

The Lexical Features in a Plant Selling Online Advertisements

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Abstract

The study examined the lexical features of an online advertisement created by people selling plants on Facebook. The qualitative design was employed. The source of data was Bukidnon's top sellers identified by their annual sales. In analyzing the data, a summative content analysis approach was used. The results showed that simple vocabulary, glamorization, and merging combinations were frequently identified lexical features used in online advertising. The study implied that the identified lexical features help the participants' advertisement posts to catch attention and easily convey their intention. Finally, the study recommended exploring the language variations in live selling online.

Keywords: applied linguistics, content analysis, lexical features, online advertisement, plant selling, Philippines

1. Introduction

Online advertisement is currently viewed by marketers as a potentially effective marketing channel due to the decades-long development of Internet usage. According to Lim et al. (2011), online advertisement has been found to be highly received by customers, which favorably affects views of the advertised brands. He added that the language styles in an online advertisement are needed to persuade peoples' minds.

Advertisers used different lexical features in their advertisements to gain customers. They implemented different words to present their products' entity and to entice consumers, which would result in higher sales than they used to have. The identity of attention value, readability, memorability, and selling power are the four major functions of successful advertisements.

As mentioned by Fan (2013), to arouse readers' interest and curiosity and achieve high advertising effectiveness, the advertisement must be noticeable and readable, and the language must be brief, novel, impressive, and persuasive. The appropriate words in proper places make the true definition of a style, hence, the choice of words in advertising is very cautious and skillful as mentioned by Fan (2013), he added that advertisement, as a means of effective sales promotion, is used to disseminate information, acquire its image, and stimulate consumption through advertising language.

Averbeck and Miller (2014) posit that the effectiveness of various language strategies can be evaluated by deriving language expectations from pertinent personality variables. Language Expectancy theory predicted expectancy violations based on the cognitive complexity of the receiver. It argues that a person is more likely to find complex sentences with a wide range of vocabulary persuasive the more

easily they can separate concepts, incorporate new information, and think abstractly. Less cognitively complex people (those with less differentiation, integration, and abstraction) tend to favor shorter, repetitive sentences. In the context of this study, sellers try to construct their advertisements based in less complex way with fewer words to persuade customers.

Lexical features are one of the categories of linguistic features that is used in online advertising (Grey, 2008). In advertising, lexical features help them stand out from one another, especially, if the sellers choose the right language to influence their target buyers. Lexical features also prompt the advertiser to think about using diction in advertisements to attract the attention and desire of customers.

In the theory of New Word Formation Process by Plag (2003), he states that word formation is one way of creating a new word. He defines word formation as “the ways in which new complex words are built based on other words or morphemes which may have some consequences of such new definitions. And accordingly, there are at least six common word formation processes which are acronym, abbreviation, backformation, compounding, clipping, and blending.

In connection, during the advent of the pandemic, one of the most trending activities online in the Philippines was selling, collecting, and searching for unique and exotic plants. In fact, the selling of plants had reached its highest peak during this time. It was because the money that was allotted for outdoor activities was converted to buying plants to resort to boredom, anxiety, and depression caused by CoVid-19 pandemic.

There are a lot of studies conducted about online and printed advertisements (Angela, 2018; April, 2016; Chugh, 2012, Fan, 2013). However, there are no studies conducted yet on the online advertisements employed in plant selling. It is in this context that the study was conceptualized primarily because online advertisement of plant sellers is under-explored. With this in hand, the study aimed to examine the lexical features of online advertisements posted on Facebook by plant sellers because even today in the post-pandemic, the selling of plants online that has been started during the advent of the pandemic continued. And the desire and eagerness of plant sellers to post online is already being part of their selling market by embracing the new culture of technology nowadays.

In plant selling online, the sellers constructed their advertisements based on their knowledge and thinking. They structured their advertisement as much as they wanted it to be. They build their marketing strategies based on their perception of the English language and combined them with their local native language. Online advertisement of plant sellers’ primary goal in constructing their adverts is to persuade the consumer’s mind to purchase the product at any cost. And that is the reason why sellers wanted to have very attractive and realistic advertisements. Specifically, the study sought to identify the lexical features in an online advertisement on Facebook and to determine how sellers structured their advertisements by examining the combinations of lexical features.

