

Why Choose Us: A Genre Analysis of Selected Digital Promotional and Advertising Materials of an International School

Eddielyn D. Bote^{1*}, Clark Arthur A. Robles²

¹ *Southville International School and Colleges*

² *San Beda College of Alabang,*

**Corresponding Author: eddielyn_bote@dlsu.edu.ph*

Abstract: Globalization has influenced academic institutions to transform the way they present themselves to the world. For an International School (IS) to be recognized worldwide, it has to make itself known not only for its growing number of enrollees, but also for its credibility and outstanding performance in general. One way of making this goal possible is through the use of promotional and advertising materials. These would serve as tools to give reasons to its target audience to choose the school as their educational institution, especially where competitive fight among ISs is a hallmark feature. However, since the outbreak of the pandemic, higher educational institutions have been forced to make effective adjustments to reach their prospects and are required to continuously adjust to the digital landscape. The competition among schools in providing the right mix of digital marketing strategies has expanded as features and functions among websites exponentially grow to keep the school's brand. The present study explores the sales and marketing's digital and printed promotional materials of an International School in Las Piñas, Metro Manila, Philippines. Accordingly, this paper drew its data from the school's official website that includes bulletins, flyers, which are accessed by a wider scope of audience. The study employed a mixed-method research methodology in examining how the texts on the materials were structured and formatted following Cook's six common linguistic advertising features, and how the materials adhered to Lewis' AIDA model as a promotional strategy. These frameworks served as the bases to gauge if the promotional materials manifested the features of the promotional language in both online and printed texts. Implications for Sales and Marketing Specialists as well as suggestions for future researchers are provided.

Key Words: advertising; genre analysis; linguistic features; promotions; structural moves

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertisements, in any form, have a long-lasting impact on their audience for their content caters the global context (Goddard, 2002). This concept takes into consideration the roles of two of the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in enhancing *inclusive economic growth* and providing *quality education* among public and private Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

This paved the way for schools, specifically those which cater to an international audience, to have a strong Public Relations, Sales, and Marketing

Department and to have employees who are not only digital natives and experts, but also those who can tailor promotional materials and strategies to an international context through a multi-dimensional virtual platform. Furthermore, these experts are also expected to continuously market the school's brand value despite the decline in rate of enrollees due to the pandemic. The challenge of shifting from on-campus marketing events to online set-up has also become prevalent in these trying times. IS's marketing strategy these days include digital marketing materials such as electronic

advertisements, press releases, and company profiles which are all found on their official website. Among these, electronic advertisements are considered to have higher visual graphics features, while press releases and company profiles are more language-dominant in their orientation.

The previously mentioned features are rooted in a clear communicative function; that is, to promote. This recognizes the idea that the process of advertising communication is indeed complex, and its linguistic features have a powerful influence over people and their behavior since the choice and level of language convey specific messages to them.

Moreover, other notable linguists in the field of advertisement such as Simpson (2001) recognizes the idea that audience can be influenced through language if there are exemplary characteristics of advertising language present in the promotional materials being catered for them. Also, advertising has been considered as an avenue for social communication as it is anchored on human perspectives such as culture, society, psychology, and even anthropology which can, later on, be analyzed through the register and genre analysis, critical discourse analysis, and linguistic pragmatics. For one case in point, the IS's effort to address cultural differences among their target audience could ensure appropriate design, wording, graphics, symbols, and content. In addition, the marketing collaterals are now designed and reconfigured in a recursive manner to achieve their purpose in allowing prospects to explore their marketing funnel even in just a glimpse of headlines.

During these trying times, promotional materials have gained an increasing communicative function. Since promotional materials have the primary role in attracting people's attention and interest towards a product (Cao, 2008), the creators must also adjust the language of their materials to that of their leads and their current situation to achieve a common connection. Traditional collaterals would heavily rely on printed materials such as flyers and brochures, but the move towards online marketing has made it more convenient for the audience to explore the content of the school's website through its hypertexts by simply adding imperatives that would let the viewers navigate the e-marketing material themselves.

