"CHECK OUT!": A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF ONLINE ADVERTISEMENTS OF SELECTED E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The isolation given by the pandemic is an opportunity seized by the online advertisers as e-commerce saw a dramatic rise in audience after the occurrence of this adversity. In relevance, this study was conducted to analyze the online advertisements of selected e-commerce platforms in the Philippines using Halliday's (1961) Systemic Functional Linguistics framework particularly in terms of its metafunctional dimension. The top five (5) e-commerce platforms in the Philippines were the sources of data analyzed. Findings revealed that rectangles and circles are commonly used shapes of the advertisements of e-commerce platforms. Colors like red, yellow, and white imply that it is used sparingly to draw attention or contrast with another color. The use of bold fonts also makes the online advertisements simpler to recall and recognize. In terms of ideational function, online advertisements contain material process of transitivity while dynamic modality abound. Affixation was also found to be the most common word-formation process while visuals as a kind of marketing communication assist the advertiser in conveying the creative appeal message. Material process as used in online advertisements helps present the whole thought an online advertisement has. And while modality emphasizes subjectivity and objectivity, expresses politeness, and unites discourse into cohesion, the use of affixation for the purpose of alteration and pluralization helps the online advertisements to resonate to its audiences, the consumers, and to influence and deliver to a larger audience.

Keywords: *e-commerce, metafunction, online advertisements, transitivity*

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INTRODUCTION

The digital economy boomed during the COVID-19 crisis. During the pandemic, e-commerce development has been faster in areas where isolation precautions have been strictly implemented, as measured by the Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker stringency index. People went to the internet purchasing in greater numbers more than ever before as they embraced social distancing. Online shopping has grown in popularity among customers. Features of various electronic commerce platforms now develop together with the updated and increase in people's needs and demands (*Ecommerce 101,* 2021).

The use of websites and other online venues as a medium for advertising is referred to as online advertising. In other words, advertisements on the Internet. This form of advertising has been around for roughly twenty-five years, or when the internet first became popular (Market Business News, 2021). According to Schroder (2017), its hypertext framework allows for multimodal, interactive, and tailored advertisement forms, which opens a whole range of possibilities for linguistic research. The primary purpose of a persuasive advertisement is to convince the recipient to purchase the product. According to Anwar (2018), advertising language isn't usually "proper" language in the traditional sense. Knowledge and effective language use helps to build powerful tests or write scripts that interact with the consumer on a deeper and more emotional level.

One of the most significant ideas is Halliday's (1961) Systemic Functional Linguistics, which has received the most attention and is regularly used in linguistics and applied linguistics literature. The study of the relationship between language and its functions in social environments is known as systemic functional linguistics. According to Halliday's (1961) theory of systemic functional linguistics, there are no fundamental purposes of language in human communication. The essence of the language is inextricably linked to the functions it must perform. Communication always has a motif, and language is employed as a vehicle to achieve the aim. Halliday (1961) categorizes the use of language into three distinct metafunctions: textual metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and ideational metafunction.

Using Halliday's (1961) Systemic Functional Linguistic method, this study seeks to identify how the selected electronic commerce platforms use language in advertisements to encourage their users to acquire their product. The systems of transitivity, modality and text are employed to embody and materialize the advertisement's value, belief, and ideology. Talking about advertisements, people normally evaluate the theme, color, layout, and tend to overlook the words since they are readily understood, but there is still depth inside the words or catch phrases that has to be explored further. This study will determine the language of advertisement in electronic commerce platforms.

The need for metafunctional analysis in language of online advertisements is the gap this research aimed to fill-in. In particular, this study sought to define the following questions unique to the study: 1)What are the implications behind the language of advertisement used by the selected e-commerce platform?; and 2) How was metafunction dimension maximized and presented in the online advertisements of the selected e-commerce platforms?

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to analyze the online advertisements of selected e-commerce platforms in the Philippines using Halliday's (1961) Systemic Functional Linguistics framework.
Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the general description of the selected electronic commerce platforms in the Philippines;
2. Identify the ideational metafunctional features present in the online advertisements in terms of transitivity;
3. Identify the interpersonal metafunctional features present in the online advertisements in relation to modality; and
4. Determine the textual features contained in these advertisements in terms of word formation and word meaning.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on MAK Halliday's (1961) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework which espouses that language is a social semiotic system. A fundamental theoretical principle for Halliday (1961) is that each act of communication entails choices. SFL maps the options accessible in any language variety using its representation tool of a "system network."

