"BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL WOMAN IS A TRIBE OF OTHER SUCCESSFUL WOMEN" – A PRELIMINARY CORPUS-ASSISTED STUDY OF EVALUATIVE ADJECTIVES IN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' BLOGS

KATARZYNA FRONCZAK
University of Lodz
katarzyna.fronczak@uni.lodz.pl

Abstract

Women entrepreneurs' blogs represent a unique and evolving form of digital discourse, blending professional authority with personal engagement. Within this genre, evaluative language plays a crucial role in shaping credibility, persuasion, and identity. While evaluative adjectives have been widely studied in formal and academic contexts, their opinion-forming function in entrepreneurial communication remains largely unexplored.

This study investigates how opinions and evaluations are constructed through the use of evaluative adjectives in women entrepreneurs' blogs, examining their distribution, rhetorical function, and impact on audience engagement. Using a corpus-assisted methodology, the analysis is conducted on the lexical data extracted from the Women Entrepreneurs Blog Corpus (WEBC), a dataset of 329,896 words from 318 blog posts. The study identifies evaluative adjectives through frequency-based corpus analysis and categorises them into distinct semantic groups, which serve as the foundation for examining how women entrepreneurs use linguistic choices to construct stance, authority, and persuasion in digital business communication.

A quantitative analysis of categorised evaluative adjectives reveals that positive-polarity evaluative adjectives are the most frequent, reinforcing optimism and motivation. Adjectives of importance follow, emphasising authority and expertise, while size- and time-related adjectives occur moderately, highlighting growth and progress. Attitude and emotion adjectives appear less frequently, contributing to a confident and engaging tone. Negatively-charged adjectives are rare and often reframed, whereas certainty and likelihood adjectives are the least frequent, reflecting a preference for flexibility over absolutes in entrepreneurial discourse.

By situating this analysis within the broader framework of stance and evaluation in specialised discourse, this study provides insights into how women entrepreneurs use language to formulate and express opinions, navigate professional identity, establish credibility, and engage their audiences. The research contributes to discussions on opinion expression in digital business communication, shedding light on the intersection of gender, entrepreneurship, and linguistic strategies in online discourse.

Keywords: blogs; corpus linguistics; digital business communication; evaluative adjectives; women entrepreneurs.

1. Introduction

The voices of female entrepreneurs reveal how evaluation and opinion are inseparable from identity, showing that language itself can be a form of innovation. Through the ways they describe, assess, and narrate their experiences, women entrepreneurs not only construct professional authority but also challenge conventional expectations of what an entrepreneur should sound like. However, these innovative voices have historically been marginalised, as the entrepreneurial sphere has long been shaped by a gendered narrative that has consistently underrepresented women entrepreneurs, both in practice and in academic discourse (e.g. Steffens & Viladot, 2015: 121-122). Traditional conceptualisations of entrepreneurship often frame it through masculine paradigms, portraying the entrepreneur as an "active businessman" (Scranton, 2010), a "captain of industry" (Scranton, 2010), a "key man" (Herbet & Link, 1982), and a "hero who perceives the gaps and connects markets" (Bird & Bush 2002). This male-centric discourse has not only reinforced systemic barriers for women but has also constrained the ways in which female entrepreneurial identity is recognised and articulated (De Bruin et al., 2006; Steffens & Viladot, 2015; Meyer, 2018).

A foundational challenge to this normative perspective came with Eleanor Schwartz's pioneering study, *Entrepreneurship: A New Female Frontier* (1976), which signalled the emergence of women's entrepreneurship as a legitimate scholarly field (Green et al., 2003; McAdam, 2013). Since then, scholars have highlighted the need to move beyond the dominant narrative to explore alternative representations constructed by women themselves, emphasising the importance of self-authored entrepreneurial identities (e.g. Fronczak, 2024a; 2024b).

Defining "women entrepreneurs" is widely recognised as complex and multifaceted. Various frameworks recognise women not merely as business owners but as key drivers of economic and social transformation. For instance, Adhikari (2008) highlights the role of women in establishing and managing enterprises, while the OECD (2004) underscores their broader impact on job creation, innovation, and economic growth. This perspective is further supported by international policy frameworks, such as the Indian government's stipulation that women entrepreneurs must control the majority of ownership and employment within an enterprise (Ambrish, 2014; Sharma, 2018). However, a universal definition remains elusive, complicating efforts to measure and compare their contributions across different socio-economic contexts (Financial Express, 2022)[1].

In recent decades, there has been a significant global increase in female entrepreneurship, with female entrepreneurs motivated not only by financial objectives but also by a commitment to advancing gender equity and challenging institutional biases. In the United States, for example, the number of women-led businesses expanded from 402,000 in 1972 to 12.3 million by 2023, with women

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[1]   see https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/reviews/defining-woman-entrepreneurship-1600615442 Retrieved January 14, 2024.

comprising approximately 43% of entrepreneurs worldwide[2]. In the context of this growth, successful female entrepreneurs have increasingly utilised digital platforms to share experiences, advocate for change, and foster supportive communities (Fronczak, 2024a; 2024b).

2. Language, Evaluation, and Entrepreneurial Identity

Language plays a central role in shaping how women entrepreneurs construct professional identity, convey expertise, and engage their audiences. In particular, evaluative language—especially adjectives expressing attitudes, judgments, and stances—functions as a powerful tool for building credibility, authority, and persuasive appeal. Evaluation is integral to how individuals express opinion, formulate stance, and navigate social positioning, particularly in professional contexts where identity and trust are crucial.

While evaluative language has been widely studied in academic writing, media discourse, and interpersonal communication, its role in digital business discourse remains underexplored. Blogs authored by women entrepreneurs represent a unique genre where personal narrative intersects with professional authority, making them fertile ground for analysing how evaluation is used to influence, motivate, and engage. Understanding the patterns of evaluative adjective usage in such blogs sheds light on how language constructs entrepreneurial identity, particularly in a domain historically dominated by masculine representations.

3. Blogs as Discursive Arenas for Women Entrepreneurs

Blogs, as dynamic and accessible digital platforms, have become key channels for self-representation and audience engagement. Since being officially recognised by the Oxford English Dictionary in 2003, blogs have evolved into powerful mediums that combine personal storytelling with professional insight. Defined by Merriam-Webster as a site for online reflection, commentary, and multimedia sharing, blogs offer dual utility: enabling personal expression and serving business objectives such as branding, marketing, and community-building (Wood et al., 2006; Ahuja & Medury, 2010; Fronczak, 2021).