Aside from contextualization, the language seen on the materials must also reflect the media, economic relations, technology, personal and group identity of its stakeholders. The use of persuasive techniques such as Ethos, Logos, and Pathos in promotional materials becomes the carrier of advertisements (Chauhan, 2003).

i. The common linguistic features of promotional materials include: (1) the use of second person pronouns 'you' and 'your,' (2) adjectives, (3) *binomials and multinomial* or a series of adjectives, nouns, or adjective/noun phrases, (4) nominal expressions or the use of scientific or research-based information/ formal terminologies like in legal documents (5) ellipsis, and (6) imperatives (Cook, 2001 as cited by

Furthermore, today's competitive world has led sales and marketing specialists to hook readers' attention by showing them pieces of headlines, interactive images, innovative printed texts. Given this time of the pandemic where IS's concerns are focused on transforming leads to sales and receiving accreditations from both local and international bodies, innovating marketing strategies have been an integral part of planning. Even the details like emotions, common words, novel phrases, and even simple clausal or sentential constructions can give a different level of creativity to the materials presented. The role of language in the promotion and business development includes having the most appropriate terms, diction, and understanding of the English for specific purpose, and for this matter, the advertising and marketing functions.

Since advertising language is a style of immediate impact and rapid persuasion (Schroeder, 1985), analyzing a material's linguistic features and communicative functions is essential. This leads the researchers to investigate the language of advertising, particularly in terms of its semantic and lexico-grammatical structures, that are evident on the promotional materials being used by the Sales and Marketing Department of an International school in Metro Manila Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the evident linguistic features on the digital and printed promotional and advertising materials produced by the IS's sales and marketing department?
2. How many digital and printed promotional materials adhere to each of the rhetorical moves of AIDA model?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design and Approach

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to genre analysis was used to examine the materials' communicative purpose and schematic structure. The Sydney School approach focused on the form-function relation at the level of clause (Flowerdew and Wan, 2009). Several published articles on genre defined '*communicative purpose*' as the intention of the language-users in writing a specific text as part of a discourse community. Next, '*schematic structure*' pertains to the moves or steps of the text which is also known as sequence. Moreover, '*form-function relation*' is anchored on the Systematic-Functional Linguistics by Halliday (1925 in Nordquist, 2019). In the present study, we focused on semantics and lexicogrammar given that genre analysis was the underpinning approach of this research.

ii The AIDA Model is an acronym that stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. It is a model used in marketing that describes the steps a customer goes through in the process of purchasing a product. (Lewis, 1898).

2.2 The Corpora

A total number of 32 promotional materials (n=16 digital; n=16 printed) were included in the study. Specifically, the researchers examined the digital marketing collaterals from the official website of the school. The Sales and Marketing Department of the selected IS discourse community posted these materials in various social media platforms and even in forms of advertisement pop-ups on Google for Academic Year 2020-2021 as a response to the virtual set-up of educational institutions. Convenience sampling was conducted in gathering the data since these were the available resources given by the department for public online consumption.

2.3 Procedure and Analysis

This study aimed to identify the linguistic features of online and printed promotional materials and to examine their move structures. Guided by our research purposes, the task of each procedure includes the following:

1. distinguish the linguistic features present on the materials; and
2. determine if the digital and printed promotional materials adhered to the rhetorical moves of AIDA model.

Mixed-method research methods by which both quantitative and qualitative procedures were integrated and utilized in the present study. First, for qualitative method, the linguistic features of promotional materials were identified, interpreted, and described using the sample corpora. This is in accordance to the work of Cook (2001 in Yongqing, 2013) called as Common Linguistic Features in Advertisements.

Second, for the quantitative method, a descriptive statistical analysis of the occurrence of the complete moves or steps were examined based on Lewi's (1800) AIDA model. The number and percentage of moves or steps that appeared in each promotional material were counted and then tallied. Inter-coding and rating were conducted in order to establish the reliability of the results. The method of computing the occurrence of moves or steps is presented below:

$$\frac{\text{Number of promotional materials that followed each move}}{\text{Total number of promotional materials}} \times 100$$

Finally, we conducted an interview to one marketing officer to triangulate our claims about the linguistic features used in the digital and printed materials and their adherence to AIDA model.

iii. AIDA model

1. Attention- narrative elements: story elements and procedural rhetoric
2. Interest- processes: brand integration and message decoding

(continued)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to conduct a genre analysis on the digital and printed promotional materials of the Marketing and Sales Department of the selected IS's discourse community. The corpora were identified and examined through the lens of English for Specific Purposes and Sydney School approaches to genre analysis. The study analyzed the Linguistic Features of the materials based on Cook's (2001) Linguistic Features in Advertisements and examined if each of the rhetorical moves of AIDA model was followed.