2. Method

The qualitative design was employed in the study, particularly the content analysis. The data were elicited from the plant sellers’ online advertisements who are residents of one of the cities in Bukidnon and actively selling since the pandemic until today when I was conducting the study. The data was collected from the top five sellers in Bukidnon whose sales ranged from 450,000 to 750,000 pesos. The content of text data was interpreted through a methodical classification process of coding and identifying patterns. I also utilized a codebook that contained predetermined lexical features, such as hyperbole, neologism, weasel words, familiar language, simple vocabulary, repetition, euphemism, humor, glamorization, and

potency. The code book was conceptualized to be the basis of the inter-coding analysis. In the summative approach of qualitative analysis, I started identifying the lexical features, classifying them according to their category outlined in the codebook, and counting their occurrences.

3. Result and Discussion

The lexical features that were implemented by the top sellers of plant online advertisements were mostly coded under the lexical features of simple vocabulary and glamorization based on the frequency number of agreements of the inter-coders. Among the fifty online advertisements, there were 44 appearances of simple vocabulary and there were appearances of the glamorization feature of lexical.

Simple Vocabulary

Simple Vocabulary is those words that are simple, clear, and precise. These kinds of words also stick to peoples' minds and are straightforward. The readers and viewers easily understand these types of words and could also be remembered easily by the customers because it is precise and direct to the point.

Vocabularies used by plant sellers online were simple, precise, and straightforward messages to the buyers of plants and presented by plant sellers in a less complex way (Averbeck & Miller, 2014). For instance, after the name of the product was presented which is "*Florida beauty*" it was followed by the describing adjective "*Stable*" which directly described the product promoted. According to Leech (1966), advertisement language is known to have plenty of adjective vocabulary and as mentioned by Fan (2015), adjectives are an effective tool in convincing customers to make them believe that the product is worthy to buy or second to none. For the following phrases, such as "*Top cut, going 3 leaves..for sale*", it was also observed that this phrase of the advertisement has the flexible usage of compounds as stated by Fan (2015) which formed into adjective + verb + verb + adjective + pl. noun + prep. + noun. In connection, because I locally collected the data, the English Language used was Philippine English which was developed into a variety of English due to the evolvment over the century of time in the Philippines (Bolton and Butler, 2008).

Glamorization

These types of words were utilized to enhance the message of advertisements. It is normal that the message of every online advertisement intends to be attractive to be understood and received clearly. That is the work of glamor words in advertisements.

Plant sellers mostly used words and phrases that enhanced the message of advertisements to attract and entice the customers to buy the promoted product. This was supported by Karlsson (2015) that a text written with the goal of persuasion will probably aim to direct the reader through the persuasion process. In addition, according to Lusekelo (2010), there is a link between the designed language of morphology used in advertisements and the interpretation captured. For instance, the phrase "*50 only*" and "*with active growth point*" functioned as evaluative adjectives in the advertisement as they are giving a subjective comment towards the product promoted, Fan (2003). The word "*only*" also served as an adjective describing the cost of the product, which is "*50*". In the proposition of flexibility usage of compound words of advertisement by Fan (2003), the phrase "*50 only*" formed as noun + adjective, and the phrase "*with active growth point*" formed as preposition + adjective + noun. And considering the Language Expectancy theory, it was found that the language used in these advertisements was presented as less complex through 'localized' or 'nativized' phrases (Averbeck & Miller, 2014).

Combinations of Lexical Features

Category number 1: Simple Vocabulary + Glamorization

The most common merging of lexical features identified in the study is simple vocabulary and glamorization. For instance, the phrase “*Yellow flame*” was interpreted in the Wide Use of Adjectives in Advertisement by Fan (2003) which presented the formation of compounding words. The word “*Yellow*” in the phrase functioned as a descriptive adjective as it describes the color of the plant. He added that in the Flexible Usage of Compound, the phrase “*Yellow flame*” refers to the formation of adjective + noun.

