


Decoding The Message: Ethical Implications of Linguistic Strategies in E-Cigarettes Advertisements

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Abstract

Digital media e-marketing advertisements have generated a lot of interests in different social and academic institutions. However, the linguistic elements employed in these e-advertisements remain relatively unexplored. The exposure of visual posts showcasing e-cigarette brands on digital devices with coded linguistic terms, though a source of distraction to many curious adolescents who are always glued to the social media, is a source of worry and concerns. Interestingly, not too many scholars have investigated this phenomenon. This study examines the linguistic choices and visual elements utilized in e-cigarette advertisements; assesses the alignment of e-advert styles with ethical standards; scrutinizes how messages related to health are framed; and hidden meanings embedded within the advertisements. Data for this study were sourced from requisite databases (Google Engine, Google Scholar, CORE, Academia and Scopus), and analyzed using socio-stylistic and semiotic tools. The study discovers that the e-advertisers often choose to use short catchy phrases or fragments instead of full sentences for the messages to be conveyed almost instantly and efficiently. The impact of e-cigarette advertisements also depends largely on different demographics, manipulative message framing, visual language that reinforces brands' messages and emotional appeal. It recommends services of language experts to checkmate lingual patterns of e-advertising.

Keywords: Decoding the message, E-cigarette advertisements, Ethical implications, and Linguistic strategies.

Introduction

Language is the cornerstone of effective communication. As a matter of fact, “Humans use language, in a distinct way, to communicate their feelings, desires and beliefs” (Etuk, and Urujian, 2018, 87): this is very true in e-advertisements on the digital media. In contemporary society where e-cigarette use is on the rise, it is essential to study the linguistic strategies

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deployed by e-advertisers to understand how these products are advertised in the digital media realm. As the e-cigarette industry continues to flourish, so does the scrutiny of its advertising practices, particularly the language used to promote these products. Miriam Inegbe (2014), in *Uncommon Artistry* views language as “a system of signs which expresses ideas as well as distinguishes codes and symbols through their relative position” (450). Inegbe’s (2014) views are in line with Jackson Etuk (2021), who asserts that “language sets the bounds of a people’s perceptual world delineating the limits of objective or ideational representations” (3). Our analysis in this study (as shown later in the study) reveals that e-cigarette advertisements often employ sophisticated linguistic strategies to appeal to a wide audience, promising various benefits and employing persuasive rhetoric to enhance product appeal. It is the tool used to convey messages, persuade audiences, and build brand identities. However, this raises critical questions about the ethical implications of such advertising practices.

Researchers examine the language techniques used by e-cigarette promotion to affect consumer perception and conduct choices in this study. This research checks if the marketing tactics utilize ethical methods while avoiding deception towards consumers. This research analyzes the ethical compliance of e-cigarette advertising styles to establish standards for responsible marketing of electronic cigarette products. The research findings will promote ethical advertising standards through recommendations that establish transparent communication within the e-cigarette market. This analysis is crucial as it does not only affect consumer choices but also impact public health and regulatory policies surrounding “vaping” products: vaping being the new norm, an alternative to “inhaling” or “smoking” which e-advertisers now consider as either too direct and revealing or too out-moded and old-fashioned.

Methodology and Conceptual Clarifications

The research examines encoding approaches utilized by advertisers in e-cigarette promotions while investigating the social effects of these approaches upon target market participants. Digital media advertisements from various e-cigarette brands will undergo socio-stylistic and semiotic analysis. Multiple approaches unite to reveal the complete methodology behind marketing e-cigarettes through advertisements.

Socio-stylistics studies the ways users of language form and defend their social positions through text analysis. This discipline formed between sociology and linguistics later developed by many experts throughout history. Socio-stylistics combines language science with

