

ABSTRACT

In 2012 alone, the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) reports that Internet Romance Scams (IRS) have caused a loss of RM32.09million. Using romance and love as bait, romance scammers entice their targets into a romantic relationship before persuading them to give money; hence causing victims to also suffer psychological and emotional trauma. This qualitative case study examines a total of 15 scammer e-mails taken from one successfully closed IRS case obtained from RMP to determine (1) how the scammer's credible identity is established, (2) how the target's emotional responses are aroused, and (3) how the fraudulent scheme is diachronically developed; focusing on Aristotle's means of persuasion: *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotions) and *logos* (reason). Briefly, at the beginning, the scammer established a credible identity by claiming to be a religious, reputable and honourable person. His credibility was enhanced through the use of evidence, reason and well-structured arguments to justify his claims or behaviour (e.g. request for money). Then, as an ideal lover, he developed an intense emotional bond with the target through the repetitive use of language that arouses positive emotions; but to obtain money from her, the scammer invoked her negative emotions using a distressed lover identity. This research also discusses the similarity between the development of the IRS and non-fraudulent romantic relationships as well as the possibility of IRS being a form of intimate partner violence. This research concludes with recommendations to reduce the number of IRS, along with the limitations of the research as well as the recommendations for future studies.

Keywords: Internet romance scams (IRS), persuasion, influence tactics, credible identity, emotional appeals, online communication, romantic relationship development, romancing strategies, discourse analysis

ABSTRAK

Laporan dari Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM) menunjukkan bahawa pada 2012, penipuan percintaan Internet (IRS) telah mengakibatkan kerugian kewangan berjumlah RM32.09juta. Penipu percintaan mengumpan sasaran untuk menjalin hubungan percintaan yang erat sebelum memujuk sasaran untuk memberikan wang dan akibatnya, mangsa IRS turut mengalami trauma dari segi psikologi dan emosi. Kajian kes kualitatif ini menganalisa 15 e-mel penipu dari satu kes IRS yang diperoleh daripada PDRM untuk menentukan bagaimana penipu (1) mewujudkan identiti yang boleh dipercayai, (2) membangkit emosi sasaran serta (3) mengembangkan rancangan penipuan secara diakronik; bertumpu pada teknik pujukan saranan *Aristotle (ethos, pathos, logos)*. Pada awalnya, penipu mewujudkan kebolehpercayaan dengan memperkenalkan diri sebagai seorang yang warak, bereputasi tinggi dan berakhlak. Sifat kebolehpercayaan ini dipertingkatkan melalui penggunaan bukti dan hujah yang munasabah serta berstruktur untuk menjelaskan dakwaan atau perangnya (cth. permintaan wang). Selepas itu, penipu berkelakuan sebagai seorang kekasih yang ideal demi memujuk pertalian emosi yang mendalam melalui penggunaan ayat-ayat yang menimbulkan emosi positif secara berulang. Namun, penipu turut membangkitkan emosi negatif demi mendesak sasaran untuk memberinya wang dengan menggambarkan diri sebagai seorang kekasih yang menderita. Kajian ini turut membincangkan kesamaan antara perkembangan IRS dengan hubungan romantik yang sebenar serta kemungkinan IRS sebagai sejenis keganasan hubungan intim. Kajian ini diakhiri dengan cadangan untuk mengurangkan kes IRS, limitasi kajian serta cadangan untuk kajian selanjutnya.