Scholars have examined various blog genres, including mommy blogs (e.g. Tangherlini et al., 2016), political blogs (e.g. Kopytowska, 2013), health blogs (e.g. Rains & Keating, 2011), fashion blogs (e.g. Duffy & Hund, 2015), and travel blogs (e.g. Anesa, 2019). Women entrepreneurs' blogs, however, represent a distinctive communicative genre, blending personal experiences with professional insights to motivate, inform, and connect with other women. These blogs often form virtual communities, fostering peer support and mentorship while simultaneously challenging conventional media portrayals of women in business (Fronczak, 2024a; 2024b).

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[2]   See: https://techreport.com/statistics/business-workplace/women-entrepreneurs-statistics/ Retrieved May 14, 2024.

Unlike traditional media, which frequently perpetuates gender stereotypes, blogs allow women entrepreneurs to take control of their narratives, articulate their journeys, and establish themselves as credible, authoritative voices. As Hammad and El Naggar (2023) note, digital platforms enable female entrepreneurs to amplify their reach and influence, creating alternative spaces for empowerment, advocacy, and identity formation.

4. The Research Gap: Evaluative Language in Women Entrepreneurs' Blogs

While the socio-economic impact of women entrepreneurs and the communicative power of blogs have received increasing academic attention, there remains a significant lack of research on the linguistic strategies employed within these blogs. Specifically, the role of evaluative adjectives in shaping opinion and constructing identity has not been systematically explored. This omission is notable for two reasons. First, evaluative adjectives are one of the most explicit linguistic resources for encoding judgement, appreciation, and emotional stance, making them particularly effective in shaping how bloggers characterise themselves and their professional activities. Second, whereas entrepreneurial discourse research has predominantly focused on verbs associated with agency and action, evaluative adjectives, despite their central role in conveying stance, remain comparatively under-investigated in this context. Addressing this gap is crucial, given that language is not merely descriptive: it actively shapes how women entrepreneurs position themselves in a male-dominated field, negotiate authority, and foster community engagement (Bhowmick & Shahi, 2024).

This study addresses this gap by analysing evaluative adjectives in women entrepreneurs' blogs using a corpus-assisted methodology. Drawing on the Women Entrepreneurs Blog Corpus (WEBC), comprising 329,896 words from 318 blog posts, the research examines how women entrepreneurs use evaluative language to construct stance, motivation, authority, and engagement in digital business communication.

In pursuing this aim, the study focuses on four key objectives. First, it explores the use of evaluative language, investigating how opinions and evaluations are expressed in women entrepreneurs' blogs. Second, it examines the role of language in digital business communication, analysing how linguistic choices influence credibility, persuasion, and audience engagement. Third, it investigates the intersection of language, gender, and entrepreneurship, exploring how linguistic strategies are used to construct professional identity and assert authority. Ultimately, this research contributes to interdisciplinary discussions on gender, entrepreneurship, digital communication, and language, highlighting how evaluative adjectives serve as tools of empowerment and persuasion in women entrepreneurs' digital self-representation.

5. Stance and Evaluative Adjectives

The concept of stance has been theorised in various ways across linguistic research, but for the purposes of this study, it is understood through the lens of stance-taking as proposed by Du Bois (2007). Du Bois offers a comprehensive and interactionally grounded definition:

> Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimensions of the sociocultural field (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163).

This widely cited definition is particularly suitable for the present analysis, as it underscores stance as a dynamic and dialogic act rather than a mere inventory of linguistic features. As Myers (2010, p. 264) notes, stance encompasses a broad range of linguistic phenomena that have traditionally been studied in isolation, including modality, evaluation, evidentiality, hedging, politeness, and metadiscourse. Crucially, Du Bois frames stance not simply as a linguistic marker of attitude but as a linguistic and social act (2007, p. 141), emphasising its performative and interpersonal dimensions.

This conceptualisation aligns well with the context of women entrepreneurs' blogs, where the bloggers act as social actors engaged in the practice of stance-taking—evaluating experiences, positioning themselves within the business discourse, and aligning with their intended audiences. The blogs, therefore, serve as a fertile site for investigating how stance is constructed and communicated in digital entrepreneurial discourse.

In terms of linguistic realisation, Biber (1999, pp. 966–997) notes that stance can be expressed through a wide array of "grammatical devices, word choice, and paralinguistic devices". Among the various resources available for marking stance, this study focuses specifically on evaluative adjectives, which, alongside stance adverbs, cognitive verbs, and modals, are among the most prominent and overt linguistic markers of stance.

Within this framework, evaluative adjectives function as linguistic resources that enable writers to express attitudes, judgments, and subjective evaluations. As Samson (2004) observes, such adjectives are frequently used to evaluate propositions, methods, results, or specific points within a text, thereby helping the writer articulate stance in a precise and often persuasive manner.

To facilitate a nuanced and multi-dimensional analysis, this study integrates the perspectives of both Biber (1999; 2006) and Du Bois (2007). Biber's approach highlights the grammatical and lexical dimensions of stance, while Du Bois emphasises the interactive, social, and evaluative processes inherent in stance-taking. By combining these two theoretical frameworks, the analysis not only identifies the linguistic realisations of stance in women entrepreneurs' blogs but also explores why and how female bloggers take particular stances in their discursive construction of identity, authority, and engagement.

6. Research Material, Analytical Tool, and Methodology

A detailed linguistic analysis of evaluative language in women entrepreneurs' blogs was conducted using a purpose-built dataset—the Women Entrepreneurs Blog Corpus (WEBC). This corpus comprises 318 blog entries authored by established and active female entrepreneurs. Following an extensive survey of well-regarded entrepreneurial blogs written by women, three platforms were selected based on their prominence, audience engagement, and consistent publication of contemporaneous content targeting women in business. These blogs include *Leaders in Heels*[3], *Women on Business*[4], and *Women Entrepreneurs*[5].

Each of these platforms was chosen due to its relevance to the study's focus on authentic female entrepreneurial voices. The blogs not only provide inspirational and practical content for women embarking on entrepreneurial ventures but also represent diverse perspectives, given that they include posts written by multiple female contributors. The primary selection criterion was that all included blog posts must have been authored by women; posts written by male contributors, occasionally found on these platforms, were excluded from the dataset. Additionally, to ensure diversity within the corpus, no more than three posts by the same author were included.

To maintain topical relevance and account for recent trends in digital entrepreneurial discourse, only blog posts published between 2019 and 2023 were considered. This temporal limitation ensures that the language analysed reflects current linguistic practices and discourse patterns in women-led business communication. As a result of these selection parameters, the WEBC consists of 318 blog posts, distributed across the three blogs as follows: *Leaders in Heels* (110 posts), *Women on Business* (104 posts), and *Women Entrepreneurs* (104 posts). Table 1 below summarises the composition of the corpus.

