The Language of Online Advertising:
Stylistic Analysis of Traveloka Advertisements

Glenn Ray B. Briones[1*]

[1]*University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.*

Short Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aims: The objective of this study is to provide a stylistic analysis of select Traveloka advertisements. Specifically, it aims to describe the meaning, form, and function of the advertisements' linguistic features at the subsentential, sentential, suprasentential, and graphological levels.
Methodology: This qualitative study uses linguistic description in analyzing Traveloka advertisements. The form, meaning, and function of the linguistic features of each advertisement (including photo and caption) are analyzed at the subsentential, sentential, suprasentential, and graphological levels.
Results: This stylistic analysis reveals the following linguistic features of three Traveloka advertisements at subsentential, sentential, suprasentential, and graphological levels: (1) second person point of view and conversational tone, (2) evaluative adjectives with positive meanings, (3) minimal use of hard words, (4) wordplay, (5) hashtags, (6) sentence fragments for a stylistic effect, (7) simple sentences, (8) average sentence length appropriate for average readers, (9) collocation and synonymy or near-synonymy for cohesion, (10) coherence, (11) highlighting techniques, and (12) images.
Conclusion: These linguistic features of the three Traveloka advertisements serve the purpose of

_____

Corresponding author: E-mail: gbbriones3@up.edu.ph;

drawing the reader's attention to the product's good qualities and persuading the reader to buy the product. These linguistic features prove useful in designing effective online travel advertisements.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines proves to be a tourism hotspot with the increasing number of tourists that visit the country every year. The Department of Tourism (DoT) of the Philippines relaunched its "It's More Fun in the Philippines" campaign in February 2019, targeting a record of 8.2 million tourists in 2019 [1]. This growing demand for travel in the Philippines has given popularity to online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Agoda, Booking.com, Traveloka, Trip Advisor, and Trivago. OTAs allow people to book affordable flights and hotels by simply downloading an application on their mobile phones. "With some $30 billion projected to be at stake in the online travel scene by the year 2025, OTAs are expected to ramp up their efforts in Southeast Asia to win bigger market shares" [2]. OTAs, therefore, are seen as key players in the tourism industry of the Philippines.

The emerging influence of OTAs has changed the way people communicate for their travel needs and wants. This paper explores the language of online travel advertisements in Traveloka, one of the popular OTAs used in the Philippines. The Esquire Magazine Philippines [3] identified Traveloka as one of the best travel applications for booking. In Indonesia, a study conducted by Alvara Strategic Research [4] named Traveloka as most popular ticketing and hotel booking application among millennials. With over 40 million downloads, Traveloka is currently Southeast Asia's most downloaded travel and lifestyle booking application [5]. The impact of Traveloka in the tourism industry opens an interesting area of study in language and advertising.

The objective of this study is to provide a stylistic analysis of select Traveloka advertisements. Specifically, it aims to describe the meaning, form, and function of the advertisements' linguistic features at the subsentential, sentential, suprasentential, and graphological levels.

2. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study uses linguistic description in analyzing Traveloka advertisements. Dong (2008) defines linguistic description as "the exploration and classification of linguistic features of a given text and the linguistic features are reflected by style markers which are linguistic items that only appear, or most or least frequent in a text, representing a particular variety or literary genre" [6]. The form, meaning, and function of the linguistic features of each advertisement (including photo and caption) are analyzed at the subsentential, sentential, suprasentential, and graphological levels.

Three Traveloka advertisements are chosen based on relevance and accessibility: (1) Attractions and Activities Discount Coupon, (2) Flight Discount Coupon, (3) Hotel Discount Coupon. All three advertisements, which come in the form of a coupon, indicate the promotional discounts available on the Traveloka application during the time of the study (advertisements accessed 14 March 2019).

Analysis at the subsentential level focuses on pronouns, adjectives, hard words, wordplay, and hashtags. The sentential level of analysis discusses sentence type, sentence mood, and average sentence length. The suprasentential level of analysis involves point of view, register, cohesion, and coherence. Analysis at the graphological level examines typography and image.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the rest of the discussion, the Attractions and Activities Discount Coupon is referred to as *Advertisement 1,* the Flight Discount Coupon as *Advertisement 2,* and the Hotel Discount Coupon as *Advertisement 3.*

3.1 Subsentential Level

Table 1 presents the analysis at the subsentential level, which focuses on pronouns, adjectives, hard words, wordplay, and hashtags.

