Research article

Linking cognition with pathos in American restaurants' menus: Jordan as a case

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to examine the strategies of persuasion used in American-cuisine restaurant menus in Jordan. It seeks to identify the power of language used by advertisers in order to attract and persuade their patrons. It mainly investigates persuasive strategies used in 26 American cuisine restaurant menus by adopting Aristotle's framework in association with Saussure's structuralist semiotics. The results showed that American restaurant menus tend to use various types of persuasive appeals that influence patrons emotionally, affect their food choices, and facilitate the process of convincing. The study also concludes that menus include five major appeals, namely *sensual, emotional, desire, pleasure, and thought and brand appeals*, whose ultimate goal is to provoke some desired mental images to influence the patrons' food choice decisions.

1. Introduction

Marketing nowadays is a crucial element in business. It is responsible for different management processes upon goods and services, and it mainly targets the offers valued by customers within a society. The industry of advertising, whose main function is to persuade customers to use products or facilities, is one of the main components of marketing sciences. One of the most popular businesses in Jordan is hospitality industry, which relies on advertising to promote their products and services.

Advertising for the hospitality industry has recently become an integral part of marketing. This explains why several studies have been conducted to examine the persuasive strategies used in the domain of marketing. For example, many studies about the persuasive strategies that target children have been conducted (e.g. Clavert, 2008). According to Clavert (2008), these strategies are mainly used to market certain types of food product by using the target products in some children TV programs, and by using children's toys to advertise for their food products.

The hospitality industry includes three main sectors, namely lodging, food and beverages service, and travel and tourism (Dittmer and Griffin, 1993). Restaurants are one significant section of the hospitality industry. Many people like to go to restaurants seeking an autonomous choice of food and enjoying their meals. Therefore, owners put great effort and pay large amounts of money on advertising for their restaurants. Using many advertising tools and strategies, restaurants tend to polarize as many patrons as they can. Menus have a significant role in increasing the item quality perception, price, and selection possibilities (McCall and Lynn, 2008). Therefore, creating and designing restaurant menus -in a way that can be genuinely effective- is a significant task. Menus should be well-managed. Accordingly, creating menus needs influential and special techniques so that they can be appealing and persuasive to customers. Williamson et al. (2009:2) argue that "restaurant reviews are engaging in an escalating discourse of class distinction exhibited in restaurant reviews". Also, a menu evokes particular persuasion strategies, such as certain types of pricing techniques that affect patrons' food quality perceptions (Parsa and Njite, 2004). Consequently, menus can entice patrons to choose certain types of food.

As a matter of fact, persuasion and rhetoric are inseparable. Jones and Simons (2017) defined the word 'rhetoric' as the field of language that is specialized in informing people effectively in order to persuade them. They confirmed that rhetorical appeals have become one of the most effective policies of persuasion not only in speeches –as part of the world of linguistics but also in the business world. Understanding the strategies of those appeals can facilitate the techniques' task smoothly; i.e., increasing sales, as well as enriching their market with customers who are more loyal.

Emotion and cognition are two independent systems (Ye et al., 2009). However, it is believed that the two systems can work together to create better persuasion results and reflect a more positive attitude among

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consumers towards a particular merchandise. Therefore, persuasion is not merely linked with emotions, but it is also linked with logical mental processes (i.e. cognition). According to Nabi (1999), many persuasive strategies link emotion with cognition to address motives, then change attitudes.

Thus, using Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, the present study aims to find the pathos appeals employed to persuade customers in American restaurants' menus in Jordan. In addition, using Saussure's structuralist semiotics, we aim to find out how language is used to create a mental image and develop subliminal messages to persuade the restaurants' patrons of the dishes presented in their menus.

2. Literature review

2.1. Persuasion in marketing

Marketing is strongly associated with different kinds of persuasive appeals as they play an integral role in changing customers' behaviours. Reichert et al. (2001) state that there are several kinds of persuasive appeals generally used in marketing since they have a more persuasive impact over customers, and then they claimed that sexual appeal is one example of those persuasive appeals.

Several studies have investigated strategies of persuasion and their effect on promoting products. For example, the use of persuasive appeals varies according various factors. One of these factors is culture. In this respect, Han and Shavitt (1994) found that cultures play a major role in choosing appropriate persuasive appeals. For instance, collectivism cultures adopt the types of advertisements that encourage the in-group benefits and family constraints, while individualism cultures focus on individual benefits. Von der Fehr and Stevik (1998) conducted a study that aimed to discover the benefits behind using a variety of persuasive strategies in advertising for very similar products. The study revealed that the more the product matches the consumer's variety, the more the consumer is expected to pay. In a comparative study about social marketing, Reichert et al. (2001) revealed that sexual appeal is more persuasive than other social appeals, and it has a strong effect on consumers' agreement. According to the authors, this appeal implements the cognitive message of "help- self"; which is important for customer's choices. In a similar vein, Hirsh et al. (2012) examined five advertisements of cell phones and phone lines to find out that messages in advertisements have more influential effect when they are tailored according to the audience interests and needs. Moreover, it was found that adapting the persuasive messages according to the personal traits of the consumers is an effective strategy for consumer's persuasion.