Table 1: Composition of the WEBC (Fronczak 2024a; 2024b)

Women Entrepreneurs Blog	# of Blog Posts	# of Words
Leaders in Heels	110	109,092
Women on Business	104	104.296
Women Entrepreneurs	104	115,508
TOTAL CORPUS	**318**	**329,896**

Although the current analysis is based on a preliminary version of the WEBC, the corpus is expected to expand in future studies. However, the process of corpus compilation is both labour-intensive and time-consuming, particularly due to the manual selection criteria aimed at ensuring authenticity and authorial diversity.

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[3]   see https://lhagenda.com Retrieved July 4, 2023.
[4]   see https://www.womenonbusiness.com/blog/ Retrieved July 4, 2023.
[5]   see https://www.entrepreneur.com/topic/women-entrepreneur Retrieved July 4, 2023.

As such, the findings presented here represent an initial exploration into the linguistic patterns of stance-taking in women entrepreneurs' digital communication.

The study employed a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) methodology, following the principles outlined by Partington et al. (2013). This approach combines the quantitative analysis of large text datasets with qualitative interpretation of discourse, enabling the investigation of evaluative adjectives as markers of stance and identity within digital entrepreneurial communication.

For corpus analysis, the study utilised *Wmatrix*—a specialised software developed by Rayson (2003, 2005)—which enables both semantic and grammatical annotation, as well as statistical keyword analysis. *Wmatrix* was instrumental in generating keyword frequency lists, from which evaluative adjectives were identified manually. This process was guided by evaluative adjective selection thresholds inspired by Conrad and Biber (2000), who suggest that meaningful stance-related features should appear at a frequency of at least 10 instances per 100,000 words. Adapting this criterion to the present dataset size, the analysis focused on adjectives appearing at a rate of 30 occurrences or more per 300,000 words.

In order to ensure analytical precision, not all adjectives identified in the keyword lists were included in the final analysis. Specifically, adjectives were classified as *evaluative* if they encoded judgement, appreciation, or affect, following established principles of appraisal theory. This included adjectives that expressed the blogger's stance explicitly (e.g. *inspiring*, *successful*, *supportive*) or implicitly through connotation. Conversely, adjectives whose function was purely descriptive, denotational, or taxonomic were categorised as *non-evaluative*. Classification was based on contextual analysis of each occurrence, and ambiguous cases were resolved through close reading and coder discussion to ensure consistency. Adjectives that did not perform an evaluative function were therefore excluded from the dataset. Examples of excluded adjectives include *digital* (as in *digital content creator*, *digital marketing*, and *digital transformation*), *international* (as in *international women's forum*, *international franchise of Entrepreneur Media*, and *international women's day*), and *online* (as in *online business*, *online shop*, and *online sales*).

These adjectives serve to specify the objective domain or scope of the noun phrases they modify but do not express any subjective evaluation. As such, they were excluded from the dataset of evaluative adjectives analysed in this study.

By applying this rigorous selection process, the analysis ensures that only lexical items contributing to evaluative stance—those which convey judgments, attitudes, or affective meaning—are included. This focus facilitates a more accurate understanding of how women entrepreneurs use language as a resource to establish credibility, convey authority, and engage audiences in digital spaces.

7. Results and Discussion

The evaluative adjectives identified in the WEBC were classified into eight semantic categories. These categories draw on established distinctions in evaluative linguistics, including appraisal theory and corpus-based classifications of adjectival meaning, which differentiate types of evaluation such as judgement, appreciation, affect, importance, size, age/time, likelihood, and polarity. This framework provided a balanced level of granularity: sufficiently broad to capture overarching evaluative patterns, yet specific enough to allow meaningful comparison across different evaluative functions. As illustrated in Figure 1, positive-polarity evaluative adjectives represent the most frequently occurring category within the analysed corpus. These are followed by adjectives denoting importance, and those related to size. Adjectives associated with age and time comprise the next most frequent group. In contrast, adjectives expressing attitude or emotion appear with somewhat lower frequency, followed by negatively-charged adjectives. Finally, adjectives indicating likelihood and certainty are the least frequently used.

Figure 1: Categorised evaluative adjectives selected from the WEBC
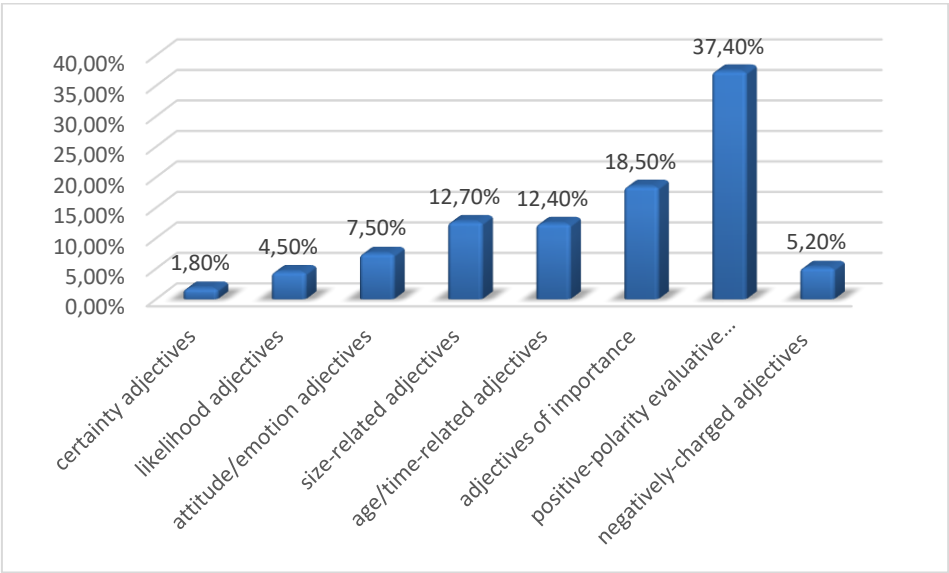
This distribution indicates a clear preference for positive and impactful language within the discourse of women entrepreneurs, which may reflect the aspirational, motivational, and supportive tone characteristic of this genre of digital business communication. The frequent use of positive and importance-related adjectives suggests that women entrepreneurs aim to inspire confidence, emphasise value, and convey authority in their blogs.