3.2 Sentential Level

3.2.1 Sentence type

All three advertisements use fragments instead of complete sentences in the photo. In general,

Table 1. Analysis of linguistic features at the subsentential level

	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Advertisement 3
Pronouns	Form: you	Form: you, your	Form: you, your
	Meaning: The subjective pronoun *you* and the possessive pronoun *your* indicate the use of the second person point of view.		
	Function: The advertisements establish a conversational tone that can engage the reader by using the second person point of view.		
Adjectives	Form: great, more, minimum, ultimate	Form: awesome, great, minimum	Form: awesome, great, minimum
	Meaning: The evaluative adjectives *more* and *ultimate* refer to the satisfaction that the consumers can get from trying the product. The evaluative adjectives *awesome* and *great* and the measurement adjective *minimum* denote that the product is economical.		
	Function: The primary goal of an advertisement is to persuade the readers to buy the product. Messages that show the readers how taking the action can serve their best interest are more likely to persuade them [7].		
Hard words	Form: attraction, activities, minimum, transaction, ultimate	Form: domestic, international, locations, minimum, transaction	Form: advantage, international, minimum, staycation, transaction
	Meaning: According to Qian (2006), hard words are "words which have at least three syllables, not including inflections or compounding" [6].		
	Function: Hard words comprise only 12.98% of the total number of words of *1*, 8.41 % of *2*, and 6.36% of *3*. The use of mostly short words in all three advertisements contributes to conciseness, a fundamental principle in business communication. Readers are drawn to concise, evocative messages that conjure up a concrete picture in their minds by using strong words and avoiding superfluous words [7].		
Wordplay		Form: 8's a deal!	Form: March your way to awesome discounts this entire March!
		Meaning: The noun *8* (eight) is used to refer to the pronoun *it,* which has a similar sound.	Meaning: The word *march/March* is used to refer to two meanings. The first *march* is a verb which means "to move along steadily usually with a rhythmic stride and in step with others" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d., para. 3). The second *March* is a noun which means the third month of the year.
		Function: Wordplay or pun "can be expressed in ambiguous verbal wit, orthographic peculiarities, sounds and forms of the words, in breaking the grammar rules and other linguistic factors" [8]. The words *8* and *march/March* were used to create humor in the advertisements. When used in advertising, wordplay can make the message more interesting and more compelling to the reader [9].	

	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Advertisement 3
Hashtags	Form: #DoMore Meaning: A hashtag is a word or a chain of words that follow the pound sign (#). The first letter of the words *do* and *more* are capitalized to highlight each part of the hashtag. The meaning of the phrase *do more* remains despite the change in form. Function: Online posts may be categorized using hashtags, and this can help social media users access content related to their interests and communicate with people with the same interests [10]. By searching or clicking the hashtag *#DoMore,* readers interested in travelling can be directed to the advertisement. This means that the hashtag can extend the reach of the advertisement.		

fragments are regarded an error in writing, but they may intentionally be used to achieve a stylistic effect [11]. To get the attention of the reader, techniques such as color, sentence fragments, catchy slogans, famous quotations, testimonials, and description of benefits may be used in crafting sales messages [7]. The economy of words makes the photo more visually appealing.

In the caption, all three advertisements mostly use complete sentences to provide explanation for the photo, except the booking period which is stated in a fragment. Simple sentences are used as catchy slogans to express the cost-effectiveness of the product.

> *Advertisement 1:* See more, explore more, and #DoMore this Payday!
> *Advertisement 2:* 8's a deal!
> *Advertisement 3:* March your way to awesome discounts this entire month!

An idea can be best highlighted by using a simple sentence [7]. Advertisements 1 and 3 stress that the consumers can get more while paying less for attractions and activities and hotels. Advertisement 2 accentuates the number *8*, which is the maximum percentage of discount for flights. The brevity of the message in Advertisements 1, 2, and 3 draws the reader's attention to the practicality of the product, which is consistent with the purpose of convincing the reader to buy it.

On the other hand, all three advertisements use complex sentences to indicate the conditions of purchasing the product, written in the following format:

> For a minimum transaction of <amount> for <product>, you can get <discount>!

In this sentence, the clause *for a minimum transaction of <amount> for <product>* is emphasized because it is used as the theme. According to Halliday [12], the theme is the "point of departure of the message" although it is not the subject. The clause *you can get <discount>* is de-emphasized because it is used as the rheme which adds information about the theme. This structure underscores the need for the consumer to meet the minimum amount of transaction required to get the discount.

