

# Theorizing a Vegan Advocate's YouTube Vlog as a Rhetorical Act

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## ABSTRACT

The community of YouTube creators, video bloggers or vloggers is growing as more technology becomes available where there is a shift of YouTube byline from "Your Digital Video Repository" to "Broadcast Yourself" that is paving the way to a new generation of communicators. Through YouTube, vloggers are given a democratic space to present their arguments for or against a particular issue. Particularly, YouTube has fostered a community of advocates such as vegan creators who produce videos dedicated to veganism and animal rights. This study conducts a rhetorical analysis of a YouTube vlogger and vegan advocate Ed Winters, also known as Earthling Ed. In the selected YouTube vlog, three prevalent rhetorical acts emerge: 1) addressing misconceptions, 2) upholding morality, and 3) moving to action. Animal agriculture for consumption and other forms of animal abuse or cruelty are the social exigencies that persuaded the vlogger to discuss these urgent issues, as well as the dire consequences to our health, the animals, and the environment, in his YouTube vlogs. To contribute to advancing a communicational view of advocacy, this study explores the use of rhetorical strategies and engages with questions of meaning and value on exigencies which allow for the creation of discourse with a pragmatic intent of offering a solution to commit to veganism. Results of the analysis also show that YouTube vlogging (video blogging) in an open space is multi-directional or complex, multi-temporal or continuous, and multi-situational or contextual, with three opportunities and the processes for a YouTube vlogger to advance an advocacy through interaction, inclusion, and influence.

**Keywords:** advocacy, Earthling Ed, rhetoric, veganism, vlogging, YouTube

## **INTRODUCTION**

Technological advancements have revolutionized the performance and accomplishment of persuasion. The evolution of media to social media has become the fulcrum that links and influences the modern world (Baym 2015). Do the techniques and functions of persuasion change as technology changes? Even though the importance of speech as a means of civic engagement has remained constant throughout history, there have been some developments that have changed the way we use it (Valenzano and Braden 2015, 21). While classical Greek and Roman cultures have been evidently and continuously influencing the rhetoric of communicators on different levels and in various contexts until today, how is persuasion situated in the digital milieu?

Technology is an agent that participates in persuasion (Saludadez 2020). Our thoughts, values, advocacies, and actions are constantly shaped by the environment around us. With the influence of Internet usage and the online environments we inhabit, social media play a big role in persuasion as they display agency to the extent that they create alternative realities for users to construct or reconstruct online identities and presence through rhetoric. Shared experiences of reality are expressed through the values and interpretations they place on certain objects, events, and spaces. The online content creators and their audience engage with each other through the open spaces for synchronous and asynchronous meetings that social media, such as YouTube vlogging (video-blogging) provide them with. YouTube vloggers and their rhetoric are social agents that need greater scholarly attention. The description of rhetoric as a “syncretic and generative practice that creates new knowledge” (Davis and Shadle 2007, 17) bears a resemblance to vlogging, since YouTube provides opportunities for its users and vloggers to engage, create content based on social exigency, and inform and persuade subtly or openly. Similarly, Kenneth Burke’s (1969) commentary manifests the scope of rhetoric that “wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is meaning, there is persuasion” (71). As what has been taking place in recent years, vlogging, a “distinctly original” form of communication that is emblematic of the amateur videos found on YouTube (Tolson as cited in Savage 2010), has become a powerful new technological trend that has been gaining much attention worldwide. The community of YouTube video creators and/or vloggers continues to develop as more technology becomes available. It has grown into one of the more influential social communities. Statistics show that more than 300 hours of video are uploaded every minute, and almost five billion videos are viewed daily (Aslam 2022). As a new mode of rhetoric, a YouTube vlog may contain a narrative, an expertise, or an advocacy that commands international access, appeal, and following. Successful content creators and vloggers become social influencers. However, merely connecting with the viewers is not sufficient, as the study of persuasion in the discipline of communication studies also requires engagement or the act of interacting and sharing in the activities of the group.

