

SELLING PHILANTHROPY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ‘RARE IMPACT FUND WITH SEPHORA’ INSTAGRAM CAMPAIGN

Cahyaratu Ayuningtyas¹
Suhandoko²

^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel, Indonesia

suhandoko@uinsa.ac.id

Abstract

Famous brands often incorporate charitable initiatives into their business strategies. While such practice is often perceived as genuine corporate social responsibility, it may also function as marketing tools to enhance the brand prestige and even profitability. This study examined how Rare Beauty, a renowned cosmetic brand owned by Selena Gomez, an American actress, utilizes social media campaigns to encourage consumer purchase under the guise of supporting mental health awareness. By analysing three campaign videos featuring Selena Gomez, released in October 4 and 10, 2023, this study employed Normal Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model to reveal how campaign narratives cloaks capitalist motives in humanitarianism rhetoric. Additionally, public perception was also evaluated through an examination of 21 most-liked comments on the campaign posts. The study demonstrates how the brand capitalizes on public altruism to increase its corporate image. At the textual level, Selena Gomez consistently initiates her campaign by addressing mental health issues, followed by explicit calls to purchase products. Her use of inclusive “we,” bold claims such as “100% of the profits donated,” and emotive words (e.g., “together,” “incredible,” and “yummy”) serve to obscure the hidden commercial agenda. On the discourse level, Instagram’s features, such as the inclusion of celebrity (happens to be the company owner) voice-overs, swipeable slides, and call-to-action links, were strategically used to construct the purchasing act as a morally and even commendable form of charity. At the social practice level, the study found that the packaging of capitalism within humanitarianism is driven by the tendency to target women through emotional appeals, particularly by utilizing social issues tied to women empowerment. Thus, linking cosmetic purchase to social causes seems to be an effective marketing strategy. Unfortunately, an analysis of netizen reactions reveals polarized responses; while many criticize Selena Gomez for being hypocrite, by advocating for mental health while remaining silent on the physical and mental health of war victims in Gaza, few demonstrate awareness of the capitalist mechanisms masked by humanitarianism discourse.

Keywords: Humanitarianism, Capitalism, Social Media Campaign

INTRODUCTION

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has evolved in the last decades. It initially started as day-to-day charity teamups, and now it has been a key part of business branding. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where users can directly shop while engaging with video content, have become key spaces for these “purpose-driven” campaigns in the beauty industry (Darmatama & Erdiansyah, 2021). Many companies, including

beauty labels, utilize this affordance by pairing product imagery with the commitment to support social issues, such as environment, body positivity, and most recently mental health advocacy (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Fortunati et al., 2020). Recent surveys show that nearly 70 percent of Gen Z consumers prefer brands that acknowledge mental health issues, thus, positioning wellness as a central theme in modern corporate philanthropy (Gomes et al., 2023).

Studies have shown that CRM can significantly boost buying decisions, but only when customers deem the initiatives authentic. A 2024 meta-analysis of influencer advertising found perceived authenticity is a key channel from cause messaging to follower trust, while over-endorsement produced the opposites (Cheah et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2025). Similar studies have also demonstrated that brand activism acts as a double-edged sword, where it can mobilise supportive publics yet also intensify scrutiny of profit aims and historical conduct (Podnar & Golob, 2024). Most of these scholarly works, however, only focus on attitude-behaviour links and metrics. Little is known how linguistics choices weave humanitarianism into commercial appeals.

Rare Beauty, the cosmetics brand founded by Selena Gomez, presents an example of how mental-health advocacy is woven into commercial branding. Since its launch in 2020, the brand has positioned itself around a strong social mission through the “Rare Impact Fund,” pledging \$100 million toward mental-health services by 2030. While media coverage and corporate reports often highlight this purpose-driven strategy as a key factor in Rare Beauty’s commercial success, academic research has yet to critically examine how the brand’s Instagram content blends humanitarian messaging with product promotion or how followers make sense of that blend. This study aims to investigate: How does Rare Beauty use language on Instagram to communicate concern for mental health while simultaneously promoting its products?

