

Strategies to Grab Attention: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Online Selling Posts

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Abstract

The present study is a multimodal discourse analysis of the popular online selling posts purposively selected from a university's online marketplace in Thailand. Adopting five Modes of Communication (The New London Group, 1996), this study aims to reveal sellers' preferred characteristics of the online selling posts, that is, verbal and nonverbal communicative strategies in an online trading platform in the disruption era. The data comprises visual storytellers' 120 online selling posts that contain multimodal elements. The findings suggest that six Moves and 10 main author tones are adopted to construct the selling captions following a textual mode. The features and types of objects, symbols, icons, colors, and sizes are found to be diverse in a visual mode, as is the organization of those elements in a spatial mode. Gestures, facial expressions, and feelings in presenting products play a key role in a gestural mode. For an aural mode, the content-related background music and songs are often noticed, except for the sound effects. The results of the current study not only reveal practical suggestions and devices for creating online selling content in terms of online marketing but also online linguistic structures favored by well-received sellers.

Keywords: modes of communication, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Multimodality, online language, social media marketing

Introduction

Since the last quarter of 2019, the severe disease Covid-19 has been spreading across the world, leading to a huge number of infected cases and a high death toll. Lockdown, quarantine, and social distancing mandates have been imposed in several countries, including Thailand, which have caused considerable damage to many people and industries, especially the economy due to the suspension of business. World Bank (2020) reveals that Covid-19 and its lockdown measures have plunged the global economy into the deepest recession since World War II. Face-to-face outdoor activities have been

replaced by the new normal “do-from-home” to reduce infection. Being present on a digital platform is thus the promising contactless way to keep all lives going in the era of digital disruption.

Due to the aforementioned economic impact, an online marketplace becomes a promising cure—an alternative channel to conduct transactions. With the help of technology, social media dominates online commerce by facilitating both sellers and buyers in ways that traditional markets cannot, for example, easy price comparison, no pressure, and an increased variety of services (Jain, 2020). In addition to social media that have drastically changed business systems, Sheth (2020) suggests that both the Covid-19 situation and state measures to address the pandemic considerably disrupt consumer behaviors, and consumers will not fully return to the old habits that have been modified by technological advances. In other words, shoppers are increasingly turning to online channels.

To address the financial issues, a university online marketplace has emerged for the first time in Thailand, with the goal of providing a platform to assist those affected by the pandemic. A group of Thai university alumni held an online marketplace in a new form, which was established as a private community for sellers who are members of the university only. This virtual community employs a Facebook group as a semi-public place where members can exchange services. Both captions and visual media can be posted unlimitedly to spark prospective customers’ interest. The manner in which a post includes various modes of media at one time is considered Multimodality, a combination between multi- and mode. Additionally, it has been over 2 years since the novel virus was first detected, yet the marketplace still stands active as a popular online shopping channel.

With a platform equipped with several useful multimedia functions, multi-style elements are added to enhance the feeling of media consumption. Not only text but nonverbal designs are also integrated into the same medium, for example, still image, video, and sound. The lack of any meaning modes can lead to incomplete communication, as the media creators hope, as language gives perfect meaning when various modes of representation are combined (Kress, 2010). Since sellers have different posting styles and preferences, the patterns of online selling posts are abundant and worth further study.

Posts with rich multimodal elements and consistent verbal and nonverbal modes of communication can effectively convey meaning. Therefore, to understand the characteristics and interplay of multimodal elements in online marketing communication, the researcher considers that the construction of these attractive selling posts be examined to see how each element is created and positioned based on the framework Multimodal Discourse Analysis. The finding of the study are intended to add to the literature on online language analysis in terms of multimodality, where both verbal and nonverbal content are analyzed. The analysis aims to propose a guideline of practical tools that can be utilized by content creators to generate more attractive and favorable online selling content for Thai customers.

Literature Review

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The framework Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) focuses on how meaning is made through various modes of communication. Kress (2012) introduced the main objective of MDA as an approach to how all *modes* are framed as one *field* and one *domain* because, together, they are treated as one related cultural resource for making meaning by community members at a specific time. Mode categorizes a channel of representation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), field is the entire situation with the purposive activity of the speaker or writer (Halliday, 1994), and domain is a different literacy, including various symbolic and representational resources (Gee, 2008). MDA initially focused on face-to-face interaction, but more recent trends examine the complex interplay of different modes, including how meanings shift as they move across modes (Jones, 2021).

