



LANGUAGE STYLE IN FASHION ADVERTISEMENTS OF ONLINE VOGUE MAGAZINE

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Abstract

In advertising, one of the purposes of communication is to offer a particular product. Advertisements display the advantages, features, and values of the products. This paper aimed to analyse the language styles used in online Vogue Magazine fashion advertisements. The data were collected by selecting ten advertisements collected from Vogue Magazine's compilation entitled "The Fall 2020 Trends Vogue Edition Editors are Shopping This Season" published on 18 September 2020. The researchers employed mixed methods to analyse the language styles used in the fashion advertisements based on nine types of language styles proposed by Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty (1995). The results showed that there were three language styles found from ten online fashion advertisements in Vogue Magazine advertisements, namely the hard sell style (three times), soft sell style (three times), and mixed style or the combination of the hard sell and soft sell styles (four times). Each advertisement style has its specific features and functions in fashion promotion.

Keywords: advertisement, language style, magazine, type of language

INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential aspect of humans in their life. Because language is used to communicate with others, people use language as one way or become a communication tool (Alsaawi, 2019; Fromkin, David, & Collins, 1999; Wardhaugh, 2006). Therefore, it is clear that human beings express their feelings, ideas, thoughts, and whatever exists in mind through language. According to Halliday (1985), we live in what is called a 'literate society' where spoken and written language are used to communicate in society. Spoken language is an utterance in the form of sounds, such as conversation, speech, discussion, radio, and television broadcast. Furthermore, Halliday (1985) stated that a written language is simply an alternative form of expression to speech, including magazines, newspapers, journals, books, and letters. To compare spoken and written language, Halliday (1990, p.62) said

that “relative to each other, written language is dense and spoken language is sparse”. For example, Halliday (1990, p.62) exemplified the following written version, which is dense: “Slavish imitation of models is nowhere implied”. Afterward, the spoken version, which is sparse, was provided: “It is not implied anywhere that there are models which should be slavishly imitated” Halliday (1990, p.62).

In communicating feelings, ideas, or thoughts in the form of spoken or written language, people use their language styles. Style refers to selecting the linguistic forms to convey social or artistic effects and acts as a set of instructions (Chaika, 1982). An example of written language used by human beings is an advertisement. Moreover, Taylor (1986) stated that the functions of advertisements are to create consumers' goodwill, create consumer awareness and product differentiation, make sales, and reinforce existing behavior. Based on Asher (1994), advertising language is used to persuade people to buy a company's products. This means that business including the advertisers are expected to know what kinds of language styles which are appropriate to convince the consumers (Atyaksheva, 2019; Butt, Mukerji, & Shareef, 2017; Christianto, 2020; Ditaya, 2018; Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017; Machin, & Van Leeuwen, 2005; Muthmainnah, 2016; Noor, Agustien, & Rohani, 2017; Peltoniemi, 2015; Rozalina, 2020; Wahyuningbyas, 2018). Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1995) argued that language in an advertisement has a creative concept to present a message to the reader or the audience.

Moreover, according to Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (1995), there are nine styles of advertisement to formulate the messages, namely a hard sell, soft sell, lecture and drama, straightforward, the demonstration, the problem solution, the slice of life, the spokesperson, and comparison. A hard sell refers to the rational informational message designed to touch the mind and create a response based on logic (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995). Also, it convinces the consumers to buy because the product is excellent, better, or best. A soft sell uses an emotional message, and it is designed around an image intended to create a response based on feeling and attitude (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995). A hard sell style is more persuasive than a soft sell. Next is lecture and drama, which combines serious and structured instruction and a character's story in some situations (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995). Straightforward means the advertiser conveys messages without using any gimmicks. The messages are more rational than emotional, and the demonstration style refers to how the messages are delivered, emphasizing the product's functions (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995). The problem solution is used for smoothly advertising a particular product. The slice of life places the audience in the position of overhearing where the problems are stated and resolved (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995). The spokesperson uses famous people to speak in promoting the products, and the last style is comparison which refers to the

way to compare a particular product to another (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 1995).

Some researchers have also conducted studies on language styles in advertisements. For example, Putra and Arman (2019, p.111) aimed “to describe the kinds of language style and how they are used in the advertisements and to find out the dominant language style used in Marie Claire Magazine.” Seven types of language style were identified: simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration, assonance, ellipsis, and hyperbole, and the most dominant language style, hyperbole, reaching 28 percent (Putra, & Arman, 2019). Another study on advertisement language styles conducted by Rahmawati (2019, p.52) showing that “in the advertisements of The New York Times they can be divided into hard sell style, soft sell style, straightforward style, and comparison style.” More importantly, Peltoniemi (2015) employed content analysis to investigate 400 advertisement appeals in hard copy magazines published in Sweden and discovered three styles of advertisements, namely a hard sell, soft sell, and mixture of a hard sell and soft sell. Based on the three previous studies mentioned above, which focused on figurative language, a newspaper, and printed magazines, the researchers decided to examine fashion advertisement language styles in online *Vogue Magazine* fashion advertisements. For this purpose, the following research question was formulated: What language styles are used in fashion advertisements of *online Vogue Magazine*?