<i>Linguistic Features in Advertisements</i>	% Digital	% Print	% TOTAL
1. Pronoun/s "you" or "your"	6	50	28
2 Adjective/s	100	100	100
3 binomial and multinomial expressions	43	94	69
4 Nominal	18	81	50
5 Ellipsis	100	88	94
6. Imperatives	100	100	100

Table 1. Linguistic Features on the Promotional materials

Based on table 1, 28% of the materials used the second person pronouns "you" and "yours." Only 6% of the digital materials used this feature. On the other hand, only 50% of the printed materials integrated this first linguistic feature. Examples were: "Improving *your* child's IQ and EQ...", "Realize *your* dreams with an international credential" and "Request *your* school credentials online." It can be observed that the use of 2nd person pronouns were less common in digital materials as compared with the printed ones. On our in-depth analysis of the digital corpora, it is interesting to note that the use of first and third person pronouns were more commonly used instead. Samples can be found in the testimonies such as: "Here's a message to *our* valued parents, students, employees..."; "*I* think what led *me* to pursue engineering is simply *my* curiosity on how things work, which then matured into..." Given the possibility of inserting hyperlinks on the digital materials, the digital marketing creators had the leeway to insert the first few sentences of the alumni's testimonials.

As for the second linguistic feature, 100% of both digital and printed promotional materials used adjectives related to education and pedagogy such as "strong values", "executive function", "multiple intelligences," "foreign language," "technology-enhanced curriculum." In terms of the digital promotional materials, adjectives were expressed in the form of the alumni's awards such as, "Top 1 Filipino Scholar", "Champion US design," "Globally

3. Desire- elements common with other media: audio, visual, and text elements

4. Action- promotions, contact details, address of the school
Source: Ghirvu, A. (2013). The AIDA Model for Advergaming. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261873887_The_AIDA_Model_For_Advergaming

Award-Winning Mathlete,” “*First and Youngest student Japan Mathematics Certification Passer*,” and “*1st Asian Reina Hispano-Americana*.” In this way, the materials would appeal to the emotions of the readers.

As for the third linguistic feature, a total of 69% of the promotional materials contained binomial and multinomial expressions. For example, “Children learn best in an environment which allows them to *explore, discover, and play*”. Conjunctions such as “and” and “or” function as connectors to nouns, noun phrases, adjectives or verbs. Parallelism was observed to consume less space on the actual promotional materials. Forms were patterned as a series of N / NP / Adj / V + Conj. in between. Other sample binomials were “*exceptional talents and academic performances*,” “*life-long learners and movers of society*,” “*PBA Delay Rookie and Southville Alumnus*” as well as multinomial such as “*celebrated artists, executives, and intellectuals*,” and “*valued parents, students, teachers, employees...*”

As for the fourth linguistic feature, 50% of the promotional materials contain nominal. Concrete nouns were explained in details through describing the learning atmosphere (e.g. *Learning Atmosphere Key: Safe and secure environment (CCTV monitored); Technology-enhanced curriculum (robotics and coding); Print-rich e-classrooms; Small class size (1:5) Adult-student ration for nursery and Pre-kinder; and Half-day of Extended Day Program*. On the other hand, abstract nouns were elaborated through certifications, organizations, and memberships where the school belongs. Some of the mentioned accreditations of the selected IS include *Investors in People (IIP)*, *Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)*, *International Baccalaureate Work School (IBWO)*, *International Standards Organization (ISO)*, and *International Schools Activities Conference (ISAC)*. In terms of the digital promotional materials, evident nominal were “*IS Alumnus, JPL-NASA Engineer M.G. and His Journey to MARS*,” “*Southville’s FIRST International Research Conference 2021*” and “*...receive their PhDs and Harvard University Certificates*.” During this time of the pandemic, it is worth-noting this linguistic feature, particularly the inclusion of accreditations, has gained its prominence on the digital promotional materials in this IS. It can be inferred that its desire to stand-out among others became stronger and more competitive.