As online media platforms are easily accessible to all users and offer a place for creating media with multiple semiotic modes, MDA is widely used in analyzing digital content, especially multimodal elements' features and interplay. In a business sense, Pratiwy and Wulan (2018) found that the interplay of all modes strengthens the producer's intention. Some cleaning advertisement videos on television present themselves as protection through visual choices, while gestures and facial expressions, music, and sound effects are purposefully designed. The product placement manifests the interrelated meaning of the ads. Similarly, Yao and Zhuo (2018) reported that the multiple resources interrelate to create synergy in a promotional video. Visual images vividly portray the positive image of the place; traditional instrument background music stirs emotions and supports the visual resources; and titles, subtitles, and background music reinforce the visual mode and create meaning as an integrated whole. However, Ife Fiyinfolu (2021) suggested that, though all multimodal modes show coherence, nonverbal resources provide more explanation in Facebook ads. Nonverbal resources take both offer and demand forms, whereas verbal resources help express those actions.

Modes of Communication

As digital content comprises multimedia, modes of communication are adopted to scrutinize the distinct details of each mode. Based on Kress (2010), multimodality is an interdisciplinary approach that considers various modes that people use to communicate with each other and express themselves. One medium generally consists of more than one mode of communication, and each performs its duty to convey meaning in different ways. All modes are equally important in representation and communication (Kress, 2010). As with the multimodal analysis in the current study, the lack of any elements—captions and visual media—causes an incomplete interpretation as both are interrelated. The New London Group (1996) set clear meaning modes and developed a tool for examining the lists in each design to cover all aspects and features of the communication, leading to five modes of communication: linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural, and aural modes.

Textual mode considers verbal choices such as vocabulary, metaphor, modality, and information structure, as well as other linguistic frameworks, for example, Move Analysis which is conducted to explore discourse organization to understand how texts are interpreted, consumed, and used in specific contexts to reach a specific goal (Biber et al., 2007; Bhatia, 2014). Visual mode focuses on the choices of visual resources such as image, color, perspective, page layout, and screen format, while spatial mode is the choice of spatial resources, including scale, proximity, boundaries, direction, layout, and organization of objects (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2020). Gestural mode explores the choices of body movement; for instance, behavior, bodily physicality, gesture, and sensuality, as well as facial expression, eye movements, and gaze. Lastly, audio mode examines features of sound such as music, sound effects, noises, alerts, and volume.

Although Kress (2010) proposed that all modes are potentially equal, Álvarez's (2016) showed that linguistic mode performs the heaviest semiotic work in academic books, while visual mode deals with images that create coherence with the overall theme. Page layout in spatial mode is intentionally designed for pleasurable viewing and space for notes. As for gestural mode, the gestures initially depend on the speaker's focus of attention or relevant information (Müller, 2013). Meanwhile, Alpert et al. (2005) proposed that different music's structural elements, such as tempo, dynamics, and rhythm, can lead to a perception of sad or happy advertising content.

Linguistics and online marketing

With advances in technology and social stimuli, businesses are increasingly reliant on online channels such as social media. Not only the business itself, but language is an important tool for running a business and can enhance many opportunities (Allcock, 2018). As a result, well-perceived linguistic characteristics and textual paralanguage (TPL) in advertising content can promote business, especially online marketing through online media platforms.

To promote business through online platforms, some marketers on Facebook attract their buyers with directive and expressive speech acts, as well as persuasion through *personal branding* and *giving tips* (Septianasari et al., 2021). Furthermore, on Twitter, shorter average sentence lengths and fewer long words are preferred, as are certainty achievement words, emojis, at mentions (@), and first-person plural pronouns (Deng et al., 2021). Cheung (2010) also revealed that testimonials are used in emails for attraction, including a friendly remark ending, graphics, animations, and interactive media along with text-based content. *Introducing the Offer* and the benefits of a product or service to a customer's needs also arouses interest.

In terms of TPL, Luangrath et al. (2017) revealed that emoticons can foster feelings of warmth and personableness, and emojis positively enhance brand engagement, leading to happy feelings and positive brand perceptions, especially when placed before relevant texts (McShane et al., 2021).

Not only is the message's content crucial, but so are other linguistic features in online business communication. Linguistics is highly compatible with marketing circles, as language and its different characteristics are powerful tools for marketing communication and a strategy that can transform a business.

Methodology

Materials

One hundred and twenty online selling posts were purposively collected from the 65 data-qualified Visual Storytellers, posted on Thammasat University and Marketplace Facebook group. It is the first marketplace to emerge in a new form in Thailand and has the largest number of visual storytellers, 113, on the day of data collection. The data was drawn from April 7, 2020, the group's founding day, to October 7, 2020, 6 months after the group's establishment—the first wave of the pandemic and the early stage of its founding. The visual storyteller is a badge that signifies group members who have made unique contributions to the community and share images or videos that other group members value (Facebook Community, 2018). The online selling posts could be in any category but have received more than 1,000 reactions, including Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry. Also, the data must carry both captions and visual elements in still or video clip form to cover five modes of communication.

