

A discourse analysis of fast food advertisements

Aporbo, Russel

russel_aporbo@umindanao.edu.ph

Faculty-University of Mindanao Tagum College, Tagum City, Davao del Norte, 8100, Philippines

Abstract

This qualitative discourse analysis aimed to identify the different linguistic features used by fast food owners in their advertisements. This also explored the propaganda techniques found in fifteen (15) linguistic corpora and the meaning it communicated towards the target consumers. Data revealed that on the textual level of analysis, fast food chain advertisements used direct address, imperatives, disjunctive syntax, positive adjectives and personal pronouns. On the discursive level of analysis, the different propaganda techniques were celebrity endorsement, weasel words, promotional advertising, bribe, facts and statistics, bandwagon, advertising jingles and target audience. Fast-food chains are preferred by many people especially working or busy person, they find it advantageous because they serve food very fast, cheap, and easily replace home-cooked meals. The issues concerning fast food today are the health concerns in which their food menus are cooked by a large amount of oil and butter that tends to be high in fat, sugar and sodium. People today, particularly teenagers and kids are so obsessed with fast foods and are willing to go to great lengths to achieve their desires. Fast-food advertisements can control or power over consumers.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, fast food, advertisements

1. Introduction

In all aspect of human endeavor, language plays a pivotal role. To understand the complexity of language and the ways in which language produces meaning, a thorough scrutiny should be of prime consideration. In everyday interaction, cognitive and social activities are mediated by countless forms of meaning created and conveyed by words and symbols in the spectrum of normative and denotative realm. The world, in its empirical nature, is filled with natural and simulated meaning-bearing forms. As common sense demands, humans coexist with different norms of speech of communities that dictate the paradigm of understanding through the means of communication. Even with nature, humans look onto the most comprehensible form of nature's language within the environment and look for signs and warnings that pose a sign, threat or warning to rational living beings (Armstrong, 2013). Hence, that's when humans get persuaded with what nature shows and similarly, it goes for artificial signs as well such as advertisements. Essentially, no advertisements convey a potential threat that might affect the interest of the target consumer but rather bring them o the mystic landscape where the only choice is to purchase a particular product (Cook, 2001 as cited by Kaur, 2016).

With society rapidly changing norms and trends, contemporary advertisements with various techniques have been frequently used to gauge the interest of target consumers. One of the arising firms of today's generation is the food industry, particularly to the different stalls of fast food chain like Jollibee, Mc Donalds, KFC, and etc. There have a lot of fast-food firms that blooms in the different parts of this world, firms that binds a strong connection between its customer and itself.

A marketing strategy will help you focus on the right services that will satisfy customers' needs, Caplan (2004). According to Mikkenson (2006), product advertising is used as more information and messages can be included in it than in other promotions methods, specially, advertisement. Many aspects of goods or services of business firm can be covered in special feature articles. Promotions are getting harder and harder each time and each company, but the point is where part of their advertisements does the audience are being attracted to. Is it how they edit it or it differs to the words they are used to entice the public market.

Batisson (2002) pointed out that advertising is a single component of the marketing process. It is the part that involves getting the word out concerning your business, product, or the services you are offering. Relative to this, Ramachandra, Chandrashekara, Shivakumar (2010), stated that promotion is the process of marketing communication involves information, persuasion, and influence. In promoting a certain products, these fast-food companies used very high class promotional videos, but it only differs on how they capture the attention of their audience by using the terms and language of persuasion.

Over-all, the above stated premises are just but few of the ropes which tied our hands and pull us to think to the very challenge of directing our qualitative experience to the deep comprehension of the marketing strategic terms that attract the target clients. It primarily gives emphasis on how triumph would be very much luscious if we take the hard road and if we will experience first the trials before the success (Cañizares, 2013).

This study would enlighten the mind of the consuming public about how and why are they being enticed by the propaganda techniques and words of persuasion used by different food industries which would broaden human knowledge better and more than to what is already known by the consumers.

1.1 Theoretical lens

To put this study into a well-founded analysis on the terms used in fast food ads, the researcher used the Three Dimensional Theory of Fairclough (1992) as being cited by Dian Handayani; Heriyanto; Ypsi Soeria Soemantri (2018).

a) Text (Description)

Description, interpretation and explanation are the three steps of discourse analysis. In the description stage, linguistic features such as choices in vocabulary (wording), grammar (transitivity, passivization) and text structure (thematic choice, turn-taking system) should be systematically analyzed.