The impact of persuasive appeals in TV advertisements have been explored by some researchers. For example, Rabab'ah and Khawaldeh (2016) investigated the persuasive strategies used in Arabic and English TV advertisements. The study showed that TV advertisements tend to use a large variety of strategies of persuasion, namely emotional, rational and play with words. It was also found that Arabic advertisements tend to have more rational strategies than English advertisements whose main strategies are emotional. In a recent study, Rabab'ah et al. (2020) explored the persuasive appeals used in Jordanian and Algerian Telcommunications companies' TV commercials. The results of the study showed that the telecommunication companies in Jordanian and Algerian adopted various appeals to persuade their target audience to purchase products and experience their services. The study also showed that the most widely used appeals were play on words, brand, celebrity and music appeals.

Some researchers directed their focus to the impact of advertisements on children's choices. For example, Busse (2016) conducted a similar study that tried to depict the content of the children TV programs and the advertisements that are broadcasted within them. The results of the study showed that advertisements have a major role in affecting the children's practices and tendencies. They tend to eat sweets and salty snacks between meals and drink more soda and sugary beverages. In a similar study, Folkvord et al. (2016) found that food advertisements are designed in a way to increase appealing, then consumption accordingly, as well affecting the children's eating behaviour. In a more recent research, Rachel (2017) indicated that there are different appealing techniques used to strongly induce children and attract children, such as using cartoon characters, spokes-characters, competitions and childish games as well as using a simple, easy language. Similarly, Rashid et al. (2016) suggested that the Aristotelian persuasive appeals (pathos, ethos, and logos) are very effective tools for customers' persuasion.

As far as menus are concerned, very few studies have explored the persuasive strategies in restaurant menus. For instance, Hou et al. (2017) investigated the effectiveness of using pictures in menus to change patrons' attitudes. The researchers conducted two inclusive experimental studies and depended on observation to find out the relationship between three main elements: pictures, course titles, and true desire of the customer to pay for buying a dish. Two main characters were taken into consideration during the experiments: the visualizer, and the verbalizer. The results showed that customers' willingness to purchase dishes with common, familiar names and supported by pictures is more than their willingness to buy dishes with ambiguous names. Mostly, pictures, which reflect dishes with ambiguous names, have a positive impact on verbalizers, unlike visualizers. In a very recent study, Cai et al. (2021) explored the role of persuasive sales techniques in improving customers' acceptance of sustainable but unfamiliar menu in restaurants. They found that different persuasive sales tactics can be implemented to decrease customers' aversion to offal and offcuts on menus.

2.2. Language and cognition

Emotions and cognition are two parallel independent fields. However, it is believed that the two fileds can work together to create better results of persuasion and reflect more positive attitudes among consumers towards specific merchandises. Therefore, persuasion is not merely linked with emotions, but it is also connected with logical mental processes (the cognition part). Many persuasive strategies link emotion with cognition to address motives, then change attitudes (Nabi, 1999).

Saussure was one of the first scholars who emphasized the significance of cognition in understanding linguistic messages, whether sent as advertisements or any other modes such as menus. He stressed the role of mental processes in forming fixed mental patterns, and connecting these patterns with specific mental images stored in mind to understand the written or spoken words depending on previous experiences, exposures and other factors.

Saussure, who first used structuralist semiotics (Radford and Radford, 2005), defined structuralism as a systematic linguistic approach whose all items depend on and harmonize with each other. Saussure also argued that each item gains its value upon this simultaneous dependence. He stated that those three items are: sign (the object itself), signified (the occurrence), and signifier (the mental image). Also, both the addresser and addressee must have a common understanding of these elements, so the communication process would be possible. He also defined structuralism, whether it is used for advertisement discourse or in any other type of discourse, as a systematic language that is bounded by certain grammatical and conventional rules. Such rules can sometimes be determined through the text genre. Therefore, menus have a specific text genre, which entails certain linguistic rules and conventions besides the emotional persuasive strategies, suggested by Aristotle, in order to achieve more persuasion.

Saussure (cited in Rossolatos, 2012) stated that language is a dynamic system, which takes place in human minds. It is based on a syntagmatic process to find relations among these units to realize the values of them. People's minds accordingly try to find the feeling and the meaning after understanding the rhetorical transformation in the cognition through the language structure.

Changing consumers' behaviors does not depend only on the emotional side, as it was found that the intervention of cognitive

processes can support the mechanism of persuasion. For example, in studying the relationship between emotions and cognition, and the role of this relationship in affecting the behaviours of consumers, Ruiz and Sicilia (2004) found that the two approaches, namely emotions and mental logic (cognition) are completely independent and separate, yet they interrelate and work together interactively. This interactive joint work helps in making a better understanding, creating more positive attitude, and changing the customers' attitudes in terms of buying, and choosing the brand.

Language and the way it is structured, displayed and interpreted generally play a significant role not only in the advertising industry, but also in many different aspects of life and different domains. For example, Rossolatos (2012), using Saussure's framework, aimed to find out the influence of the brand images in the advertisement process. Rossolatos (2012) highlighted that linguistic structures pave the way for organizing the needed imagination within marketing. It was found that different linguistic norms were used for brands marketing. Homologation, isotopy, recurrence, reduction, and redundancy are all types of these linguistic norms. These norms strengthen the coherence and the communicative consistency of the images of the brands throughout advertising.