Data Collection

The qualified data were purposively collected and downloaded one by one from the visual storytellers' posts in the Thammasat University and Marketplace Facebook group. The online files were shared to the researcher's Facebook folder, while the offline files were kept as screenshots to prevent unexpected disappearance and post deletion. Importantly, this research strictly adheres to the Institutional Review Board's ethical principles in collecting data.

Analysis

Five modes of communication were examined in line with The New London Group's (1996) theory. All elements in the caption and visual media were investigated based on the framework's guidelines. Apart from the author's tones, the captions were analyzed with Swales' (1990) Move Analysis to reveal the organization. While analyzing the texts, color coding was adopted to help distinguish lexical choices, TPLs, and content types. The VxPx code is put after the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) texts to indicate the data source: Vx for the Visual Storyteller number and Px for the post number. The visual mode focuses on semiotic elements, that is, objects, symbols, colors, and sizes, whereas the spatial mode analyzes the organization and composition of the post's elements and captions. The gestural mode studies the body language and emotional expressions of people in the media to see how they present and are involved with their products, and the aural mode analyzes sound components in the selling videos. In addition, the interplay of

multimodal modes was studied to see how various modes of representation cooperated in conveying meaning.

Results

In pursuit of the research goal, a question is posed to guide this study: What are the characteristics of the multimodal elements in the online selling posts in the virtual university marketplace? How are they constructed and interrelated? The results are divided into two parts: the multimodal construction of online selling posts and the interplay of multimodal communication.

Multimodal construction of online selling posts

This section analyzes five modes of communication based on The New London Group (1996): textual, visual, spatial, gestural, and audio modes.

To present the overall pattern of the online selling posts, sellers not only include promotional messages but also general stories with different content-related emotional tones in their captions. Meanwhile, the visual media includes stills and spoken and music videos. The elements within visual media differ depending on the creators and the content they wish to express. The features of each mode of representation are provided.

I. Textual mode

The caption organization is divided into six moves based on Move Analysis, namely, starter, salutation, introduction, body, ending, and closing. ± Move 1: *Starter* begins the captions. ± Move 2: *Salutation* greets and builds familiarity between buyers and sellers. ± Move 3: *Introduction* contains only an announcement. + Move 4: *Body* includes important information about products and services and is the only mandatory move. ± Move 5: *Ending* functions as a summary. Lastly, ± Move 6: *Closing* finally ends the captions. All moves and their popular steps (submoves) are described in Table 1. However, this organization is a specific pattern of the online selling posts found in the online university marketplace.

Table 1

Caption organization and popular steps

| Move | Step |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Move 1: Starter | Step 1A: ± Announcement |
| Move 2: Salutation | Step 2A: ± Greeting |
| Move 3: Introduction | Step 3A: ± Announcement |
| Move 4: Body | Step 4E: + Main detail |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Move 5: Ending | Step 5D: ± Call to action |
| Move 6: Closing | Step 6B: ± Call to action, Step 6B: ± Soliciting response |

Apart from the caption organization, the author's tones were analyzed to find the themes of the posts. Analyzing lexicon choices, 10 main author's tones were found: informative, persuasive, humorous, appreciative, nostalgic, romantic, depressing, encouraging, offering, and fictional tones.

I) Informative tone provides buyers with information, characteristics, and properties of goods and services. Also, it is the most prevalent tone in the online sales posts, found in all captions (100.00%). This tone is subdivided into four categories: general details, business stories, advice, and announcements. As shown in Example 1, the seller puts the announcement in his caption.

(1) tɔɔnníi thaɔŋ ráan thán sǎɔŋ sǎakhǎa tɔŋ khǎɔ pít thík wancan hâj pháʔnákŋaan thík khon dǎaj phákpòn kan (V3P5)

[Translation] Now both branches will close every Monday for all employees to rest.

II) Persuasive tone engages readers with one strategy. It is sorted into three aspects: persuade with interesting details, persuade with references, and persuade for actions. The first two subtones attract readers with interesting issues such as prices or real users' comments. While the last tone entices readers to do something for the writer's business, as shown in Example 2.

