

English Unit 4: Analysing Argument

Outcome 2 – Print text

Instructions

For this Outcome, you are required to analyse the use of argument(s) and language to persuade an intended audience to share the point of view expressed in a persuasive text.

- Read the background information on this page and the material on pages 2, 3 and 4, and write an analytical response to the task below.
- For the purposes of this task, the term 'language' refers to written and spoken language, and 'visuals' refers to images and graphics.

Task

Write an analysis of the ways in which argument(s), written and spoken language, and visuals are used in the material on pages 2, 3 and 4 to try to persuade the intended audience to share the point of view presented.

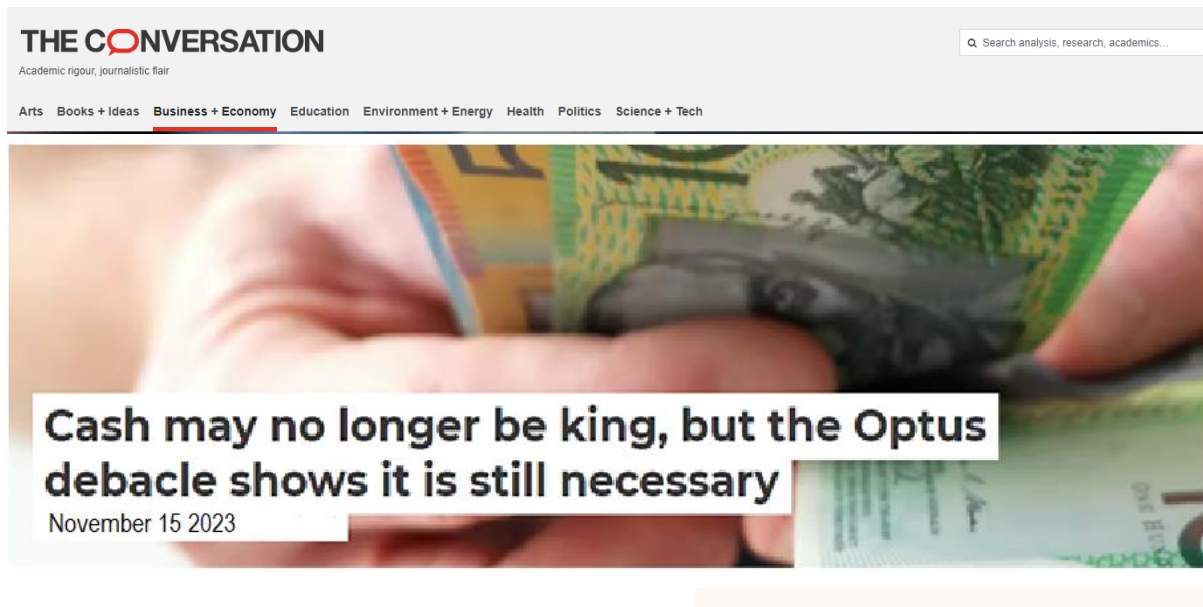
Background information

The Conversation is an online media outlet publishing news stories, research reports, and expert opinion and analysis. Access and republication are free. *The Conversation* aims to make quality opinion and analysis available to a wide audience. The online magazine's motto is 'Academic rigour, journalistic flair'.

The monthly audience of *The Conversation* (Australia & New Zealand) is approximately 3.3 million unique users onsite, and 10 million page views including through republication.

On November 15, 2023, *The Conversation* published an opinion piece by Chris Vasantkumar, a lecturer in Anthropology at Macquarie University. The item is titled, 'Cash may no longer be king, but the Optus debacle shows it is still necessary.'

Vasantkumar's comment is a response to recent technology failures which have raised questions about cashless societies.



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Cash may no longer be king, but the Optus debacle shows it is still necessary

November 15 2023



Chris Vasantkumar
Lecturer in Anthropology, Macquarie University

A simple software upgrade went wrong. Across the country economic life ground to a halt. Groceries were abandoned at supermarket checkouts. Commerce was paralysed as the nation waited for its payment system to be brought back online.

The Optus outage lingers fresh in our minds, yet the scene described here is not taken from Melbourne or Sydney in November 2023, but Zimbabwe four years ago when the southern African nation suffered a 72-hour outage of the mobile money service known as EcoCash.

At a time when up to 96% of the country's transactions were cashless, EcoCash boasted more than three times the number of registered users than there are Zimbabweans with traditional bank accounts, and a near monopoly on mobile money payments.

This outage, along with a shorter one due to rolling blackouts earlier that same year, intensified concerns in Zimbabwe about the reliability of non-cash payments.

Abandoning the cashless experiment

Four years on, Zimbabwe has retreated from cashlessness, with the pandemic encouraging a return to cash as the preferred means of payment. While the 2019



The Optus and other outages raise questions about the benefits of becoming a cashless society.

outage was not the only reason Zimbabwe returned to a cash economy, increasing frustration with mobile phone transactions contributed to it.

When I talk to Australians about these events and their implications for our own economic behaviours, I commonly hear the reply “but Australia isn’t Zimbabwe!”

But the Zimbabwean case holds important lessons for us about the undesirability of eliminating cash in the aftermath of the latest Optus outage.

First, these outages highlight a key advantage of physical cash - it never goes down. We can rely on it to be there when we need it in contrast to cashless payment systems such as EFTPOS which suffered disruptions during the 2020 fires in NSW and Victoria.

We’re using less cash but we still won’t let go

Many Australians might argue for the need to keep cash as a fallback in the event of future natural and technical disruptions, but the main reason they want to hang onto it has nothing to do with using it to buy and sell.

The use of cash in buying and selling has been in decline for 20 years and continued to decline during the pandemic. The total percentage of economic transactions involving cash dropped from 69% in 2007 to 13% in late 2022 according to the Reserve Bank’s June Bulletin on Consumer Payment Behaviour in Australia.

By contrast, much of the continuing demand for cash can be attributed to its use as a store of value — something you hold onto rather than spend. During the pandemic there was more cash being kept at home as a source of security and comfort, than was being spent.

This desire to access cash even as its circulation declines highlights the degree to which doing away with it might be ill-advised and potentially destabilising. Indeed, this is exactly what happened in Zimbabwe — the country went cashless very quickly and without buy-in from most people.

Other reasons to keep cash, apart from dodgy technology

Other concerns about going cashless include the lack of privacy in the electronic payment system plus it makes it more difficult to control spending.

Even as some Australian banks move away from handling cash, other countries, Sweden most famously, have been forced to reinstate cash in response to the needs of communities left behind by the shift to cashless payments.

These include the elderly, people in regional and remote areas, migrants and people who don't have a bank account. While these groups are decreasing in size, we ignore people who don't have the knowledge the confidence or reliable access to cashless payment systems at our peril.

The financial transaction process needs to be inclusive. Standard, state-issued currency has historically been a public good that is accessible to all and ideally not a source of profit.

Going cashless is a form of privatising money. It moves transactions into a world where you must rely on banking institutions, while these institutions make money off your financial dealings through fees.

And as we saw all too vividly with the Optus debacle, a transition to privatised payment infrastructures opens up new kinds of vulnerability to go along with their convenience.

Chris Vasantkumar is a lecturer in Anthropology at Macquarie University

This text can be accessed in full at <https://theconversation.com/cash-may-no-longer-be-king-but-the-optus-debacle-shows-it-is-still-necessary-217520>