psychology and other fields like cultural theory sociology literature and history according to Leech (2013). The study of linguistics' social components analyzes how different community aspects determine how people use language. The method supports evaluation of language samples from various sources including spoken or written records plus non-verbal expressions. Socio-stylistics shows that writers use language and style based on what society and culture impact their communities. (see Ferguson, 1993; Malison, & Kendal, 2013). It can be used to investigate the role of linguistic choices, visual cues, and cultural underpinnings in communications to examine how these factors shape both individual and societal perceptions. It attempts to proffer principles, aimed at finding out why certain linguistic decisions are made by individuals and social groups in their communication. It allows for an understanding of how language and linguistic choices are shaped by social factors. Miriam Inegbe (2024) affirms this in JINCES as she posits that “the choice of linguistic codes embodies the sociocultural and economic development of any nation or society” (342). Crystal, and Davy, (1969), explain that the aim of socio-stylistics is to “analyze language habits with the purpose of identifying from the general mass of linguistic features why such features have been used as opposed to other alternatives, and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context”. Socio-stylistics is, thus, an umbrella term for an analysis of varieties of the same language. Our choice of language in this present study is the language of e-advertising in digital media. The language of e-advertising is a highly stylistic form of expression that is distinctively manipulated by emotive adjectives and collocations. The study shall examine the lexical selection, tone, and persuasive techniques employed in the various e-advertisements of cigarettes. Other prominent figures who have contributed significantly to the development of socio-stylistics include, a British sociologist and linguist, Basil Bernstein, known for his work on language codes and their relationship to social class; William Labov, an American sociolinguist, who is a pioneer in the field of variationist sociolinguistics, studying how language varies across different social groups and contexts; Deborah Cameron, a British sociologist and linguist, who has conducted extensive research on gender and language, examining how language is used to construct and maintain gender identities; Paul Baker, a British sociolinguist, who has studied the relationship between language and social identity, particularly in the context of globalization and multiculturalism, and Dell Hymes, an American anthropologist and linguist who developed the concept of “communicative competence” and emphasized the social and cultural contexts of language use. The works of these individuals have contributed immensely to shaping the field of socio-stylistics and providing a framework for understanding the social dimensions of language.

Prominent concepts in Socio-stylistics include Variation and Identity, Accommodation Theory, Discourse Analysis, Language Attitudes, and Stylistics (see Wales, 2011). Variation and Identity give insights into dialect variation across different geographical regions or social groups and social identity which use language to signal or reinforce one's social identity such as ethnicity, social class, or gender. In Accommodation theory, researchers can gain insights into convergence and divergence. In convergence, people may adjust their language to be more similar to that of their interlocutor and to build rapport or express solidarity. However, in divergence people may accentuate language difference to maintain a distinct identity or social distance. Discourse analysis gives insights into power relations and discourse communities. In power relations, language can be used to exert power or dominance in social interactions while discourse communities deal with groups of people who share similar language practices and knowledge. Language attitudes give insights into language prejudice and language ideology. Language prejudice analyzes negative attitudes or stereotypes associated with certain languages or dialects while language ideology analyzes the beliefs and values which people hold about language and its social significance. Stylistics is the study of language choices and their effects on meaning and interpretation. This submission agrees with the assertion on stylistics that "stylistics is primarily concerned with accounting for choices among alternative surface structures" (Hutchings, 1973, 84). Stylistics is a multidisciplinary field that draws on linguistics, literary criticism, and other disciplines. Stylistics is the study of style and "Style is the way a writer manipulates words to write a piece of literary work" (Inegbe, 2011, 178) to enhance communication in language. A stylistic analysis examines the artistic and persuasive devices used to create an impact. From this perspective, stylistics, according to Crystal (1992), is the study of "any situationally distinctive use of language and of choices made by individuals and social groups in their usage of language in all linguistic domains" (323). This assertion agrees with Inegbe (2020), submission that "style and stylistics could be applicable to all kinds of situations in which language is used" (123). Thus, stylistics can be applied to various types of texts, including literary works, spoken language, advertisements, legal documents, and more. Key approaches to stylistic analysis are: Formal Stylistics which focuses on the analysis of linguistic features and their formal relationships within a text; Functional Stylistics which examines how language is used to achieve specific communicative goals in different contexts; and Critical Stylistics which explores the social and ideological dimensions of language use. Stylistics often draws insights from cultural studies which include feminism. It focuses on how linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and figurative language contribute to the overall style of a text. It also helps in "studying the defamiliarization of everyday language

use” (Inegbe, 2024, 4). Prominent elements in stylistics include, register (formality or informality of language), genre (the type of text or discourse), cohesion and coherence (how sentences and paragraphs are connected), figurative language (the use of metaphors, similes, irony, and other literary devices to create imagery and evoke emotions), and rhetorical devices (techniques used to persuade or influence an audience, such as repetition, contrast, and rhetorical questions). However, studies in Stylistics help in understanding how language works and how it can be used to create different effects. It can enhance appreciation of literature and other forms of communication. It has practical applications in fields such as education, advertising, and translation. Therefore, by applying socio-stylistics analysis to e-cigarette advertisements, researchers can better understand the ways in which language is used to promote and market these products, and the potential impact of such advertising on public health.