(2) fàak kòt láj phèet wáj kòɔn phûa sòn kamlaŋcaj hâj kan mâj ʔìtnǎn mâjpenraj raw càʔ loŋ khaathǎa riak maa jǎam chom kan bɔj bɔj conkwàa càʔ jɔɔm lɔɔŋ chim khàʔnǎmpaŋ khǎɔŋ raw 🍷 (V33P1)

[Translation] Please like our page first to support each other. No purchase is fine. We'll often cast a spell to call you to visit us until you're willing to try our bread.



III) Humorous tone keeps readers entertained while consuming the content. It can be noticed in jokes, exaggerated slogans, mimic speeches, and laughter markers and emojis. Focusing on laughter, several sounds are presented, that is, /haa/, /ʔàhí/, /ʔóək/, and LOL (laughing out loud). Interestingly, the number 5, /hâa/, in Thai is pronounced the same as the English word "ha", so this figure is often used to represent laughter, as displayed in Example 3.

(3) khàʔnǎmclíp kŋ 69 bàat 3 lǎik kŋ lân lǎan phróʔ raw sàj mǎi mâj dâj 55 (V22P1)

[Translation] Shrimp dumplings 69 baht/3 balls, pure shrimp as we can't put pork.
55

IV) Appreciative tone expresses the seller's gratitude in various ways, but the obvious one is to thank the community's trading space, moderators, and members, as shown in Example 4. Other thankful people are also introduced, such as specific persons, celebrity customers, and ancestors who gave rise to today's business, as well as appreciative emojis: 🙏 (folded hands) and ❤️ (red heart).

(4) khòp khin phèet thammá?sàatlé?kaanfàakráan thîi tham hâj ?òdôê jé? khà?nàat níi khòp khin cîj cîj ná? kháp (V3P11)

[Translation] Thank you to the Thammasat and Marketplace page for giving such large orders. Thank you very much.

V) Nostalgic tone recalls memories, particularly events related to the university, which are perceived by most members. This can be seen in specific place names and in-group activities. Moreover, since memories took place in the past, a past-time marker "like/mǎan/" is used to compare the events of the past, as shown in Example 5.

(5) chîaŋ níi jîi bâan nôk càak WFH kôo thǎj fèet sîj jîi naj klîm níi tà?lòot hên thǎj khwaamtà?lòk ?òp?îi kan?eej khǒj phûan phîinóoj mǎothǎw mǎan sà?mǎj rian mǎj mii phît mii khraj pen mǎan ?ǎoj bâaŋ mǎj khít thǎj chiiwít mǎ?hǎalaj mâak 🤗 (V7P1)

[Translation] I'm home these days. Besides WFH, I scroll down the FB feeds, always embedding in this group. I see the humor, warmth, and friendliness of the TU family exactly like when I was there. Is anyone like me? Miss college life so so much. 🤗

VI) Romantic tone expresses the seller's love experiences and memories, including couple and family love. This tone is signified through endearing terms and loving emojis, such as 😊 (smiling face with smiling eyes) and ❤️ (red heart). As displayed in Example 6, the seller takes advantage of his wedding anniversary and includes an endearing term to show romance.

(6) ... wanníi thǎu?ookàat wan khróprôop tènŋaan kàp fèen sǎaw sînlá?pà?sàat mǎothǎw rá?hàt 50 mǎankan ná? kháp ... (V31P1)

[Translation] ... Today I take the opportunity of my wedding anniversary with my girlfriend, Liberal Arts, TU, Year 50 ...

VII) Depressing tone in the study reveals the negative feelings that result from the Covid-19 crisis, using the cause-effect sentences to clarify the situation before and after the pandemic. This tone was also noticed in the terms that express melancholy, such as crying emoji (😭 loudly crying face and 😓 downcast face with sweat), and cry mimicry,

that is, /ŋɛɛ/ and /huuu/ which are equivalent to “wah” in English, as presented in Example 7.

(7) phêŋ pəət maa dâaj 1 sàpdaa thũu wâa phɔɔ khăaj dâaj khâ? tɛɛ jaŋ mâj thũŋkhân mii lĩkkháa prà?cam tɔnnĩi mii khêe ráan?aahăan ráan nuŋ thĩi ?ɔɔdôə raw tà?lòt tà?lòt nôknán pen khăacɔn baŋ wan kôo ŋiap ciŋciŋ khâ? ŋɛɛ (V1P1)

[Translation] I've opened a store for a week. The sales are okay, but we do not have regular customers. There is only one shop that keeps ordering from me now. Others are casual. It's so quiet some days. Wah.