For Halliday (1961), all languages involve three simultaneously generated metafunctions: one construes experience of our outer and inner reality as well as logical relations between phenomena (ideational); another enacts social relations (interpersonal relations); and a third

weaves together these two functions to create text (textual—the wording).

The focus of the study is on the metafunctional dimension which consists of ideational, interpersonal, and textual components. Metafunction is uniquely defined in SFL as the "organization of the functional framework around systems" language is not only seen based on their message but the way they work and progress in the social context. As the study continue to prosper the researchers aim to investigate these shallow messages and strive to decode the confound motivation behind these messages in order to analyze and understand the systemic function of language on the online
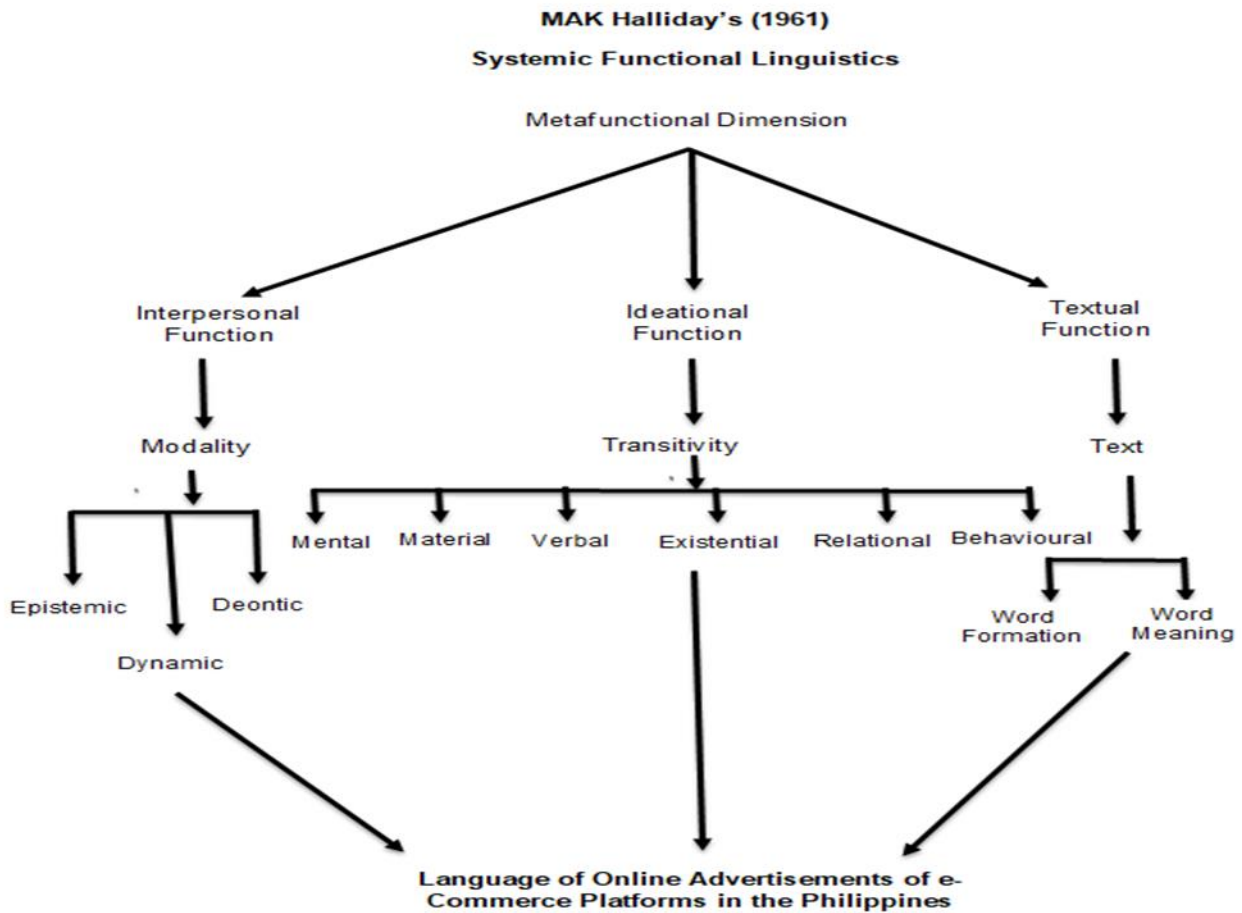

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

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advertisements of the selected e-commerce platforms in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive research design, focusing on textual analysis. Descriptive research aims to describe a phenomenon or situation and verify developed hypotheses. Textual analysis involves understanding language, symbols, and pictures in texts to gain information about how people communicate and make sense of life experiences. The study described the systemic function of language on the online advertisements of the selected e-commerce platforms in the Philippines.