Vrooman (2002) states that the cyberspace, where the YouTube “vlogosphere” is situated, is a performative space created through programming and communicative interaction. With a vast amount of information online, vloggers are provided with a powerful space to create ways to generate, control, sift through, highlight, or hide information during their communication with the viewers. Through YouTube, vloggers are given an opportunity to connect with and present their arguments about a particular issue, to influence the attitudes and beliefs of their audience. A vlogger’s rhetoric has the power to influence the targeted viewers towards committing to an advocacy. One specific way to connect and engage in communication activism is through direct action in support of social change for individuals or groups (Frey and Carragee 2007). As an open and free platform, YouTube has fostered a community of creators who produce videos dedicated to their advocacy and social action. The YouTube vlogging community provides viewers with means for gaining empathy and inclusion, especially among those who seek the company of like-minded individuals. YouTube has also become central to collective and collaborative action. By subscribing, liking, commenting, sharing, and downloading the vlogs, the viewers-turned-users’ small acts of participation are now generally considered part of the realm of collective action.

As this study is premised within the rhetorical tradition of communication theory, it views communication as a “practical art of discourse” where “people act as rhetors” or persuasive speakers (Craig 1999, 103). It problematizes how the nature and function of classical and contemporary rhetoric is envisioned and how the theory, practice, and critique of rhetoric has constantly been interconnected with the views about personal, political, and social issues and advocacies. Banking on communication and synergy among its subscribers and content creators, YouTube’s active and engaged viewers, but also the potential ones can also be tapped into committing to an advocacy (Johansson and Scaramuzzino 2019).

Generally, advocacy is not directed only at policy makers, but also at private sector leaders whose decisions affect people’s lives, as well as the media, development agencies, and other institutions whose opinions and actions influence policy makers. As technology becomes more easily available, there is a shift of YouTube’s byline from ‘Your Digital Video Repository’ to ‘Broadcast Yourself.’ This paves the way to a new generation of communicators who use multimodal elements to speak to the audience (Frobenius 2014; Frenchaud 2017, 59). Using YouTube as their medium, vloggers are given a democratic space to present their arguments for or against a specific issue. Particularly, YouTube has fostered a community of vegan advocates who create videos dedicated to veganism and animal rights.

The study’s selected vlog *“It’s My Personal Choice To Eat Animals!”* (2018) is from Ed Winters’ YouTube video series called *30 DAYS, 30 EXCUSES*, published on his YouTube channel, named *Earthling Ed*. His main purpose is to unmask the fallacies in each non-vegan argument in each of the videos. As of

November 2022, the vlogger's channel has over 443,000 subscribers, 52,000 views, 400 comments, and 3,400 likes.

The audience is an important part of the rhetorical situation as it consists of the intended or unintended viewers and/or active users of the rhetorical message. In the rhetorical context of vlogging, the invoked audience is the one imagined by the vlogger. The vlog itself creates roles and invites the audience to participate. The vloggers themselves make decisions based on their audience since the latter has the capability to identify the language used, identify with the rhetor, know the importance or gravity of the discourse, the strategies, and the delivery used by the vlogger, and the arguments in the rhetoric. The damage that livestock consumption does to human's health and the environment and the extent of agony the animals go through – pigs suffering from open wounds, abscesses, cannibalism, and other harrowing footage of slaughter practices – are made apparent in Earthling Ed's vlog. With this, the environment and the animals themselves are the identified social exigencies that require collective deliberation, judgment, and decision-making.

After selecting the vlog for analysis, transcriptions were made and themes of how the vlogger Earthling Ed communicated veganism to his viewers were compiled. The transcriptions gathered were used to organize themes that emerged from the analysis of the online community. The data were analyzed using qualitative and ethnographic thematic content analysis methods. Rhetorical analysis extends the scope of inquiry to examine meanings, themes, and patterns that may be apparent or concealed in a text. Among the resources for attaining both content and the vlogger's personal purpose are the various patterns of organization of the vlog. It was observed that the vlogger developed a system of points and subpoints to present his ideas in logical and strategic ways. Problem-solution, reversal of apparent position, extended analogy, and examples were the patterns employed in communicating the advocacy through YouTube.

