

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
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**TRẦN THỊ VIỆT NGÀ**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LINGUISTIC DEVICES  
FOR PERSUADING PRODUCT BUYERS USED IN  
TEXTUAL ADVERTISEMENTS IN ENGLISH AND  
VIETNAMESE**

**Field: The English language  
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**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
(A SUMMARY)**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RATIONALE

In Vietnam, with the open - door policy, in our market economy of selling products, the real role of advertising is to predispose and reassure a target market. It has made the world a better place to live in by constantly suggesting public improvements and urging the adoption of hygienic methods in the homes of the people. It has created great industries, constructed railroads, built towns and cities and opened up to settlement vast areas of agricultural land. It has lightened the burdens of man- kind by introducing labor-saving devices; it has reduced the dangers of traveling by rail by bringing into use signal systems that prevent collisions between trains and permit their operation at high speed. It has taught people how to be healthy through the consumption of pure foods and the wearing of the proper kind of clothing. It has brought riches to the poor, given budding genius a hearing, and shown the public how to enjoy itself. It has stabilized business, found markets for home-made products in foreign lands and stimulated domestic trade. It has opened up a whole world of opportunity to ambitious young men in search of name and fortune. Advertising is crucial in our modern society. It is designed to promote the sale of a product or service... However, much money is spent on advertising but not all Ads are effective and persuasive. How to understand and do the successful advertising, this will make advertisers, businessmen, and

marketing students difficult to attain the aim. And this also creates a lot of difficulties for every language learners. For these above reasons, I decide to do a research on LDs for persuading products buyers used in textual Ads in English and Vietnamese.

### 1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.2.1. Aims:

Aims of this study are to find out the syntactic and semantic features of LDs used in Ads for persuading products buyers in English and Vietnamese to point out the similarities and differences between them. Also, through the result analysis and findings of the thesis, we hope the given suggestions may benefit the advertisers, sellers, businessmen, and marketing learners in writing Ads and selling products.

#### 1.2.2. Objectives:

This study is intended to:

- Identify the LDs for persuading products buyers used in Ads in English and Vietnamese.
- Examine typical LDs for persuading products buyers used in Ads in English and Vietnamese.
- Analyze, comment and illustrate the syntactic and semantic features of LDs for persuading products buyers used in Ads in English and Vietnamese.

- Put forward some implications for the teaching and learning LDs for persuading products buyers used in Ads in particular and of language in general.

### **1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study only focuses on the syntactic and semantic features of LDs for persuading products buyers used in textual Ads in English and Vietnamese. The pragmatic values of these are sometimes discussed in the study.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are LDs for persuading products buyers used in Ads in English and Vietnamese?
- What are the semantic and syntactic features of LDs for persuading products buyers used in Ads in English and Vietnamese?
- What are the differences and similarities of these languages in English and Vietnamese?

### **1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Method and Procedure

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussions

Chapter 5: Conclusion-Implications

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 A REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE PROBLEM**

Leech (1996), in his pioneering and comprehensive study on English in advertising, has analyzed in detail different aspect pertaining to grammar, vocabulary, discourse and rhyme and rhetoric of advertising which special reference to television.

In “The discourse of advertising” by Guy Cook (2003, 2nd edition) a framework for analysis of Ads as a discursive genre was provided. Concepts from discourse analysis; stylistics and linguistics are applied to examine the ads textual and contextual features in a bottom - up approach that allow identifying their interaction and combinations.

Besides, from different views, some linguists approached advertising and advertising language, examining the linguistic usage in billboards and Ads, the correspondence between forms and contents as well as the influence of cultural factors such as: “Về ngôn ngữ trong quảng cáo” (Trần Đình Vĩnh - Nguyễn Đức Toàn, 1993), “Đôi nét về quảng cáo ở Việt Nam” (Võ Thanh Hương, 2000). Đinh Gia Hưng and Hồ Sĩ Thắng Kiệt discussed about the features of English linguistic units and semantic meaning used in Ads in “A Discussion Concerning Linguistic Units and Meaning in English language Ads”[29]. A recent master thesis by Nguyễn Thị Tố Nga with the topic “An investigation into the syntactic and pragmatic

features of directives in English and Vietnamese” gave an over view on directive in general [34]. The syntactic and semantic features of collocations used in advertising skincare products in English and Vietnamese was studied by Hoàng Thị Bảo Kim in “A study of collocations in advertising in English and Vietnamese”[30]. However, among them no research has been done into LDs for persuading buying products used in advertising. Therefore, this research has been shaped and entitled “An investigation into LDs for persuading products buyers used in textual Ads in English and Vietnamese”.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.2.1. The concept of Advertising**

“Advertising is the structured and composed nonpersonal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, services, and ideas)” [17, p.7]

“...advertising as any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.” [34, p.405]

Advertising is defined by Harris and Seldon as a public notice: “Advertising designed to spread information with a view to promoting the sales of marketable goods and services.” [27, p.40]

According to Dominick [22, p.398-422], there are three main components of advertising:

**Advertiser:** Who plans the advertising, decides where he appears, sets aside a certain amount of money for the advertising budget, and coordinates the advertising with other department in the organization.

