



A GENRE ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS

Nan Chen¹ⁱ,

Chuanmao Tian²

¹Postgraduate Student,
Yangtze University,
Hubei, P. R. China

²Professor of Translation Studies,
Yangtze University,
Hubei, P. R. China

Abstract:

This paper explores the characteristics of genre and genre analysis in discourse analysis and uses and Bhatia's genre analysis method to analyze 30 printed advertisements published in magazines such as Economist from two aspects of genre structure and lexical grammatical features. It attempts to reveal the features of its discourse structure and discourse pattern. Besides, it hopes to provide a new research perspective for the study of business English print advertisements and contribute to a better understanding of language expression and deep connotation.

Keywords: business English; print advertisements; genre analysis; move

1. Introduction

Nowadays, advertisements have become an indispensable part of people's life. All kinds of ads can be seen everywhere on TV, computer, magazines and newspapers. They emerge as a key marketing tool in industries where potential customers have to base their decisions upon these mental images of product provided instead of physical sample alternatives. As one of the most popular text genres, advertisements have attracted more and more attention of the linguistic circle. Therefore, genre analysis is gradually emerging. Over the past few years, a large number of studies in the genre analysis have been devoted to academic writing or business emails. Compared with a wealth of studies on academic writing, the amount of genre-based researches focusing on business background and advertisements are rather limited. Being familiar with the genre of advertising texts will provide an awareness of taking social and mental factors into consideration while reading and writing, which will finally lead to a desired effect for the products that companies intent to promote. Besides, it also has great significance for education in such subjects as Business Communication and Business English Writing.

ⁱ Correspondence: email 912924490@qq.com

On the basis of previous research findings and theoretical framework, this paper will use the advertising genre model proposed by Bhatia and combined with the overall characteristics of printed advertising. 30 different categories of print advertising texts had been collected from English magazines such as *Economist*, *Reader's Digest*, *Fortune* and *Vanity Fair* for statistics and analysis. The focus of this paper is to find the communicative purpose, discourse structure, stylistic features and language features of the advertisements. It tries to answer the following four questions: how many steps are there in English print advertising texts? how many are core words? how are the various steps presented? what types of vocabulary and sentence patterns are used in print advertising?

2. Genre and Genre Analysis

The term genre comes from the French word, originally Latin *genus*, for “kind” or “class” and traces back to classical philosophy. Although the idea of genre had been used quite frequently by sociology, literature and rhetoric for a long time, it has only recently assumed importance in linguistics.

Current studies about genre and genre analysis in general fall into three large schools, the Sydney School with James R. Martin (1993) as representative, New Rhetorical School founded by Miller C. R. (1984) and the Swalesian School with John Swales (1990) and V. K. Bhatia (2004) as core members. The Sydney School mainly concerns with communicative events, such as appointment, application and feasts. Pedagogy is another area they focus on and the goal of which is to make it available for students to acquire the genres needed to function fully in daily life. While the focus of the New Rhetoric School is mainly on the meaning that people want to express through the way of textual expression, why discourse has an impact on our life activities, and how specific genre discourse can affect communication. However, the New Rhetoric School does not pay attention to the study of genre structure and form, and does not draw a systematic conclusion in this regard. As for the Swalesian School, it's known as ESP School (English for Specific Purpose). It combined the views contained in the above two schools, and focus on the genre applied in reality and for special purpose. Two representatives of this school are Swales and Bhatia. Genre analysis in the Swalesian School begins with ‘moves’ which provided by Swales. A text is analyzed by discerning its internal ‘move’, the ‘steps’ by which the argument of each topic is developed. Then Bhatia put forward with three levels of genre analysis: grammatical analysis, features of the text style, explanation of the text structure. He tried to incorporate psychological and cognitive factors into genre and proposes a seven-step process to analyze unfamiliar genres. Bhatia also discovered the similarities among kinds of advertisements and concluded them as ‘Promotional Genre’. ESP is mainly a way or an idea to meet the needs of learners in learning and professional fields and to have a good grasp of language application. Therefore, compared with the genre theories of the two other schools discussed above, ESP school pays more attention to research and practice. So, it is the most influential genre theory and is widely concerned by the academic world.