In the abovementioned video, the vlogger presents a problem-solution as his rhetorical plan in addressing the misconception. He begins by setting forth the non-vegan argument that consuming animal products is a personal choice. After presenting counter arguments, the content creator proposes a solution of committing to veganism or adopting a plant-based diet. The plan provides an advantage to the vlogger by giving him an opportunity to build common ground with his viewers before reaching the controversial part of his video. His rhetorical plan involves argumentation in which he seeks to convince the viewers to take a particular course of action. While explaining the problem, Earthling Ed emphasizes the effects of consuming animal products on the animals themselves by describing the situation, analyzing the problem, and recommending a solution. The rhetorical analysis focuses on determining the strategies and how they accomplish the goal of communicating veganism to the viewers. By considering this YouTube vlogger's skill, his creativity of exploring the "available

means of persuasion” and ability to create discourse and communicate veganism are identified in the analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Three prevalent rhetorical acts emerge in the selected YouTube vlog: 1) misconceptions on eating animal products as a personal choice, 2) morality of eating animal products as personal choice, and 3) move towards veganism addresses a common excuse or characterization about veganism.

### **Misconceptions**

Misconceptions are “persistent and commonly held” (Leonard, Kalinowski, and Andrew 2014, 10) beliefs that contradict scientific evidence. Fisher and Moody (2002) use the term “to underscore the cognitive transformation required in order to achieve the scientific view” (56). To demystify an advocacy process in the digital age, addressing or correcting prior misconceptions is practiced for the viewers to acquire new knowledge, as well as to understand and resolve conflicts between prior knowledge and newly presented one in a digital format. Frederick (2005, 35) recommends to rely on cognitive reflection rather than on intuition to improve ability to undergo conceptual change.

To address misconceptions, Earthling Ed presents a problem-solution rhetorical plan. He begins by setting forth a non-vegan’s argument that consuming animal products is a personal choice. His use of the pronoun “we” was used three times in the first three statements of the video. In the opening sentence, “So the next excuse that we’re addressing today is the excuse that it’s “my personal choice” to eat animal products” (Earthling Ed 2018, timestamp 00:00:02), the personal pronoun “we” is used to present the excuse non-vegans give to defend meat consumption. This reveals the vlogger’s ethos, a rhetorical character that appeals to the values of the people and directs them to accept certain truths. The articulation of the first comment reflects the vlogger’s good will and good character. He includes the viewers as part of the discussion by adding a personal tone to the vlog. This identification with vegan viewers is apparent when Earthling Ed states: “[A]gain, this is something we hear all the time as vegans” (00:00:06), which addresses the issue of having “personal choice” to eat animal products. Moreover, the use of “we” as a symbol of togetherness is evident in the statement above. The personal pronoun “we” has rhetorical functions as it creates a sense of togetherness and blurs the vlogger-viewer divide. As Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) point out, the use of “we” instead of “I” also diminishes the responsibilities of the speaker since he is portrayed as collaborating with his audience. It appeals to Aristotle’s ethos as it characterizes community and identification with vegan viewers.

In the video, the vlogger addresses the common excuse that eating animal products is an exercise of “personal” choice. However, according to Earthling Ed (2018), the consequences extend well beyond the person. This is in congruence with Kenneth Burke’s (1969) identification theory according to which the speaker attempts to connect with the audience. In this context, Earthling Ed (2018) makes use of the phrase “we’re addressing” (00:00:02) to include the audience in the rhetoric and in the act of explaining the misconception. For vloggers to persuade the viewers, they must engage and connect with them on some level. This can be achieved through identification, which Jackson (2013) defines as the feeling of relating to a person, issue, or organization that can result from “empathy, sense of community or feeling of responsibility created by rhetoric” (6).

When eating animals is considered a “personal choice,” it comes across as a euphemistic way of saying, “respect my choices,” or “don’t judge or hold me accountable for my actions that harm animals.” Thus, the statement is not intended to support the argument of eating animals, but rather functions as a defense mechanism which aims to end the discussion. When this occurs, “personal choice” becomes the highlight that takes away awareness of the welfare of animals from the discourse. This aligns with Boylan’s (2013) tenet: “Without awareness there is no freedom. Awareness is vital for any possibility of free choice” (124). Indeed, without awareness, there is no free choice. The rhetorical situation can be the result of many events. The misconceptions represent (mis)understandings produced by ideological systems and structures that support othering vegans. The quotations are ideologically imbued with meanings that highlight certain interests while muting others.

