

The Analytical Spam Filter

One of the few simple pleasures of the new technological age is the brilliance of the spam filter. Knowing that every day when I wake up and check my email I can open my inbox with the comfort that it will not be full of advertisements for some form of organic penis enhancer makes the monotony of the action less frustrating. Imagine my surprise when opening my inbox and finding that my precious filter had failed me. I received an email from a young Kenyan named Oziba Hamza trying to enlist my help in a financial matter that can only be described as a felony. This was a complete scam, obviously, but why do so many people give in to these things each year? In an effort to investigate this tempting offer I chose to use Toulmin's tools of analysis to break the email down.

After attempting to persuade the reader that he is an honest man, Mr. Hamza mentions a large sum of money, ten million dollars. In exchange for my help liberating the money, he claims I will be rewarded with thirty percent of the ten million, but naturally I am skeptical. Mr. Hamza explains that he is a twenty year old houseboy, formally in the service of President Barack Obama's grandmother, Sarah Obama, in Kenya. By connecting himself with such an important American figure as the current president, and associating himself with such a close family member, he is attempting to build credibility with the reader. Labeling himself as a houseboy does not help in the understanding of how he came into the possession of ten million dollars, but he goes on to explain away those doubts. According to Mr. Hamza, a Swedish gentleman by the name of Ralph Molala gave the ten million dollars to Sarah Obama to assist in President

Obama's re-election campaign, "...Grand mum called Obama for this fund and Obama was not interested as he said he had enough money to follow up his campaign" (1). Due to President Obama's lack of need, Sarah deposited the money in a Security Company. Mr. Hamza was given this money because of his close relationship with the late Sarah Obama knowing that if she had not have given it to him the money would have been tied up in outside matters, "Now, I know that no one recognizes my presence in the family, because I was only a house help to the late woman. I decided that I will not disclose the position of these 10 million United States dollars to any one here because they will take it from me" (1). This touching story of care and patriotism exemplifies Oziba Hamza's warrant.

Mr. Hamza is trying to convince the reader of his warrant, which is that he is a trustworthy person and worthy of the reader's assistance. He immediately begins his email by trying to connect through a religious and therefore moral reference, God, "Greetings to you and your family in the name of God! I am a reliable and God-fearing person and I have gotten your contact information through prayers and searching I made on the Internet" (1). He also builds on his self proclaimed good nature by claiming that of the left over seventy percent of the ten million, twenty percent will be used to help people around the world in financial need from recent disasters. Aside from the promised charity he claims that the money would only be used to bring him to America and help his family in Kenya before reminding the reader of his connection to God, "Please, I beg you in the name of God to help me collect the deposit" (1). Mr. Hamza qualifies his pleads by claiming that he has had to abscond from Kenya and needs to money before he can leave. This technique makes Mr. Hamza seem as though he has taken on the role of hero in distress and is offering the reader a chance to help in his quest.

Despite the deceptively bad grammar, Mr. Hamza is actually using the argument techniques based in the rhetorical triangle. Through the use of logos, pathos, and ethos Mr. Hamza states his claim. Through logos Mr. Hamza attempts to approach from a logical perspective by adding a hyperlink that he urges you to investigate if you question his claims, despite the fact that it sends the reader to a blank news page, “We deposited the fund outside of Kenya for safe keeping before the kind grand mum gave up recently. You can this out on the web: <http://www.bloomberg...>” (1). Using ethos Mr. Hamza builds his credentials by claiming to have been a close former service provider of the President’s grandmother, so close that she trusted him enough to put the money at the Security Council in his name, “The money was deposited in my name because Grand mum does not write English,” (1). Mr. Hamza’s most persuasive side of his argument resides in the pathos, or emotional appeal. By mentioning his loss of his employer Sarah Obama, and his recent need to abscond his home country, Mr. Hamza is hoping to tug enough on the heartstrings of a “Mr. Nice Guy,” that only wants to help an unfortunate victim.

Though Oziba Hamza is able to construct an emotional plea, as an argument for helping in the act of embezzlement Mr. Hamza’s email fails. There is no logical connection, and although he claims to have worked for Sarah Obama there is no proof. It is also hard for a reader to imagine a houseboy being close enough to his former employer that he is given ten million dollars that he is not able to receive on his own merit. While Mr. Hamza provides a decent story it does not seem enough to cause the repeated success of scams on the lives of unsuspecting people just trying to sort through their inbox.

Work Cited

Hamza, Oziba. "Obama's Kenyan Grandmother's Houseboy." Email.