As for the fifth linguistic feature, a total of 94% of the promotional materials were found to be using ellipses. It is worth-mentioning that almost all digital promotional materials had this fifth feature. All ellipses appeared together with the first few sentences of the hypertext. These were also followed

by phrases such as “Read more,” “Watch video,” and “Click here for more details.” Examples were: (1) “*Students are only as good as their teachers. Which is why the IS Global Education Network (SGEN) is committed to... Read more*” (2) “*...Follow us on YouTube to get updates about our community of lifelong learners and movers of society. Watch video*,” (3) “*Request your credentials online! Click here for more details*.” It can be deduced that ellipses could save space and capture the readers’ attention to find an in-depth knowledge about the topic of interest.

As for the sixth linguistic feature, 100% of both digital and printed promotional materials used imperatives. Tracing back the interview as part of the tools to gather information about the selected discourse community’s Sales and Marketing team, the marketing officer gave emphasis that customers must be converted to be the learners of the institution in the future. The main banner of the school was followed by imperatives such as “*Be Amazing. Be Southville*”, “*Realize your dreams with an International credential*”, and “*Earn British and Australian degrees in the Philippines*,” “*Contact Us*,” and “*Inquire Now*.” This linguistic feature was further explained as one of the rhetorical moves in AIDA model found in the succeeding section.

Based on the researchers’ inter-coding and rating of data, the presence of each move based on AIDA model is now discussed.

<i>Move Structures</i>	<i>% digital</i>	<i>% print</i>	<i>Total</i>
Attention	100	100	100
Interest	100	100	100
Desire	94	100	87
Action	19	94	57

Table 2. Awareness – Interest – Desire – Action (AIDA Model) as Rhetorical Moves

As for the ‘attention’ and ‘interest’ as the first and second rhetorical moves respectively, 100% of both digital and printed materials followed these by highlighting the name of the school together with its logo (attention). To capture the ‘interest’, celebrities, icons, and different popular figures in the Philippines were highlighted on the posters. Celebrities like Jodi Sta. Maria and Liza Soberano, known celebrities in the showbiz industry, were part of the promotional materials. Their written testimonies were usually complemented with their pictures wearing their respective uniforms. This second move was also followed by bolding and enlarging the headlines of each material. Parallel with the basic rule in headline and news writing under the field of journalism, the verbs in the titles of articles and the news of the promotional materials

iv. Legend:

N- noun Conj- conjunctions
 NP- noun phrase
 Adj- adjective
 V- verb

were written in the present tense (e.g. “*SGEN’s Top Officers receive their PhDs and Harvard University Certificates*,” *IS opens first Filipino higher education institution in the UAE*,” *IS Alumnus graduates summa cum laude and lands Facebook Internship Amid the Pandemic*”

The preceding moves were strengthened through the third move called ‘desire.’ A total of 87% of the promotional materials offered further information about the preceding move. Terminologies in the academe and education were used to give the benefits of enrolling in the school such as “*world class education*” and “*affiliated institutions across the English-speaking countries*.” The school emphasizes the holistic development of the learners through sharpening their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor needs. The concepts such as 21st century skills, international affiliation, and technology integration were emphasized. These were written in bold letters and can be found at the center of the material. It is also vital to mention that the school’s and its alumni’s successes amidst the pandemic were given emphasis (e.g. Underrated by the *pandemic* and lagging industries worldwide...IS has been *successfully* moving...; IS: A Year in the Pandemic...It has been an amazing year of breakthroughs and growth...; ... *lands Facebook Internship Amid the Pandemic*”). It can be concluded that the contents of news were blended with soft news and coping up mechanisms of the school.

Lastly, only 57% of the promotional materials involved the last move called “action.” The contact details through phone and telephone numbers, email addresses, social media platforms, and the map where the school is located were the usual features of this move. “*Enroll now!*,” “*Limited slots only*” and “*Free Entrance Exam*” were the usual lines to make the readers act or be urged to move and enroll in the school. Notably, there were only 19% of the digital materials that followed this move. It can be attributed to the fact that due to its recursive nature through hyperlinks, one hyperlink of the website has already contained the details to contact the school. On the other hand, action was also evident across all the printed flyers and poster except for one school paper or bulletin. Perhaps, that was due to the bulletin’s scope and duration of dissemination.