METHOD

The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study (Creswell, 2014) using document analysis and collected data from the online *Vogue Magazine* fashion advertisements (<https://www.vogue.com/article/fall-fashion-trends-2020-editor-picks>). The researchers decided to use this method because the study aims to describe the data in the form of words or written texts. Later, the data were described and calculated based on the research problem, namely, what language styles were used in online *Vogue* magazine.

To answer the research question “what language styles are used in online *Vogue Magazine* fashion advertisements,” the researchers adopted Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty’s (1995) theory on nine types of language styles. To categorize the data more specifically, the researchers added a category called a mixed sell (a combination of a hard sell and a soft sell). The data were ten online advertisements collected from an online *Vogue Magazine*’s compilation entitled *The Fall 2020 Trends Vogue Editors are Shopping This Season* compiled by Fass published on 18 September 2020 (<https://www.vogue.com/article/fall-fashion-trends-2020-editor-picks>). The advertisements were mainly about the fashion stuff to complete the fall

season's look, as indicated from the article's compilation title. Besides, the advertisements were written by people who loved fashion.

After collecting the online Vogue Magazine data, the researchers took several steps to analyze the data. Firstly, the researchers categorized the data based on the kinds of language styles based on the theory proposed by Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty (1995). Secondly, the researchers interpreted and described the data from each category. Finally, the researchers drew conclusions based on the data analysis.

FINDINGS

The following are the results and discussion of ten fashion advertisements collected from the online Vogue Magazine's compilation entitled "The Fall 2020 Trends *Vogue* Edition Editors are Shopping This Season" compiled by Fass and published online on 18 September 2020 (<https://www.vogue.com/article/fall-fashion-trends-2020-editor-picks>).

Table 1 presents the summaries of the results, and the discussion follows.

Table 1. Advertisement Distribution

No.	Advertisement	Style	Note
1	Backless loafers (by Virginia Smith)	Hard sell	Datum 1
2	Maxidress (by Chioma Nnadi)	Mixed	Datum 2
3	Skirt (by Ella Riley-Adams)	Mixed	Datum 3
4	Skirt (by Madeline Fass)	Soft sell	Datum 4
5	Leather tote (by Julie Tong)	Soft sell	Datum 5
6	Coat (by Alexandra Gurvitch)	Hard sell	Datum 6
7	Boots (by Elisee Browchuk)	Hard sell	Datum 7
8	Weejuns (by Lauren Valenti)	Mixed	Datum 8
9	Print top (by Sarah Spellings)	Soft sell	Datum 9
10	Denim trousers (by Ciarra Zatorski)	Mixed	Datum 10

As shown in Table 1, three advertisements were categorized as a hard sell, three examples of soft sell, and four mixed (hard sell and soft sell). Based on Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty's (1995) nine styles of advertisements, only two of them were identified in this study, namely the hard sell and soft sell. The mixed sell was added (the researchers' proposed advertisement style). The other seven types, namely lecture and drama, straightforward, the demonstration, the problem solution, the slice of life, the spokesperson, and comparison, were non-existent or non-occurring in this study, which examined a small number of data, namely ten fashion advertisements.

DISCUSSION

Below, the ten fashion advertisements were primarily analysed one by one based on the nine types of language style proposed by Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty (1995).

Datum 1. The first fashion advertisement was written by Virginia Smith, a Fashion Director. This advertisement, describing backless loafers, read as follows. “... However, as we move into fall and the possibility of returning to work, these Givenchy loafers are the perfect transition – the appeal of a loafer with the comfort of a slide.”



Figure 1. “Givenchy chain-embellished leather backless loafers”

This advertisement highlighted the benefit of the product. Moreover, that statement presented the benefit or feature of the product to persuade the readers to buy the product. Therefore, this advertisement was classified into a hard-sell type since it focused on describing the product's main features without using promises and dreams but rational information about the comfortable slide.

Datum 2. The second fashion advertisement was written by Chioma Nnadi, a Fashion News Director. This advertisement talked about a maxidress product, which read as follows. “I’m a sucker for a maxi-length mesh dress, and Ottolinger always covers theirs with really interesting prints. I’m looking forward to taking this really slinky look into the fall with an oversized trench coat and some chunky boots.”