This is the first step, in which text is the object. For Fairclough (1989), "Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of text". In other words, linguistic features of the text are to be explored in the descriptive stage. For the purpose that it can understand more clearly, he also posts ten key questions together with more other sub-questions, which are mainly involved with vocabulary section, grammar section, and textual structures section (Fairclough, 1989). The section of vocabulary mainly deals with the choice of different words; grammar is about the grammatical features, which has a close relation with Halliday's systemic-functional grammar whereas the textual structures part concerns the whole structures of the discourse.

b) Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

Fairclough (1989) says "interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as recourse in the process of interpretation". In the interpretation stage, the relationship between the discourse and its production and its consumption should be interpreted. Besides, discourse is not only regarded as text but also a discursive practice in this stage, which means apart from analyzing linguistic features and text structure, attention should be drawn to other factors such as speech act and inter-textuality. These factors link the text to its context. In other words, this step deals with the exploration of inter-textual relations among discourse, texts and setting. That is, the discourse should not only be considered as the linguistic version, but also a kind of discursive practice. Those factors which relate to how people produce and interpret the advertisement discourse should be taken into consideration, thereby, the source and modes should be worthy of exploration in the interpretive stage of advertisements (Fairclough, 1995).

c) Social Practice (Explanation)

According to Fairclough (1989: 26), "Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects". On the other hand, the analysis in explainable part is in reference to the historical, social, and cultural contexts.

In discourse analysis, especially advertisements, the undiscovered information of power, ideology and language will be investigated and explained in this part by two contexts, institutional context and societal context (Fairclough, 1995). The explanation stage corresponds to the dimension "discourse as social practice," more precisely "socio-cultural practice." In this stage, factors like ideology or power

are taken into account so as to fully explain the interaction between social-cultural context and the production and consumption of texts.

Research Questions

This discourse analysis on fast food advertisements sought to answer on the following:

- 1.) What are the different propaganda techniques used in fast food ads?
- 2.) What are the linguistic features and patterns used in fast food ads?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative study employing discourse analysis which described and analyzed the different propaganda techniques and the linguistic features used in the advertisements of fast food.

This Discourse Analysis only used secondary data as advertisements of fast food industries will be used as linguistic corpora. This study is qualitative in nature, using the Discourse Analysis (DA) approach. In this method, information is gathered to study a social phenomenon and may take the form of spoken transcripts, written text, or other types of documents. This data is analyzed to try to comprehend how people behave and interact in social situations. Moreover, since the data in this study is in the form of words and will be described in descriptive terms, it falls under the category of a qualitative study employing the Discourse Analysis (DA) method (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). The DA approach was used to elaborate the meaning of the advertisements in textual, discursive and social practice of the propaganda techniques and their intended and communicated meaning behind the discourse of advertisements.

Discourse analysis is an approach to explaining the relationship between form and function in verbal communication (Renkema, 2004). Further, in conducting this study, the researcher adhered to the process of conducting research which is to ask first for a permission to conduct the study. Furthermore, the process of data collection includes the following: First, the researcher used observational approach and tools, including field notes, recording videos, and transcription, to gather all of needed corpora. Second, the researcher recorded all the captured data and then, made use of data reduction to only include the needed data for analysis.

2.2 Research Materials

This qualitative-discourse analysis study utilized the authentic advertisements of fast food industries. These linguistic corpora were treated for analysis to extrapolate the different linguistic features and the propaganda techniques used by fast food owners in promoting their food. Fifteen (15) linguistic corpora were used for extrapolating the different linguistic features and propaganda techniques as well as the discourse or meaning communicated through these advertisements.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis as it entails, refers to the process of making deductions from the linguistic corpora gathered. This could be done through analytical and logical arguments to recognize the patterns, connections, or themes. The researcher examined and made an evaluation of the linguistic features and the propaganda techniques present in the advertisements of fast food.

Kamalu & Osisanwo (2015) argued that discourse analysis is concerned with more than just the study of formal characteristics of language; it is also concerned with how language is utilized in social and cultural settings. As a result, discourse analysis investigates the link between language (written, verbal – conversation, structured forms of discussion) and the settings in which it is employed.

In order to exemplify the different textual feature, the discursive expressions of the advertisements and the social implication it communicated towards the target consumers, three-fold dimension of Fairclough was used of the theory for evaluation and comprehensive data extrapolation. The results were stated in order to answer the question of the study.