Zhu (2006) studied a number of posters for restaurants' advertisements in order to reveal the effectiveness of language logic within advertising to convince customers. The study followed a qualitative analysis for four different promotional posters of restaurants, taken from different internet websites. He found that advertisement posters have some common linguistic, such as the use of emotion words, weasel words, not direct or straightforward words, and pun words. The study showed that advertisement posters share some common linguistic characteristics, so they serve the purpose of attracting the audience.

The literature review has shown that several studies have explored some marketing persuasive techniques used for promoting products, and their ability to change people's behaviour. Some other studies related to restaurant menus investigated the power of designing and writing menus in changing patrons 'attitudes as well (e.g., Hou et al., 2017; Cai et al., 2021). Such studies showed several techniques of persuasion, such as repeating of the embedded messages delivered to the audience, using pictures, pricing, and confirming an ethnicity or an ideology of a certain group. However, very few studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of language over patrons' choices in menus. In addition, no previous research has studied persuasive strategies (i.e., appeals) in American restaurant menus in Jordan. Therefore, this research tries to build a bridge between the previous studies about the different persuasive appeals used in the food industry used specifically in American restaurant menus. In our research, we examined pathos persuasive appeals that mainly depend on the emotions, and the psychology of the restaurant patrons to show how they may implicitly direct patrons towards certain dishes. It also explained the cognitive processes that support persuasion mechanism. Based on the previous findings of Ruiz and Sicilia (2004), we linked Aristotle's pathos appeals with Saussure's framework (i.e., structuralist semiotics) based on the cognitive linguistic analysis to understand the emotionally loaded language of menus by depicting mental realistic images. In other words, the current study explores the effect of emotions and cognition on influencing attitude and consequently choosing a certain item from the menu over another.

3. Method

3.1. Corpus

To achieve the objectives of the present research, menus written in English were collected from 26 American restaurants in Jordan. The number of menus is limited because of the limited number of American restaurants in Jordan, but, since this research is a qualitative research, we believe this sample is enough. The menus are divided into two main formats: list menus (catalogue like), and detailed menus. A list menu is a menu that includes the name of courses with their prices only, without

giving any details, and they are sometimes enhanced with pictures, whereas a detailed menu is the one that has the courses names, enhanced with pictures, in addition to the ingredients that comprise each course. Most often, list menus are used for fast food restaurants, whereas detailed menus are used in restaurants, which serve gourmet food. Detailed menus are usually book like, with thick cover. Notwithstanding, the researchers chose to survey the menus as a whole corpus.

3.2. Theoretical frameworks

Two frameworks for the data analysis were used, namely Aristotle's framework of persuasion (i.e., pathos) and Saussure's framework (i.e. structuralist semiotics) to understand the language used and depict the mental images connected to reality. It is worth mentioning that the analysis was limited to emotional appeals due to the scope of the present research and the number of pathos appeals used in the corpus. The menu discourse was analysed qualitatively, in the absence of customers, to find out the persuasive appeals used and the extent to which the menu content may influence restaurant patrons' food choice.

3.3. Data analysis

Aristotelian methodology was used to analyse the emotional appeals (pathos) used in the corpus and its sub-strategies. The Aristotelian approach is one of the premier frameworks that has been adopted by many scholars to examine some of the persuasion appeals in different discourses, such as political discourses (Charteris-Black, 2013; Rabab'ah and Khawaldeh, 2016).

The focus of the present research was to find out pathos that targets people's emotions and feelings for persuasion, and illustrate through structuralist semiotics how language is analysed to depict mental images in order to be persuasive to restaurants' patrons.

Using the word and phrase as the unit of analysis for the American Restaurants' menus, pathos appeals were found and classified according to the Aristotelian categorization, which divided pathos into sensation, emotions, desires, pleasures thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, pleasure, and pain (Leighton, 1996). However, the first screening of the data revealed that only five major categories, which were divided into further categories, were found to be used in the corpus under investigation (Table 1). Therefore, evidence of these persuasive strategies was found and illustrated using examples from the corpus.

Using Saussure's structuralist semiotics (cited in Rossolatos, 2012), we first looked up the dictionary meaning, as well as the 'slang' meaning (the signified). Secondly, we looked up the connotations. Finally, we studied the connotative meaning in order to find out the provoked mental images or configurations in patrons' minds (the signifiers). The latter

Table 1. Pathos persuasive appeals found in the corpus (Adapted from Leighton, 1996).