**Agency:** An independent business organization composed of creative people and business people who develop, prepare, and place advertising for sellers seeking to find customers for their goods and services.

**Mass media:** The connection between a company and its customers.

In short, each particular field defines advertising in their own way, however, a successful advertisement is expected to accomplish five functions namely (1) attracting attention, (2) commanding interest, (3) creating desire, (4) inspiring conviction, (5) provoking action.

### **2.2.2. Language of advertising**

#### **2.2.2.1. Legality**

#### **2.2.2.2. Theoretical, factual foundation**

#### **2.2.2.3. National characteristic**

#### **2.2.2.4. The popularity**

#### **2.2.2.5. The vividness**

#### **2.2.2.6. The multi - stylistic**

### **2.2.3. The structure of Ads**

Although there are many different kinds of advertising, the formal components of an advertisement are: (1) headline, (2) subhead line, (3) body copy, (4) caption and (5) standing details, (6) illustrations

#### **2.2.4. Linguistic devices in advertisements**

##### **2.2.4.1. Rhetorical devices.**

- a. Punning**
- b. Simile**
- c. Metaphor**
- d. Personification**
- e. Euphemism**
- f. Parallelism**
- g. Alliteration**
- h. Repetition**

##### **2.2.4.2. Acronyms**

##### **2.2.4.3. Deixis**

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

##### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

##### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODS**

##### **3.3 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE**

##### **3.4 PROCEDURES - DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

##### **3.5 DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLES**

### **CHAPTER 4**

#### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF LINGUISTIC DEVICES FOR PERSUADING PRODUCTS BUYERS USED IN ADVERTISEMENTS**

##### **4.1.1. Semantic features of linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in English**

###### **a. Pun used in EAds**

To pun is to play on words, or rather to play with the form and meaning of words, for a witty or humorous effect. For example:

*Coke refreshes you like no other can. (Coca-Cola)[195]*

The word can be taken in meaning literally in American English as the aluminum tin used to contain liquid, especially drinks, while it also functions as the modal verb in its homograph. Thus, this advertisement can be interpreted in two ways:

*Coke refreshes you like no other can. (can refresh you)*

*Coke refreshes you like no other (drinks) can (refresh you).*

###### **b. Simile used in EAds**

*Like your baby, kittens need more nutrition than adult cats.[167]*

*Paul Gauguin dressed like a pirate, looked like a demon, and painted like an angel. [179]*

### c. Metaphor used in EAds

*You are the traveler. Your investments are the terrain. We are the map. [161]*

*The Glenlivet, the father of all Scotch.?(Glenlivet Wine ) [191]*

From the examples above, we can easily identify the meaning the advertisement intends to convey and find out what the metaphor refers to.

### d. Personification used in EAds

*You're in good hands with Allstate. (Allstate Insurance Company) [44]*

*Dog tired? Take a sip.*

*A cup of tea can do wonders. Perk up with every sip as the brisk liquid gently massages your tiredness away. [50]*

### e. Alliteration used in EAds

*Peak of the Pack [161]*

It is observed that the phonemes /p/ and /k/ occur at the initial and final positions respectively in the two key words: “peak” and “pack”. This is aimed at drawing the attention of the reader and it enhances the auditory agreeableness due to the inherent melody of the speech sound. Also worthy of note is the contrast between the vowel sounds /i:/, a high vowel in /pi:k/ and /æ/, a low vowel in /pæk/. The contrast, coupled with the alliteration earlier discussed makes the advert such that the reader can easily remember or chant

the slogan without difficulty because of the organization of the sound patterns.

### f. Repetition used in EAds

*Sharp Mind, Sharp Products. [172]*

There is a play upon the word “sharp” which is the brand name of the product being advertised. The logic is that “sharp” products can only come from the sharp minds who work in the sharp corporation. Moreover, the word play on “sharp” is also apt for a camera since the quality of a camera is usually measured by the sharpness of its pictures.

### g. Parallelism used in EAds

*Your own car.*

*Your own phone.*

*Your own place.*

*Your dad's insurance?[50]*

This is a property insurance advertisement which aims at encouraging female audience to buy insurance for her beloved family. Each sentence is very short while powerful and humorous. After repeating “ your own...” three times, the question is changed into “your dad’s insurance?” which makes an unexpected impression on the reader.