Figure 2. “Ottolinger tomato-print maxidress”

This advertisement was classified as hard-sell style because it focused on explaining the features of the product. The advertisement highlighted the interesting finished prints of the product. On the other hand, the last statement, “Finally, I’m ready to wrap my mind around wearing dresses again!” was classified as a soft-sell style since it included the writer’s feeling towards her experience wearing the product. For the reasons, this advertisement was

categorized as a mixed style advertisement because it consisted of two styles, namely a hard sell and a soft sell.

Datum 3. The third fashion advertisement was written by Ella Riley-Adams, a Senior Beauty and Living Editor. This advertisement described a skirt, and it was classified into a mixed style since it focused on the soft sell style and hard sell style. Thus, it was clearly explained in the opening of this advertisement as it was classified into a soft-sell style, *“Sandals for fall? Definitely doable with a good pair of socks. My Eva Birkenstocks have been my most treasured possession since the pandemic started, so I’ll simply up the comfort as the weather chills by committing to a former footwear faux pas that’s been gaining steam since spring.”*



Figure 3. “Imitation of Christ scoop-neck midi-length dress”

This statement led the readers to have a particular feeling and attitude towards the product as it became the most treasured possession to the writer. In addition, a hard-sell style which focused on persuading the readers through rational information based on logic was clearly shown in the statements, *“A good friend recently gifted me a pair of Brother Vellies Cloud socks, which are available in a soothing array of colors. I’ll be cozying up with those, as well as a new pair of my favorite Kapital Smilie socks.”* These statements explicitly provided the readers with how to style the sandals. For these reasons, this endorsement advertisement was categorized as a mixed style.

Datum 4. The fourth fashion advertisement was written by Fass, who is a Market Director. This advertisement described a skirt, and it was classified into a soft-sell style. The reason why this advertisement had a soft-sell style was that it was clearly shown in the statements, *“I love a suit and suit separates. After the plethora of skirt suits that came down the runways for fall, it’s only right I give the ladylike version of the tailored silhouette a try. I started to experiment and get comfortable with the idea of incorporating more skirts into my wardrobe earlier this year while we were still in the office, and I look forward to getting back into the groove again by wearing them for as many occasions as I can find this fall. Plus a midiskirt will showcase my favorite fall loafers and knee-high boots quite well.”*



Figure 4. "Peter Do pleated cotton midiskirt"

The writer tried to persuade the consumer to buy this product by sharing her feelings and experience in wearing the product and how her style looked in using the product. At the beginning of the advertisement, she included the word 'love' to emphasize her overall feeling towards the product.

Datum 5. The fifth fashion advertisement was written by Julie Tong, a Commerce Director. This advertisement described a leather tote, which read as follows. *"The idea of fall trends this year feels a bit strange, but even so, I have found myself gravitating toward the same item I always do during the season – a new bag. This year my style inspiration comes from none other than Katie Holmes and her sidekick Khaite tote bag. Even though our team is not returning to the office quite yet, my obsession with work totes runs deep. Khaite's version is one I can't resist, even if it's something I can only carry to the local bodega for now."*



Figure 5. "Khaite Envelope Pleat medium leather tote"

It was clear that this advertisement was categorized as a soft sell style since it explained how the writer experienced using the product. She tried to persuade the readers by sharing her feelings when she used the product and touched the readers' feelings later. The statement made it clear that her feeling towards the product was related to her deep obsession with the tote bag.

Datum 6. The sixth fashion advertisement was written by Alexandra Gurvitch, an Editor. This advertisement talked about a coat, and it was classified into a hard-sell style. *"As the weather is getting cooler and our time at home is extending, I am transitioning into adding layers, specifically a trench coat to throw on for my infrequent outings. The Burberry Battersea trench is just long enough to perfectly hide my loungewear."*



Figure 6. "Burberry Battersea garbandine trench coat"

This advertisement presented the product's benefit or feature in the last sentence, highlighting how this coat could perfectly hide her loungewear. This style directly emphasized the tangible features, facilities, and benefits. Moreover, she also included how she styled the coat.

Datum 7. The seventh fashion advertisement was written by Elisee Browchuk, who is an Editor Business Coordinator. This advertisement explained the features of boots. Thus, it was clear that this advertisement was categorized as a hard sell style.



Figure 7. "Imitation of Christ scoop-neck midi-length dress"

"I'm gravitating toward pieces that feel groovy and timeless this season. Fringed jackets, flared denim, and faux leather boots all fit the bill. I've been eyeing these Stella McCartney platform booties, which look like they walked straight out of the That '70s Show set." The advertisement provided rational and brief information on how the product's ingredients as expected to work on the lips.