The following section offers a detailed examination of a representative sample of evaluative adjectives drawn from the corpus. The analysis considers their frequency, distribution, and discursive functions, with particular attention to how these adjectives contribute to stance-taking, audience engagement, and the construction of professional identity within women entrepreneurs' digital narratives.

7.1. Positive-Polarity Evaluative Adjectives

The predominance of positive-polarity evaluative adjectives (37.70%) in the discourse of women entrepreneurs indicates a strong preference for evaluative language that fosters trust, engagement, and motivation among their audience. This lexical tendency highlights the centrality of optimism and encouragement in entrepreneurial communication. Furthermore, the dominance of positive adjectives within this discourse underscores a rhetorical emphasis on success, motivation, and empowerment. By adopting such linguistic choices, women entrepreneurs cultivate an inspiring and motivational tone, reinforcing self-confidence and fostering a supportive communicative environment.

Table 2: Positive-polarity evaluative adjectives in the WEBC

Positive-polarity evaluative adjectives	Frequency in the WEBC	Relative frequency in the WEBC	Averaged number of occurrences in the WEBC
Good	268	0.09	244
Great	216	0.07	196
Successful	211	0.07	192
Easy	170	0.05	155
Positive	158	0.05	144
Right	157	0.05	143
True	133	0.04	121
Real	111	0.04	101
Clear	108	0.03	98
Unique	83	0.03	75
Effective	71	0.02	65
Perfect	71	0.02	65
Productive	65	0.02	59
Powerful	65	0.02	59
Comfortable	58	0.02	53
Valuable	56	0.02	51
Passionate	55	0.02	50
Amazing	51	0.02	46
Helpful	45	0.01	41
Incredible	33	0.01	30
Nice	31	0.01	28

For the purposes of this study, the term *positive-polarity evaluative adjectives* is used to designate adjectives that encode affirming judgments, appreciations, or affects. Linguistically, they function as stance-taking resources, while discursively they promote optimism, motivation, and credibility within entrepreneurial communication. This definition foregrounds both their evaluative role and their discourse-specific function.

Examining the concordances of selected positive-polarity evaluative adjectives reveals their strategic role in shaping entrepreneurial narratives. Notably, the use of *powerful* and *unique* underscores themes of individual agency and personal branding, which are central to entrepreneurial discourse. These adjectives emphasise the distinctiveness and strength of the entrepreneur, reinforcing the idea that personal attributes contribute to business success, as demonstrated in the following examples:

1. *As an entrepreneur, you have a **powerful** tool at your disposal that can help your business stand out and succeed: your personal brand.*

2. *We each bring a **unique** contribution to the table and have a right to be proud of our strengths.*

Moreover, adjectives such as *good, great,* and *successful* reinforce optimism and encouragement, which are crucial for building confidence in business ventures. Corpus analysis shows that these adjectives function as reassurance markers, enhancing hope, perseverance, and achievement. By normalising challenges while maintaining a forward-looking, optimistic outlook, they strengthen the belief that hard work leads to positive outcomes—a core narrative in entrepreneurship. This is illustrated in the following examples:

3. *There's a **great** saying: "It'll all be good in the end, and if it isn't good now, it's not the end."*

4. *Some of the most **successful** entrepreneurs out there are moms—they have plenty of experience multitasking and working on tight deadlines.*

Alongside these moderate reassurance markers, stronger evaluative adjectives such as *perfect*, *amazing*, *incredible*, and even the more colloquial *nice* serve to amplify enthusiasm. Corpus analysis further reveals that these hyperbolic or affective descriptors create a tone of excitement and inspiration, encouraging readers to view entrepreneurship not only as achievable but also as highly rewarding and enjoyable. Among them, the adjective *perfect* is especially revealing, as it oscillates between two discursive poles. On the one hand, it reflects the social and psychological burden of perfectionism, often gendered in its framing. Expressions such as *women must be perfect* or *everything must be perfect before starting an idea* expose the paralysing effect of unattainable standards, frequently tied to self-doubt and imposter syndrome. In this sense, *perfect* functions as a negative evaluative marker, highlighting constraints and pressures rather than achievements. On the other hand, *perfect* is also deployed positively to describe products, services, or desirable futures, as in *fiber optic connections are perfect for companies* or *everything will be perfect in 10 years*. In such cases, it serves as an intensifier of excellence, conveying functionality, suitability,

or aspirational ideals. This duality makes *perfect* a highly versatile adjective, encapsulating both the limitations imposed by unrealistic expectations and the promise of optimal outcomes.

Additionally, adjectives such as *easy*, *clear*, and *effective* reflect an effort to reduce psychological barriers to entrepreneurship. By describing business frameworks and solutions as effective and simple, entrepreneurs make the entrepreneurial journey appear more accessible and achievable. This aligns with the persuasive function of entrepreneurial blogs: motivating hesitant individuals by minimising perceived complexity, as in the following examples:

5. *Proving the stereotypes wrong isn't **easy**, but the struggles make the successes more satisfying.*

6. *I went looking for a new and potentially kinder solution, and what I found was incredibly **effective**. I discovered a framework that makes all the difference.*

While analysing Example 5, it is noticeable that this sentence acts as both a reality check and a source of inspiration, emphasising that while entrepreneurship is demanding, overcoming challenges enhances the emotional reward. The contrast between *struggles* and *successes* mirrors the entrepreneurial journey, where persistence transforms adversity into triumph. The comparative adjective *more satisfying* intensifies the emotional impact, portraying challenges as stepping stones rather than obstacles. Moreover, the use of *effective* and *all the difference* in Example 6 conveys certainty and practicality, reassuring readers that success is within reach when the right tools are employed.

Furthermore, adjectives such as *right, true*, and *real* contribute to narratives of authenticity and legitimacy. *Right* is frequently used in collocations such as *right people* (20), *right fit* (18), *right mindset* (15), *right direction* (16), and *right choice* (14); *true* appears most often in expressions like *be true* (39), *stay true* (19), and *true leader* (17), while *real* occurs commonly in phrases including *real change* (14), *make a real difference* (14), and *real game-changer* (11). As the corpus analysis shows, each of these adjectives foregrounds a slightly different dimension: *right* emphasises strategic decision-making and alignment, *true* underscores integrity and fidelity to values, while *real* highlights tangible impact and transformative potential. Taken together, they stress correctness, factuality, and genuineness, which are crucial in establishing trust with readers. By framing decisions as the *right* ones, or experiences as *true* or *real*, female entrepreneurs strengthen the credibility of their advice and position their stories as grounded in lived reality.