Kata-kata kunci: Penipuan percintaan Internet (IRS), pujukan, taktik pengaruh, identiti yang boleh dipercayai, daya tarikan beremosi, komunikasi atas talian, perkembangan hubungan romantik, strategi romantis, analisa wacana

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To God be the Glory, great things He hath done.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	x
List of Appendices	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1. Background of Study	1
1.1 Research Aims and Questions	4
1.2 Online Scams	5
1.3 Internet Romance Scam Process	8
1.3.1 Perpetrators of Internet Romance Scams	13
1.3.2 Victims of Internet Romance Scams	14
1.4 Conclusion	16
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2. Introduction	17
2.1 Online Communication and Online Relationships	17
2.2 Related Psychological Theories	20
2.2.1 Cognitive Theories of Persuasion	20
2.2.2 Psychological Approach to Trust Development	26
2.3 Persuasion	29

2.3.1	Persuasion through ‘ <i>Ethos</i> ’	37
2.3.2	Persuasion through ‘ <i>Pathos</i> ’	42
2.3.3	Persuasion through ‘ <i>Logos</i> ’	47
2.4	Textual Analysis Approaches	51
2.4.1	Referential Meaning	52
2.4.2	Connotative Meaning	53
2.4.3	Presuppositions	55
2.4.4	Speech Acts	56
2.5	Conclusion	59
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY		61
3.	Introduction	61
3.1	Research Design	61
3.2	Data and Data Collection Process	63
3.3	Data Analysis Procedures	67
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS		70
4.	Introduction	70
4.1	The Identity of a Credible and Reliable Person	71
4.1.1	A Religious Person who Believes in Divine Providence	71
4.1.2	A Person with a Good Reputation	76
4.1.3	An Innocent Person with Good Moral Traits	78
4.2	The Identity of an Ideal and Passionate Lover	80
4.2.1	Personal Attributes of a Romantic Lover	80
4.2.2	Adores His Lover	84

4.2.3	Willing to Do Anything for His Lover	87
4.2.4	Offers a Lasting and Exclusive Love	90
4.3	A Distressed Lover in Need of Financial Help	95
4.3.1	A Distressed Lover who is Disappointed and Angry	96
4.3.2	A Distressed Lover Pleading for Help	100
4.3.3	A Distressed Lover Giving Up and Preparing to End His Life ...	104
4.4	Conclusion	108
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION		111
5.	Introduction	111
5.1	Use of Persuasive Appeals According to the Stages of a Romance	
	Scam	111
5.2	Comparison between the Romance Scam and Non-fraudulent	
	Romantic Relationships	114
5.3	Internet Romance Scam as a Form of Intimate Partner Violence	116
5.4	Conclusion	120
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION		121
6.	Concluding Points	121
6.1	Summary of Findings	121
6.2	Policy Recommendations and Possible Activism	122
6.3	Recommendations for Future Research	127
REFERENCES		130

LIST OF FIGURES

No.	Title	Page
1.1	Internet Romance Scam Process	9
2.1	Central and Peripheral Route as a Continuum	24
2.2	Central and Peripheral Route as Parallel Processes	25
2.3	Means of Persuasion – <i>Ethos, Pathos & Logos</i>	36
2.4	Ways of Portraying a Credible Character	39
2.5	Theoretical Framework of the Present Study.....	60
3.1	Phases of Data Collection Process	64
3.2	Order of Messages in the Data Provided by RMP	66
3.3	Stages of Data Analysis Process	67
5.1	Use of Persuasive Appeals according to the Stages of the Internet Romance Scam	112

LIST OF TABLES

No.	Title	Page
1.1	Difference Between 419 scams and Internet Romance Scams	16
2.2	Speech Acts by Searle (1976)	56
3.1	Text Size in Terms of Number of Words.....	66
4.1	Rhyme-endings	84
4.2	The Target's Presupposed Desires and Needs and the Scammer as Agent that Satisfies Them	89
4.3	Emotions Expressed in SM10	97
4.4	The Scammer as Victim and the Target as Offender	102
4.5	Summary of Persuasive Appeals	109
5.1	Comparing Stages of the Scam with Stages of a Non-fraudulent Relationship	114

LIST OF APPENDICES

No.	Title	Page
A	Example of scammer e-mail from <i>Introductory Stage</i>	149
B	Examples of scammer e-mail from <i>Grooming Stage</i>	150
C	Example of scammer e-mail from <i>Request for Money Stage</i>	151
D	Example of target e-mails	152