Source of Data

Primary data were gathered from the online advertisements of the top five electronic commerce firms, namely: Shopee, Lazada, Amazon, Carousell, and LBC Express. These e-commerce platforms were taken from *economeye.com* list of top 10 e-commerce sites/apps in the Philippines.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in choosing the three (3) online advertisements from the top five e-commerce platforms in the Philippines. These ads were then analyzed based on a set of devised criteria or standards discussed below:

Relevance and timeliness

The study considered advertisements released no earlier than the year 2020 and in line with the current trends and demands of the digital era. The study excluded television, radio, and podcast advertisements, focusing solely on textual advertisements.

Concept and trends

The study included e-commerce advertisements that share similar and modern concepts, such as seasonal advertisements, promotional advertisements, and unique one-of-a-kind offers, to attract customers. The analysis was limited to online advertisements as the study focused on e-commerce platforms, and traditional forms of advertising such as flyers, brochures, and newspaper advertisements were not included.

Popularity and demand

The study examined advertisements that are familiar and popular to the general public, featured known celebrities or influencers as endorsers that made the e-commerce platform known or popular to its consumers/customers.

Unit of Analysis

The study analyzed the online advertisements of chosen e-commerce platforms, limiting the analysis to the textual components of the ads, such as sentences, taglines, phrases, and clauses. The review was restricted to the text-based portions of online poster advertisements. The data analysis and interpretation involved calculating the preponderance and percentage of the text elements analyzed.

Data Coding

The study used coding to analyze the textual elements of online poster advertisements. The coding unit was formulated as a basis for coding to avoid the repetition of words. The researchers used abbreviations as shortened forms of words and numbers to indicate the advertisement count. Specific codes to label each advertisement were also used.

Table 1. Coding on the online advertisements of selected e-commerce platforms

SHOPEE

CODE	DESCRIPTION
S-1	Shopee's first advertisement
S-2	Shopee's second advertisement
S-3	Shopee's third advertisement

LAZADA

CODE	DESCRIPTION
L-1	Lazada's first advertisement
L-2	Lazada's second advertisement
L-3	Lazada's third advertisement

AMAZON

CODE	DESCRIPTION
A-1	Amazon's first advertisement
A-2	Amazon's second advertisement
A-3	Amazon's third advertisement

CAROUSELL

CODE	DESCRIPTION
C-1	Amazon's first advertisement
C-2	Amazon's second advertisement
C-3	Amazon's third advertisement

LBC EXPRESS

CODE	DESCRIPTION
LBC-1	LBC Express first advertisement
LBC-2	LBC Express second advertisement
LBC-3	LBC Express third advertisement

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The study utilized advertisements from selected e-commerce platforms as its data source and did not involve human participants. A self-made analysis table was used to analyze the language of these online advertisements, based on Halliday's (1961) Systemic Functional Linguistic approach.

The analysis table consisted of three independent tables, one for each metafunction dimension: transitivity process, modality type, and textual dimension. Each table had rows representing process or type categories and columns representing the selected e-commerce platforms and their respective advertisements. The transitivity process table contained categories for different process types, while the modality type table contained categories for different modalities used in the advertisements. Lastly, the textual dimension was analyzed through rows for word-formation processes and semantic meanings of the words used in the advertisements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual metafunctions of online advertisements, focusing on transitivity, Modality process, and word formation.

General Description of the Physical Characteristics of Online Advertisements

Table 2. Physical characteristics of online advertisements

E-COMMERCE PLATFORM	PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS			
	Visual Elements		Typeface Elements	
	Shape	Color	Font Style	Punctuation
Shopee	Square and Rectangle	Orange, red, green, yellow, white	Bold letters	Exclamation mark
Lazada	Heart Shape and Rectangle	Blue, white, yellow, light purple	Bold letters	Comma
Amazon	Circle	Black and yellow	Bold letters	Exclamation mark and Period
Carousell	Circle and Rectangle	Red, white, and green	Some texts are in cursive style	Exclamation mark and Period
LBC Express	Rectangle and Dialogue bubble	Red and yellow	Bold and italics.	Exclamation mark, comma, and Period.