Finally, phrases centred around adjectives such as *positive*, *passionate*, *valuable*, *helpful*, *comfortable*, and *productive* foreground the affective and ethical dimensions of entrepreneurship. In the WEBC, *positive* occurs frequently in expressions like *be positive* (15 instances), *stay positive* (13), *remain positive* (11), *positive impact* (13), *positive mindset* (8), *positive change* (5), and *positive review* (5). Similarly, *passionate* appears in phrases such as *what are you passionate about* (15), *be passionate about* (24), and *feel passionate* (13); *valuable* occurs in *be valuable* (16), *valuable insights for* (14), *valuable life lessons* (12), and *valuable assets* (12). *Helpful* is frequently used in *be helpful* (25), *helpful feedback* (12), and *helpful advice* (11); *comfortable* appears

in *feel comfortable* (15), *you get more comfortable* (6), and *be comfortable in* (7); while *productive* is found in *productive workday* (12), *productive workplace* (12), and *productive working from home* (10). The concordances indicate that they highlight not only the functional benefits of business practices but also the emotional investment and sense of worth associated with entrepreneurial work. More specifically, adjectives such as *positive*, *passionate*, and *comfortable* foreground an affective orientation, promoting motivation, enthusiasm, and confidence, whereas *valuable*, *helpful*, and *productive* convey a more utilitarian stance, emphasising knowledge, support, and efficiency. In doing so, these lexical choices link professional identity with personal values while simultaneously reinforcing entrepreneurial credibility, underscoring the notion that successful entrepreneurship is both rewarding and meaningful.

7.2. Adjectives of Importance

Adjectives of importance (see Table 3 below) constitute the second most frequent category after positive-polarity evaluative adjectives. These adjectives commonly function to highlight key priorities, success factors, and business strategies discussed in the blogs. Importantly, their interpretation in this study does not rest on the assumption that they always refer directly to the author or are used without modification. Each occurrence was examined in context to identify its evaluative target and polarity, including cases where the adjective described actions, decisions, or entities other than the blogger herself. Despite this variation, the overall frequency of adjectives of importance indicates that women entrepreneurs consistently frame their discourse around strategic value, emphasising the significance of business actions, decisions, and insights.

Table 3: Adjectives of importance in the WEBC

Adjectives of importance	Frequency in the WEBC	Relative frequency in the WEBC	Averaged number of occurrences in the WEBC
Important	383	0.12	348
Key	129	0.04	117
Simple	109	0.03	99
Clear	108	0.03	98
Essential	92	0.03	84
Critical	55	0.02	50
Necessary	51	0.02	46
Significant	47	0.02	43
Crucial	46	0.01	42
Relevant	42	0.01	38
Meaningful	42	0.01	38
Major	30	0.01	27

It is also worth noting that several items in this category, such as *clear, simple,* and *meaningful,* simultaneously convey positive evaluation in addition to signalling importance. This overlap suggests that adjectives of importance do not only emphasise priorities and necessities but also contribute to constructing an encouraging and motivational tone in entrepreneurial discourse.

As the analysis of the concordances reveals, women entrepreneurs use adjectives of importance to highlight business priorities and leadership values. Moreover, by using adjectives like *key*, *essential*, and *important*, the following statements position entrepreneurial qualities as indispensable for leadership and growth, motivating readers to internalise these principles. As in the examples:

7. *One **key** factor to success is cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset a powerful set of attitudes, skills, and behaviours that allow you to approach business ownership with confidence, poise, and adaptability.*

8. *Networking is **essential** for a woman at her workplace as it helps her build a strong personal rapport will all her colleagues.*

9. *To succeed, it's **important** for would-be entrepreneurs to develop these traits. Here are a few simple ways to build resilience and perseverance: Create a Supportive Network and Reflect on Yourself Find positive, like-minded people who encourage and motivate you.*

It is worth stressing that the adjective *essential* in Example 8 frames networking as indispensable, reinforcing its strategic necessity rather than presenting it as optional advice. This linguistic choice validates women's need to build professional networks, emphasising relationships as a key leadership asset.

What is more, by using adjectives like *crucial* and *important*, women entrepreneurs convince their audience of the significance of particular actions or strategies. Adjectives of importance in these examples function as persuasive markers, shaping the audience's perception of what is critical for success and prompting them to take action. The examples:

10. *A positive mindset **is crucial for** resilience, but it must be paired with adaptability.*

11. *If women are promoted in roles that feel more challenging than the roles that men are often promoted into, you might have a problem. This is especially **important** for leaders to pay attention to and address. Keep your radar up for potential glass cliff situations and ask if this were a man, would we approach this the same way?*

Analysing the above examples, it is noticeable that the adjective *crucial* in Example 10 signals that a positive mindset is not just beneficial but foundational for resilience. Moreover, the contrast *but it must be paired with adaptability* strengthens the argument by showing that resilience alone is not enough, reinforcing a balanced, strategic perspective. On the other hand, the phrase *especially important* in Example 11 intensifies the urgency and necessity of leadership intervention while

the phrase *keep your radar up* further amplifies the call to action, urging leaders to remain vigilant about workplace inequalities.

In the WEBC, important appears predominantly in fixed expressions such as it is important to remember that (18), it is important to consider (18), it is important to understand that (17), it is important to note that (15), and it is important to know (14). Building on the use of adjectives of importance, the analysis of the concordances shows that these formulaic expressions serve multiple communicative functions in women entrepreneurs' blogs. They guide readers' attention to key points, including balancing work and family life (It's important to remember that balancing work and family life is not just a female issue; it's a society issue), taking calculated risks (It's important to remember that taking risks doesn't mean you should move forward without careful thought and consideration first), seeking mentorship and external input (It is important to remember it is okay to ask for help or find a mentor), developing resilience and perseverance (A positive mindset is crucial for resilience, but it must be paired with adaptability), understanding historical, social, or legal contexts (It's important to understand that Imposter Syndrome isn't unique to employees), and evaluating business decisions, ethical considerations, and strategies (All I can say is that it's important to consider your point of view). At the same time, these expressions signal multiple stances: a reflective or advisory stance that encourages careful consideration, a supportive and motivational stance that fosters confidence and engagement, and an authoritative stance that asserts expertise and credibility. Correspondingly, the actions emphasised include self-reflection, strategic thinking, proactive behaviour, ethical decision-making, and personal and professional growth. By frequently employing these constructions, women entrepreneurs structure their guidance to be clear, persuasive, and reader-focused, reinforcing both their authority and the motivational tone of their discourse.