Literary reviews

Nowadays, health discourse has shifted beyond clinics, with it becoming part of everyday life, including in everything we watch, buy, and wear. Binkley (2014) noticed

this trends in the nineties where TV shows and books began to prescribe on how to be happy. This is in line with the rise of the positive psychology, which “maps out, with the same measure of scientific precision applied to mental pathologies, the psychological states identified with joy, flourishing, expressive well-being, and happiness itself” (p. 25). Instead of talking with therapies, customers are encouraged to turn to products and media to help them manage their emotions. Technological advances have also taken role in keeping us fit by treating feeling like numbers. Today we are provided with so many apps that can measure our sleep, mood, and stress and suggest the therapies that we can independently pursue(Lupton, 2016). All this has set the stage for the studies of emotional capitalism where Illouz (2007) explains as the strategy the companies today in attempt to sell their customers emotions. For an illustration, when you buy a lipstick, it is not only about the colour, but it also shows self-care or boost your mood.

In today’s increasingly competitive global market, Banet-Weiser (2012) points out how companies are adopting various strategies to gain customer trust, one of which is by “utilizing key strategies of emotional engagement” to make themselves as presentable as authentic (p. 72). They seem to convey that their products or services genuinely satisfies the emotions and needs of the customers.

Philanthrocapitalism, term coined by Bishop and Green (2008), refers to the act of giving money to good causes. Big donations and charity efforts have shifted more business-like. It is planned carefully and shown off publicly, partly to build good image of the company. Celebrities have also played a role in promoting this effort, especially when the business involves those who are engaged in social cause. A survey by Brockington (2015) found that when a celebrity endorses a product and it is tied to a charity, people are more likely to trust the ad. However, when audit was applied to investigate the Instagram post, it found that many brands claimed to donate, but did not clearly say about how much what impact it had.

Van Leeuwen (2007) argues that companies build legitimating stories to justify the company social claims: authorisation moral evaluation, rationalisation, and mythopoesis. Authorization refers to the acknowledgment of the experts or respected

people. Moral evaluation means the saying that the act is the right thing to do justified with logical reasons or rationalisation. The last is the use of mythopoesis where inspiring stories are involved in the narrative. Studies show that brands often mix and match these strategies depending on the situation. For example, fast-fashion companies present themselves as applying low carbon emission by saying “We are using less fuel” or using sustainability claims by saying “We care about fairness”.

Today, mental health has been discussed a lot online, not only by doctors or therapists, but also common people. Qualitative work on online forum shows that users often share advice and check each other’s progress. Carlisle et al. (2024) found that netizens commented each other’s posts as if they treat self-care as a networked routine. Meanwhile, news and media have noticed a trend called therapy-speak, where terms like “triggered” and “setting boundaries” are frequently used on social media (Eleanor Morgan, 2023). While it helps people talk more about mental health, scholars worry that these serious terms begin losing its core meaning. Even worse, The Guardian has found that half of top mental health videos on TikTok contain misinformation, ranging from quick-fix therapy or mis-labelled symptoms (Rachel Hall & Rachel Keenan, 2025).

All of these studies have demonstrated how linking brands with social cause can be both plausible and risky: consumers are primed to accept retail remedies for mental health problems, but also are technically and culturally equipped to fact-check such claims for authenticity. Despite these abundant studies, research on how linguistic mechanism is utilized to enable beauty brands to invite consumers to view a purchasing act as an act of mental health advocacy. This study aims to investigate how Rare Beauty uses language in their Instagram posts to express concern for mental health while selling its products.

