can be ascertained through qualitative research paradigm.

This study used tweets of Ghanaian celebrities as data and Twitter as the research area. Future study could employ self-report survey, tweets and interview guide with a larger sample, such as 200, to ascertain how university students conduct self-representation on Twitter, in view of their potential for promoting national growth after graduation.

This study used CMDA for analysing relevant data during the course of the study. Future study could use Critical Discourse Analysis or Multimodal Discourse Analysis to conduct similar studies within different contexts.

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