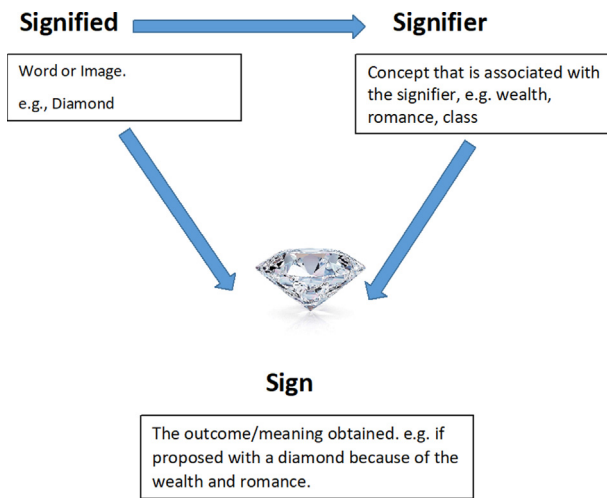| No.	Pathos Persuasive Appeals
1	**Sensual**
2	**Emotional**
2.1	*Nostalgia*
2.2	*Romance*
3	**Desires**
2.1	*Sexual*
2.2	*Machismo/Potential Appeal*
2.2.1	*Predators*
2.2.2	*Strong characters/legends*
2.2.3	*Sports challenging*
2.2.4	*Adventures*
4	**Pleasure**
5	**Thought and Brand**

Figure 1. Meaning interpretation using Saussure's structuralist semiotics.

level is achieved through understanding the nature of how people think based on pieces of information understood upon previous experiences and shared societal backgrounds. See Figure 1.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis showed five major pathos persuasive strategies, namely sensual appeal, emotional appeal, desires appeal, pleasure, and thought and brand appeals. These strategies were divided into subcategories, which are discussed and illustrated in the following sections.

4.1. Persuasive appeals used in the American restaurants' menus

4.1.1. Sensual appeal

Our senses (e.g. seeing, touching, tasting, etc.) could depict a million objects because "The senses are the media through which we experience and make sense of gender, colonialism and material culture" (Howes, 2005, p. 11). In support of this, Zibin and Abdullah (2019) confirmed that metaphor is persuasive and manipulative. Similarly, Krishna (2012) believes that sensual appeal aims to influence the person's perception and behaviour through unconscious stimulants provoked by senses, especially for abstract concepts or non-existent objects.

The analysis showed that menus are a heavy concentrated content of sensual words. They are an extended environment, which is full of provocative and persuasive terminologies, mostly provoking sight, touch, and taste human's sensation. Some od these appealing words provoke the sense of sight, such as *Red, Sparkling, Violet,* and *colorful*. These menus also use some other words that persuade through provoking the sense of touch. These words mainly reflect the food texture and its temperature. *Cold, cool, Iced, warm,* and *hot* are examples of words that deal with temperature sensation, whereas *velvety, gooey, crispy, sticky, soft, tender, juicy, buttery, flaky* and *moist* are examples of sensual words of texture. The analysis also revealed that there are some words that provoke the smell sensation, just as *balsamic,* and *the aroma of our freshly baked.* In addition, there are some other words that would stimulate sensation through the sense of taste, such as *sweet, sour, lime, savoury,* and *nutty,* which make dishes appeal to patrons because they feel the taste or dish textures, and visualize dishes, and they are also capable to produce a cognitive appealing image of them. This capability is mainly enhanced by previous knowledge and culture. Cultures have ready configurations and fixed images about different aspects, and objects. Accordingly, those fixed images and perspectives have the ability to serve the sensation process, and achieve persuasion through moulding absent objects, and giving them a socially appealing and agreed concrete shape. See examples (1–3):

Example 1. Cold Brew and Iced Coffee
'Cold' means chilly, and iced means chilled and cool (Oxford Dictionary). These two words refer to the sense of touch.
Example 2. Soft Drinks
'Soft' means mushy (Oxford Dictionary). This word provokes the sense of touch.
Example 3. Sticky Toffee Pudding: Warm and gooey date pudding topped with caramel sauce.

'Sticky' is glutinous, a word that provokes the sense of touch. *'Warm'* means at fairly or comfortably high temperature. It provokes the sense of touch. Also, the word *'gooey'* means soft and sticky which provokes the sense of touch, too (Oxford Dictionary).

Examples 1–3 present dishes which are described by using descriptive words related to the sense of touch, which is mainly divided into two main streams: temperature and texture. Example 1 in addition to part of example 3 contain some words that provoke the sense of smell, such as using the words balsamic and aroma. Each underlined word in the examples are defined in terms of their signified meaning, Krishna et al. (2010) stated that both the sense of touch and the sense of smell are used in marketing as they have an ability to support people's perception and persuade them towards certain products. Therefore, they are intensely used in the field of restaurants and food marketing. The semantic meanings of such words illustrated above are capable of influencing patrons' choices and convince them through involving a "multisensory interactions" which are also linked with previous cognitive appealing images located in the minds.

4.1.2. Emotional appeal

Emotional appeal basically depends on feelings, emotions, senses, and perception. It is also enhanced by previous experiences, and memories in which much cognitive stored information and images are processed accordingly (Johnston and Olson, 2015). Emotional appeal is divided into two sub-appeals, namely Nostalgic and Romance appeals.