3. Data Collection and Methodology

The data set in this study is print advertisements, labeled as 'special advertising features' in the five English-language magazines: *The Economist*, *Fortune*, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Reader's Digest*. These magazines are considered to be appropriate data sources as they have widespread availability globally and reached a large audience. All the articles were selected from recent magazines that were published in the first half of 2019. A corpus of 30 print advertisements was formed.

As the corpus was deemed too large for a thorough and comprehensive genre analysis, a sub-corpus of 3 classified advertisements was further selected. The criteria of selecting the samples is to get a variety of subjects and a wider range of target readers, so as to increase the external reliability of the study. Besides, the chosen advertisements should reflect the general characteristics. In order to understand the differences between different advertisements in varied industries, the sponsors of the selected samples were from various such backgrounds as IT companies, non-governmental organizations, luxury companies, etc.

Considering the fact that Swales's genre analysis mode is designed for academic discourse, it's not wise to adopt and Swales's mode to analyse business English print advertisements. However, Swales's mode does provide a well-designed structure for genre analysis. Based on this structure, Bhatia realized to apply genre analysis to promotional and other social or professional discourses. So, it's better to integrate Swales's genre analysis structure with Bhatia's genre analysis steps. The model of moves given by Bhatia (1993) for sales promotion letters was applied to the analysis of data and found to be relevant to the advertisements which have the same communicative purpose, that is, to persuade the readers to notice the product advertised and to desire to purchase it from the myriad rivals in the market.

However, not all of the moves in Bhatia's model were found in advertisements as they differ from sales promotion letters which tend to employ other moves not found in ads. So, several alterations were made as a means to better fit the text type under study. First, the analysis of advertisements genre which is suggested in the framework is basically concerned with the cultural background. But current data come from popular English magazines and there are no direct relationships with particular organizations or institutions. Second, according to Bhatia, genre analysis should include a step for specialist information. As this study based on expanding-circle context with limited resources, specialist information is hard to obtain. So, after careful analysis and comparison of 30 print advertising texts, this paper put forward a modified graphic structure so that it can be more suitable to analyse print ads, even though they all belong to promotional genre. The graphic structure shows as follow:

Move 1: Headlines

Move 2: Establishing Credentials

- Step 2A: Establishing a territory

- Step 2B: Establishing a niche

Move 3: Introducing the Offer

- Step 3A: Offering the product/service/idea/company

- Step 3B: Essential detailing of the offer

- Step 3C: Indicating value of the offer

- Move 4: Endorsements/Testimonials
- Move 5: Offering Incentives
- Move 6: Using Pressure Tactics
- Move 7: Soliciting Response

4. Genre Analysis of Business Print Advertisements

To deepen our understanding against the structure of promotional genre, this study will analyze different kinds of commercials. The first is from Vanity Fair for L'OREAL PARIS. The second one comes from Reader's digest for digital hearing aid. The third is from The Economists introducing SCOR, a global reinsurance company providing its clients with a broad range of investors solutions and services and a solid financial base.

Table 1: L'OREAL PARIS haircare product

New Elvive Revive Damaged Hair	M1	
Total repair 5 damage-erasing balm	S3A	M3
This treatment contains an elixir of Almond, Protein + Ceramide. Use weekly to fight 5 signs of damage-weak, dry, dull, rough hair and the look of split-ends.	S3B	
Revives damaged hair for intense care, beyond conditioner.	S3C	
In Just 1 Use, A Comeback for Damaged Hair	M5	

Table 2: Digital Hearing Aid

Affordable Quality Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aid --For Only \$229!	M1	
The new HearClear™ HCR3 Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aids are now available to you for an unbelievable price!	M2(S2A)	
This quality digital hearing aid has the same key elements that all high end digital hearing aids share, but is also rechargeable.	S3A	M3
Unlike analog hearing aids, the digital signal processor adjusts to amplify important speech sounds as well as filtering out unwanted noise.	S3B	
Most importantly, your new HearClear™ HCR3 hearing aids work at a fraction of the cost of name-brand hearing aids, and you don't have to keep changing the batteries! You will also love the comfortable, lightweight, open-fit design..	S3C	
"This product is outstanding. Dad loves it, my mom loves it, and I am grateful! Don't believe that you have to spend a lot of money to get a quality hearing aid." --Gilmore B.	M4	
You can spend thousands for an expensive hearing aid or you can spend just \$249 for a hearing aid that is great for most hearing losses (only \$229 each when you buy a pair)	M6	
We are so sure you will love our product, that we offer a 100% Money Back Guarantee-- Risk Free if you are not satisfied for any reason.	M5	
Money Saving Offer! 1-888-531-0473 (use coupon code RD94)	M7	