4. CONCLUSION

Through the lens of genre analysis in investigating the linguistic features and moves structures of the selected promotional and advertising materials of an International School, the researchers figured out the importance of having frameworks as guiding principles in the creation of

the said materials. These principles will serve as tools for future material creators and even educators in the field of ESP and EAP to understand specific functions and roles of language in the global world of business promotion.

After analyzing the promotional materials, significant findings might be of help for the beginning Sales and Marketing officers as patterns in the creation of their advertisements. First, ESP and EAP teachers may find this study beneficial specifically in the teaching of the genre; that is, the effectiveness and efficiency of materials made will be based on the achievement of their communicative functions, schematic structures, and form-function relations. Second, with the identified linguistic and move structures in this study, marketing teachers may use the data in order to better illustrate how actual material creators make the materials. Third, marketing officers will realize that the digital and printed materials share similarities and differences in terms of their linguistic features and adherence to the AIDA model. Lastly, through the identified language features in this study, language and marketing teachers may better equip their students with the appropriate grammatical foci in creating promotional and advertising materials.

Some limitations were recognized in this study which can better improve future researches. Future researchers should collect more data in building their corpora on promotional materials. Other frameworks can also be used in order to have a more in-depth genre analysis of the corpora in other contexts. Such constructs can be Bhatia’s Framework for Promotional Genre and Gu Xiangfen’s Five-Move structure.

5. REFERENCES

- Badugu, D., & Chauhan, S. (2016). Creative Excellence In Advertising. Research Gate, 7(1),234–359.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312376611_Creative_Excellence_In_Advertising
- Cook, G. (2001 in Yongqing, L. (2013). A Genre-Based Analysis of Hotel Advertisements in Malaysia.
<http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/5699/1/>
- Cao, M. (2008). Types of Marketing Materials. ToolboxTourism.https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/Toolbox/Tourism/tourismtoolbox/reslib/10/10_types_of_marketing_material.html

- Chauhan, B. (2014). Persuasive Language: A Guide to understanding persuasive Language. United Nations Awareness Foundation, 12(2), 10–47. https://www.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Persuasive_Language_v2_May-2014.pdf
- Dali, H. (2019). The Language of Consumer Advertising: Linguistic and Psychological Perspectives. *Studies in Linguistics and Literature*, 3(2), 93–109. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332381923_The_Language_of_Consumer_Advertising_Linguistic_and_Psychological_Perspectives
- Dieter, H. (1999). The Contribution of Language Teaching to the Promotion of Peace. *Global Issues in Language Education*, 7. <http://gilesig.org/34Pro.htm>
- Epure, M. (2018). The Role of Language and Symbols in Promotional Strategies and Marketing Schemes. *IGI Global: Disseminator of Knowledge*. <https://www.igi-global.com/book/role-languagesymbols-promotional-strategies/192043>
- Featherstone, M. (2007). Consumer Culture and Postmodernism. *Sage Publications*, 1(2), 2–26. https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/17148_book_item_17148.pdf
- Flowerdew, J., & Wan, A. (2010). The linguistic and the contextual in applied genre analysis: The case of the company audit report. *Research Gate*, 29(2), 78–93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2009.07.001>
- Goddard, A. (2002). *The Language of Advertising: Written Texts (Intertext)* (2nd Ed., Vol. 1). Routledge. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(90\)90068-O](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90068-O)
- Ghirvu, I. (2013). The AIDA Model for Advergimes. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261873887_The_AIDA_Model_For_Advergimes
- Kolb, K. (2003). The role of language in the formation, reproduction, and promotion of cultural and social identities <https://www.grin.com/document/139879>
- Lewis, S. (1898). AIDA Model. Oxford Reference. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095432783>
- Nordquist, R. (2019). Overview of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/systemic-functional-linguistics-1692022>
- Schroder, K., & Vestergaard, T. (1985). The language of advertising (1st ed., Vol. 17) [E-book]. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.22158/sll.v3n2p95>
- Simpson, P. (2001). 'Reason' and 'tickle' as pragmatic constructs in the discourse of advertising. *Science Direct*, 33(4), 35–78. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(00\)00004-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(00)00004-7)
- United Nation. (n.d.). THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development. Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development. Retrieved June 2, 2021, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>