VIII) Encouraging tone in this context is given by people who are experiencing difficulties to people who are experiencing difficulties, especially Covid-19, and is counted as an inspirational message. It can be noticed from philosophical insights and personal experiences, as shown in Example 8. The length of the encouraging message varies. Some are merely concise phrases, but there is one caption that devotes almost the entire section to encouragement.

(8) thóothée mǎankan tɛɛ thâa cà? hâj nân mòtwăŋ kôo khonj mâjchâj jaŋ mii lómhăajcaj kôo tɔŋ sîi kan tòpaj phá?jaajaam ráksăa thĩ?rá?kit thĩi sâaŋ khũn maa hâj jĩrôot hâj dâaj tɔŋ mii khwaamwăŋ wâa thĩkjàaŋ cà? tɔŋ dii khũn (V19P1)

[Translation] I'm also frustrated, but staying hopeless is not the way. As long as I have a breath, I fight, trying to keep the business going on. I must hope that everything will get better.

IX) Offering tone gives a signal that a seller can help or facilitate buyers. Appearing in an affirmative or imperative sentence, this tone can be in an offering form, asking buyers to be served by the sellers, as in Example 9, or inform what the sellers will do for buyers, as in Example 10.

(9) wé? maa thákthaaj kan dâaj khráp dùumnáamdùumthâa kan kòon dâaj khráp phôm cà? pen câwphâap ?eeŋ ☺ (V31P1)

[Translation] Please come and say hi. Let's drink some water. I'll be the host. ☺

(10) cà? phá?jaajaam ?aw khǒŋ thĩi khəəj loŋ wáj naj tà?làat lé? khǒŋ thĩi ráppàak wâa cà? chiaj thá?jɔɔj loŋ hâj mâak thĩisít ná? khráp (V9P12)

[Translation] I tried to consistently post the products that have been posted once and those that I promised to help as much as possible.

X) Fictional tone creates something special and unimaginable for an online selling caption. This tone is presented through common fictional elements such as fictional and character names, unreal things such as imaginary events and places, and unusual words such as archaic and royal words. Quotation marks (“ ”) are another prominent indicator of

the fictional tone. The excerpt in Example 11 contains quotation marks and unreal organizations and places, respectively.

(11) “thân phîdoojsăan năkchóop pròot sâap khà?nà?nii *bɔɔri?kaan jiiŋthɔɔŋ* khǎɔŋ raw dâaj nam thân maathŋj *thâa?aakàatsá?jaanphrá?can* léew... khòɔpkhîn lé? sà?wàtdii khâ?” (V9P2)

[Translation] “Dear shopping passengers. Our *Yoong Thong flight* has brought you to *Phra Chan Airport* ... Thank you and goodbye.”

Combining the caption organization and the author’s tones, the finding reveals that the most popular tone for *Move 1: Starter*, *Move 2: Salutation*, *Move 3: Introduction* and *Move 4: Body* is the informative tone (announcement). The most popular tone for *Move 5: Ending* is the persuasive tone (requiring action). Last, the most popular tone for *Move 6: Closing* is the informative tone (announcement).

II. Visual mode

In terms of objects, various items are put in the visual part. Not only the product itself is inserted, but also items of equipment, animals, places and environment, people, artworks, and signs are added. Symbols are sorted as logos, letter symbols, and non-letter symbols. Focusing on social media icons, they are noticed in the selling images to facilitate buyers and promote sales in the era of online selling. To comply with the lockdown restriction, the icons are placed on as many platforms as possible, particularly shipping companies, as illustrated in Figure 1. Texts in the visual elements are concise and can be multilingual. Concerning colors, colorful, monocolored, dull, and bright images are common. Black and white, sepia, and yellowish hints are often used with old-time images to convey nostalgia. Colors for highlighting objects are flamboyant so that they contrast with surrounding images. When it comes to size, important or central objects are always larger than others. Meanwhile, the posts have a specific pattern conforming to Facebook’s requirement, for example, square (1:1) or rectangle (3:4 or 9:16) (Digivizer, 2022).

Figure 1

Delivery companies’ logos in the online selling images



III. Spatial mode

The main products are sometimes presented with other objects. In this manner, most products occupy the center or half of the image, which makes them stand out. The most popular way for the sellers to present their products is to encourage people to become involved with them. The most common pattern is that the hand is below or behind the product in a holding gesture, pointing the product logo towards the camera if possible. Both the products and hands are at the center of the image, but the products remain in the first layer, as displayed in Figure 2. Meanwhile, the spatial organization of other elements analyzes symbols and letters. These elements spread along the edges of the image, arranged in groups or horizontally with equal sizes and gaps. The placement of emphasizing symbols varies depending on the objects to be presented and is sometimes on the back layer. The collage is used quite often as it presents multiple images at one time, and the number of images depends on the selected pattern, mainly two to four, and each is stepped with borders of different sizes, as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 2