Table 3: The Global Reinsurance Company

In a Changing Risk Universe, SCOR Drives Top-Tier Performance	M1	
As the risk universe is continuously expanding and becoming more complex, SCOR strives to push back the frontiers of insurability by constantly investing in the understanding and modeling of risks.	M2 (S2B)	
We are very proud to contribute to the welfare and resilience of societies by helping insureds to overcome the catastrophes and risks that they face.	S3A	M3

SCOR's proven ability to create value, while absorbing shocks, relies on a controlled risk appetite, a strong franchise, high diversification and a robust capital shield.	S3B	
In relentlessly pursuing its ambitious strategy, the Group has tremendous potential for continued profitable growth and long-term value creation as an independent Tier1 global reinsurer.	M5	
SCOR 2019 Combined Shareholder's Meeting will be held on April 26, 2019. Information relating to this Meeting may be consulted on SCOR'S website at https://www.scor.com/en/combined-general-meeting .	M7	

As we can see from above examples, not all moves, and steps are shown in the discourse and even the order of appearance is not the same. On that account, this paper makes further statistics on the steps and frequency of the 30 selected commercial printing advertisements.

Table 4: The Frequency of Each Step

Move	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rate	100%	60%	100%	13.4%	13.4%	15%	92%

Table 5: The Frequency of Steps Structure

The structure of Steps	Three	Four	Five	Six
Rate	33.3%	45.4%	12.8%	6.7%

From Table 4 and Table 5 we can come to the conclusion that Headlines, Introduction the Offer and Soliciting Response are core moves, and the structure of Four Steps is most often used in business print advertisements. Besides, the rest tables also show that moves are usually used in conjunction with each other so that the two-fold communicative effects can be achieved: using appropriate language to expand market and promoting the product to persuade consumers to buy the products.

4.1 Headlines

The main function of a headline in a business print advertisement is to attract the reader's attention. Therefore, the headlines are usually terse and forceful in order to highlight the distinctive features of the product. Research shows that the headline is usually the epitome of a certain phrase in the body of an advertisement. According to the function of headlines, 30 samples could be classified into three groups:

Group 1:

- 1) *In a Changing Risk Universe, SCOR Drives Top-Tier Performance*
- 2) *Only Egglund's Best is the egg good enough for your family*
- 3) *Easier is better with Jitterbug*

In Group 1, all the headlines indicate the sponsor's brands and explicitly express the appeals or benefits of the offers. The method is to inset the major benefits or advantages into the headlines. In this way, even though readers don't have enough time to read the whole article, they are still able to grasp the key information.

Group 2:

- 4) *Affordable Quality Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aid ---For Only \$229!*
- 5) *Get back to a life free from chronic neck or back pain*

6) *Safety, Steady Streams of Profits*

For those headlines in Group 2 put their focus on the solution that the products would provide without showing the brands or names of the companies. Potential customers' attention can be easily attracted and the sponsors will therefore more efficiently target their main market.

Group 3:

7) *Healthier Brain. Better Life.*

8) *Endless Creativity, Unlimited Possibilities.*

9) *Small business is no small task.*

The unique feature of Group 3 lies in that there are the advantages, services or brand names possessed by the products in their headlines. However, this group advertises by creating a conception of the company or product. In some way, the headlines highlights the topic of the whole article. Headline 7 emphasizes the importance of a healthy brain, which is exactly the need of everyone. While Headline 8 promotes the spirit of creativity and innovation and Headline 9 shows the readers its serious and responsible attitude, thus leading us to believe their quality of reliability. All of these can contribute to their companies as whole.

4.2 Establishing Credentials

The purpose of this move is to provide background information concerning with the product. Research shows that the majority of advertisements do not introduce the product directly at the beginning of the text. Instead, by taking this move as a buffer, the importance or significance of the product can be properly displayed. Besides, advertisers tend to use this move to show its excellency by comparing with other similar products' defects, or to show the strong market demand for it. From the functional level, this move can be accomplished by two steps (establishing a territory /niche), which are expressed in different ways:

1) Identifying the occasion:

As the risk universe is continuously expanding and becoming more complex, SCOR strives to push back the frontiers of insurability by constantly investing in the understanding and modelling of risks.