Underlying theories

Fairclough proposed three-dimensional model to reveal how every text has three inseparable dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice (2015). His framework has been proven reliable across studies, such as policy, media, and marketing because it links micro structure of the text, such as lexis, syntax, and cohesion to how the

text is distributed to how the text represent the social conditions, ideologies and power relations. The first dimension is text. In text analysis, researchers describe the lexical choice, grammar, and cohesion to investigate the pattern of linguistic item. The second dimension, discursive practice, investigates how the text is produced (i.e., using legal or academic documents, using expert quotes, or using slogans from earlier campaigns), distributed (i.e. using social media, using national or affiliated mainstream media), and consumed (likes, shares, comments). In the third dimension, social practices put the event within a wider structure of ideology and power. Researchers consider the cultural norms, economic models, and historical development that define what can be said and how it will be read.

METHODOLOGY

Research method

This study employed a qualitative research design with Fairclough's three-dimensional model CDA for analysing the data. This model allows us to move beyond words, to how the post is put together and shared and finally reaches the wider business culture it supports. The data was taken from three official reels of Rare Beauty's Instagram posted on 4 and 10 October 2023. We watched the videos, transcribed every spoken line. To see how the viewers reacted, we also collected 21 comments with the most likes. User names were made pseudonym to keep them private. We then identified the key word and grammar choices, such as pronouns like *we*, firm verbs like *will*, and commands such as *join*. We also identified lexical choices that contained imperative, persuasion, commercial objectives, and emotive words. We then looked at the production features by focusing how Selena Gomez's voice over guides viewers from care to purchase. Finally, we read the results against wider perspectives of emotional capitalism and brand authenticity.

The following is presented the transcript of the three videos:

| | |
|---------|---|
| Video 1 | Hi Rare Beauty It's Selena Gomez, I'm honored to share on world mental health day October 10th. Sephora will be donating 100% of Rare Beauty sales to the Rare Impact Fund for 24 hours to increase access to mental health resources and education for young people around the world. I started Rare |
|---------|---|

| | |
|---------|--|
| | Beauty along with the Rare Impact Fund three years ago with the mission to expand mental health resources to young people and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. Since 2020 we have provided resources to 25 global grantees who have done incredible work towards this mission, we still have so much work to do and I'm honored to have Sephora join us in our mission. Help us reach our goal by shopping Rare Beauty at Sephora online or in-store on October 10th. Together we can make rare impact. |
| Video 2 | Come with me to Sephora for Make a Rare Impact Day. I'm going to the Rare Beauty section. I've spent way too much time at the Sephora before just for fun, I'm going to check out Rare Beauty. So if I was shopping Rare Beauty for the first time, here's a few things that I would get. Here, we're going to do the Warm Wishes Effortless Bronzer Stick. This is so funny. I like the shade Happy Sol. Because it feels really like yummy on, and then I would go to the Positive Light Liquid Luminizer and my colors is mesmerize! There they are, they so pretty. My little pride and joy, my liquid blush! And I would probably get it in Hope. Okay. Let's see. Oh, this one. This one's amazing. This is my Perfect Strokes Universal Volumizing Mascara. It feels so good. It does not run. And then I would suggest the Perfect Strokes Longwear Gel Eyeliner. That does not move, but it's also very easy to take off. I'm going to get it in all three colors, which would be black, true brown. Compassion. Those are some things I would try. I think I should go check this out now. |
| Video 3 | Today is the day! It is World Mental Health Day and Sephora is donating 100% of Rare Beauty sales to the Rare Impact Fund for 24 hours, starting right now! The Rare Impact Fund is Rare Beauty's commitment to providing mental health resources and support to young people around the world. Join me today, October 10th to make a Rare Impact by shopping Rare Beauty at Sephora online or in-store, thank you! |

Humanitarianism Appeals for Commercial Gains

Our findings show that Selena Gomez consistently use linguistic strategy across all reels. The following is our results of textual analysis, discursive practice and sociocultural practice in Rare Beauty Impact initiative.