Earthling Ed’s “It’s My Personal Choice To Eat Animals!” vlog presents rhetorical responses to a situation (see Figure 1). The situation at hand is the excuse non-vegans make about consuming animal products. After presenting counter arguments, the vlogger proposes a solution of committing to veganism. The plan provides him with an advantage by giving him an opportunity to build common ground with his viewers. The rhetorical plan involves argumentation through which Earthling Ed seeks to convince his viewers to take a particular course of action. While explaining the problem, he emphasizes to the viewers the effects of consuming animal products to the animals themselves by explaining and describing the situation, analyzing the problem, and recommending a solution. As an advocate, addressing all misconceptions may not be possible.

Thus, vlogging a misconception is theorized as a rhetorical act for there is an interactive digital dialogue between the content creator and the viewers. One of the rhetorical effects of the digital world has been the ways in which the globally accessible messages posted on it can address particular audiences. By analyzing underlying messages that advocate a particular viewpoint, the viewers become critical and interactive consumers who make educated choices to embrace these messages or not. In the video analyzed in this study, the vlogger intends for an interactive digital dialogue so that the viewers may seize a moral high ground.



**Figure 1. Vlogger Ed Winters advocating veganism. Source: Earthling Ed 2018.**

As a rhetorical act, a vlog can be characterized as acquiring a sense of closeness and vulnerability because of its setting and tone. This is illustrated by Figure 1, in which the vlogger brings the viewers visually close to him with his upper body filling much of the frame. Vlogs are also usually short in duration, more focused, purposive, and re-playable. Addressing a misconception in such a format also feels intimate because it echoes face-to-face exchange, but in the case of Earthling Ed's video, it only remediates the misconception that it is a personal choice to eat meat, creating a new mode for interpersonal dialogue. Therefore, the motive that impels this kind of discourse is more cooperative than competitive. This also means that a person's language is closely linked to his or her motives. Therefore, to understand a speaker's motives, it is necessary to understand the action of his or her language or rhetoric.

### **Moral Argument**

Forms of moral argumentation that were observed in the vlogging entries are claim-reason points based on moral norms as premises. Earthling Ed's (2018) statement "But it's also someone's personal choice if they want to commit rape or commit an act of murder. The person personally chooses to do those things" (00:00:25) is an appeal to uphold morality. It also appeals to logos as it attempts to reason deductively and provide an analogy between choosing to eat animal products and choosing to commit heinous crimes. Similarly, his statement "Likewise, if some wants to beat and abuse a dog, it's their personal choice to beat and abuse that dog. Just because someone personally chooses to do something does not make the action morally justifiable" (00:00:28) suggests that this personal decision encompasses morality and ethics. By stating this, the rhetor aims to uphold the moral status of animals.

Motivated by ethical principles, the vlogger takes on an advocating role in serving both the interests of justice and the rights and privileges of his “clients” [the animals, the environment, and the people] by pleading a case, supporting a cause, or recommending a course of action and seeking to influence policies by arguing within political, economic, and social systems. Rhetorical devices such as this are used by rhetors to enhance arguments for persuasion. When presenting a moral argument, the vlogger employs Burke’s (1968) concept of identification to facilitate understanding of how his way of communicating unites or separates him from the viewers through the choices of words and overall vlog content. Since vlogging occurs under complex conditions, it recognizes intricacies of communicating advocacies online. A rhetorical action responds to its context since there are a variety of interactional features that influence the creation, persuasion, dissemination, and interpretation of a vlog genre. Vlogging is a continuous process since there are no definable beginnings and endings in the persuasive performance as it is the viewers’ decision when and how they will be presented in the vlogs.

To challenge the viewers to think critically about moral arguments, Earthling Ed (2018) would often ask rhetorical questions with an ethical dimension, such as the following: “[S]o the question I’d like to ask anyone who uses the ‘respect my personal choice’ excuse is what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own?” (00:02:43). The Socratic Method is used to allow the viewers to reach conclusions on their own, without being told how to answer or what to feel (Borchers 2006, 30). A series of rhetorical questions are articulated in the video to highlight the dissonance in the viewers’ perception of animals.