3.2.2 Sentence mood

The use of the imperative mood, which expresses commands, instructions, or requests

[7], is evident in all three advertisements. The following directly tell the readers to try the product:

> *Advertisement 1:* Go on an ultimate summer adventure by booking an activity and attraction on Traveloka!
> *Advertisement 2:* Get flight discounts when you book it with Traveloka!
> *Advertisement 3:* Might as well take advantage of our hotel deals!

Moreover, the following sentences are used to suggest urgency:

> *Advertisement 1:* Hurry, book now to get this great deal!
> *Advertisements 2 and 3:* Don't miss out. Book now!

These use of the imperative mood works effectively for the purpose of motivating the reader to take immediate action.

3.2.3 Average sentence length

Krizan et al. [7] state that short sentences are favored in business communication because they take less time for the readers. They further note that short sentences must consist of 15 to 20 words for the average reader. The average sentence length of Advertisement 1 is 8.56; Advertisement 2, 7.64; Advertisement 3, 7.86. This means that all three advertisements are appropriate for the average reader. Keeping the message short and simple makes it easier to understand for the reader.

3.3 Suprasentential Level

3.3.1 Point of view and register

All three advertisements are written in the second person point of view or the you-viewpoint in business communication. The reader's point of view is given utmost importance when the sender uses the you-viewpoint [7]. The use of the you-viewpoint in all three advertisements allows the sender to tap into the reader's attitudes, values, and sensibilities. It also establishes a conversational tone which gives the reader a sense of involvement in the communication process. The reader is more likely to respond favorably to the sender and to the message when it is receiver-centered [7].

3.3.2 Cohesion

All three advertisements use collocation to achieve cohesion. They use nouns, verbs, and adjectives related to the noun *travel*, which is the product or the subject of the advertisements:

> *Advertisement 1:* adventure, activities, attraction, do, explore, see
> *Advertisement 2:* domestic, flight, international, locations
> *Advertisement 3:* Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, hotel, international, local, staycation

Similarly, the following verb and nouns linked with the concept of business are used:

> *Advertisements 1, 2, and 3:* book/booking, deal, discount, promo, transaction

Synonymy or near-synonymy also contributes to the cohesion of each advertisement:

> *Advertisement 1:* great, ultimate
> *Advertisements 2 and 3:* awesome, great

The evaluative adjectives *awesome, great,* and *ultimate,* when used with the above-mentioned nouns related to travel and business, suggest a favorable and affordable travel experience for the consumers. By using words associated with each other and words with shared meanings, the advertisements create a meaningful context.

3.3.3 Coherence

All three advertisements are written in a logical organization of ideas that can effectively persuade the reader. All photos show the fragments that indicate the amount of discounts. All captions, on the other hand, follow a certain format. The introduction starts with a catchy slogan followed by a supporting sentence or supporting sentences. Then the body discusses the most important part: the conditions for purchasing the product (i.e. the amount of minimum transaction required to avail of the discount) and brief instructions for purchasing the product (i.e. how to use the promo code). The conclusion expresses a call for immediate action and states the booking period to close the advertisement in a memorable way.

3.4 Graphological Level

Table 2 presents the analysis at the graphological level, which examines typography and image.

Table 2. Analysis of linguistic features at the graphological level

	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Advertisement 3
Typography	Form: The following elements are arranged according to their font size, in decreasing order: (a) discount, (b) name of coupon, (c) category of coupon,[1] (d) catchy slogan,[2] and (e) catchy slogan and body text. Highlighted in boldface are the catchy slogan and select keywords in the body text such as (a) type of flight/hotel, (b) amount or percentage of discount, (c) minimum amount of transaction required, and (d) promo code. Closing statements that express a call for immediate action are highlighted in italics. Only fragments indicating the amount of discount are used in the photo, while complete sentences are used in the caption. Meaning: The use of highlighting techniques such as various font sizes, boldface, and italics puts emphasis on elements deemed important for persuasion. Function: The use of highlighting techniques and graphics in creating visually appealing technical documents can aid the comprehension of readers (Gerson, n.d.). More importantly, it sends a stronger persuasive to the reader, making the reader more likely to buy the product.		
Image	Form: The photos use digital artworks of tourists, airplanes, hotels, swimming pools, and theme park rides. Meaning: The photos depict tourists with which the readers can identify and the things that the readers can associate with the concept of travel. Function: To direct the reader's attention to significant elements, illustrations may be included [7]. The digital artworks provide the readers with visual stimulus.		