2) Highlighting benefits:

The new HearClear™ HCR3 Rechargeable Digital Hearing Aids are now available to you for an unbelievable price!

3) Indicating the daily life problems:

Although health care costs keep rising, there is finally some good news to report---it could be worse. By 2015, health care costs will eat up 20% of the Gross Domestic Product.

4) Showing unfulfilled needs:

We get some days come with an extra shot of security risks. For protection wherever you go, you need Lenovo ThinkPad and IT Orchestration by CDW.

5) Pointing out the shortcomings of existing products:

Unlike analog hearing aids, the digital signal processor adjusts to amplify important speech sounds as well as filtering out unwanted noise.

Among the 25 samples, the first two ways are more frequently used than the other ways. And the research further finds that this move also possess some characteristics on linguistic level.

For example, conditional clauses are often used to imply that the product is sold under special circumstances.

4.3 Introducing the Offer

Introducing the offer is the core move of print advertisements. This move can be further divided into three steps from the functional level. Step 3A aims to represent the product to the public and it is usually realized in three ways:

- 1) By indicating that the product can fulfill consumers' needs

Have GEICO car insurance? Get home insurance through the GEICO Insurance Agency and you could get a Multi-Policy discount.

- 2) By showing that there are improvements upon the old products

Depend FIT-FLEX Underwear gives you Trusted Protection in more sizes and an improved design with softer fabric for all around comfort.

- 3) By denoting the occasion

One solution for oxygen at home, away, and for travel. Introducing the INOGE ONE. It's oxygen therapy on your terms.

It is clear that the names of products must be mentioned in Step 3A. However, Step 3B and Step 3C are often mixed in actual use, which makes it hard to tell one from another. But they do share some linguistic characteristics:

- 1) Coordinated Noun Phrase---to compress information

The super absorbent core turns liquid to gel, for drier protection that's a lot less bulky.

- 2) Complex Noun Phrases---to highlight the values of the product

...relies on a controlled risk appetite, a strong franchise, high diversification and a robust capital shield

- 3) Adjectives and Comparison---to evaluate or define the products

Prevagen is America's best-selling brain support supplement and has been clinically shown to help with mild memory problems associated with aging.

- 4) Compounds---to present more information as much as possible

You will also love the comfortable, lightweight, open-fit design.

- 5) Second Person Narration---to interact with the target customers

We've teamed up with eHealth, whose helpful team of licensed insurance brokers can provide advice tailored to your specific prescription needs and help find a plan with the lowest costs to you.

- 6) Simple Verbs and Present Tense---to create a feeling that the value is everlasting and eternal
Compared with those complex noun phrases, an unique atmosphere can be created with such verbs as offer, tell, help, discuss, assure, specialize in, supply. Although these words are carried connotation which is similar to "buy", they may suggest that they can provide with amenities that they desire instead of exploiting them when put in context. Therefore, these strategies will achieve more satisfying result of provoking action for purchase. For example:

It doesn't tell the time, it tells the history.

4.4 Endorsements

This move is the quotation of their consumers' evaluation towards the products. Because of its fairness and reliability, the public can be easily persuaded to accept the product and to make the purchase. From the functional perspective, there are usually two ways to achieve this move:

1) Direct Speech

"Hearing loss is isolating and makes you feel invisible. To understand again is a miracle. Thank you Hearing Help Express!"--- Joanne from Park City, UT

2) Reports

VectorVest's Money Maker Trading system returned 21.3% per year over 5½ years, with America's safest stocks!

4.5 Offering Incentives

The goal of this move is to tempt people to buy their products by providing them various and enticing benefits such as free samples, gifts, attractive discounts and prices, extra services, special payment terms, etc. For example:

We are so sure you will love our product, that we offer a 100% Money Back Guarantee--Risk Free if you are not satisfied for any reason.

4.6 Using Pressure Tactics

This move is to virtually force the public to act quickly in case that there is no such a good opportunity to have this product. It is often realized by placing some restrictions on the product and there are two forms:

1) Time/Quantity Constraints

Limited quota of chocolate box set will be available on a first-come first-served basis.