Earthling Ed’s (2018) statement, “how far detached they’ve [non-vegans] become from the fact that the animal products they’re eating have either come from an animal that is already dead or one that is in the process of being exploited and will eventually end up dead” (00:00:41), is reminiscent of Carol Adam’s (2014) concept of “absent referent.” She reasons that “behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes...” (14). The absent referent functions to cloak the violence inherent in meat consumption, protect the conscience of the meat eater, and render the idea of individual animals as immaterial to anyone’s selfish desires. The vlogger’s rebuttal points out that “personal choices” have dire consequences. An analogy is given to illuminate the oppression of animals in general. The vlogger stands by his principles by explaining that to deny animals the right to live according to their own interests is wrong, and to attempt to defend our choice to eat them as a personal one is morally unjustifiable. Logical evidence is first apparent in the introduction of the video blog as Earthling Ed (2018) presents statistics of the number of animals killed: “We’re respecting the personal choice of the 56 billion land animals and the 2.7 trillion marine animals who are killed needlessly, who do not want to die for us” (00:01:10). Another component of logical proof is evidence of refutative skills such as picking out significant points of clash, resolving contested issues, clearly revealing the relation of a non-vegan’s claims to his own, and preserving the structural wholeness of

the vlog as a constructive enforcement of an idea. The vlogger has proven that he possesses refutative skills as he was able to meet objections and defend veganism against non-vegans' claims.

Earthling Ed's *30 DAYS, 30 EXCUSE* vlog series challenges viewers to follow a plant-based diet that might hinge on "symbolic threats to the status quo" or their dietary choice (Sandoiu 2019). This is evident in Earthling Ed's (2018) argument: "So the question I'd like to ask anyone who uses the respect my personal choice excuse is what other personal choice, what other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own" (00:02:40). This analogy is given to illuminate the oppression of animals in general. The advocate stands by his principles by explaining that to deny animals the right to live is wrong and to attempt to defend our choice to eat them as a personal one is morally unjustifiable. Earthling Ed's vlog appeals to logic to convince the audience of irony innate in the meat eaters' justification. Specifically, situational irony is used to show the opposite for a dramatic effect and is apparent as the rhetor's argument conveys the incongruity of the statement. The irony of being animal lovers and yet killing billions of animals is emphasized. The implication is that it would be impossible to love animals if people pay for them to be murdered and killed. Thus, as Turner and D'Silva (2006) argue, the use of pathos is evident to evoke emotions by emphasizing that other animals too have intelligence and sentience or the ability to perceive one's environment, and experience sensations such as pain and suffering, pleasure and comfort.

There is a deliberate attempt to highlight the abuses animals experience due to animal agriculture. The shift from the use of the pronoun "we" to "you" point-of-view is a persuasive way of addressing the audience as it calls for action. The second person pronouns "you," "your," or "yours" are usually used in the context of providing instructions or advice, thus the shift to better engage the viewers. The use of personal pronouns draws on the areas of Burke's (1969) consubstantiation to identify with the viewers since differences are inevitable among people and human interaction is far more complex than simply persuading others online. In this context, the vlogger's attempt to interact with the viewers by identifying with them is a necessary step to communicate with anyone online or offline. As Burke (1969) states, people are "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with one another" (1020). By employing strategies of Burke's rhetorical identification, we can better understand and analyze persuasion in rhetoric. To accomplish change, deliberative rhetoric or "symbouleutikon" is done since it focuses on what lies in the future. It is the rhetoric of vegan advocates by foreseeing what effect embracing veganism might have if change is made at the moment of the rhetoric.

### Move Towards Veganism

Move for action towards veganism is the third rhetorical act that emerges from Earthling Ed's video.

Before the explicit mention of the call for action to commit to veganism, his statements show the harmful effects of animal consumption: "As vegans, we respect the environment and everyone who is affected by climate change because consuming animals is responsible for causing some of the worst environmental calamities that we're currently facing as a species" (Earthling Ed 2018, 00:01:40). In this utterance, the vlogger appeals to logic as he emphasizes the negative effects of animal consumption on the environment, specifically climate change. This is echoed in Mackintosh's (2019) CNN article, *The Amazon is burning because the world eats so much meat*. The crisis has been linked to animal consumption since animal agriculture requires massive amounts of resources such as land, feeds, water, and energy which ultimately cause living beings to endure immense suffering.

'Move to Action' is a call-to-action addressed to the viewers who can act on an issue or an advocacy immediately. Compared to a traditional speech delivery which would take much longer, advocacy vlogs are usually three to five minutes long. In them, the vlogger excludes trivial hindrances and frames the 'Move to Action' in the viewers' best interest to stir them to act on the advocacy as soon as possible. To act shows that an action shaped by a response to symbols was initiated and can be translated into virtual experiences. They are the vlogger's production of words, sounds, and images forged to create a mental picture in the minds of the viewers. The reason for choosing YouTube videos demonstrates the influential role the vloggers play (Ladharja et al. 2020, 4) in how the world is interpreted, which is reflected in the rhetorical tradition of communication. YouTube vlogs as a form of entertainment can both reflect and shape people's beliefs and behaviors.