Semiotics will also be employed to analyze the visual representations used in the advertisements of e-cigarettes. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and how they create meaning. It explores how humans interpret and communicate through various sign systems, including language, images, gestures, and objects. Semiotics helps to understand how meaning is constructed, shared, and interpreted in different cultural contexts (see Campbell, Olteanu & Kull, 2019). Key features of semiotics include: Sign, which is the basic unit of semiotics. A sign consists of a signifier (the physical form or representation), and a signified (the concept or meaning it represents); Sign System, which is a set of related signs that operate within a particular framework or context. Language is a complex sign system with its own rules and conventions; Denotation, the literal or dictionary meaning of a sign; Connotation, the associated or implied meaning of a sign, often influenced by cultural, social, or personal factors; and Codes, systems of rules that govern the interpretation of signs within a particular culture or context (Caesar, 1999, 55). However, these signs, according to Inegbe, (2014, 450), are not independent of the context they signify; they are all actively involved in the signification process. Key influential figures in semiotics are: Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Julia Kristeva, Christian Metz, among others. These figures have contributed significantly to the development of semiotics as a field of study. Their theories and concepts continue to be relevant and influential in various disciplines, including linguistics, literature, philosophy, and cultural studies. Semiotics, therefore, in this present study would be viewed significantly as a language, and according to Inegbe, (2014, 442), as “a system of signs that express ideas” and help to understand how meanings are created and

interpreted in various texts, including advertisements. It allows researchers to examine the strategies used to convey messages and persuade audiences. Semiotics explores how signs and symbols reflect and shape cultural values, beliefs, and identities. It encourages researchers to question, and analyze the underlying meanings and messages conveyed through various forms of communication. Semiotic analysis focuses on the word choice and connotations, narratives and storytelling, subtle messages and symbolism, cultural references and appeals, and on the visual elements, including images, colours, and symbols employed to reinforce and enhance the persuasive impact of advertisements. Applying semiotic analysis will help decipher the underlying messages and symbols in e-cigarette advertisements, revealing how language and visual elements work together to shape consumer perceptions. This knowledge can be valuable for policymakers, public health professionals, and individuals who are interested in critical media literacy.

These chosen approaches are all concerned with the impact of communication practices on individuals and society, though from different perspectives and with different objectives. By employing these tools, this study would provide a better understanding of how language in e-cigarette advertisements influences consumer behaviour and the ethical considerations of such practices.

Digital Media E-Advertisements

The letter “E”- that precedes advertisements is a prefix that stands for ‘electronic’. It is often used in reference to activities or concepts that are performed or that exists online or electronically. For example, e-commerce refers to online buying and selling, and e-learning refers to electronic learning through online platforms or digital resources. E-advertisement, also known as advertising, is a form of communication that aims to promote a product, service or idea to a target audience. It involves the use of digital platforms or technologies to deliver promotional messages to persuade a target audience or potential consumers. E-advertisements come in different forms and appear across different digital platforms. It includes paid advertisements which appear in search engine otherwise known as search engine marketing, visual adverts placed on websites, apps, or social media platforms which is known as display advertising, social media advertising for advertisements of products or services on social media platforms like facebook, instagram, twitter, linkedin, promotional email for sending promotional messages to subscribers, news-letters through which promotional content is sent to subscribers, push notifications through alerts sent to users’ devices, video advertising which

shows adverts in video content, such as on youtube and mobile advertising in which adverts are displayed on mobile devices. However, the effectiveness of e-adverts depends on various factors, including the target audience, the adverts messages, and the platforms where they are displayed.

Digital media refers to any form of media content or communication that is created, technologically distributed, and consumed digitally or electronically. It includes text, images, videos, audio, and interactive elements that can be accessed through digital devices like computers, smartphones, tablets, and the internet. Examples of digital media include websites, social media platforms, digital magazines, digital images, online videos, online games, streaming services, music, podcasts, email, search machines, and mobile apps.