Product presentation by hand

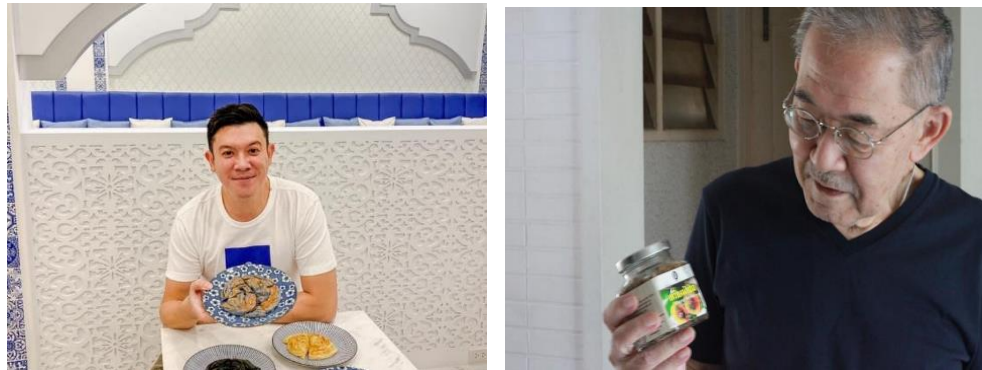


Figure 3*Collage of customer's reviews*

With regard to letters, or captions, due to a rule of the selling platform, Facebook, all messages are solely aligned to the front. The captions are mostly in the form of paragraphs of different lengths. The lines are evenly spaced, but each paragraph takes up a great deal of space due to the double-spaced lines or the use of a period or a long line of dashes as a separator. Yet, the arrangement of the text in a separate sentence can be seen, often preceded by a dash or an emoji.

IV. Gestural mode

Regarding facial expressions and feelings, the most common facial expression is the eyes looking straight at the camera (demand gaze) with a smile, but the offer gaze, in which people look at other objects, is also found. Figure 4 compares the difference between demand and offer gazes. Funny, sad, and calm expressions are common in the data, including a dreamy face. Each face corresponds to the theme that the sellers want to express. However, viewers must understand the story in the caption to understand the expressions and emotions of the people in the visual media.

Figure 4*Demand gaze (left) and offer gaze (right)*

Concerning body language, there are multiple ways of promoting products, but the most visible act is for the product to be held in one's hand and presented to the camera while the seller is sitting or standing. The seller focuses on the product by being close to it and may spread their hands or point at it. In order to present the atmosphere of a business, the presenters take photos in various gestures with those locations as the background. Furthermore, all the gestures shown in the video clips are one seller dancing to songs with exaggerated facial expressions.

V. Audio mode

In terms of songs, they were used in the selling video clips and are found in nine posts, but there are 10 songs in total: seven Thai folk songs, two international songs, and one Korean pop song. The seller used songs to accompany his dance performance. None of them were full songs. The length of the song ranged from 25 seconds to 1.50 minutes, and the song's volume was consistent. Music was noticed in the six video clips, and most of them were in a cheerful tone. The rhythm can be either slow, fast, or alternate. The pattern of volume and beat was inconsistent. The duration of the music did not necessarily equal the duration of the clip, ranging from 13 seconds to 2.55 minutes. The music styles also varied depending on the product, such as traditional Thai music with a video of a traditional Thai restaurant and cheerful music with a video of flower fields and hotel surroundings. Meanwhile, sound effects in the online selling posts were very limited and found in only one clip. Lastly, the soundscape's type and volume varied based on the background at that time.

Having analyzed 120 online selling posts using five modes of communication, the most popular tools of each mode, as well as their frequency and percentage, are displayed in Table 2. In line with the study contribution, the given data serves primarily as a guide to present the products and services in terms of verbal and nonverbal designs to help sellers create eye-catching online selling posts.