In comparison to a face-to-face presentation, the vlog uses various terms of address, questions, and directed language and employs specific gaze and gestures or movements within a fixed frame. For instance, the point of emphasis in the video is a close-up of the vlogger's face and inserted video clips within the vlog, which provides important cues about what the viewers are supposed to take away from the video. The vlog uses voice-overs to tell a story and make its case. It relies heavily on pathos, appealing to the viewers' sense of empathy. The vlogger's voice underscores the textual modality as Earthling Ed starts out sounding relatively calm, becomes more concerned, somber, and quick in articulating the plight of the animals. The fast background music creates a sense of urgency. This not only lends atmosphere to the vlog, but also underscores its main point about the effects of animal exploitation.

The analysis of the vlog creates a rhetorical feature that directs what the viewers can and cannot see. The vlogger has the potential to alter the perception of a concept by contributing to associated experiences which improve the capacity of understanding. Since the rhetorical purpose of Earthling Ed's vlog is to persuade audiences to understand and respond to the advocacy he promotes, and since facts alone are not always enough to achieve this goal, then it is up to his ability to alter the perceptions of the viewers through the virtual experiences created in his vlogs. These modalities work together to

create a coherent feeling and rhetorical perspective: the vlogger's onscreen voice, voiceover, music, and inserted videos and photos. In this regard, YouTube vlogging is a rhetorical act because it demonstrates the influential role YouTube vlogger advocates play in how the world is interpreted, since vlogging, although primarily a form of entertainment, can both reflect and shape people's beliefs and actions. The vlogger's rhetoric is not necessarily ornamental speech, as the thoughts and actions of an audience can be influenced through any type of speech or written communication.

Before the explicit mention of the call for action to commit to veganism, Earthling Ed's (2018) statements indicate indirectly the harmful effects of animal consumption: "As vegans, we respect the environment and everyone who is affected by climate change because consuming animals is responsible for causing some of the worst environmental calamities that we're currently facing as a species" (00:01:37). His use of the personal pronoun "we" [as in "we, the vegans"] is consistent throughout the video. Connecting with the viewers is apparent in the articulation of the advocacy. It is a clear indication of Burke's (1969) identification since the vlogger connects with and persuades the viewers by identifying with them in certain ways. In this context, persuasion may occur after the viewers have identified with the vlogger. Burke (1969) stated that people, by nature, are responsive to symbolic expressions that can unite them in purpose and action when a persuasive message, such as a vlog, is skillfully crafted.

When Earthling Ed emphasizes the negative effects of animal consumption in his YouTube series *30 DAYS, 30 EXCUSES*, he does so through superlative statements to emphasize its gravity. Similarly, the use of the word "species" implies the effects in totality since "species" pertains to all organisms. In the succeeding rhetoric, the vlogger appeals to logic as he enumerates the negative effects of animal consumption on the environment and people's health when he states that "as vegans, we're respecting the personal choice of everyone who wants to live a long, fulfilled, happy, healthy life by telling them that consuming animal products causes the most prevalent diseases and illnesses currently affecting our society, i.e. heart disease, type-2 diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney failure. All these diseases can be attributed to the fact that we consume animal products" (Earthling Ed 2018, 00:01:47). The rhetor calls for action to avoid animal products and instead embraces a vegan diet. The recommendation is explicitly mentioned when he proposes in his conclusion: "But most importantly, a simple switch to a plant-based diet cannot only prevent many of them, it can even reverse and treat some of them as well" (00:02:06).

One of Earthling Ed's rhetorical strategies is to ask rhetorical questions that highlight the cognitive dissonance in the viewers' perception of animals. Through this approach, he makes the viewers reveal the answers to themselves. By using this strategy, critical thinking is stimulated and the viewers are left questioning themselves and letting them assess if their actions and morals are aligned. An example of a rhetorical question from the video is Earthling Ed's question "What other personal choice, what

other opinion are you considering and respecting when you eat animal products, other than your own?" (00:02:42). The vlogger employs the three rhetorical proofs to elicit emotion and to engage the audience's loyalties and/or commitments. Ethos is evident in the vlog. The vlogger is credible in sharing his advocacy online. His rhetoric has the three constituents of ethical appeal which reflect the goodness of his character, sense, and will. To spread his advocacy, he makes use of different ways to reach out to people.