Digital advertising enables businesses, products information and services to reach a global audience thereby fostering international trade. It provides consumers with access to information and a wider range of products and services. Digital advertising drives innovation in technology, marketing, and content creation. Hence, it can be used to create awareness on social issues and promote positive change as well as create negative impacts.

The beauty of e-advertisements and digital media lies in their ability to target specific consumers psycho-graphically with unparalleled precision. This is unlike the traditional media of which their reach is narrower than digital media. Inegbe, (2020, 125) argues that “print media are the most versatile due to their easy accessibility to the people especially with the ease of carriage”. This is because physical copies of newspapers, magazines, handbills, and brochures can be kept and referred to multiple times, making the information more memorable. The tactile experience of holding and reading print media can create a stronger emotional connection with the content. However, despite the versatility of other traditional media, the digital platforms allow advertisers to pinpoint their ideal audience based on a multitude of factors. By knowing, identifying, and understanding target consumers, advertisers create highly relevant codes and effective campaigns that resonate with their audience and drive conversions.

Language Contents in Digital Media E-Advertisements

Language plays several roles which can greatly impact on society. Language is “employed in diverse ways to suit specific contexts and environment” (Inegbe, 2024). Effective, engaging narratives with clear and memorable language can build emotional connections in e-

advertisements. It is a powerful tool in the world of e-advertisements and digital media. When used effectively, it can drive engagement, sales, and brand loyalty. Advertisers make use of language to create a strong brand identity and to achieve a specific goal. For instance, in an e-advertisement tagline like ‘Vapor4life’, the creator carefully created a “style in writing (which) embodies a writer’s special artistic deployments using language and imagery to boost meanings and the sense of aesthetics in his/her creative work” (Inegbe, 2019, in *Emerging Perspectives*) The slogan, ‘Vapor4life’, is a system of signs that expresses ideas. This advertisement emphasizes and notifies the target audience about the product’s ability to produce the contemporary ‘vapor’ instead of the traditional ‘smoke’ to replicate the experience of smoking. The advert’s creator makes use of number key, ‘4’ instead of ‘for’ purposely to create a catchy and relatable message for users and viewers, highlighting the features of the product. The language structure and the rhetorical choices of the message are driven by the psychological idea that the advertiser has about the target consumer. An understanding of the user’s setting allows the advertisers to make use of language in a particular catchy way that attracts the attention of the viewer and makes him/her appreciate the brand of product or services being advertised and perhaps patronize them. Taking all these features into consideration, that is, the psychology of the online viewers, their differences in settings, and the need for the advert to attract their attention within a limited time, the e-advertisers maximize their power products’ imagery, colours, icons and language tailored to resonate with specific demographics or interests to drive home their point. These psychological devices employed by the advertizers “capture the attention of the target audience while the language supports it with the linguistic elements, carefully chosen so as to attract patronage” (Inegbe, 2020, 125). From these psychological devices employed by digital advertisers, two affective outcomes are achieved: the decision effect and the constant effect of the advertisements. The decision effect has to do with the online viewer of the adverts when he/she decides whether to take the desired action- such as clicking, buying, or sharing the e-adverts- or not to yield to the advertiser’s objectives, while the constant effect is that both the advertiser and the viewer have engaged in an interaction whether the advertiser’s goals are achieved or not. Overall, these e-advertisements effectively communicate the different brands’ values and selling points, using language that resonates with, and is relatable to their target audience and emphasizes key products benefits.

Language helps to establish and reinforce the brand image of a product or service. Through the use of consistent language, digital media creates a unique identity for a brand, with specific

tones, styles, and language choices that reflect their values, personality, and target audience. Language in digital media enables direct communication and interaction between companies and consumers. Through chatbox, customer support, and social media engagement, companies use language to address consumer queries, provide assistance, and build relationships with their audience. With the global nature of digital media, language serves a crucial role in reaching audiences across different countries and cultures. Advertisers need to ensure their language choices are culturally sensitive and localized to resonate with diverse audiences, thereby expanding their reach.