And the underlined and italicized phrase which states, “*pwedi na I cut*” means in the English Language that the plant is ready for propagation. This phrase enhances the products’ quality and state. It was also presented as being a familiar language since it was posted using the local language of the viewers which is a Cebuano dialect. With this, the idea of attempt and personalization can take various shapes of advertisement according to Hermeren (1999) which was mentioned by Bautista (2000); is to engage the viewer with a famous person or a stereotype that they are familiar with. This means that, in crafting online advertisements, it is better to consider your local audience since most of your viewers belong to them. Moreover, the phrase “*pwedi na I cut*” was translated into the English Language which is “*ready for propagation*”, this is for the purpose of interpretation through the theory of Fan (2003). The phrase “*ready for propagation*” is formed in the Flexibility Usage of Compounds as adjective + preposition + verb.

In addition, to complete the message of the online advertisement, the amount of the product promoted was stated in the phrase “*4,500 only*”. In the idea of Flexibility Usage of Compound words, the phrase is formed as noun + adjective. And from the Wide Use of Adjectives in Advertisement, the word “*only*” describes the amount of the product which is “*4,500*”. This was supported by Karlsson (2015) that, a message of advertisement must be understood and accepted by the recipient in order to have a persuasive effect on them to the receivers. And, for the purpose of having a favorable outlook toward the promoted product, this advertisement proved the theory of Language Expectancy by Averbeck and Miller (2014).

Category number 2: Simple Vocabulary + Glamorization + Potency

Another combination category is simple vocabulary, glamorization, and potency words. Based on my coding analysis, all phrases inside the frame are coded in the lexicon of simple vocabulary which supported the theory of Language Expectancy by Averbeck and Miller (2014). However, there were phrases that were coded again with other lexemes.

For instance, the word “*each*” in the phrase “*750 each*” is describing the amount of the product promoted which is “*750*” and it was formed in the formation of compounding words as noun + adjective. Fan (2003) proposed this in the wide usage of adjectives in advertisements and the flexibility used in compounds. The “*Pink visible variegation*” words in the phrase “*Pink visible variegation foliage*” was used as a describing adjective of the product promoted “*foliage*”. Furthermore, in light of compounding words, the phrase was formed as noun + adjective + adjective + noun.

The underlined phrase “*Can ship nationwide*” enhanced the intention of the seller in selling the plant by trying to say that he/she is able and willing to ship the product anywhere in the country. It also means that the online advertisement has used describing adjectives which is the word “*nationwide*” which describes the action that will be taken by the plant seller. In addition, it has also a formation of compound words which is verb + verb + adjective. The phrase “*Open for bulk orders (special price 100 pots)*” emphasized the huge availability of product supply of the seller through offering a special price for those

who will order a bigger number of plants. This phrase used the evaluative adjective proposed by Fan (2003), giving subjective comments about the promoted product. It has also a compound word formation of adjective + preposition + adjective + verb + (adjective + noun + noun). In relation, the online advertisement of plant sellers were all created in Philippine English which classified by Bautista from adopting the notion of Platt et al. (1984) under the criterion of English has been taught as a subject and used in many cases as a medium of instruction and is used for a range of functions among those who speak or write it in the region in communication between friends and in the family.

Category number 3: Simple Vocabulary + Neologism + Potency + Glamorization

According to Weinberg (2009), the fact that social media is now a powerful marketing channel is a surprise to many businesses and organizations. Therefore, a smaller company needs the ability to not only communicate its message to its target audience through social media but also to start developing meaningful relationships with its customers. This means that the online advertisements of plant sellers not only created an art of lexical features emergence but also was able to develop a relationship with the customers which resulted in high sales regardless of the minimal usage of this category.