1. Results

Textual Analysis

Tables 1. Use of Direct Address

Food Brand	Direct Address
Burger King	“Have it your way”
Starbucks	“We serve you decaf if you’re rude”
Subway	“Our Sub Your Way”
Firehouse Subs	“We put our money, where your mouth is”

Table 2. Use of Imperatives

Food Brand	Imperatives used
Jollibee	“Dito sa Jollibee Beeda ang sarap
Mcdonald's	“I’m lovin’ it”
Taco Bell	“Live Mas
KFC	“It’s finger lickin’ good”
Greenwhich	“Buy 1 take 1 pizza”
Chowking	“Tikman ang tagumpay”
Church’s Chicken	“Small batch from scratch”
Shakey’s Pizza	At Shakey’s, we serve fun (also pizza)”
Krispy Kreme	“Make today special”
Pizza Hut	“Make it great”
Cinnabon	“Life needs frosting”

Table 3. Disjunctive syntax in advertisements (Linguistic Corpora)

Fast Food Chain	Taglines
1. Jollibee	“Dito sa Jollibee Beeda ang sarap”
2. Mcdonald's	“I’m lovin’ it”
3. Taco Bell	“Live Mas”
4. Burger King	“Have it your way”
5. KFC	“It’s finger lickin’ good”
6. Subway	“Our sub your way”
7. Arby’s	“We have the meats”
8. Greewhich	“Buy 1 take 1”
9. Chowking	“Tikman ang tagumpay”
10. Krispy Kreme	“Make today special”
11. Pizza hut	“Make it great”
12. Church’s Chicken	“Small batch from scratch”
13. Firehouse Subs	“We put our money, where your mouth is”
14. Culver’s	“Welcome to delicious”
15. Cinnabon	“Life needs frosting”

4. Discussion

Linguistic Features /Textual Analysis

Direct Address

The textual analysis relates to research question 1 on the linguistic features in the advertisements analyzed. At this level of analysis the linguistic features such as choices in vocabulary (wording), syntax and rhetorical devices employed in advertisements are discussed. Linguistic corpora indicated a great use of direct address in the advertisements for both ideological and practical reasons. The use of the second-person personal and possessive pronouns such as ‘you’ and ‘yours’ seek to address the readers directly and personally. When people are addressed individually rather than as part of mass audience it is considered highly valued. This handling of people on an individual basis is referred as ‘synthetic personalization’ (Fairclough, 1989:62). Examples are as shown below:

- “**Have it your way**” (Burger King)
- “**We serve you decaf if you’re rude**” (Starbucks)
- “**Our Sub Your Way**” (Subway)
- “**We put our money, where your mouth is**” (Firehouse Subs)

Use of Imperatives

In addition advertisements also need to persuade readers to buy or take certain actions. Thus advertisements usually use imperatives. The following are the examples of imperatives used in the advertisements analysed in this study.

- “**Dito sa Jollibee Beeda ang sarap**” (Jollibee)
- “**I’m lovin’ it**” (MCDO)
- “**Live Mas**” (Taco Bell)
- “**It’s finger lickin’ good**” (KFC)
- “**Buy 1 take 1 pizza**” (Greenwich)
- “**Tikman ang tagumpay**” (Chowking)
- “**Small batch from scratch**” (Church’s Chicken)
- “**At Shakey’s, we serve fun (also pizza)**” (Shakey’s Pizza)
- “**Make today special**” (Krispy Kreme)
- “**Make it great**” (Pizza Hut)
- “**Life needs frosting**” (Cinnabon)

By using imperatives the advertisers are trying to establish a closer relationship with the readers. Such informality can signify equality between advertisers and readers.

Disjunctive Syntax

Another type of strategy to simulate conversational style is the use of disjunctive syntax, that is, sentences without verbs or subjects. These sentences consist of one or two grammatical items only. Consequently, linguistic corpora or corpus linguistics is used to collect data, either composed writings or a translation of recorded discourse, which can be utilized as a beginning stage of etymological portrayal or as methods for confirming theories about a language (Crystal 2003).

Jollibee. Television advertisement of Jollibee expressing “*Dito sa Jollibee Beeda ang sarap*” to persuade people especially children in choosing their meals over other brands.



McDonald's. The slogan they used *“I'm lovin' it”* indicates the positive feeling towards their fast-food meals to entice and capture the attention of the people.



Taco Bell. Live Mas means to live more. It emphasizes that people should eat taco bell to live longer. The picture illustrates the catchy and unique slogan of Taco Bell that attracts, amuses and easily understand by people.