4.1.2.1. Nostalgic appeal. Nostalgia refers to longing to the past memories. It is referred to any term that provokes a complicated warm feeling about a state that does not exist today (Cross, 2015). Nostalgia also is strongly connected with people's heritage that is associated with their religion, ethnicity, nationality and identity (Akagawa, 2014). The corpus of the present study revealed that nostalgic appeal is one of the most significant persuasive strategies used to convince restaurant patrons. The nostalgic appeal is represented not only in the course names, but also in the way the dishes are described, or the way the ingredients of the dishes are presented. This appeal is persuasive since it uses words and phrases that represent home longing, as people appreciate their homes, their moms' dishes, and homemade food. It can also appeal patrons as it represents their cultures and traditions that are tightly connected to their countries where they belong to, boast of their identity, and feel proud of. In addition, it sometimes represents an ancient era or old deep-rooted cities in order to direct patrons' attention to particular originality that has the persuasive influence on them to order that dish.

Furthermore, these words and phrases, which are used in menus, emphasize the dishes' simplicity. Simplicity in presenting the served dishes symbolizes the real appealing homemade dishes. It also has the ability to persuade patrons through moving them from a sophisticated, busy, noisy life to an easy, simple, quiet, and humble life, such as the rural life which most of the patrons - who head to restaurants in cities - miss. Most of the nostalgic words and phrases used in menus try to create an image of a calm, peaceful rural environment, through using words with old, natural, and simple meanings, such as *upstate, rustic, country* and *fielded.* The words also emphasize the way food is prepared, and usually try to persuade patrons through signifying images of mothers preparing dishes for their families with love and warmth. These images are appealing as they focus on emotionally provocative words. Such words are illustrated as *'handmade'* in order to add more intimacy to dishes, like *homemade, house, handcrafted, hand-cut,* and *handmade. See Example 4 below.*

Example 4. Rustic Tuna Sandwich: Tuna mixed with herbs, citrus dressing & sun-dried tomatoes

Example 4 uses *rustic,* which refers to rural life, and herbs which means soft-stemmed plants which are used for food seasoning or for medication (Oxford Dictionary). Some other additional words are added to the description in order to highlight the mental image that can be provoked in patrons' cognitions. These words are: *herbs, and sun-dried.* Most herbs are wild plants; they grow without being planted. The use of the word *herb* addresses the natural life in the countryside. *Sun-dried* points out an old method of preserving food, away from any preservative interference. All these elements together can persuade patrons by creating an appealing mental image of a natural, simple, green, fresh life in a rustic place somewhere away from the noisy life. Accordingly, patrons would be persuaded to order such a dish.

4.1.2.2. Romance appeal. Romance appeal is connected with love sensation and some other warm feelings as well (Cui, 2015). Our analysis showed that romance appeal is not only used in the dish titles to persuade customers, but it is also obviously used in the statements and phrases that are usually added to menus. Based on the data collected, we classified romantic appeal in an independent category despite the fact that dishes are titled and described in a way that stimulates nostalgia sometimes. We placed the romantic appeal in such classification due to the special limited feelings that are provoked. This appeal plays an integral role in persuasion as it addresses people by the use of the language of love, passion, and desire, as well as depicting some intimate moments. The provoked cognitive images can persuade patrons by transferring them to particular happy love appealing moments and desired domains (see example 5).

Example 5. A Passion For Quality. A Promise Of Value. Handcrafted dishes. 100% Beef Burgers. All natural chicken. Hand-cut vegetables. And oven baked buns. We do all this because quality is the only way to deliver value. And you deserve both

According to *Oxford Dictionary, 'passion'* means strong and barely controllable emotions; it also means intense sexual love. It connotes love and ambition (Urban Dictionary). Furthermore, the word '*Promise'* means a pledge, and is associated with honor (Oxford Dictionary). While the word '*Value'* means worth and merit, and *'Deserve'* means to be worthy to something (Oxford Dictionary). All these words together aim to create an image of precious love moments that are valued by the readers and consequently appealing to the restaurant patrons. It usually reminds them with moments of love, desire, and commitments. This passionate image is able to persuade customers to buy the described dish.

4.1.3. Desires appeal

One of the major appeals is related to the quality of satisfying one's instinctive desires through indulging into materialistic physical pleasures (Thurschwell, 2009). Desires appeal refers to the words that are used to evoke desires. This appeal is divided into three sections, namely *sexual appeal, beauty appeal,* and *machismo appeal.*

4.1.3.1. Sexual appeal. The corpus showed that menus include some words that have a strong connection with sex and temptation. Such words provoke the instinct of food consumption (Saad, 2011). Since both sexual and eating instincts are parts of carnal human instinct, menus include a variety of words that introduce food courses, but at the same time have some sexual subliminal messages. For more clarification, many food courses have certain signifiers that are related to different food signs, yet they subconsciously evoke sexual images. These images target the latent desires in a way that they trigger the sensation of satiety.

The first group of sexual appeal includes dishes with their ingredients' descriptions. Sexual revelations do not exist in the dish name. However, they are found in the way dishes are described. The explanation of the example 6 below shows their ability to provoke sexual images in the patrons' minds.

Example 6. French Dip: Tender, juicy, sliced roast beef, rich roasted mushroom sauce, melted Swiss cheese with balsamic grilled onions piled high on a toasted baguette with our horseradish sauce and a side of au jus perfect for dipping! Served with crispy seasoned fries.