For instance, the phrase “*For sale!!*” describes the intention of the seller in posting the product on Facebook by giving subjective comments about the product advertised online as proposed by Fan (2015). The word “*tri-color*” is a new word formation of language in advertisements that came from the existing word “triple color,” and that is from the light of the New Word Formation Process by Plag (2015). In addition, blending entails the creation of a new lexeme by combining elements of at least two other source words, of which one of the source words is either condensed in the fusion or there is some phonemic overlap said by Gray (2004). The word “*tri-color*” is an extension of the name of the product promoted and as mentioned by Sangsthita (2018), the language of advertisements is used to create captivating content that will draw in the intended audience. The names of the products are one of the advertising's main points. Producers frequently give their products names that resemble how words are formed or created to make them more appealing to consumers. From this idea, the word “*tri-color*” refers to the name of the plant and has presented it in an attractive way to the target audience. The phrase “*Can ship nationwide*” was observed using the flexible usage of compound words in advertisements. It was formed as verb + verb + adjective. It was also found that this phrase implements an evaluative adjective that gives subjective comments toward the seller, which make it viewed by the buyers as a less complex advertisement that proved the theory of Language Expectancy by Averbeck and Miller (2014).

Category number 4: Simple Vocabulary + Glamorization + Neologism + Weasel Words

Simple vocabulary, glamorization, neologism, and weasel words are another combination of lexical features identified in the study. It was noticeably observed from the three advertisements that plant sellers have very close exposure with simple and straightforward words in introducing the product and the implementation of words that emphasize the product from the lexicon of glamorization. In addition, the use of neologism was mostly presented in acronyms as part of the six common word formation process according to Plag (2003). And weasel words were presented as words that weaken the intention of selling the product according.

For instance, in the phrase “*2 Visible pink variegation foliage*”, the words “*2 Visible pink variegation*” implemented the descriptive adjective which describes the “foliage” which is the product promoted in the advertisement. The phrase “*2 Visible pink variegation foliage*” have the formation flexible

use of compound words as adjective + noun + adjective + noun. The phrase “*For only 750 each*” subjectively described the product and emphasized the amount of the product that was promoted as mentioned by Fan (2013). The phrase “*Can ship nationwide*” is telling the client that the seller is willing and able to ship the product promoted anywhere in the country which enhances the message of the first phrase and is coded with a lexicon of glamorization. In addition, this phrase was also created in the flexible use of compounds such as verb + verb + adjective added by Fan (2013). The words “*Open for*” in the phrase “*Open for cod/cop via LBC*” give a personal comment about the product’s payment mode. It was followed by the acronyms of the New Word Formation Process by Plag (2003) which “cod/cop”; came from the existing words of “cash on delivery/cash on pick-up”. The phrase “cod/cop” means that the product could be availed through “*cash on delivery/cash on pick-up*” It conveys a message that the seller is willing to ship the plant without paying it first. And the word “via” describes the courier that the seller uses in shipping the product.

Lastly, the phrase “*for sure buyers only*” denotes that, the seller wants to cater only to those who were sure about their decision in buying the product. It also implemented the subjective adjective which gives subjective comments towards the customers in buying the product. Another idea from Leech (1966) which was mentioned by Fan (2013), states that language in advertisements was known to be rich in adjectives. There are two types of adjectives, descriptive and evaluative adjectives. The online advertisements of plants have mostly utilized the evaluative which is giving a subjective comment of the product promoted. And adjectives are effective tools to convince the readers that the product advertised is second to none. Several adjectives in advertising display the product’s extra value and make the advertising eye-catching. They are used to warm the commodity and redecorate the advertising to stimulate the readers’ desire of buying. From the observation of I, this online advertisement has localized Philippine English since it was using the commonly shared English Language among the advertiser and the receiver of the online advertisement. In relation, according to D’Souza (1992) as mentioned by Bautista (2000) that, as a powerful sales promotion tool, advertising is employed to spread information, develop its image, and by advertising language, promote consumption. To pique the interest and curiosity of readers, advertising must be effective, and the language must be concise, original, readable, convincing, and impressive.