Table 2*Popular tool, frequency, and percentage of each communication mode*

| Modes of communication | Mode's popular tools | Frequency/ posts* | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Textual | Move Analysis: Step 4E: + Main details | 120/120 | 100.00 |
| | Author's tone: informative tone for general details | 120/120 | 100.00 |
| Visual | Object: image of product and service | 102/107 | 95.33 |
| Spatial | Product position: in the center | 102/102 | 100.00 |
| Gestural | Facial expression: demand gaze with smiling face | 51/94 | 54.26 |
| | Body language: presenting a product by hands | 43/94 | 45.74 |
| Audio | Background song: related to a story | 7/10 | 70.00 |
| | Background music: cheerful tone | 5/5 | 100.00 |

* *The number of posts that contained captions for textual mode, objects for visual and spatial modes, people for gestural mode, and songs and music for audio mode.*

As outlined in Table 2, it can be concluded that a popular online selling post contains five communication elements as follows: (i) for textual part, or caption—a text must include main details of the product and service in the informative tone; (ii) for visual part—images of product and service must be added; (iii) for spatial mode—an important item must be in the center of the image; (iv) for gestural mode—if the media includes people, the participants must have a demand gaze looking straight at the camera with a smiling face and presenting a product in their hands; and (v) for audio mode—if the medium is video, the background song must be relevant to the story of the presentation and the background music must have a cheerful melody.

Interplay of multimodal communication

All modes of communication have equal status and strengthen each other in representation and communication (Kress, 2010). The objects in each mode of representation are selected on purpose to complete the selling posts. All resources are interrelated to create synergy; that is, the caption is related to the content of the visual media, whereas the visual media amplify the caption. Yet, elements within the visual media support the representation; that is, facial expressions, gaze, and body language correspond to the author's writing tone; the color, size, and spatial organization of the visual components correspond to the degree of importance; and the music corresponds to good and service types. The absence of any part can result in incomplete communication or distort the media creator's intention.

Focusing on the emoji-text interplay, the emojis in the middle or at the end of the selling captions often express emotions based on content, such as humorous messages with laughing emojis and appreciative and romantic tones with heart emojis. Meanwhile, the emojis preceding the selling messages usually function as bullet points. The data shows that emojis are most commonly used in humorous-tone texts, with many specific laughing emojis.

The gesture-song interplay proposes that the dancer's choreography relates to the lyrics, regardless of whether the content is positive or negative. Also, facial expressions clearly relate to the song's content, but the expressions are often exaggerated. As illustrated in Figure 5, the dancers' body language and facial expression and their lyrics are related. He is working hard and wiping sweat with a sad expression that matches the lyric about hard work.

Figure 5

Dancing gesture and facial expression related to lyric

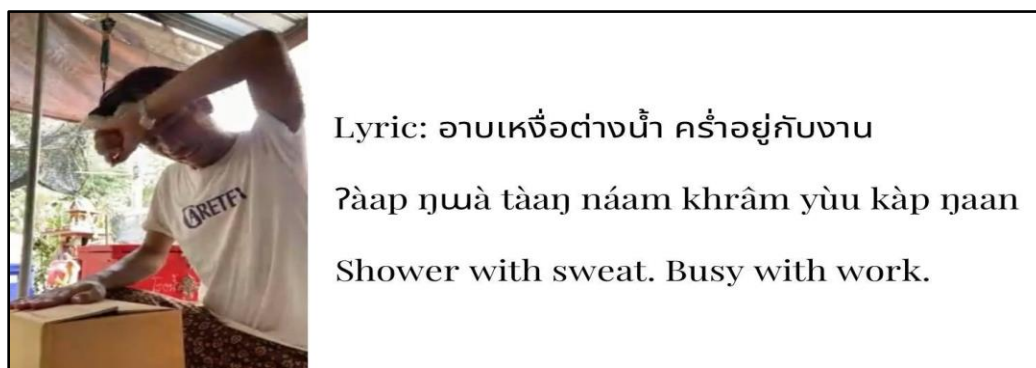


Figure 6 provides an example of the interplay of the caption and visual medium. The multimodal post of Figure 5 comprises a caption and an image. The stater and the introduction of the caption have a depressive tone, as observed from the overall content, the term /rɔ̌ɔ̌ŋhâj/ (cry), and the crying emojis (😭). Meanwhile, the ending has an appreciative tone, as observed from the term /lɔ̌əb/ (love) and the heart (❤️) and smiling face with heart-eyes (😍) emojis that were added to show appreciation toward marketplace members. The male seller shows his sadness by bringing his hands to his forehead, narrowing his eyes with an offering gaze, and pouting his mouth. The restaurant's banner stand and the seller, both of equal size, occupy most of the image to gain more attention (Serafini, 2013). The pink circle emphasize encircles the restaurant's slogan in order to link the seller's intention in the caption, necessitating the creation of a new banner. Its contrasting color guides the attention of viewers (Deswal, 2013). All multimodal elements are congruent within the same theme.

Figure 6

Caption and visual media of the online selling post

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Having examined the various elements of the online selling posts, many interesting points for discussion appear. The issues include: emotional marketing: the relationship between feelings and business; the benefits of computer-mediated communicative tools; organizational solidarity and online marketing; and the advantage of being a celebrity.