The word *'tender'* according to *Oxford Dictionary* means showing gentleness, and affection. It also means sensitive to pain and easy to cut. *Tender* also connotes a beautiful soft woman (Urban Dictionary). The word *juicy* literally means filled with juice, and as for informal usage it means temptingly appealing, and it also has some other connoted meanings like sensational and youthful (Urban Dictionary). In addition, the word *'sliced'* adds extra information to the descriptive dish; it describes the way the beef is cut; it is cut into thin pieces. The previous words that are used to describe some pieces of meat are all served with a type of onions that is *'balsamic'. Balsamic* connotes nice aroma (Urban Dictionary). As shown, the description tells how all the ingredients together make a *'perfect'* dish for *'dipping'.* Thus, all these words together create an appealing sexual, cognitive image of a youthful, slender, attractive and soft woman who deserves to have a perfect sex with. Because of the fact that sex is considered one of the major instincts people yearn to satisfy themselves through, this cognitive image is able to persuade patrons and convince them to choose this dish as it is considered tasty and appealing.

Example 7. Virgin Mojito

'*Virgin'* is a woman who has not had sexual intercourse (Oxford Dictionary) and it connotes an innocent woman who had no sex before, especially like Mary the Virgin, the mother of Jesus. Based on the oriental culture, men prefer getting married from a virgin woman. As a result, describing Mojito as a virgin would be sexually appealing and more convincing. Therefore, this word '*virgin'* appeals to the customers and persuades them to buy such a drink with pleasure and pride.

4.1.3.2. Beauty appeal. Beauty standards are formed and taken for granted based on realities that have been established and experienced by people. Gorden et al. (2007) highlighted that societies structure women's beauty. The researchers mostly focus on young women and emphasize on the weight and the shape of their bodies. They are associated with agreed societal criteria. Ideal women's bodies are subject to very strict standards, such as having *slender, curved, rounded, fleshy, and smooth-skinned* body.

The analysis of the present study showed that the menus under investigation contain different adjectives (e.g. little, blue, mini, soft, slim, twist, tender, angel, and lady), which conform to the definite societal beauty criteria of women. They meet the universal beauty standards. These adjectives are found in the dish names, the dishes' descriptions, and in some other sentences and phrases that are written aside in menus, which aim to direct and persuade patrons to choose them. The following (Example 8) is a list of names of some dishes that use beauty appeal as a persuasive strategy:

Example 8

- **Little** Italy Pizza
- **Blue cheese** Burger,
- **Mini** Chicken Burgers: two mini burgers served on **soft** rolls
- **Slim** Line Chicken: Grilled chicken **breast**, light mozzarella cheese, homemade… **Soft** Drinks, **Twist** Garlic, Chili Cheese **Curly**,
- **Lady** Lynchburg **Shaker**,
- **Angel** Burger
- **Tender Sliders**

4.1.3.3. Machismo appeal. The study showed that machismo appeal refers to men's attributes, such as their belief of superiority, powerful potential, abilities to perform different tasks, willingness to take risks, and fertility. It showed that men's potential manifests in two strategies, namely *predators, strong characters,* like *legends* or *heroes.*

4.1.3.3.1. Predators. The analysis showed that some of the dishes are named after predators or wild animals. Some others are named after parts

of the predators' attributes. These animals represent an extreme power and strength. It is believed that defeating these predators is considered somehow impossible unless a person has a supreme extraordinary power, usually does not exist in real life. Socially, the power of predators symbolizes the ultimate power which men usually seek for, or at least try to imitate to prove their masculinity (Saunders, 2013). Different wild animals are used in the dish titles, like *eagles*, *buffalos*, and *bulls*. Usually, some dishes are illustrated by a picture of one of those animals. This picture provokes an appealing cognitive image of power in the minds of patrons. These images, based on the patrons' previous scientific and social experience, are associated with strong, fierce, and invincible attributes. Therefore, menus aim to convince patrons of such kinds of meals through creating the feeling of acquiring this ultimate supreme power, and making them really want to gain at least part of it. See example 9 below:

Example 9. Eagle Nachos Supreme: Tortilla chip covered with our Tex-Mex Chili, tomatoes, onions, jalapeno, black olives… (See Figure 2).

Example 9 represents a dish course called '*Eagle Nachos Supreme.* '*Eagle*' means a type of large bird of prey with a massive hooked bill and long, broad wings (Oxford Dictionary). This bird connotes people with sharp sight who are able to see and notice things very quickly and unexpectedly (Oxford Dictionary). In addition to the word eagle, the dish has includes the word '*Supreme*' which is usually associated with power. The dish description also contains some words that refer to the dish ingredients. These ingredients have some challenging characteristics, which make this food item not edible by everyone, but those who can endure the very hot, and spicy food. These words are '*TexMex chili*', and '*Jalapino*'. The use of these words along with a picture in the menu enhances a mental image of a powerful eagle with supreme power in the patrons' minds. Patrons tend to order this dish as some of them may reflect the provoked extraordinary attributes of the eagle to themselves. They would be persuaded in ordering this course as they would be enthusiastic to have such super qualities.

4.1.3.3.2. Strong characters/legend. The data revealed that many dishes indicate terms of some famous figures; most of those figures are so powerful and sometimes are considered as role models for a lot of men due to their extraordinary attributes and achievements. Menus do not only include such famous figures, but also some other adjectives or descriptive words. These words imply meanings of supreme powers, extreme furious activities, and some spectrums of dominance that usually go in parallel with popular legends or the well-known strong characters.