Textual Analysis

Our analysis found that Selena Gomez consistently uses linguistic items, such as (i) the use of personal and inclusive pronouns, (ii) mental health vocabulary, (iii) donation terms, and (iv) emotive words to make the customer trust the initiative.

The use of personal and inclusive pronoun “we”

Our analysis reveals Selena Gomez uses two alternating pronominal clusters together working to combine humanitarianism message and the commercial appeal. The use of personal pronoun “I” functions to emphasize personal experience and commitment, and then shift to inclusive pronouns “we/us/our” to invite customers to play role in mental health mission, and at the same time, to buy the product. In the first part of Video 1, Selena positions herself as the driving force behind the initiative:

“Hi Rare Beauty, it’s Selena Gomez, **I’m** honored to share on World Mental Health Day...”

“**I** started Rare Beauty along with the Rare Impact Fund three years ago with the mission to expand mental health resources...”

The use of personal pronoun “I” serves to show to the audience that the initiative was motivated by her personal experience rather than a corporate strategy. This self-reference appears three times (one is by mentioning name) in Video 1 and then ten times in Video 2, which align with what Banet-Weiser refers to as a “narrative of authenticity,” where the brand’s appeal is grounded in the personal story of the owner. Once the emotional framework is established, the discourses shift to inclusive personal pronoun (we/our/us), as described in the following excerpt:

“Since 2020 **we** have provided resources to 25 global grantees ... **we** still have so much work to do...”

“Help us reach our goal by shopping Rare Beauty at Sephora online or in-store on October 10th.”

The first “we” combines the brand with past donors (“have provided”), the second marks the future collective work (“still have...work to do) followed by “us/our” positioning the viewers inside an unfinished collective project and linking the audience participation to the act of purchasing. This shift is apparent in the closing line “Together we can make Rare Impact.” The phrase “together we” concludes the impression that if audience buy the products, they have participated in achieving the collective goal.

The same pattern also is also found in the other two videos, where Selena starts her campaign with personal experience and then shifts to collective effort with the commercial appeal to purchase the product. In video 2 she starts with “I’m going to the Rare Beauty section... like the shade Happy Sol”. Although this may seem like a personal product endorsement that highlight an item Selena enjoys herself, she subtly adds an inclusive line: “We’re going to do the Warm Wishes Effortless Bronzer Stick,” as if she draws viewers alongside her shopping cart, reinforcing the notion that her selecting of a product is a shared experience.

Video 3 also shows the same pattern where Selena concludes her campaign with general deictic explanation of the donation, followed by personal invitation “Join me today” and a collective imperative “make a Rare Impact”. The alternation from personal to inclusive pronouns suggests that the brand attempts to naturalize the authority while minimizing the perceived distance with the consumer.

The use of mental health vocabulary

Our analysis also found that Selena frequently uses the mental health-related vocabulary, such as “mental health,” “resources,” “education,” “support,” “stigma,” “access,” and “impact.” Both Video 1 and 3 include the invitation to donate beginning with the date marker “World Mental Health Day” which seem to have dual purpose: to provide globally recognized context that legitimises the donation and to position audience in a commemorative situation.

After setting the calendar frame, the narrative offers a concrete cause: “increase access to mental health resources and education” (Video 1) and “providing mental health resources and support” (Video 3). The term “resources” calls for real tangible

services (such as counselling service or educational materials), while “support” widens the scope to emotional aid. The use of these value-loaded nouns gives the impression that financial transaction turns directly into social benefit despite the non-transparent mechanism.

The only negative-related vocabulary used appears in Video 1 where Selena mentions “stigma,” asserting that it is a social barrier that needs to tackle with. The use of such term makes the impression that the brand wants to present themselves as fund provider but also an agent of social change. This seems to align with Illouz’s emotional capitalism, where products are offered as a toll for overcoming social barriers.