The language used in digital media can shape societal norms and impact social behaviour. Advertisements and digital content can either reinforce stereotypes, promote body image issues, or contribute to social movements by encouraging positive change. Language has the power to influence public opinion and shape societal attitudes. Hence, (Inegbe, 2024, 214), maintains that “language, as an instrument of communication, has resources that penetrate into humanistic realities, that is to say, an enlightening force that can promote positive or negative developments”. Language in digital media is used to convey information quickly and efficiently. Websites, blogs, and online articles use language to inform and educate consumers about products, services, and current events. Language choices in digital media can promote inclusivity and accessibility. Advertisers and content creators are increasingly using inclusive language to ensure that their messages are accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and identities. However, language in digital media adverts can also impact negatively on society depending on its deployments. Language shapes consumer behaviours, cultural norms, and public opinion, making it a powerful tool for both positive and negative influence. It is, therefore, important for advertisers and content creators to be mindful of language choices they make and their potential impact on society. We argue in this study that Language should be used responsibly and ethically by avoiding misunderstandings and unintended meanings.

Selected E-Cigarettes Advertisements

The data for this study were sourced from requisite databases (Google Engine, Google Scholar, CORE, Academia and Scopus). Here are some notable slogans and taglines of e-cigarette brands and products selected for analysis: Vuse: “Find Your Vuse”/ “Refreshing Vuse”; JUUL: “Make the Switch”, Smooth JUUL, Vapresso, Satisfying JUUL, Cleaner JUUL, Safer JUUL, Flavorful: Vapresso, “Introducing the NEW JUUL Mint!”; SMOK, Cutting edge: Voofoo, GeekVape, Tailored: Vapresso, Voofoo; Breeze Smoke: “Satisfying Vapor” and “Breeze

ThroughYour Day”; Elf Bar: “Vape the Moment”; NJOY: “NJOY the Moment”; HQD: “HQD : The Real Taste”; Lost Vape Orion: “Innovation Meets Design” and “Unmatched Performance”; Loon: “Loon – Flavor You Can Feel”; Maxx: “Maxx Out Your Vaping Experience”; Mr. Fog— “Fog It Up”; Blu “VaporLux”; Esco Bars: “Puff.. Relax. Enjoy.”; Vape Pens: “Vape with Ease” and “Portable Vaporization”, “VAPE SMART, VAPE SAFE”, “TAKE CONTROL of Your Vaping Experience”; Tanks: “Refill. Reuse. Rejoice.”; Mods: “Customize Your Cloud”; “LIMITED TIME OFFER: Get a Free Pod with Every Purchase”; Premium: “Experience the ultimate Premium vaping experience with our high-quality e-cigarettes”; Innovative: “Discover our Innovative e-cigarette technology that revolutionizes your vaping experience”; Stylish: “Our sleek and Stylish e-cigarettes are designed to enhance your vaping style”.

These slogans and taglines reflect the e-cigarette brands’ emphasis on convenience, satisfaction, and personal enjoyment. The linguistic strategies employed in these e-advertisements remain relatively unexplored. This study seeks to address this gap by decoding the linguistic messages, visual, and cultural aspects of e-cigarettes advertisements on digital media. By examining the stylistic choices made in these advertisements, we aim to shed light on their potential influence on public attitudes towards e-cigarettes, smoking habits, and health implications. Understanding these strategies is crucial for devising effective public health campaigns on e-cigarettes and policies to combat tobacco use in society.

Analysis And Discussions

Lexico-Semantic Features

Lexico-semantic features refer to the combination of lexical (related to words or vocabulary) and semantic (related to meaning) elements in language. It involves the deployment of properties and characteristics of words that contribute to their meanings and relationships within a language. The term, thus, refers to the “set of all words and phrases in language which have specific meaning” (Inegbe, 2020, 128) to convey precise messages. In the context of e-cigarette advertisement, lexico-semantic features involve the specific words, short phrases or fragments used, as well as their intended meanings. For example, “Innovation Meets Design” and “Unmatched Performance”. The lexis ‘Innovation’ connotes new and improved products and ‘Design’ symbolizes the aesthetics and functionality of the product. The ‘unmatched performance’ connotes the high quality of the product which implies the offer of superior