2) Emotional Blackmail

So why settle for just any eggs when you can give them the best? Eggland's Best

4.7 Soliciting Response

The function of this move is to encourage people to inquire further or to make the purchase immediately. Advertisers generally seize on the public's consumer psychology and imply that they have the opportunity to get free samples through phone calls, letters and field visits. Therefore, this move will provide the contact number, address, coupons or websites. On the linguistic level, the common structure are imperatives, words like *call*, *send*, *contact* are most frequently used in this move. For example:

For Immediate Service Call Toll Free 1-844-593-8371 or visit www.GetGlobeToday.com

5. Conclusion

This paper approaches the business print advertisements as an emerging hybridized text type within the framework of genre analysis with a view to digging out the answers to the question "Why do members of specific discourse communities use the language the way they do?" (Bhatia, 1993). The major findings can be generalized as follows:

Firstly, according to the communicative purpose identified, business print advertisements are both informative and persuasive. They intrinsically share the same communicative purposes as the other types of advertisements but not as straightforwardly: to provide positive information and to persuade in the position of sponsors. Secondly, the superstructure of business print advertisements basically includes headlines, lead, body text and conclusion, the body text in the structure contains several steps to attract potential customers and to give detailed information concerned with products, services or the companies. Among those moves, Headlines, Introducing the offer and Soliciting Response are core moves. Each move and step have its own characteristics. Last but not least, although the business print advertisements all belong to the promotional genre, different categories of advertisements have different uniqueness.

As a rational description of professional discourse, genre analysis provides us with a useful and powerful tool that can be conducted in applied linguistics. Moreover, the understanding of genre theory and genre analysis will be contributed to the development of teaching activities by providing students with a real environment for practicing. This also prompts the ad writer to take appropriate approach designing and creating the ads based on the genre-specific features.

Conflict of Interest Statement

We declare that we have no financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that can inappropriately influence our work, there is no professional or other personal interest of any nature or kind in any product, service and/or company that could be construed as influencing the position presented in, or the review of, the manuscript entitled.

References

- [1] Bahtia, V.K, 1993. *Analyzing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*, London: Longman Group UK limited.
- [2] Bahtia, V.K, 2004. *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-based View*, London: Continuum.
- [3] Martin, J.R, 1993. *A Contextual theory of language*. B. Cope & M. Kalantzis.
- [4] Miller, C.R, 1984. *Genre as Social Action*. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*.
- [5] Swales J.M, 1990. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Zhou S, 2012. "Advertorials": A Genre-based Analysis of An Emerging Hybridized Genre. *Discourse & Communication*, 3: 323–346. doi: [10.1177/1750481312446265](https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481312446265)
- [7] Ding Jianxing, 2007. The Tradition and Frontier of Genre Analysis. *Foreign Languages Research*, 6:13-18.
- [8] Li Xuansong, 1997 . Genre Analysis and Business Discourse. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 2: 27-30.
- [9] Liang Wenhua, Kang Shuming, 2012. A Comparative Study of the Three Main Schools of "Genre Theory". *Foreign Languages Research*, 1: 54-60. doi: [10.13978/j.cnki.wyyj.2012.01.012](https://doi.org/10.13978/j.cnki.wyyj.2012.01.012)
- [10] Qin Xiubai, 1997. An Introduction to Genre Analysis. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 6: 8-15.

- [11] Qin Xiubai, 1997. Genre Analysis of Discourse. *Journal of South China University of Technology (Natural Science)*, S2: 6-11.
- [12] Wang Hongli, 2005. Genre Analysis of English Print Advertisements. *Foreign Language Education*, 1: 26-30. doi: 10.16362/j.cnki.cn61-1023/h.2005.01.012
- [13] Wang Hongli, Guo Jirong, 2006. Genre Analysis and Promotional Texts in Business Settings. *Foreign Language Education*, 04: 32-37. doi: 10.16362/j.cnki.cn61-1023/h.2006.04.014.
- [14] Wu Jianguo, Qin Xiubai, 2006. An Adaptation Analysis of Interdiscursivity. *Foreign Language Research*, 5: 32-36. doi: 10.16263/j.cnki.23-1071/h.2006.05.008
- [15] Yang Ruiying, 2006. Application of Genre Analysis: Analysis of the Structure of Academic Articles in Applied Linguistics. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, 10: 29-34.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). and European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).