Category number 5: Simple Vocabulary + Glamorization + Weasel Word + Potency

Other combinations are simple vocabulary, glamorization, weasel words, and potency. For instance, the phrase “*Plants for sale*” implemented the evaluative adjective, which was said by Fan (2013), that gives subjective comments from the intention of the seller towards the product promoted. It was also observed that the phrase used a compound word formation which is noun + preposition + noun. Then the following phrase which is “*2 days reservation*” enhance the message of the first phrase and have also utilized one of the groups of adjectives which is evaluative because it provides a subjective comment on the product as stated by Fan (2013). It tells a message to the customer that, if the buyer cannot settle the payment after two days of reservation, the product will be open to other buyers who are interested in it. Another idea that was observed from the phrase is that, in the flexibility use of compounds, it used the formation of adjective + noun because the noun “*2 days*” functioned in the phrase as an adjective that describes the noun “reservation”. The next phrase which is “*No to joy miners*” means that the seller strictly prohibits the buyers who are just overwhelmed with the product without considering the reality of the intention in selling. And this case mostly happened in selling plants and even with the other products

advertised online. In addition, this kind of phrase weakens the intention of the seller in selling because most of the customers who have not experienced selling plants cannot relate to the experience of sellers in encountering “bugos buyers” which is the result of “joy miners” clients. However, according to Hermerén (1999), it is understandable in a mass-communication if the recipient of a message frequently finds the message irrelevant knowing that thousands, possibly millions of other people receive the same message.

In addition, the phrase “*no to joy miners*” have used the evaluative adjective as one of the groups of adjectives and it gives subjective comments of the product towards the buyers, and it was formed in the compounding words as adverb + preposition + adjective + noun according to Fan (2003). Moreover, Karlsson (2015) mentioned that, although making a purchase or responding to an advertisement may appear to be a personal decision, research indicates that how we process information happens subconsciously (Sedivy & Carlson 2011:577). This gives advertisers a significant advantage when trying to persuade consumers through advertising, as consumers will still process the advertisement as information regardless of whether they recognize it as such. Goddard (2002) supports this claim by stating, “for adverts to work, they must use our commonly shared resources of language in ways that affect us and mean something to us”.

In connection, as mentioned by Sofia Karlsson (2015), the discourse surrounding advertising is predicated on the idea that the text was written to convince the reader to purchase a good or service or to make it appear as desirable to the reader as possible. Furthermore, Hermerén (1999) asserts that attempts at personalization can take various shapes of advertisement in which the advertiser can speak to the recipient as though he were an old friend. From this idea, the online advertisements of plant sellers were proved to be created with an art of structure through personalizing it with the different emergence of lexical features.

Based on the results and findings of the study, the online advertisements posted on Facebook by plant sellers were frequently utilizing the two lexical features of language such as the lexicon of simple vocabulary and glamorization, that emerged in all the merging categories found. And it was also found that among the fifty online advertisements of plants, there were forty-five of them were coded in the merging process of construction and choice of words. From these findings, it is safe to say that the design in constructing online advertisements does not matter with the length of the phrase but rather in how words play’s role in the advertisements and what lexical features go together in an advertisement to create an art of emergence as part of the persuasive communication process in online advertisement. According to Lusekelo (2010), there is a link between the designed languages used in advertisements, the morphology of the words, and the interpretation captured. Specifically, in implementing words that have the power to convince customers to buy the products. Hence, from the results that were discussed above, the answer the research question number one was met, and that led me to identify the appearance of merging categories of lexical features in each advertisement.

4. Conclusion

The study concluded that plant sellers mostly utilized simple, precise, and straightforward words in advertising their products online on Facebook. The results implied that the simple and direct usage of lexical features and combining them enticed the customer’s interest through implementing words that enhanced the message of the advertisement to be perceived clearly. Plant sellers also constructed their advertisements with an art of creativity by emerging the various type of lexicon in each advertisement

which resulted in a high performance of sales. Advertisers of plants commonly personalize their online advertisement, which they unconsciously did.

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