The use of emotive words

Different from Video 1 and 3 which contains mental-health related vocabulary, Video 2 includes more emotive words when Selena invites the audience for the product tour. In Video 1, Selena compliments the initiative grantees for having done “**incredible** work towards this mission.” The use of the term “incredible” seems to valorise the achievement without any evidential metrics. This strategy aims to invite more audience’s trust to the donation. In Video 2, while doing her make-up tour in Sephora, Selena shifts her lexical choice to words that evoke texture, look and feel to endorse the product.

“This shade Happy Sol feels really **yummy** on.”

“[The luminizers] are so **pretty**.”

“Oh, this one’s **amazing**.”

“It feels so **good**. It does not run.”

All these adjectives project an immediate sensory reward rather than technical specifications. This lexical choice turns the cosmetic use into an emotional event. As the saying goes, “Don’t sell products. Sell emotions.” The intensifiers like “so” and “really” heighten the narrative and create a conversational tone which can improve the perception of relatability and authenticity.

Imperative Positioned after Empathy Statements

Each video has consistently shown Selena’s moves from shared values to an

explicit call to act. In Video 1, Selena concludes the explanatory section “I started Rare Beauty … with the mission to expand mental-health resources to young people” with a directive: “**Help** us reach our goal by **shopping** Rare Beauty at Sephora online or in-store on October 10th.” The directive “help” and “shopping” appears after Selena frames the collective concerns of tackling mental health issue. The preposition “by” links the collective purpose “help us reach our goal” with a commercial appeal “shopping rare Beauty.” This suggests that the act of purchasing is actually an act of participating in social cause.

This is also noticed in Video 3, where Selena includes the time marker to add the encouragement: “**Join me** today, October 10th, to **make** a Rare Impact by **shopping** Rare Beauty at Sephora online or in-store, thank you!” The imperative “join” is paired with the phrase “today, October 10th” which marks the urgency and set the duration limit for the audience to participate in the donation. The closing “Thank you” softens the directive tone, reshaping the command as a shared endeavour instead of a top-down order.

In Video 2, although it is more like an invitation to product tour, the imperative scheme still exists in the opening line: “Come with me to Sephora for Make a Rare Impact Day.” Although less forceful, the use of imperative “come” positions the audience as active partner in the shared mission. The use of these imperatives is strengthened with the high-certain modality to improve the trust.

High-Certainty Modality

When Selena talks about its fundraising mechanism, she assertively mentions it with no hesitation. In Video 1, she announces: “Sephora **will** be donating 100 percent of Rare Beauty sales to the Rare Impact Fund for twenty-four hours.” In this statement, the auxiliary “will” signals a future event that is already agreed, while the number “100 percent” intensifies the commitment. The statement is framed as if the fund transfer is a hundred-percent guaranteed although the mechanism is not explained.

In Video 3, Selena heightens the assurance level by shifting the future to the present: ““Sephora **is donating** 100% of Rare Beauty sales to the Rare Impact Fund for 24 hours, **starting right now!**” this progressive tense “is donating” makes the impressions that the proses has already begun in still continues. The use of adverbial

phrase “right now” limits the timeline, which suggests if you want to take part in the donation, buy the product now.

Discursive Practice

Our closer look into the production and distribution processes of the campaign found that Selena incorporated into at least three discourse spheres: corporate philanthropy, influencer marketing, and retail merchandising, all within the framework of a singular Insta event. Most pronounced is this hybrid in the choice of speaker. Selena Gomez literally makes up each of her statement and yet the fusion of boardroom and vlog is striking. She repeats mission statements in Video 1 and 3 as full clauses, such as “Sephora will be donating 100 percent of Rare Beauty sales to the Rare Impact Fund for twenty-four hours.” This is classic CSR press release syntax. In Video 2, though, she replaces her formality with a detailed narration of an in-store walkthrough, where she decorates her narration with adjectives like “yummy” and “so pretty.”