Generally, men tend to emphasize their masculinity through emphasizing their strength and their capability of achieving extreme

Figure 2. Sample image used in menus.

powerful activities. Using particular legendary charterers and well-known societal or folkloric figures, such as worriers, heroes, hunters, and knights, induces men to enroll themselves into the plot of such epics, legends, and stories. In addition, it gives them the opportunity to think of those figures as models they need to follow to prove their powerful masculinity (Saunders, 2013). This makes men satisfy their internal needs in doing so by choosing these dishes. These kinds of word choices are able to persuade patrons of such courses since they are able to stimulate a machismo manhood satisfaction and powerful mental pictures. See example 10 below:

Example 10. Caesar Salad

Although Caesar salad was invented by a man called Caesar Cardini, an Italian immigrant who opened some restaurants in the United States (Kump, 1987), '*Caesar*' refers to a Roman Emperor and it connotes Julius Caesar in particular (Urban Dictionary). This dish name is associated with an image of a great emperor who is mentioned in old novels and plays. This character symbolizes power and dominance as he was known in the Shakespearian play of his political speeches, military actions, as well as his strategic ways in deception and manipulation (Canfora, 2007). This naming is able to persuade customers, since *Caesar* is considered a legendary character, and patrons would have certain legendary and powerful mental images about themselves or about this character who might like to imitate. Therefore, this course name appeals to the restaurant's customers.

4.1.3.3.3. Sport challenging. Practicing sports is considered part of men's strength and power. The corpus revealed that some menus address sport fans. Menus use some strategies to attract and convince them to buy particular dishes through giving certain dishes appealing names. This persuasive strategy is used to motivate patrons, who are into sports, to enroll themselves into time-limited draws that are related to prominent sport championships. See example 11 below:

Example 11. Win 1 of 24 tickets to the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia with McDonald's

Example 11 above illustrates a different strategy of sport persuasion. It is a strategy of encouraging patrons to buy particular meals through making them enroll into particular draws that are strongly connected with sport championships. These draws are limited in time. They are associated with the place and the timing of the beginning and the end of championships of the year of 2018. In the previous example, some words are used to form a sentence or an appealing attractive phrases, such as: '*win*', '*tickets*', '*FIFA*', as well as '*World Cup*'. In fact, all these words connote FIFA World Cup Championship with its all possible mental images to persuade patrons, especially those who are in love with football matches in general, and this occasion in specific.

4.1.3.3.4. Adventures. The corpus showed that some menus included dishes that have reference to adventures and excitement. As shown below, the words used appeal to patrons by forming a variety of different mental images to put patrons into the middle of an exciting adventure and persuade them through provoking their imagination and creating cognitive images about the food.

Example 12. The fisherman: Eat grand & Feel grand! Breaded with fish fillet, cheddar cheese, & tartar sauce

In example 12, the food course is called '*The Fisherman*'. The word *fisherman* means is a person who catches fish or any other see creature from a water body (Oxford Dictionary). The description of the ingredients also contains the word 'fish, which is a cold-blooded see creature, preceded by the phrases '*Eat grand*' and '*Feel grand*', and followed by the word '*tarter*'. *Grand* means big and massive, while *tartar* is a type of sauce, but at the same time it means hard (Oxford Dictionary). The dish name '*The Fisherman*' combined with the words: *grand, fish*, as well as *tartar* can be appealing through forming an image of a professional fisherman who performs a difficult job that cannot be done by everyone, and who is able to catch big fish with an excellent quality. This image of fishing can persuade patrons to order this dish, as patrons would like to go through the same experience, or at least to feel it.

4.1.4. Pleasure appeal

Rewards are considered as basic needs to human life. As a result, positive words help to evoke rewards in the human mind (Schultz, 2015). The analysis showed that words that stimulate happiness, elation and relaxation are used as a persuasive linguistic strategy of hospitality in the selected menus. They are used to inspire and persuade patrons to reward themselves with a good meal. They also help in imagining what kind of appealing rewards they are about to get after a tiring day or enable them to visualize the appealing rewards they think they deserve. See example 13 below:

Example 13. Fiesta Chicken

In example 13, the main course name '*Fiesta Chicken*' is appealing. According to *Oxford Dictionary, Fiesta* means a festive celebration or a religious festival. Festival which is mainly a type of celebrations is always associated with lights, freedom, song, dancing, drinks, food, pleasure, and different activities (Urban Dictionary). As people like to have fun away from their problems and stresses of life, attending festivals is one way of doing so. Calling a main course *Fiesta* would help in recalling persuasive euphoric mental stored images of festivals, events and activities that usually take place there. Therefore, patrons may choose this dish based on previous appealing mental images. This name would be persuasive especially if a colorful dish with different items and vivid colors is assumed to be served.