The top five electronic commerce platforms contain commonly utilized visual elements. Rectangles in S-3 to highlight the word *"Top 99 Deals"* trigger different images and memories in people's minds. The use of circles in A-2 and C-2 can catch the eye, and it is clear to see how this form stimulates interaction. According to Sukhraj (2021), the never-ending circle soothes the consumer while presenting an aura of strength and unity. Rectangles benefit from familiarity, trust, order, tranquility, and regularity. In colors, red is an excellent color for 'Buy Now' or 'Click Here' buttons on Internet banners and websites (Baker, 2014). Yellow represents enthusiasm, and green is inextricably tied with nature and the environment. It is also connected with dependability, security, stability, honesty, sustainability, and newness. Colors are the first thing that consumers see in the advertisement.

Furthermore, the common typeface element used by the top-five e-commerce platforms in the Philippines under Font Style is bold letters that employ huge, bold words to send a specific message to the reader (Paudyal, 2016). It helps readers to perceive information from the text. Moreover, exclamation points in S-2, *"Our Shopee Princess is Here!"* using a period in A-1, *"Thank you! We love putting the smile in your box."* and the use of the comma in L-1, *"Buy More, Save More,"* affect the readability of the material and the perception of online poster ads (Karasek, n.d.).

Studies of physical characteristics of online poster advertisements show that perception of the entire visual image takes precedence over perception of the pieces, which may consist of a series of events within the overall work (O'Halloran, 2008).

Ideational Metafunctional Features of Online Advertisements in Terms of Transitivity

The Ideational Metafunctional features of online advertisements in relation to their Transitivity Process are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of the ideational function of the online advertisements in terms of transitivity

PROCESS TYPE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Material Process	6	40
Mental Process	4	26
Existential Process	3	20
Relational Process	1	7
Verbal Process	1	7
Behavioral Process	0	0
TOTAL	**15**	**100**

In the analysis for ideational metafunction of transitivity process, each type of processes exists at least once in each of the online advertisements. For instance, Material Process from LBC-2, it states that *"Send money with a few clicks with LBC connect"*. This explains that there is something that the speaker wants to happen or there is a doing pertaining to the phrase *"send money"*. For Mental Process, one (1) online advertisement coded as A-1 states that, *"We love putting the smile in your box"*, explains that there is a sense or feeling, an emotion. The word *"love"* in the sentence expresses the opinion or thoughts that the speaker wants to express on its consumers or customers. Verbal Process is the process of saying, in which, in C-1 online advertisement that says *"Elle's top picks on all things home: handpicked properties, furniture, home décor, and more! #ElleUyApproved"*. This expresses that the speaker wants to say something, particularly. For Existential Process, there is this one advertisement coded as S-1 with the sentence, *"The most exciting crossover in the history, J&T Express now available on Shopee!"*, which shows that something is existing or going to happen. Last type of process that the texts contain is relational. This process is about having a carrier and its attributes. For the statement on the LBC-3 online advertisement, *"First remittance is free at LBC Chicago IL, Houston TX, and Nova."*, it explains that the *"first remittance"* is the carrier, and the word *"free"* is its attribute.

Dai (2015) stated, that the speaker or writer's view of reality in the form of different types of processes is a part of grammar which determine how the participants are represented, and is concerned to who acts and is acted upon. Other studies, such as that of Ayoola (2015) on metafunction analysis of public advertisements, showed that material process is used frequently when it comes to advertising products, items, or events. Conducting transitivity analysis is important to observe the metafunctions of languages, as it shows how people represent the real world. This supports Halliday's (1971) claim that people indicate their consciousness through their reactions, cognition, and perceptions, and the linguistic acts of speaking and understanding of other people.