This shift encourages audiences to view the same person (Selena Gomez) as a credible founder and a relatable shopper, a double identity which scholars studying micro-celebrity entrepreneurship argue essential to boost audience trust. The blend of this voice is amplified by platform affordances. All three posts are in Reels format, which is prioritized for discovery by Instagram’s algorithm. The brand combines a moral cue and a purchase urging action within a single scroll, and it is greatly simplifying the thought process behind motives. The twenty-four-hour promise also serves the social countdown tied to World Mental Health Day, which activates an urgency for immediate engagement instead of delayed response by the audience.

The language of aid discourse provides the vocabulary for reels which they integrate with retail terminology such as bronzer stick, liquid blush, and volumizing mascara. Every time the retailer’s name Sephora is added to the donation statements it creates the institution while also indicating stock availability. According to Fairclough the integration of commercial language with philanthropic language creates a “colonised” discourse because humanitarian terms bear market objectives without showing any contradiction.

Initially, uptake illustrates how the informal text fits the action of interpretation. All forty-eight hours early comments received the most likes and were negative: calling

the brand selective in its activism and profit-oriented. Were these comments seen from a discursive-practices view? Accusingly, they set up an immediate feedback loop that would feed into Instagram's measuring metrics, possibly suppressing reach. Their presence affirms that audiences recognise the two-sided discourse and employ persuasion knowledge to fight against it, indicating the limitations of hybrid strategies when authenticity is perceived as failing.

Sociocultural Practice

The social world into which the Rare Impact reels have entered has been preparing itself, and will be preparing itself, to welcome- or even police- brand claims of care. The beauty product enables its user to have added emotional benefits aside from the aesthetic one. Academic scholars have termed this change an emotional capitalism, the politics of which the act of purchasing is generally taken to be an avenue of psychological repair (Illouz, 2007). Rare Beauty capitalizes on that scenario by presenting using a smear or mascara to "increase access to mental health resources": a formulation in which both pampering and prosocial obtain. This has some appeal as beauty advertising continues to be addressed to women as the default caregiver; this thesis notes that reels invite female followers to expand their nurturing roles to a global one through the decision to use the "right" cosmetic label.

Yet the same environment intensifies audience expectations for authenticity. Selena Gomez is known as a mental health advocate, which seems to support the commitment, but influencer culture demands a consistency of personal advocacy across issues. When Gomez did not speak to other humanitarian crises, followers interpreted the silence as moral dissonance and used Instagram's comment field to point that out. The algorithm had elevated hostile comments - "Supporting mental health and genocide at the same time, interesting!" and "Are you sure that that's where the money is going?" - to the top of the thread within hours of posting. The like based ranking of the platform thus converts individual uncertainties into a visible consensus that reinforces what the thesis is calling a "scaled call out" dynamic.

Philanthropy capitalist standards offer additional scrutiny. From today's donors, there is more of an expectation for numeric evidence of impact, and rare beauty provides us with "25 global grantees," but that's as far as they go. The lack of granular data

represents an inconsistency with absolute lexicon such as "Sephora is donating 100 percent," allowing the upper classes to create the transparency gap that commenters who challenge its integrity point to. While one commenter states, "You put your money where your mouth is and avoided all posts about freeing Palestinian," the issue is not just ideological; it is an expectation of cross issue consistency and specific accountability.