The use of logos is also prevalent in the vlog. Earthling Ed's vlog "It's My Personal Choice To Eat Animals!" appeals to logic by citing statistical data. He does it to convince the audience that there is significant reasoning for his argument. Pathos is implied in every argument as the vlogger attempts to persuade the viewers by implicitly putting them in a certain frame of mind to trigger an emotional response, specifically empathy, after enumerating the ill effects of animal consumption to the environment, people's physical and mental health, and animals themselves.

## CONCLUSION

After conducting a rhetorical analysis on Earthling Ed's (i.e., Ed Winters') vlog "It's my Personal Choice to Eat Animals!" from his video series *30 DAYS, 30 EXCUSES*, it is evident that classical rhetoric has kept its power in the digital milieu. In this context, the vlogger possesses ethos or source credibility based on his expertise in matters pertaining to veganism. As an advocate, Earthling Ed's is an opinion leader as he serves as a model for the subscribers and viewers of his YouTube channel. Persuasion used in virtual environments such as YouTube offers virtual versions of classic rhetorical proofs: virtual ethos, pathos, and logos. Each of these virtual appeals gives online vloggers the means to occupy positions made available by the new medium. The analysis also directed attention to devices and elements that are part of each rhetorical act.

In the Philippines, veganism has a limited place for discussion anywhere else except on social media platforms that are free and open for advocacy. It is important for Filipino vegan advocates to note that with YouTube's influence on the viewers' behavior, rhetoric has evolved to include the process of "adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas" in messages of all kinds. Once clicked, the uploaded vlog is continually persuading and shaping people's perspectives about the world of veganism and providing a firsthand account as could no other conventional speaker. The rhetorical acts illustrate how an advocate constructs the discourse to explain that the situation or issue is important enough to speak rhetorically about it on YouTube. The vlogger accomplishes the goal of communicating advocacy through the platform by first addressing a misconception about the advocacy and/or its opposition. Earthling Ed introduces and explains it as one of the common reasons people fail to move to action or

commit to advocacy. The rhetorical act of morality about the advocacy and/or its opposition allows the viewers to be informed of the moral issues and to question the status quo.

By stating misconceptions about the advocacy and its opposition, upholding morality or presenting moral argumentation, and moving for action, the vlogger attempts to clarify a misconception: inform and persuade the viewers of the moral issues about the advocacy and its opposition and influence the viewers to commit to action. This is because we are now living in a time of conflict, health, environmental, and animal crises, and a confluence of cultural, technological, and exigency forces that influence how we communicate with others. YouTube vlogging by advocates has become a powerful tool in influencing the viewers. Thus, persuasion in YouTube is a dynamic and ongoing event. Similarly, communication on the platform is not something the users do, but something in which they engage. In general, the vlogger's rhetoric is pragmatic. It demonstrates the applicability of vlogging an advocacy to address misconceptions, uphold morality, and ultimately move to action.

The three rhetorical acts used in vlogging serve as a powerful instrument for the advancement of any advocacy. A fitting rhetorical response is, therefore, determined by the way the situation is presented and the statements are arranged to comprise each situation. The vlogger's rhetorical responses to the viewers would not have been elicited without today's health, animal, human, and environmental crises. Thus, exigent discourses, such as ongoing debates about the advocacy and issues surrounding it, are a key feature of the rhetorical situation.

The study contributes new knowledge in the area of advocacy vlogging. The study revealed that an engaged and open virtual community, such as the vlogosphere, continues to integrate into the physical as manifested in vlogging. It redefines ideas about interaction online that may catapult change in behaviors and adapt a new communicative space in restructuring a vlogger's own and the viewers' sense of place and process of sensemaking through a new genre of advocacy vlogging. Hence, advocacy vlogging has become a powerful agent in influencing or reinforcing the existing beliefs of the viewers on certain levels. It permeates through many levels of society as it cuts across cultures and multi-temporally connects people cultivating a real sense of community in a virtual space.

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