Burger King. They used *“Have it your way”* to evolve the functional side of things of having much stronger emotional appeal to people which makes differ from other fast-food chains.



KFC. The tag line resonates with the customers and the licking of fingers of a person is a habit after a great taste of a meal.



Subway. “*Our sub your way*” offers delicious sub just the way the customers want it. It reminded people to eat fresh.



Arby's. Arby's proudly presents that they have all the meat that people ever wanted.



Greenwich. The promotional advertisement of Greenwich “*Buy 1 take 1*” gives customers the feeling of pleasure or enjoyment towards the food products.



Chowking. *Tikman ang Tagumpay* is the mantra of this brand which inspires Filipinos to strive hard to succeed regardless of difficulties.



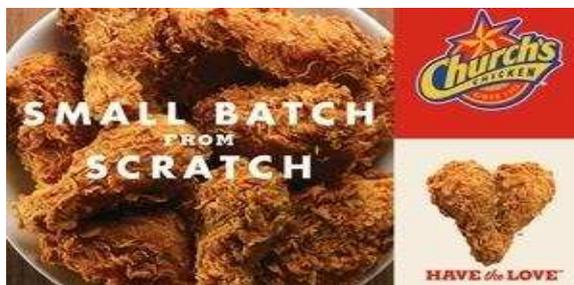
Krispy Kreme. The Krispy Kreme slogan today serves quality and commitment to delivering the best experience to their customers.



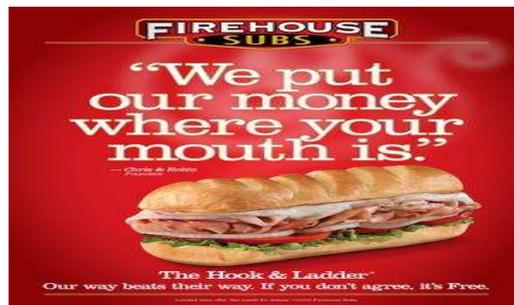
Pizza Hut. The sayings of Pizza Hut being used serves or offers to their customers a well-deserved and great pizza.



Church's Chicken. "Small batch from scratch" promoting their chicken fries with love to the customers and let people know when you put love into the chicken, they were gonna love it.



Firehouse Subs. The catchphrase emphasizes that Firehouse Subs guarantee to the customers that their money is worth buying their best sub that they will ever have.



Culver's. They embrace customer who leaves Culver's leaves happy.



Cinnabon. “Life needs frosting is an upbeat message that there is always time to celebrate life’s little pleasures.



Vocabulary is the means for advertisers to express ideological opinions about people and events. Adjectives are pertinent in advertising as they convey a positive or negative affective meaning (Delin, 2013). Affective meaning will display reader’s positive or negative evaluation of an item shown. The advertisements in this study contained adjectives with both positive and negative connotations. The positive adjectives are related to the qualities of the product whereas the negative adjectives are linked to the problems which existed prior to using the products or due to not using the problem. Below are examples of adjectives used in the fast food advertisements.

Positive Adjectives

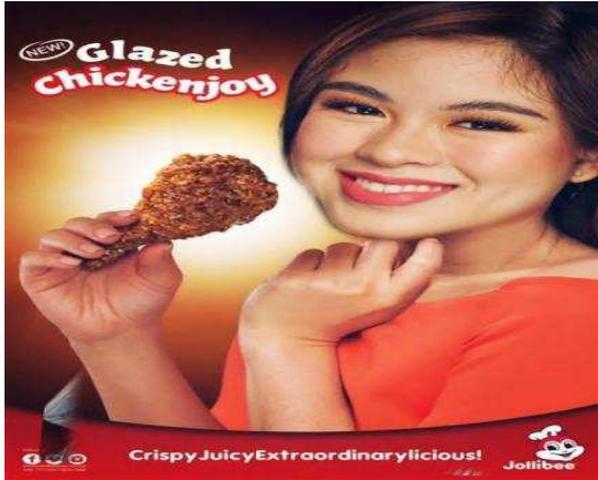
It depicts thoughts such as amusement, excitement, happiness, hope, inspiration, love, peace and gratefulness. The advantageous form is used to describe nouns (people, locations or things) or to describe verbs (actions) or conditions in a pleasant way such as: “*Feel good, extraordinary, taste better, delicious, tastiest, crispiest*”

Feel good. It means that causing happy and positive feelings about something.