In addition, other adjectives of importance further frame the writer as an expert, enhancing credibility. For example, by incorporating adjectives such as *critical* and *essential*, women entrepreneurs establish themselves as knowledgeable experts who offer valuable insights, as in the example:

12. *Resilience and historical context are **critical**: Young women entrepreneurs must recognize that the path they are embarking upon is their personal journey and a continuation of the fight for gender equality that generations before them initiated.*

The adjective *critical* used in Example 12 above heightens the importance of resilience by linking it to historical struggles and the broader fight for gender equality. This framing legitimises the advice, presenting it as not just practical but also deeply rooted in societal progress.

7.3. Size-related and Age-/Time-related adjectives

Another two groups of evaluative adjectives that appear in the corpus are size-related and age/time-related adjectives, which are often used to describe growth, progress, and business development over time. As the analysis demonstrates, the presence of such evaluative adjectives (see Tables 4 and 5) indicates that blog authors construct a narrative of progress, scaling, and transformation. These lexical choices support a journey-based storytelling frame, in which entrepreneurship is represented as a temporal trajectory: beginning from modest origins, advancing through stages of development, and projecting toward future success.

Table 4: Size-related adjectives in the WEBC

Size-related adjectives	Frequency in the WEBC	Relative frequency in the WEBC	Averaged number of occurrences in the WEBC
Small	204	0.07	186
Big	200	0.05	182
Strong	149	0.04	108
High	93	0.02	57
Huge	89	0.02	81
Little	42	0.01	38

Table 5: Age/time-related adjectives in the WEBC

Age/time-related adjectives	Frequency in the WEBC	Relative frequency in the WEBC	Averaged number of occurrences in the WEBC
New	398	0.13	362
Young	98	0.03	89
Current	72	0.02	65
Daily	65	0.02	59
Recent	49	0.01	45
Early	40	0.01	36
Long-term	40	0.01	36

The collocational patterns of size-related adjectives illustrate distinct evaluative functions. *Big*, for example, emerges as a highly polysemous amplifier, intensifying both positive and negative experiences. Among the positive associations, the most frequent are *big goal* (18), *big opportunity* (15), *big dream* (14), and *big success* (13), all of which frame entrepreneurship as ambitious and aspirational, as in the following examples:

13. *Successful people stay committed to their **big goal** (that's why goal setting is so important) and don't quit.*

14. *When you set bigger goals, your mind expands to perceive **bigger opportunities**. As one of my mentor says, Million dollar thinking attracts million dollar ideas.*

In contrast, negative collocations such as *big challenge* (19), *big mistake* (16), and *big risk* (14) highlight obstacles, dangers, and setbacks, which are often embedded in personalised accounts of difficulty. Women entrepreneurs frequently position themselves at the centre of such experiences, narrating obstacles in an autobiographical mode, for instance:

15. *I had to learn to see that episode as an opportunity to grow, not to beat myself up mentally for failing or making a **big mistake** in the workplace.*

16. *One of the **biggest challenges** I faced as a solopreneur is having to wear multiple hats in my business.*

Meanwhile, *huge* overwhelmingly reinforces positive, inspirational evaluations, with recurrent collocations like *huge impact* (14), *huge difference* (14), and *huge influence* (12), aligning with a motivational discourse of transformation and far-reaching change, which is demonstrated by the examples below:

17. *Both the environment and social relationships in the workplace have a **huge impact** on employee performance.*

18. *There are many tools and strategies you can implement through daily practice to make a **huge difference**.*

Together, these patterns demonstrate how women entrepreneurs construct entrepreneurial journeys through language: balancing risk and reward, framing ambition as transformative, and situating themselves in relation to broader corporate structures.

Moreover, the corpus analysis highlights the evaluative productivity of *small* in women entrepreneurs' blogs. To avoid relying on isolated examples and to ensure that the interpretation reflects recurrent usage, the analysis examined typical collocates and phraseological patterns. Frequent combinations include *small steps* (20), *small actions* (13), *small change* (13), *start small* (13), *think small* (11), and *play small* (11). These recurring patterns demonstrate that *small* functions ambivalently in the corpus: it serves both as a resource of encouragement, emphasising manageable, incremental progress, and as a marker of limitation, often signalling the need to challenge restrictive thinking or behaviours.

On the one hand, *small* is framed positively as a way to promote incremental progress and accessibility, as in the following examples:

19. *Dream big, start small, and empower yourself by taking that first step.*

20. *It's a matter of making small actionable steps daily to reach your goals.*

The above examples illustrate how female bloggers motivate their readers to embrace entrepreneurship as a series of manageable moves. The idea of *starting small* appears across diverse contexts, from cultivating compassion (*If you're having trouble cultivating that mindset, start small*) to balancing responsibilities (*Since you're knee-deep in responsibilities, why not start small so the handoff of responsibilities is smoother?*). This recurring discourse encourages resilience through gradual change:

21. *Finding the solution may not happen straight away, but resilience requires taking small steps to reach a big goal, which removes feelings of being overwhelmed.*

On the other hand, *small* can act as a discursive warning against restrictive mindsets. Expressions such as *think small* or *play small* construct *smallness* as an obstacle, incompatible with ambition and entrepreneurial success. In this sense, the word marks the boundaries between beginnings (where smallness is strategic and enabling) and aspiration (where smallness must be outgrown).

Through this dual function, *small* helps bloggers balance accessibility with aspiration, presenting entrepreneurship as both realistic and visionary. It offers encouragement by showing that success begins with cautious first steps, while simultaneously pushing readers to move beyond smallness to achieve big goals and transformative impact.

Moving to age/time-related adjectives, the corpus analysis highlights how women entrepreneurs' blogs construct entrepreneurship as both novel and embedded in ongoing processes of development. The dominance of *new* underscores the importance of innovation and fresh ideas, which serve as a key source of entrepreneurial identity and authority (*new opportunity* (24), *new idea* (22)). As the concordance shows:

22. *When you are the kind of leader or individual contributor who brings new ideas to the market, you are, by definition, doing something that you have not done before.*

23. *By sharing your vision, expertise, and personality, you can attract new opportunities and position yourself as an authority in your industry.*

Other adjectives frame entrepreneurship as a trajectory across time. Terms such as *early* (*early stage* (17), *early days of* (19)) and *long-term* (*long-term success* (16), *long-term goal* (13)) highlight both fragile beginnings and sustained achievement, suggesting a continuum of growth. Similarly, *current* (*current situation* (16), *current affair* (12)) and *recent* (*recent year* (20), *recent salary* (12)) emphasise relevance and responsiveness to changing market contexts, reinforcing the entrepreneur's image as adaptive and present-oriented. Meanwhile, *daily* grounds the discourse in routine and resilience, illustrated by collocates like *daily basis* (18), *daily life* (20), *daily habits* (14), *daily practice* (14). Collectively, these adjectives (see Table 5) position entrepreneurship as a process that is innovative, situated in time, and sustained by consistent action.