Algorithmic velocity heightens these tensions. The window for purchases encourages immediate action but also shortens potential moral decision-making. Viewers need to quickly take a position on whether the pledge is genuine, and the interface provides a public stage for them to do this. With the most liked comments pinned to the top of the comment feed, fresh viewers encounter the campaign through a lens of doubt, not solidarity. The same affordances that increase visibility for charity also accelerate the threat of reputational harm, and exposes the delicate balance between the humanitarian rhetoric of the campaign and an ideologically opposed form of promotional capitalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our analysis confirms that Rare Beauty's "Make a Rare Impact Day" operates according to the rationale of emotional capitalism, using therapeutic language and retail signifiers to weave caring and buying. The intention made evident here mirrors Illouz's assertion that late modern markets convert moods into tradeable commodities insofar as "market-based cultural repertoires shape and inform interpersonal and emotional relationships, while interpersonal relationships are at the epicenter of economic relationships" (p. 4). The use of inclusive pronouns encourages followers to participate in a collective initiative, while phrasing certainty "100 percent of sales" eases potential hesitation regarding the donation's worth. This lexical choice reflected Banet-Weiser's claim of contemporary brands proceeding by securing their credibility through narrative coherence versus technical specification (2012). Our findings went further than this in that coherence is generated not only through narrative but also from carousel sequencing and output frames: caring has always come before the shopping prompt in the carousel sequenced and authored caption, thus, producing the understanding that consumption is

the normal and only expression of empathy or “shopping for change”.

Simultaneously, follower resistance indicates that coherence is necessary yet not sufficient for perceived authenticity. The shift between praise and condemnation, “Supporting mental health and genocide at the same time,” demonstrates netizen’s moral horizon as survey research has established that Gen Z consumers penalize selective activism (Gomes et al., 2023). Discursively, the audience imports a human rights register into a wellness script, fracturing the brand’s attempt to limit meaning to mental health advocacy. Van Leeuwen’s taxonomy of legitimisation can help us understand why the fracture occurs. Rare Beauty relies primarily on moral evaluation as is “mental health belongs to all of us” and authorisation through partnerships, as shown in Selenas’ statement “Sephora will be donating”. Rationalisation, by the use of numeric transparency aside from the headline,” is largely absent, and mythopoesis is limited to broad future claims. This deficit confirms Bishop and Green (2008) observation that in philanthropic capitalism, donor identity is privileged over measurable impact. Netizens asking for precise figures suggest they expect the rationalisation strategy in addition to moral appeals, particularly when the pledge has a commercial gain and has bias tendency.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis looked into three World Mental Health Day reels by Rare Beauty, and the twenty-one most-liked comments, to examine how the brand expresses its concern for mental health, while also promoting the products. Our analysis demonstrates patterned statement. Selena begins the presentation with a personal pronoun “I”, to begin her appeal grounded in her own identity and experience, then shifts to “we/us/our” to enlist netizens in a shared mission. Mental health language (such as, “resources,” “education,” “support,”) establishes the humanitarian frame before any prompting toward the purchases. Words of affectation in the product tour (such as, “yummy,” “pretty,” “amazing”) provide an affective payoff that links personal pleasure with benefit to the cause. Imperatives always follow empathy clauses (such as, “Help us,” “Join me”), and high-certainty formulation reduce the space for doubt in impact.

The reels discursively combine three strategies: corporate philanthropic work,

influencer narrative practice, and retail merchandising. The mission sentences read like CSR copy; the in-store walk-through mimics influencer vlogs; the repeated references to Sephora signal both partnership and product availability. The format and 24-hours of Instagram's Reels bundling moral consideration and purchase in a single scroll. However, every top liked early comment was a critique of the reels and challenged moral consistency across issues. The viewers' cognitive schema for persuasion tested the authenticity of the reels, as they brought a human-rights register that the wellness script evidently had not anticipated.

Our study advances Critical Discourse Analysis by demonstrating how pronoun shifts, value nouns, placement of imperatives, and modality choices operate together with platform affordances to naturalize a humanitarian-commercial link. They illuminate existing work on emotional capitalism and brand authenticity: coherent care language helps but does not guarantee trust when transparency and cross-issue consistency are weak. Brands that pair causes with commerce should pay careful attention to aligning personal voice, clearly articulated cause terms, verifiable numbers, and an engagement plan with public audit in mind. Future research will be able to experiment with these elements across multiple campaigns, follow longer comment arcs, and experiment with different wording of donation pledges in order to monitor how audiences calibrate trust.

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