“The picture illustrates endorsement of McDonald’s Fuel up... feel good!”

Extraordinary. It means that very unusual and special; different in type or greater in degree than the usual or ordinary.



“The illustration shows Kisses Delavin endorsed the New Glazed Chickenjoy of Jollibee”

Taste better. It means that having or exhibiting good taste and having pleasure or satisfying flavor.



“The picture shows the Burger King Super Seven Incher that will blow your mind away.”

Delicious. It is highly pleasing to the senses, especially to taste or smell or delightful.

“This picture illustrates Malias Burger Pub Delicious Juicy Burgers always fresh”



food), crisp, curly or tastiest! The

Crispiest. Brittle (especially to wavy and brisk. “This shows The crispiest! of Jollibee meal”



The ways the positive adjectives are utilized represent the positivity or inspiration of the product. Positive adjectives are used to feature certain qualities and characteristics of fast food products. In short, the use of emotive adjectives or adjectival phrases can stimulate or encourage the interest of the people.

Use of Pronouns

The use of pronouns in advertisements helps to create a friendly atmosphere to persuade the audience. People will easily accept a product if a good friend or seller recommended them. Hence, advertisements that seem to talk with friends bring the readers closer. In this study, it was found that the most common pronouns used are “you”, “your”, “we” and “I”. The use of first and second person pronoun seems to indicate as if the advertiser is making promises that are sincere and honest (Smith, 2004). For example, the pronoun “we” is regarded as authoritative and implies power while “you” reflects a personal engagement as the reader is addressed directly. In addition, the use of “our” does reflect a certain “us” versus “them” feel to it. Examples of pronouns in the fast food advertisements in this study are:

- Hot, juicy, and cooked right when **you** order...
- ...sometimes **you’ve** got to break the rules
- We** do it like you’d do it
- We** don’t make it until you order it.
- ...**you** deserve a break today

“It appears that food advertising is better at getting into the mind and memory of kids,” says Ashley Gearhardt, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. “This makes sense because our brains are hardwired to get excited in response to delicious foods.” (as cited in Michigan, 2013)

Discourse Analysis

This level of analysis involves studying the linguistics in promoting specifically in text’s production and consumption, focusing on how power relations are enacted. In this study, the advertisers used various strategies in their discourse to attract consumers. The table below summarizes the strategies used.

Strategy Used in Advertisement	Linguistic Devices Used
Celebrity Endorsement	“Pressure is our pleasure kaya ang lasa walang takas ang gravy walang katapusan, KFC original recipe.” Daniel Padilla (Celebrity Endorser)
Weasel Words	“Paste the difference, been ingredients better pizza Papa John’s”
Promotional Advertising	“The 2 for 100 deal just get better, choose two of these four meals. 2 meals 100 bucks only at Burger King”
Bribe	“Buy one burger and one free” or “be the member of the store for two years and get 20% of all on all services.”
Facts and Statistics	“Our fresh chicken is carefully hand-breaded and rolled 7 times in the secret blend of herbs and spices before being scooped and folded in the breading mix 7 times. The chicken is then pressure cooked at a low temperature in high stability canola oil to preserve that great taste we’re known for around the world.”
Bandwagon	“Love it? You have ever seen it look like this. We can promise you that good things have away of coming together.”
Advertising Jingles	“Sabado na bukas! I love you Sabado... sa Jollibee bida ang saya”
Target Audience	“Jollibee Kids Party, Ulitin ang pinaka-pinakamasaya”

Celebrity Endorsement. The advertisers use celebrities to advertise their products. The celebrities or star endorse the product by telling their own experiences with the product.



“This picture above shows Daniel Padilla endorse KFC Original Recipe”

Celebrity branding is the use of famous people to generate buzz around a product or service. Celebrity branding involves engagement from celebrities with the product or service. These days, that often translates to generating buzz or engagement with their social networks. Celebrities have substantial social networks and people are always interested in the trends and products that celebrities endorse. Celebrity branding on social media has the potential to reach more people than other traditional advertising methods. Celebrity endorsement is a promotional tool that boosts brand awareness. It is a way of enhancing credibility and gaining visibility for brands. Celebrities are well-known people and a celebrity endorsement can make a brand stand out. Many companies have successfully leveraged celebrity endorsements to result in increased business.