A particularly salient case is the adjective young. While formally part of the temporal category, its collocates (young girl (25), young woman (38), young professional (14)) reveal that it functions simultaneously as an evaluative marker. In some contexts, young conveys freshness, potential, and future promise, as in motivational calls to set the right

example for the thousands of young girls who may, someday, take on the leadership mantle. At the same time, the repeated focus on young girls foregrounds issues of gendered socialisation and vulnerability—examples include references to body confidence in young girls and parental responsibility in shaping their self-image. Such uses highlight systemic concerns around inequality, representation, and the shaping of ambition from an early age. Thus, young operates at the intersection of temporal reference and evaluative judgement, reinforcing the idea that entrepreneurship discourse is not only about business development but also about broader cultural narratives of empowerment, identity, and gendered experience.

7.4. Attitude/emotion adjectives

Another significant set of evaluative adjectives identified in the corpus comprises emotional and attitudinal adjectives, which are central to how blog authors construct entrepreneurial identity and experience. These adjectives reflect the psychological, emotional, and cognitive positioning of women entrepreneurs in their digital discourse. They signal confidence, awareness, motivation, and personal engagement, reinforcing how entrepreneurs present themselves, their experiences, and their relationship with their audience. Attitude/emotion adjectives account for a moderate proportion of the total evaluative adjectives in the dataset. The most frequently occurring words are included in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Attitude/emotion adjectives in the WEBC

Attitude/emotion adjectives	Frequency in the WEBC	Relative frequency in the WEBC	Averaged number of occurrences in the WEBC
Happy	83	0.03	75
Afraid	61	0.02	55
Willing	56	0.02	51
Passionate	55	0.02	50
Aware	50	0.02	45
Unconscious	37	0.01	34
Conscious	36	0.01	33
Capable	31	0.01	28
Proud	30	0.01	27

Key adjectives in this category like *happy, willing, passionate, proud, capable* suggest that entrepreneurial discourse is built around self-confidence, enthusiasm, and empowerment. These adjectives reinforce a motivational and aspirational tone, encouraging both the writer and the audience to embrace challenges and pursue success, as portrayed in Examples 24-26 below. Moreover, the word *willing* in Example 25 below conveys determination and courage, encouraging entrepreneurs to embrace both success and failure as part of their journey.

24. *I'm **so proud to** say I work within a group of women that feel like family.*

25. *Speak your mind, take the lead, and be **willing** to win or lose as yourself.*

26. *The old saying is **happy** wife, **happy** life and a company's success is certainly dependent on a **happy** team.*

Additionally, evaluative adjectives like *aware, conscious, unconscious* indicate a high level of self-awareness and strategic thinking. These adjectives often occur in contexts where women entrepreneurs position themselves as insightful decision-makers who anticipate and adapt to challenges, as in the following examples:

27. *As a Black woman entrepreneur, being **aware of** the obstacles and having courage to overcome them is critical.*

28. *The most important thing companies can do to promote more women leaders is to think, act and lead with the **conscious** commitment to including everyone and promoting a culture where women, and people of all genders and backgrounds, can show up as their authentic selves.*

29. *Talking from common experience (as this is the only space I should share my opinion) - coupled friends with careers and children point to what can be described as a largely **unconscious** mission to excel as a wife, partner, and mother, whilst also excelling on the job front.*

Analysing sentence 28 in more detail, it is noticeable that the adjective *conscious* used in *conscious commitment* underscores the importance of deliberate, inclusive leadership, reinforcing gender equity in business.

Finally, the presence of *afraid* suggests that entrepreneurs acknowledge fear and uncertainty, but it is often paired with resilience and determination to overcome challenges and try something new or unknown.

30. *Don't **be afraid to** step outside your comfort zone, seek the support you need, and, most of all, rise to the challenge to be the best you can be.*

Moreover, *afraid* is mostly preceded by *not be* (47 occurrences). *Afraid* frequently can be found in expression *don't be afraid to ask for help/advice/support* which carries significant linguistic, psychological, and rhetorical implications within the context of entrepreneurial discourse.   In addition, the phrase *don't be afraid to ask for help* challenges the "self-made entrepreneur" myth, instead highlighting the importance of mentorship and support networks, as in the following examples:

31. *Finally, **don't be afraid to** ask for advice or help when you need it. It's often easier to ask for help than you think!*

32. *You can also seek mentorship or coaching from more experienced professionals in your field. **Don't be afraid to ask for help** everyone starts somewhere!*

As the analysis suggests women are often more hesitant to ask for funding, mentorship, or business advice compared to their male counterparts due to imposter syndrome or societal expectations. The phrase *don't be afraid to* functions as a direct encouragement to break these barriers and embrace a support-driven entrepreneurial approach, as can be seen in the following examples:

33. *Stay focused on what's really important to you and **don't be afraid to ask for help**. You've got this, mompreneur! Success is within your reach.*

34. *Get help if you need help managing the kids during spring break, **don't be afraid to ask** for it!*

35. *When I started out in my career, I was **always afraid to ask for advice**. I didn't want to bother people and I didn't want to appear to not know something that I should know. Looking back, I realize that I missed out on the benefit of a mentor early in my career. I've learned over the years to not be afraid to ask for support.*

7.5. Negatively-charged adjectives

Negatively-charged adjectives are relatively rare in the dataset, indicating a general tendency in the blogs to foreground progress, solutions, and professional growth rather than to dwell extensively on obstacles. When such adjectives do appear, they frequently occur in constructive or motivational contexts, for example, describing challenges as catalysts for learning or resilience. The most common items in this category include *difficult*, *bad*, *negative*, *hard*, and *uncomfortable* (see Table 7 below).

Table 7: Negatively-charged adjectives in the WEBC

Negatively-charged adjectives	Frequency in the WEBC	Relative frequency in the WEBC	Averaged number of occurrences in the WEBC
Difficult	102	0.03	93
Bad	64	0.02	58
Negative	59	0.02	54
Hard	59	0.02	54
Uncomfortable	33	0.01	30

As the analysis shows instead of presenting negativity outright, women entrepreneurs often mitigate or reframe negative adjectives to focus on problem-solving, resilience, and overcoming adversity. However, due to the space limit more attention is paid to the last group namely *likelihood and certainty adjectives* than *negative* ones.