[1]*Advertisement 2 and 3 only;* [2]*Advertisement 2 only*

4. CONCLUSION

This stylistic analysis reveals the following linguistic features of three Traveloka advertisements at subsentential, sentential, suprasentential, and graphological levels: (1) second person point of view and conversational tone, (2) evaluative adjectives with positive meanings, (3) minimal use of hard words, (4) wordplay, (5) hashtags, (6) sentence fragments for a stylistic effect, (7) simple sentences, (8) average sentence length appropriate for average readers, (9) collocation and synonymy or near-synonymy for cohesion, (10) coherence, (11) highlighting techniques, and (12) images. These linguistic features of the three Traveloka advertisements serve the purpose of drawing the reader's attention to the product's good qualities and persuading the reader to buy the product. These linguistic features prove useful in designing effective online travel advertisements.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. CNN Philippines. DOT keeps 'It's More Fun In The Philippines' campaign, eyes 8.2M tourist arrivals in 2019; 2019.
Accessed 14 March 2019.
Available:http://nine.cnnphilippines.com/news/2019/02/18/department-of-tourism-its-more-fun-in-the-philippines-campaign.html
2. The Philippine Star. Online travel agencies to spur Philippine tourism growth; 2019.
Accessed 14 March 2019.
Available:https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/travel-and-tourism/2017/11/07/1756223/online-travel-agencies-spur-philippine-tourism-growth#HyPsDzlt7xA6vjzZ.99
3. Esquire Magazine. The most essential travel apps to help you plan your holiday; 2019.
Accessed 1 August 2019.
Available:https://www.esquiremag.ph/culture/tech/most-essential-travel-apps-a00287-20190417-lfrm2
4. Alvara Strategic Research. Behaviors and preferences of Indonesian millennial consumers on e-commerce applications in 2019; 2019.
Accessed 1 August 2020.
Available:https://alvara-strategic.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/PRESS-CON-ENGLISH-E-COMMERCE-REPORT.pdf
5. Traveloka Press. Traveloka ranked as the most popular ticket and hotel booking application among millennials.
Accessed 1 August 2020.
Available:https://press.traveloka.com/traveloka-ranked-popular-booking-application-among-millennials/
6. Li M. The stylistic analysis of the magazine advertisement—Atkins chocolate chip granola bar. Asian Social Science. 2009; 5(9):63-69.
7. Krizan AC, Merrier P, Logan J, Williams K. Business communication. 7th ed. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western; 2008.
8. Giorgadze M. Linguistic features of pun, its typology and classification. European Scientific Journal. 2014;2:271-275.
9. Laviosa, S. Wordplay in advertising: Form, meaning and function. Journal of the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers. 2005;1(1).
Available:http://www.sdutsj.edus.si/ScriptaManent/2005_1/Laviosa.html
10. MacDonald J. The importance of hashtags: Know where, why, and how to use them. Business 2 Community; 2017.
Accessed 14 March 2019.
Available:https://www.business2community.com/social-media/importance-hashtags-know-use-01837644
11. Forlini G, Bauer MB, Biener L, Capo L, Kenyon KM, Shaw DH, Verner Z. Grammar and composition 4. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc; 1990.
12. Celce-Murcia M, Larsen-Freeman D. The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course. 3rd ed. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle; 2008.

APPENDICES

Quantitative Characteristics of Traveloka Advertisements

Table 3. Word count of Traveloka advertisements

	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Advertisement 3
Number of words in the photo[1,2]	11	17	17
Number of words in the caption[1,2,3]	66	90	93
Total number of words	77	107	110
Number of hard words[4]	10	9	7
Percentage of hard words[5]	12.98%	8.41%	6.36%

[1]*The ampersand (&) used for the word and and the hyphen (-) used for the word to are counted as one word;* [2]*Figures with the Philippine peso symbol (Php/₱) and alphanumeric codes are counted as one word;* [3]*Words in hashtags are counted separately;* [4]*Hard words are words with three or more syllables, excluding inflections or compounding, figures, alphanumeric codes, and the brand name Traveloka;* [5]*Percentage of hard words = (number of hard words / total number of words) * 100*

Table 4. Average sentence length of Traveloka advertisements

	Advertisement 1	Advertisement 2	Advertisement 3
Total number of words	77	107	110
Number of sentences in the photo[1]	3	5	5
Number of sentences in the caption[1]	6	9	9
Total number of sentences	9	14	14
Average sentence length[2]	8.56	7.64	7.86
Percentage of hard words	12.98%	8.41%	6.36%

[1]*Fragments are counted as one sentence;* [2]*Average sentence length = total number of words / total number of sentences*

Traveloka Advertisements

Fig. 1. Advertisement 1

Fig. 2. Advertisement 2

Fig. 3. Advertisement 3