Emotional Marketing: the relationship between feelings and business

Exploring multimodality in online selling posts, it is true that all sellers aim to sell their products, but selling without specific information can lead to a failure to share emotions, an influential factor leading to buying decisions. They thus write as much as possible to evoke a feeling in the viewers, and the only place they can write the entire text is in a caption. Not only a selling story but also the author's feelings can be included. Here, the depressive tone of the author is found, but it is not surprising because of the abundance of negativity during the Covid-19 crisis, and these depressive feelings are also added to the visual media. Following Fairclough (1992), the circumstances during the text's production influence the content; the Covid-19 pandemic severely affects many people and is the main cause of the trading in this online community. Although the sellers may not realize that their action—expressing personal moods—is considered a selling strategy, arousing the viewer's emotions is an acceptable and effective way of doing business. It is called "Emotional Marketing," which describes how to provoke emotions in people to induce them to buy a particular product or service (Consoli, 2010). Different authors' tones can be claimed to arouse different emotions, but all work in a commercial sense. However, not only captions but resources in other modes can arouse the viewers' different feelings, such as cheerful music, sad facial expressions, and happy family images. When modes of representation are combined, their elements promote each other as an effective selling post.

Benefits of computer-mediated communicative tools

With the capabilities of technology and social media in the era of online commerce, the subtle elements of online sales posts strongly convey the intentions of media creators and make it easy for audiences to shop online. In terms of media creators' intentions, emojis—visual symbols in computer-mediated communication—can convey their emotions more clearly due to the variety and significant differences of each emoji. Emojis also help amplify messages when used with related content, such as a megaphone emoji with seller's suggestions and a chopsticks emoji with Chinese food menus. However, emojis should be used carefully according to culture, as the interpretation is influenced by cultural background (Bai et al., 2019). To increase the convenience of shopping for customers, not only the verbal information conveys the intention, but the semiotic information also serves an effective role, especially computer-mediated symbols. As seen in the data, QR codes are frequently used as they meet the needs of the modern age of technology, and social media icons inform readers of the available platforms. Therefore, the online selling posts have adapted to the times and crises such as Covid-19 appropriately by taking advantage of computer-mediated communication tools.

Organizational solidarity and online marketing

When conducting business with group members, organizational solidarity is a key consideration. The sellers do not only hard sell but help to encourage or create a harmonious atmosphere for other members, which is evident in their encouraging and offering tones. Also, many sellers manage to foster solidarity between customers by establishing various relationship styles in the virtual marketplace, that is, the introduction with university-related information, special deals only for university members, and products specially made for the university, as noticed from lexical choices in the informative tone. These associative strategies are not only profitable but also raise awareness and multicultural expressions in the group (Mulyana et al., 2019). Furthermore, what the sellers call readers signifies a sense of membership and family; for example, /lûk mē doom/ (Mother Dome's children) or /phîi nó ɔŋ lûat lǝaŋ dɛɛŋ/ (yellow-red-blooded sibling). These addressing terms are only understood by community members as they represent unique elements of the identity of the university. As a result, trading with corporate members is not only commercially beneficial but also strengthens relationships.

Advantage of being a celebrity

The sellers who belong to the virtual trading space are from various backgrounds, so the contents and linguistic styles are naturally different. Concerning the text producer, famous people within the community are very influential when creating content and are also very popular regardless of the message's characteristics. Even when selling the same products, famous people are always more popular than normal sellers. Therefore, the male seller, who is an actor, takes advantage of his acting career to sell products on behalf of his acquaintances, and every post is well received, often gaining over 5,000 reactions. Out of 120 posts, 27 came from him, though some posts contain poor-quality visual elements and

long messages. Supported by Lestari and Wahyono (2021), celebrity has positive effects on purchasing decisions as an indicator of visibility, credibility, attraction, and power. In addition, community celebrities are just as popular as real ones in the virtual marketplace, despite different styles of posting. This is a good example of how the individual affects text consumption and how being a famous person benefits business.

Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the limitations of the Facebook platform, a broader perspective on linguistics and online marketing will be gained if datasets across social media platforms are examined with a wide variety of captions and graphic styles. Moreover, as every post created by celebrities grabs the reader's attention no matter what the posts' characteristics are, a study on the relationship between celebrities' influence and online marketing should be undertaken. Additionally, the study analyzed 120 qualifying posts, which is a small number that could prevent some interesting online selling patterns from appearing. Hence, more data may reveal more varied patterns of sales.

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