7.6. Likelihood and certainty adjectives

Likelihood (4,50%) and *certainty adjectives* (1,80%) are the least frequent groups of evaluative adjectives in the WEBC. This suggests that women entrepreneurs rely more on subjective assessments and strategic persuasion rather than absolute certainty.

The low occurrence of certainty adjectives such as *certain* and *sure* suggests not that women entrepreneurs avoid expressing certainty altogether, but rather that they tend not to rely on adjectival expressions of commitment. Certainty in the corpus is often conveyed through other linguistic means, including modal verbs, stance verbs, and pragmatic framing devices, all of which can express both strong commitment and varying degrees of adaptability. It is also important to note that the absence of a certainty adjective does not necessarily signal less commitment, as short, unmodified statements may in some cases be more absolute than longer, hedged expressions containing such adjectives. Notably, *sure* appears predominantly in the fixed expression *be sure to do something* (30 occurrences), which functions primarily as advice or guidance, as illustrated in the following examples:

36. *Just be **sure** to have all of your business information handy when you fill out the forms, including your name, address, and contact information.*

37. *If your company is implementing a training program, be **sure** to identify the goals that need to be met and take advantage of the array of training resources available.*

38. *Don't say you can guarantee certain results if you're not absolutely **sure** that you can deliver.*

Analysing above examples in more detail, it is clear that the adjective *sure* is rarely used to express absolute certainty but instead appears in advisory phrases like *be sure to do something*, reinforcing guidance rather than assertion. Moreover, statements like *Don't say you can guarantee certain results if you're not absolutely sure* (see Example 38) reflect caution against making definitive claims, promoting honesty and adaptability in business communication.

It can be assumed that women entrepreneurs avoid making rigid or overly assertive claims, fostering credibility and trust in their audience. The preference for guidance over guarantees aligns with a mentorship-driven communication style, common in entrepreneurial discourse.

On the other hand, likelihood adjectives like *potential, likely, possible* are used twice as frequently, indicating a preference for discussing opportunities and probabilities rather than definitive outcomes, as in the examples below:

39. *Creating a thriving, beautiful business of your dreams is **possible** if you fully embrace your ambitions and have the support that every entrepreneur requires to accomplish their lofty goals.*

40. *VC funding by default goes to startups that are **likely** to scale fast and provide tremendous return on investment.*

It is also worth stressing that the use of *possible* in Example 39 above suggests opportunity rather than certainty, leaving room for individual agency and varying paths to success. On the other hand, *likely* conveys probability rather than inevitability, encouraging confidence while acknowledging uncertainty. The use of *likely* in Example 40 reflects an understanding that success depends on multiple factors, rather than a guaranteed outcome.

Overall, women entrepreneurs frame success as attainable but not predetermined, reinforcing an adaptive and strategic mindset. This language choice acknowledges risks and uncertainties, making entrepreneurial advice more realistic and practical.

8. Conclusions and Future Research Directions

This study reveals that positive-polarity evaluative adjectives dominate in women entrepreneurs' blogs, playing a central role in persuasion, motivation, and credibility. Such language foregrounds optimism and empowerment, reinforcing the belief that entrepreneurial success is attainable through perseverance and self-confidence. At the same time, evaluative resources of importance help to establish authority and expertise, positioning bloggers as credible voices and thought leaders. Equally significant are adjectives of attitude and emotion, which infuse the discourse with affective resonance, strengthening audience engagement and framing entrepreneurship as both a professional pursuit and a personal journey. Interestingly, negatively charged adjectives appear sparingly but strategically, acknowledging risks and struggles. By embedding these moments of difficulty in narratives of resilience and achievement, bloggers maintain authenticity while enhancing relatability. Another noteworthy finding is the low frequency of certainty adjectives, suggesting a deliberate preference for adaptability and openness over absolute claims—a choice that mirrors the dynamic, fast-paced, and unpredictable nature of entrepreneurship.

Overall, women's entrepreneurial blogs are more than personal reflections; they operate as persuasive platforms that strategically employ evaluative language to shape perceptions, strengthen brand identities, and build communities. By weaving together optimism, authority, relatability, and adaptability, these texts function simultaneously as motivational narratives, self-branding strategies, and tools of influence in the digital business sphere.

It should be noted that systematic linguistic analyses of evaluative language in blogs remain limited, which makes it difficult to determine how far the patterns observed in this study are genre-specific or reflect broader tendencies across digital discourse. Some linguistic studies of corporate blogs (e.g. Fronczak 2021) include discussion of evaluative language, but they do not focus on women entrepreneurs' blogs. As comparable research on other types of blogs is still scarce, future studies incorporating cross-genre or cross-platform comparisons would be valuable for further contextualising the findings presented here.

Future research could extend these insights beyond blogs to other forms of digital business communication, such as LinkedIn posts, press releases, and advertisements, to explore the pervasiveness and variation of evaluative language across genres.

Comparative studies on gendered usage are also essential, investigating whether men and women entrepreneurs deploy evaluative language in similar or divergent ways, and how this impacts perceptions of credibility and authority. Cross-cultural perspectives present another promising direction, since evaluative language is culturally embedded and may operate differently across linguistic and societal contexts. Finally, an important avenue lies in examining how evaluative language intersects with storytelling strategies, given the central role of narrative in branding and persuasion. Understanding how entrepreneurs combine evaluative stance with narrative structures can yield valuable insights into the persuasive power of digital business discourse and its role in shaping entrepreneurial identity and audience trust.

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Author with affiliations:

EN version: Katarzyna Fronczak, Department of Specialised Languages and Intercultural Communication, Faculty of Philology, University of Lodz

PL version: Katarzyna Fronczak, Katedra Języków Specjalistycznych oraz Komunikacji Międzykulturowej, Wydział Filologiczny, Uniwersytet Łódzki

Bio: **Katarzyna Fronczak** is a Research and Teaching Assistant at the Department of Specialised Languages and Intercultural Communication, University of Łódź. She holds two M.A. degrees in Linguistics and English Language (specialisation: Computer-Based English Language Studies, Lancaster University, 2008) and in English and Computer Applications (University of Łódź, 2008). She earned her Ph.D. in Linguistics at the University of Łódź in 2019 with a dissertation on *Blogs as a New Form of Corporate Communication: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Selected English-Language Corporate Blogs*. Her research interests include corpus and applied linguistics, discourse analysis (corporate and business communication, political discourse), and English for Specific Purposes. She applies both quantitative and qualitative methods, with an emphasis on corpus-based tools and ICT in language teaching.