enjoyment. This is another level of language through which carefully manipulated linguistic strategies in advertising especially choices of lexemes with striking, evocative and psychologically driven contents are employed. By carefully selecting adjectives and collocations, advertisers shape the lexico-semantic features of their message to evoke specific emotions, desires, or associations in consumers. Adjectives are used to describe the product in a positive and captivating way, while collocations help to create a specific image or perception, for example, ‘make a decision’ is a common collocation, as opposed to ‘create a decision’. By carefully selecting these word pairings, advertisers enhance the product’s attractiveness and influence consumer perceptions and preferences. In digital advertisements of e-cigarette brands, vocabulary is the most prominent lexico-semantic features seen in the e-advertisements. These features have a psychological and pragmatic effect on the audience. This effect is reflected in the descriptive vocabulary used for the e-adverts, such as: experience, discover, enjoy, NJOY, relax, feel, enhance, customize, and so on. The lexis ‘NJOY’ with an unusual spelling pattern is a play on the word, ‘enjoy’. When the creator of an advertisement, like a writer, purposely uses “a particular word other than the standard word, he or she is not ignorant of the lexical structure of the source language but for aesthetic or for stylistic reason” (Miriam Inegbe, 2011, 178-179). Through this tagline, ‘NJOY the Moment’, there is psychological interaction and assurance of satisfaction. All these and more are employed by content creators mainly to appeal and to create immediate attraction, attention and psychological attachment of their target audience to the products that are being advertised.

The e-cigarettes advertisers maximize the descriptive power of the chosen adjectives in the exaggeration of attributes and functions of their brands. Such adjectives are strategically used to create appealing and persuasive messages. For instance:

Premium: “Experience the ultimate Premium vaping experience with our high-quality e-cigarettes”

Innovative: “Discover our Innovative e-cigarette technology that revolutionizes your vaping experience”,

Stylish: “Our sleek and Stylish e-cigarettes are designed to enhance your vaping style”

From the various illustrations above, the adjectives, “ultimate”, “Premium” and “vaping” in the first illustration, “innovative” and “vaping” in the second illustration, and “sleek”, “Stylish”

and “vaping” in the third illustration are used in such a way that almost all the lexical and morphological processes deployed in the e-adverts are affected by their description.

Another pertinent observation is the persuasive force and effect pulled by these adjectives. Adjectives like “smooth”, “flavorful”, “refreshing” are used to describe the sensory experience of e-cigarettes. These terms aim to evoke a positive emotional response and make the product seem more enjoyable. Vocabularies such as “innovative”, “cutting-edge”, and “stylish” are used to position e-cigarettes as a modern, fashionable choice, appealing to consumers looking for latest trends or technological advancements. Terms such as “customizable”, “satisfying” and “tailored” are used to highlight the personal control which users have over their vaping experience, emphasizing satisfaction and individual preference. Words like “premium” and “ultimate” are employed to create a sense of exclusivity and high quality, making the product seem more desirable and valuable. Similarly, adjectives like “cleaner” and “safer” are used to suggest that e-cigarettes are a healthier alternative to traditional smoking, despite the lack of definitive evidence proving their safety. However, the use of these adjectives in e-advertisements enhances the brands’ appeal, influences consumer perception, and differentiates e-cigarettes from other smoking alternatives.

In e-cigarette advertisement, collocation is used strategically to create positive associations and convey specific messages. Examples of such phrases and collocations are: “authentic flavor”, “smooth vapor”, “unmatched performance”, “real taste”, “customizable nicotine”, “Portable Vaporization”, “clean experience”, “innovative design”, “satisfying flavor”, “satisfying vapor”, and so on. These collocations help in building a positive image for the product. Words like ‘clean’ and ‘innovative’ aim to highlight the brand’s advantages over traditional cigarettes. Terms like “unmatched performance” or “real taste” target or appeal to consumer desires for quality and pleasure. The term, ‘Satisfying’ implies satisfaction and the fulfillment which the user derives from this brand, while the ‘Vapor’ symbolizes the mist produced by the e-cigarettes. Using unique or appealing collocations can set e-cigarettes apart from competitors and traditional tobacco products.

Syntactic Features

The e-cigarette advertisements also contain syntactic features. Syntactic features refer to the ways in which language is structured and used to convey messages. These features include “the set rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a language, usually