4.1.5. Thoughts and brand appeal

Based on Nufer's definition (2015), the idea of generating facts and realities and sharing experiences with customers in order to make a charter between a brand and a consumer is believed to be used as an appeal. This appeal refers to testimonial and uniqueness states which are reflected on consumers' minds as thoughts and strong beliefs. Thought appeal is used through stressing on the brand's identity and is proved through consumers when they proclaim their commitment to the brand. One of the examples used in the corpus is the drink name 'Signature Mojito'. The corpus of the study revealed that the American restaurant menus are targeting persuading the customers through using particular thoughts and beliefs. These thoughts and beliefs are divided into what are thought to be *uniqueness*, and what are *thought to be taken for* granted as they are part of social traditions.

Uniqueness is represented by calling dishes after cities or countries. This is appealing based on the belief that when a course is named after a particular city or country, this means that the food course reflects and connotes the real taste of the original dish of the chosen city. This reflection stimulates patrons to be persuaded and directed with desire towards these dishes. Menus under scrutiny have shown a large number of meals that are named after cities or countries. Each meal is thought to reflect the traditional way of its preparation as if it is prepared in its homeland. Originality is represented in such naming. See example 14 illustrated below.

Example 14.

- **Turkish** Beef Burger
- **New York** Strips Steak
- **Mexican** Chicken Sandwich
- **Greek** Meat Salad
- **Mediterranean** Linguine
- **Irish** Beef Burger
- **Brazilian** Chicken Burger
- Little **Italian** Pizza
- Classic **American** Burger
- **USA** Burger
- **Italian** Burger

As shown in example 14, many dishes hold names of cities, such as *Turkish*, *New York, Mexican, Italian*, etc. These words mainly express uniqueness though they do reflect the origin of dishes. Yet, they present uniqueness flavour, as well as the perfection in the way of preparation.

These names are able to emphasize the identity of dishes and their credibility, and consequently persuade patrons to choose them.

5. Overlapping

The results of the study showed that some appeals interconnected with other specific appeals. That is sometimes appeals never used alone. During the classification process, the researchers found that there is a degree of overlapping among some appeals. It is noteworthy that there were no 100% stratifications among the appeals all the time. This was manifested clearly in some appeals, such as sexual, and beauty appeals. Women beauty is a factor that urges sex, and phallic is also connected with the masculine sexual ability and man's fertility. As a result, these two appeals are strongly connected with the sexual appeal. Another example is the overlapping between social, and euphoria appeals to some limited extent. In some points, it was found that the same domains, where some people are socialized together, are considered certain spots where people get euphoric, such as clubs.

Generally, it was found that there is an imaginary line that separates between one appeal and the others; however, this line can be penetrated by other appeals. The reason behind this is that human minds differ from one person to another. People's mental configurations and their cognitive images also differ from one person to another. This differentiation is based on the different backgrounds as well as the different previous experiences everyone got before. Yet, there some common societal, sensual, and cultural basis that are able to create a variety of shared mental images.

6. Conclusions

This study revealed that *sensual, emotional, desire, pleasure,* and *thought and brand appeals* were used to persuade the restaurants' customers of the menu dishes. These results are in line with previous studies (e.g. Reichert et al., 2001). The results of the present study also lend support to Busse's findings (2016) that restaurants' patrons are affected by the way dishes are presented and language used in menus, because menus are considered one means of food marketing at restaurants. So it can be said that menus are capable at changing patrons' behaviors towards choosing restaurants courses.

The in-depth survey of menus at 26 American-cuisine restaurants in Jordan, the study revealed that naming plays an integral part in the hospitality industry. Patrons go to restaurants seeking for autonomy in food choices. It was found that the labeling process is designed to achieve social predetermined behavior (e.g., stereotypes). Moreover, word choice in describing food, such as vivid and sensual words, past participle verbs, and desires, and beauty standards based on some societal criteria improve customers' desire and willingness in the dishes presented in the menus.

The researchers concluded that menus are not arbitrarily written or designed; menus are subject to a set of persuasive strategies and conventions. Such appeals and conventions have power to control patrons' decisions and dominate their psyche. Patrons think that they are free to choose, but in fact, language influences their choices and limits their options for persuasive purposes. This happens through latent hidden messages that control patrons' way of thinking and direct their attention unconsciously to certain courses rather than others. This happens through the mental images that restaurants aim to establish in the mind of the patrons to make them buy their dishes.

It is also worth mentioning that the study is mainly based on analyzing the corpus of American restaurant menus, which implies that the corpus reflects some aspects of the American culture, its history, its popular charterers and some behavioral tendencies, besides being written in English. It is also important to mention that Jordanians are to a certain extent familiar with this culture; however, this knowledge is holistic. In addition, not all Jordanians master English language, and not many of them know anything about the American history. Therefore, the

persuasive strategies might not be effective due to lack of this cultural knowledge. Its effectiveness is based on the patrons' knowledge, familiarity, and exposure to the English language, as well as both the American culture and the American history. In other words, if a patron reads a name of any course item in the menu, which he/she is not familiar with or its background, the dish name would not be persuasive to him due to the lack of stored mental images for such dish names.

The effectiveness of these persuasive strategies in the American menus needs realizing and understanding the language, and culture. Since this issue is not the main concern of the present research, it is recommended that other studies be conducted on the impact of such persuasive appeals on the customers of the American restaurants.

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Author contribution statement

Ghaleb Rabab'ah and Sewar Al-Qudah: Conceived and designed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

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