Interpersonal Metafunctional Features of Online Advertisements in Terms of Modality

The interpersonal metafunctional features of online advertisements in terms of their modality are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of the interpersonal function of the online advertisements in relation to their modality

MODALITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Dynamic	7	46.66
Deontic	5	33.33
Epistemic	3	20
TOTAL	**15**	**100**

Results show that most online advertisements used dynamic modality in showcasing the products while minority showed certainty, probability, and possibility. For example, L-2 states "*Be rewarded with everything you love.*" in which "*it gives the ability to express everything the people love and be rewarded for doing it.*" Huddleston and Pullum (2002) describe dynamic modality as concerning with the traits and dispositions of individuals, alluded to in the phrase, particularly by the subject.

Deontic modality was the second type used in the ads. This type of modality may express permission, ability, volition or obligation (Kastrone, 2008). For instance, in C-1 advertisement, it says "*#ElleUyApproved Elle's top picks on all things home: handpicked properties, furniture, home décor, and more!*" This means that "*Elle has permission and approval to the items at home on Carousell.*"

Epistemic modality was the least used modal in the advertisements. The degree of confidence on a proposition's knowledge may be divided into three categories: certainty, probability, and possibility. For example, in L-1 which states "*Buy more, save more in our grand Christmas sale!*"

which means that "*it is needed to save because of the possibility that the customers would look and buy more items.*" Another example, in LBC-3 which states "*First remittance is free at LBC Chicago IL, Houston TX and Nova.*" That is to say that "*It is expected that the first remittance is free at LBC Chicago IL, Houston TX and Nova.*" As a result, it relates to the manner in which the advertisements express their uncertainties, certainties, and educated judgments.

Halliday (1985) distinguishes modalization from modulation based on various communicative functions. The former, belonging to the indicative type, plays a role in information exchange and refers to the speaker's judgment on the possibility and frequency of propositions, including rank of probability (possibly, probably, certainly) and rank of frequency (sometimes, usually, always; the latter, belonging to the imperative type, plays a role in article and service exchange and refers to the speaker's judgment on the expectability of a suggestion, including rank of obligation (allowed, supposed, required) and rank of inclination (willing, keen, determined).

Table 5. Distribution of the textual function of the online advertisements in relation to word formation

WORD FORMATION PROCESS	FREQUENCY (F)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Affixation	21	55.26
Compounding	5	13.15
Back Formation	3	7.90
Borrowing	3	7.90
Creative Respelling	3	7.90
Acronym	2	5.26
Conversion	1	2.63
TOTAL	**38**	**100**

Textual Metafunctional Features of Online Advertisements in Terms of Word Formation and Word Meaning

Textual metafunctional features of the online advertisements in relation to their word form and meaning were also identified.

Four out of five e-commerce platforms analyzed, ranks affixation as their most-used word formation process. According to Voros (2010), affixation is arguably the most productive word-formation process in the English language. Affixation's main purpose is to alter the meaning or form of a word and comes in the form of either a prefix or a suffix (Nordquist, 2019). In the advertisements, affixation's presence can be called a 'common occurrence', with words such as; *'rewarded', 'approved'* in L2, and C1 respectively. Affixation is also uniquely used in online advertisements to stress out the rank or degree of a word through a superlative, word such as *'Nationwidest'* in LBC-1, and it is also used as a form of pluralization to a word, as used in S-3 and A-2 words such as *'deals' and 'recharges'*. Customers' interest is caught more when they see the suffixes *'-s'* or *'-es'* because this typically means more or bigger (Rosler, 2018). More deals, promo, and discounts have a substantial influence on customer acquisition.

Compounding ranked second mostly used word-formation process in the ads analyzed. Talking about terms like *'crossover', 'payday', and 'handpicked'* in S-1 and S-2 ,these all work together to create a very distinct image in mind which is exactly what an advertiser wants when creating an ad because once the sense of imagery is triggered in the consumer's mind, the desire to buy the product and flaunt the product themselves is activated.

Creative respelling, the language of advertising, is characteristic for its innovative ways with lexical items (words) and their creation. This purpose is also contributive to how the word "carousel" ,commonly known as a merry-go-round amusement ride was used as emphasized in *'carousell'* in C-1. The presence of creative respelling in the online advertisements is a vital

language tool in a field wherein minds of multiple individuals work at the same time.

Furthermore, advertising uses backformation, acronym, and clipping. As stated in the power of words in advertising, words are important in expressing ideas. The shorter the word/term is, the more it is easier to be remembered by the audience/consumers/customers. This is why it is applied to the online advertisements by the e-commerce platforms. In the case of borrowing, a language may not always have all the words it needs to capture all of its experiences. It must borrow words and expressions from other languages that come into contact with it at such times (Egbe & Akpan, 2017). As advertisement's aim is to always as much as it could capture buyers' attention and interest, borrowing words from other languages is sometimes the answer to attain this objective.