including word order” (Miriam Inegbe, 2024, 59; and 2020, 129), and overall organization of text. The digital advertisements are mostly written in short phrases or fragments. These fragments are catchy phrases used to convey advertisers’ message or information almost instantly and efficiently. They are mostly in the form of imperatives, statements, a few exclamations, and no questions. The imperative is to challenge users and prospective users with subtle but smart directives to try their brands. For example: “Discover your perfect vape today!”, “Make the Switch”, “Choose from a variety of flavors: mint, berry, vanilla, and more”, “Find Your Vuse”, “Breeze Through Your Day”, “Customize Your Cloud”, “Maxx Out Your Vaping Experience”, and so on. The verbs are distinctive and pushful. The first example directly and clearly communicates the idea of transitioning from traditional smoking to e-cigarettes. The second example, “Make the Switch”, is a simple logic on the psyche of the target users of other brands of e-cigarettes to step up and switch to JUUL. The idea of making a switch implies a change from one thing to another. This is a captivating and engaging allusion that will attract multitude of audience to switching to the brand. This tactful command also encourages smokers to change from the known traditional tobacco products perhaps towards a potentially trendy alternative. The advertiser here maximizes the contemporary psychology that everyone wants a change to something special and classy by using ‘Make the Switch’. This allusion agrees with Miriam Inegbe (2024, 62) assertion in Integral Research that “language finds credence in a social group and thus, the cord between language and culture remains inseparable”. The fourth slogan, ‘Find Your Vuse’ suggests that ‘Vuse’ offers a range of products, allowing users and targeted consumers to find the ‘Vuse’ that best suits their individual preferences and needs. In a way, this advert slogan emphasizes personalization and choice. This linguistic choice is stylistically created to work on users’ psychology and ego, embedded in ‘Find Your’ which connotatively signals class-consciousness. This is because most contemporary adolescents have class ego in the manner of patronizing and acquiring products. The example, “Breeze Through Your Day”, connotes a fulfilling nature of the vapour produced by Breeze Smoke’s product. It is also suggestive that the brand is worth using the whole day. This content dictates the way which the user should go; “Breeze Through Your Day”, implying that the user should become a chronic or addicted consumer of the advertised brand. By using imperatives, the advertisers pragmatically appeal to the audience psychologically to go for their brands. The example, “Customize Your Cloud”, emphasizes the customizable nature of Mods devices, allowing users to tailor their vaping experience to their preference and create a personalized vapour experience. The term, ‘Customize’, implies to modify according to individual’s preferences, and ‘Cloud’ refers to the vapour produced.

Declarative fragmented statements are also employed for specificity and detail in the information being given by advertisers. This is used to describe the products and to highlight relevant advantages of the brand. Examples are: “Enjoy a smooth, rich, and satisfying vaping experience”, “For those who value sophistication and style”, “Fill your tank, choose your flavor, and enjoy a smooth vape”, “The Real Taste”, “Fog It Up”, “Flavor You Can Feel”, “Vape the Moment”, “Puff. Relax. Enjoy.”, and so on. In the first example, “Enjoy a smooth, rich, and satisfying vaping experience”, positive adjectives like ‘smooth’, ‘rich’ and ‘satisfying’ are used to enhance the perceived quality and appeal of the e-cigarette, creating a favorable impression for it. In the second example, “For those who value sophistication and style”, the syntactic feature aligns the product with a desirable lifestyle, appealing to consumers who identify with or aspire to a sophisticated and stylish image. The third example, “Fill your tank, choose your flavor, and enjoy a smooth vape” provides a clear statement and step-by-step guide on how to use and enjoy their product, making the process appear simple and accessible. The fourth example, “The Real Taste” is a powerful narrative of the brand that may likely draw a huge number of adolescents to the use of HQD brand of e-cigarette. It emphasizes the brand’s commitment to flavour quality in their products. This distinctive narrative style positions this brand as providing true and satisfying taste, appealing to those seeking a high-quality taste experience. “Fog It Up” a tagline from Mr. Fog, is another narrative in a brand and it implies producing a dense, satisfying vapour, appealing to users who enjoy a substantial vaping experience. The term, ‘Fog’, symbolizes the smoke and vapour produced, and ‘It Up’ implies increasing and intensifying the experience. Another illustration is “Flavor You Can Feel” and it implies a sensory impact which the user can taste from experiencing their product. This is also their way of advertising to their target consumers that Loon offers a distinct and memorable flavour experience that users and prospective users can physically sense, enhancing their Loon pleasure. The last illustration is, “Puff. Relax. Enjoy” which implies the users and targeted consumers inhaling, unwinding and satisfying themselves with Esco Bars’ brand.