Datum 8. Fashion advertisement eight was written by Lauren Valentim, a Senior Beauty Editor. The advertisement promoted Weejuns product and read as follows: *"As I rethink my style in this strange time, I find myself returning to the classics, and nothing gets me in the fall mood more than slipping on a pair of boyish penny loafers. The eternally chic Weejuns are comfortable enough for daily sanity walks but stylish enough to help me feel – relatively – put-together while grabbing a coffee."*



Figure 8. "G.H. Bass Whitney easy Weejuns"

This advertisement was classified into a mixed style. The first and second sentences of the advertisement were included in a soft-sell style since they expressed the writer's experience and feelings towards the products to touch the readers' feelings and attitude and persuade them to buy the product. The last sentence focused on describing the benefits of the products to the readers: the comfortable and stylish look of the product -- a hard sell. Thus, this advertisement was categorized as a mixed style.

Datum 9. Fashion advertisement nine was written by Sarah Spellings, who is a Fashion News Director. This advertisement described a print top product. It was evident from the advertisement that it was classified into a mixed style. The soft-sell style existed in the statements, *"I'm not normally a bold print kind of gal, but I've been drawn to wavy, abstract, colorful prints lately. And, of course, the master of such prints is Emilio Pucci. This is my kind of going-out top – seriously I would wear this turtleneck to a club."*



Figure 9. "Emilio Pucci sheer abstract-print top"

Those statements presented how the writer felt and experienced using the product. She also employed a soft-sell style that refers to emotional messages to create responses based on feeling and attitude. Moreover, she mentioned using the product at a club and described how to style it. In addition, the statement *"But given the world today, I would wear it with wide-leg trousers for work, and a miniskirt, structured blazer long enough to cover said miniskirt, and tights for fun."* was categorized as a hard sell style since it presented the explicit information on how to style the look using the print top product.

Datum 10. Fashion advertisement ten was written by Ciarra Lorren Zatorski, who is an Assistant Market Director. It mainly explained the denim trousers and suede sneakers. This advertisement was classified into a soft-sell style. *“If there is one thing a pandemic-era summer has taught me, it’s that I am a minimalist through and through, as monochromatic looks have carried me through the dog days of the season. Crisp white shirts paired with denim shorts and sleek leather flip-flops (also white) have become my daily uniform, adding a bit of brightness to an otherwise dreary time. On the top of my list for fall are classic white pieces like denim trousers and suede sneakers, which will seamlessly transition into the colder months – or perhaps to hang onto the summer aesthetic I just can’t seem to shake off.”*



Figure 10. “Harrods Le Jean Leona wide-leg jeans” and “Veja Rio Branco leather-trimmed sneakers”

This advertisement presented the writer’s feelings towards the product. For instance, the statement *“or perhaps to hang onto the summer aesthetic I just can’t seem to shake off”* meant that she could not get rid of the aesthetic of the summer.

As shown in the findings and discussion, data 1, 6 and 7 belonged to the hard sell (backless loafers, coat and boots), data 4, 5 and 9 the soft sell (skirt, leather tote and print top) and data 2, 3, 8 and 10 the mixed sell (maxidress, skirt, weejuns and denim trousers). To some extent, the findings of this study were similar to Fitriyah’s (2008, p.) investigation, which discovered that “the hard sell and soft sell were dominant in Newsweek advertisements.” Nevertheless, the results of the two studies also differed since Fitriyah (2008) showed no mixed sell. In terms of the number of sell types but not the data quantity, the findings of this study and that of Peltoniemi (2015) were the same, namely three categories: the hard sell, soft sell and mixture sell. Peltoniemi (2015, p.66) stated that “Among 400 advertisements 119 were soft-sell advertisements, 255 hard-sell advertisements and 26 mixture advertisements”.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This mixed-methods study analysed the language styles used in online *Vogue* Magazine fashion advertisements and the results showed three language styles: a hard sell, soft sell, and mixed sell. Three advertisements used a hard-sell style, another three used a soft-sell style and four used a mixed advertisement style. The mixed style was often used since it provided the customer with complete information on a hard sell. It was indicated as explicit information on the features, facilities, and benefits of the product. The soft sell was also found, and it involved emotions in promoting products. Besides, the soft-sell style illustrated how the mood was sold more than the product features. Interestingly, the hard sell and soft sell often appeared together in advertisements.

The study limitations are the data consisted of a small number of (fashion) advertisements, and the factors behind the non-occurring language styles were uncovered. Future studies on fashion advertisements in online magazines are, therefore, encouraged to explore underlying factors of such non-occurring language styles and involve a larger size of data to draw solid conclusions.

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