According to Ariana (2008), the practice of abbreviating terms is increasingly popular as literacy increased, and improved science and technology brought with them more difficult terminology and concepts. Examples of this include 'LBC' which uses an acronym to reflect its laid-back, easy and convenient branding.

The last is conversion. According to Nordquist (2020), conversion is a word-formation procedure that allocates an existing word to a different word class. It is synonymous to functional shift, which is used in advertisements to pique interest or better understand the contents of the advertisements. For instance, the word/term 'flash' and "flash sale" in L3, uses the word/term not as a verb but as an adjective to describe an abrupt phenomenon.

According to Halliday (1961), the evolution of language is in response to the specific demands and environment of the society in which it is used; in this case the language revolves on the society of e-commerce. Halliday (1961) stated that textual metafunction contradicts the idea that words are just words with semantic meaning but rather pose an idea that the words read and heard by the audience are a result of an extensive motivation that goes beyond just the literal meaning. These motivations are what

brings color to the message of the passage and brings their meaning beyond its literal phase.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

In terms of shapes, colors, fonts, and punctuation marks, rectangles and circles are commonly used shapes in online advertisements in the Philippines. This is because these shapes give the online advertisements a solid, imposing, or weighty image and are utilized to offer additional information. Colors like red, yellow, and white draw attention or contrast with another color. The use of bold fonts also makes the online advertisement simpler to recall, recognize, and emphasize the text and brand tagline. Punctuation marks also come with an impact for the message that the advertisers are communicating. All of these are a kind of marketing communication that assists the advertiser in conveying the creative and effective messages of the advertisements.

Transitivity's material process is the most frequently used type of process in online advertisements as it presents the whole thought an online advertisement has, and states what will happen and what is in the online advertisement itself. The effect it brings is much easier to understand as it is personal and straight to the point as SFL refers to, and language enables people to communicate the way a person wants with one another.

In terms of Interpersonal metafunction, the dynamic modality is the most used type in the majority of advertisements. From a functional perspective, systemic-functional linguistics, as represented by Halliday (1985), has built an open grammatical framework by introducing the idea of modality. Modality which clearly indicates that it can be used in online advertising to emphasize subjectivity and objectivity, express politeness, and unite discourse into cohesion.

Affixation is the dominant word-formation process as its purpose is alteration and pluralization that helps the online advertisements resonate with its audience. This is deeply affiliated upon Halliday's (1961) claim that language is spoken in accordance with society's demand in which it is spoken or practiced. In this case, the focused audiences are swayed by quantity, hence the repetitive use of affixation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions made, this study recommends the following:

E-commerce platforms sustain the use of visual elements that benefit the product; however, also consider using different visual elements to give more meaning to the image of the online advertisements.

Advertisers also maintain the use of bold letters and correct use of punctuation marks to avoid misunderstanding of the intended meaning of the texts.

Writers or speakers may consider using different types of processes equally than sticking to or frequently using just one type of process for an online advertisement. By balancing the use of processes, writers or speakers will truly relate to the feelings and opinions of the people for them to be persuaded on checking out an item, and for successful communication.

Online advertising can pay greater attention to the phrases they write in their content, particularly the modality expressions they utilize. Advertisers should use more modalization expressions such as "*There is no doubt that…*", "*It is clear that …*," or "*It is known that…*" to make the text more convincing. It would be beneficial in developing a keen imagination and at enticing followers to read online advertisements.

The use of other word-formation process that appeals to be more corporate, formal, and perceptive to the audience is suggested for the advertisers for them to cater other personalities

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and this includes neologism (coining of new words/expression), onomatopoeia (words that describe noise), and blending (merging of two words based on sound structure). After all, SFL always proposes that language functions as a semiotic process, as society evolves, would need to be modifiable, resilient, and illustrative.

With the effectiveness of SFL as analysis for language of advertisements, researchers may widen their research and include other forms of advertisements such as job vacancy , beauty and fashion, mobile phone advertisements, and so on, as well as other types of texts such as manuals, news articles, and other related materials using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics for deeper insights.

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