Conditional and contrast statements are also employed for emphasis and specific information. We have illustrations in the following: “If you want to quit smoking, our e-cigarettes are the ideal choice” and, “Unlike traditional cigarettes, our e-cigarettes produce no smoke and less odor”. The first example is a conditional statement with high suggestive content. It presents the e-cigarette as a solution to quitting smoking, targeting consumers who are seeking to make a change. The second example is a contrastive statement. It highlights differences between e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes, emphasizing the advantages of the e-cigarette. The use of

these syntactic features in e-cigarette advertisements effectively engage the target audience, highlight product benefits, and creates persuasive messages that drive consumer interest and action.

Graphological Features

Graphological features are stylistic strategies employed in e-advertisements for emphasis. It is “a linguistic level of analysis that studies the physical characteristics and patterns of writing” (Inegbe, 2020, 126). They refer to the visual and textual elements used to convey a message and create an impact. They include elements such as typography (font choice), colour, imagery, and layout. These elements play a crucial role in conveying a message and influencing consumer perception. In the context of e-cigarette advertisements, these features are often used to appeal to a specific target audience, promote the product’s benefits, and create a desirable brand image. The typography can convey a brand’s personality and make the advertisement stand out. It deals with the selection of fonts to convey different emotions and attitudes. For instance, the use of a bold, sans-serif font like Raleway in VaporLux advertising convey a sense of modernity, energy, and youthfulness, aligning with the brand’s target audience. By carefully selecting fonts, e-cigarette advertisers create a visual language that reinforces their brand’s message.

Different colours evoke various emotions and associations. The contrast between colours can make the advertisement more visually appealing and help highlight important elements. For example, JUUL uses a sleek black and gold colour scheme to evoke luxury and sophistication, while Vuse employs a vibrant blue and white packaging. This gives a fresh, modern feel, suggesting a healthy alternative to traditional cigarettes. The way the e-cigarette is positioned or displayed can influence how consumers perceive it.

The use of imagery like photographs, illustrations, or icons in the advertisements can help to create a sense of connection with the target audience. For example, JUUL uses minimalist photographs that focus on the sleek design of their devices, while Vuse uses a variety of photographs, including images of people enjoying their e-cigarettes in different settings, and Blu uses icons like battery life, flavor options and charging capabilities. These images provide visual information, enhance the overall aesthetics, and contribute to the brand’s message.

In e-cigarette advertisement, the layout is designed to draw attention to the brand name, product features, and call to action. For example, JUUL uses minimalist layout with large, bold headlines and minimal text. This creates a clean modern look that emphasizes the product itself. Vuse uses a more dynamic layout with multiple images and text elements. This can help convey a sense of excitement and variety. Blu uses a grid-based layout to maintain consistency across different advertisements. This can create a cohesive brand identity.

Other textual elements used by e-advertisers that reveal valuable insights into the intended message and the target audience are the letter case written in short phrases or fragments. For example: “Introducing the NEW JUUL Mint!”, “LIMITED TIME OFFER: Get a Free Pod with Every Purchase”, “VAPE SMART, VAPE SAFE”, etc. The capitalization of ‘NEW’ in the first example emphasizes the product’s novelty and draws attention to it. The capitalization of “LIMITED TIME OFFER” in the second example creates a sense of scarcity and encourages immediate action of hurrying to order. In the last example “VAPE SMART, VAPE SAFE” all-caps headlines are used to grab attention and convey a strong message.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The use of persuasive linguistic techniques in e-cigarette advertising often raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding the potential for misleading consumers about health risks and benefits. Advertisements that use emotionally charged or deploy deceptive language can significantly impact consumer perception and behaviour. To address these ethical concerns, there is a clear need for regulatory measures that limit the use of misleading language and ensure that advertisements provide accurate, evidence-based information about e-cigarettes. Services of language experts in scrutinizing the linguistic strategies deployed in e-cigarettes advertising should be sought to ascertain their impact on vulnerable citizenry.

This study recommends the need to educate consumers and the targeted adolescents because they are the chronic social media users. They need to know about the nature of e-advertising techniques and their potential effects. This knowledge would empower them to make more informed decisions and mitigate the impact of unethical advertising practices.

The study also recommends an advocacy for e-cigarette companies to adopt self-regulatory practices that prioritize ethical advertising. These companies should be mandated to publicly disclose their linguistic strategies and the rationale behind them. Continuous monitoring and

evaluation are essential to adapting regulations and practices in response to evolving advertising techniques and their effects on consumer perception.

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