Celebrity endorsement is a common marketing communication strategy for building brand image. Advertisers believe that the use of a celebrity affects advertising effectiveness, brand recall and recognition, as well as purchase intentions and followthrough (Spry et al., 2011). There have been many studies of celebrity endorsement in recent years (e.g., Hakimi et al., 2011; Hung et al., 2011; Spry et al., 2011). These studies have examined the influence of celebrity endorsement on young adults (Hakimi et al., 2011), celebrity worship on purchase intentions (Hung et al., 2011), and the celebrity’s credibility on the brand’s consumer-based equity (Spry et al., 2011).

Weasel Words. Advertisers do not say that they are the best from the rest but do not also deny.



“This picture above illustrates the slogan of Pizza Papa John’s better ingredients, better pizza.”

Weasel words are words or phrases that are opinions and exaggerated statements. The words "better", "best", "greatest", and "finest" are typically used in deceptive advertisements. The information is not intended to be factual.

Weasel words and phrases are highly effective means of attracting readers. They do not only present people what they want to read but also lead them to particular conclusions and form certain values and preferences in the society. (Danciu, 2014)

Promotional Advertising. It is a technique that involves giving away samples of the product for free to the consumers and provides promos.



“This illustration above shows Burger King’s promo 2 for 100 medium meal”

Bribe. It is a sum of money or something valuable that one person offers or gives to another in order to persuade him or her to do something.



“This illustration shows “Buy one burger and one free”

Facts and Statistics. Advertisers use numbers, proofs, and real examples to show how good their product works.



“This illustration above shows fresh chicken blended and mixed with secret herbs and spices.”

Bandwagon. It involves convincing customers to join the group of people who have bought his product and be on winning side.



“This illustration above shows Clyde’s promotional advertisement with its tagline “good things have a way of coming together”

Advertising Jingles. A short song created for a brand or commercial that is designed to be catchy and convey a message.



“This picture above illustrates a short jingle of Jollibee expresses “I love Sabado”

Target Audience. It is a specific group of people, individual, or identified as intended recipient of an advertisement or message.



“This picture above shows where children having fun in Jollibee Kids Party”

In general, adjectives can serve as stimulators for the target market to help decide their food of choice. Considering the good qualities of food together with the services provided and ensuring the good state of price as well.

Social Practice Analysis

This level of analysis explains the broad societal currents affecting advertisements. This level of analysis is also concerned with “inter-textual understanding that helps to understand the broad societal currents that are affecting the text being studied”. This includes the views of people on fast food chains and specifically the reasons behind their attraction towards these practices. In today’s world, fast food is emphasized as quick and easily accessible. Fast-food chains are preferred by many people especially working or busy person, they find it advantageous because they serve food very fast, cheap, and easily replace home-cooked meals. The issues concerning fast food today are the health concerns in which their food menus are cooked by a large amount of oil and butter that tends to be high in fat, sugar and sodium. People today, particularly teenagers and kids are so obsessed with fast foods and are willing to go to great lengths to achieve their desires. Fast-food advertisements can control or power over consumers. People exercise their power through promos they offered.

Also, celebrities in advertisements tend to give high support in persuading consumers. A related study by Story and French (2004) shows food advertising and marketing channels used to target children and adolescents. They asserted that children and adolescents are currently the objectives of exceptional and particular food marketing and marketing endeavours. Food marketers are keen on youth as consumers because of their spending power, their buying impact, and future grown-up buyers.

5. Conclusion

The study presenting fifteen fast-food advertisements with enticing words in the world and Philippine setting had shown attracted themes drawn from the factors that affected the written propaganda techniques. As indicated in the ads, ‘the life changing’ was pinpointed to be the number one factor which contributed an effect to the advertisements. Aside from the life-changing notion, its taste, appearance, words of persuasion and tactics are the other factors that affected the propaganda. Moreover these fast-food ads have their different factors also and generated themes that are unique to each other.

More than the themes, the discourse analysis also entail the positive adjectives, the celebrities who are the endorser, its musicality or jingle and all also provide significant words related to how their products are much yummy and delicious. The advertisements being presented was not mere ads only but these ads have a deep and broad meaning. Advertisements produced by the fast-food companies are quite based on its target customer. Before the ads was produced by the company they somehow analyzed and utilized to depend on the target consuming public as the main factor they have to serve the propaganda well.

An effective way of persuasion is to be realistic which could let people comprehend based to true-life story. Putting new information through the choice adds up to the effectiveness of discourse which could help also the people to choose what fast-food they wanted to go in, an information that serves as a source of new knowledge that the people can use in persuading other people.

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