### h. Euphemism used in EAds

*The inside story leaking out. (Luvs Diaper) [44]*

### **i. Acronym used in EAds**

BOGOF which is an acronym for:

*Buy One, Get One Free. [44]*

### **4.1.2. Semantic features of linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in Vietnamese**

#### **a. Repetition in VAds**

*Tôi chọn clear*

*Tôi dùng clear mỗi ngày*

*Tôi là Rain. (Clearmen) [139]*

The combination of phonetic and grammatical repetition makes the advertisement softly and it can be remembered very easy by the customers. When the customers read it, they will feel soft, comfortable and pleasing to ear.

*Mua hàng hiệu, trúng quà sành điệu [90]*

#### **b. Simile in VAds**

Advertisers often use various rhetorical devices to increase readability and appeal of an advertisement and to arouse customers' interest of buying products. Simile is one of them is used in Vietnamese Ads:

*Mềm mịn như nhung (NNO) [145]*

*Trắng như sữa, mịn như hoa (Sữa tắm Gerve) [56]*

#### **c. Metaphor in VAds**

Metaphor makes the listeners memorize easily the form of advertisement and the product's name. So when there is demand for

certain types of products consumers will remember the brand that they belong.

*Daehan Smart*

*Chính hiệu Hàn Quốc ISO 9002*

*Thiên Thần xinh đẹp. [71]*

*Hảo hảo (mì ăn liền)tốt tốt [83]*

#### **d. Personification in VAds**

Personification is a figure of speech that gives life and personal attributes to inanimate objects. It also makes the commodity advertised full of feelings so as to strengthen its affinity.

*Tôi âm cực lớn, dáng cực thon. [74]*

#### **e. Hyperbole in VAds**

Hyperbole can make the features of products become to go over the top and be believable in competition to get the customers' attention.

*Không phải siêu phẩm mà siêu phẩm đến tuyệt đối. [65]*

*Làm việc ít, hiệu quả cao. [103]*

*Vẻ đẹp tự nhiên, phong cách hoàn thiện. [113]*

## **4.2. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF LINGUISTIC DEVICES FOR PERSUADING PRODUCTS BUYERS USED IN ADVERTISEMENTS**

### **4.2.1. Syntactic features of linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in English**

#### **a. The Use of Imperative and Interrogative Sentences**

*Hook up with a buddy online, get your own meal plan and easy recipes, or chat with a dietitian. C mon, if I can be a big loser, there's nothing stopping you. (Sample 2)[177]*

In this example, the advertiser uses imperatives as mild commands to prompt the action - to join slim - fast program. Imperative sentences are sometimes preferred because such sentences are persuasive and appealing to readers.

#### **b. The Use of Short Sentences**

Sentence length is an important criterion of the readability of a text. The longer the sentence, the lower the readability of the text.

#### **c. The Use of Simple Sentences**

*So you can lose twice the weight than counting calories by your lonesome...And shake that notion of just shapes out of your head. There's soup, pasta, meal bars, even ice cream snacks. (Sample 2)*

#### **d. The Use of Minor Sentences**

*Canon's solution ?A five - ink printer. Introducing the Canon i860: with a pigment - based black for laser quality documents, and a photo - grade black for high - contrast photos. Its speed ?. The i860's resolution? Up to a crisp 4800 \* 1200 dpi. (Sample 1)*

#### **e. The use of Deixis**

*You know you can trust TOTAL [44]*

*Coca-Cola... You can't Beat the Feeling [44]*

*Citizens Bank... Your right to succeed [44]*

*Vmobile: It's all about You [44]*

### **4.2.2. Syntactic features of linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in Vietnamese**

#### **a. Simple sentences**

Advertisers often use simple sentences to make a message more striking.

*OBIMIN giúp cho Thai kỳ khỏe mạnh.*

*Thai nhi khỏe mạnh [135]*

#### **b. Imperative sentences**

*Đừng chần chừ vì cơ hội không còn nhiều [90]*

*Hãy thử Nestle Omega ngay hôm nay nhé! [77]*

#### **c. Interogative sentences**

The interrogative sentence is very favorable in advertising copy writing. *Sao không tự mình khám phá bí quyết đó?[63]*

*Làm thế nào khi trẻ biếng ăn? Hãy dùng Pedia*

### **4.3. DISCUSSION**

#### **4.3.1. Similarities of linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements**

##### **4.3.1.1. Similarities of linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in semantic feature**

#### **a. Few verbs are used**

G. N. Leech, English linguist, lists 20 most used verbs in his *Buy x. Use it. We make... X will give you what you need. You'll love x. Get x. Fox example:*

*We'll make this quick. (Hertz Car Return) [178]*

*Get great coverage that's so weightless and water-fresh.  
(ALMAY) [156]*

**b. Use of emotive words**

*The world's coolest CDs aren't made in New York, London or  
L.A. They are made in my apartment. (Philips CD Recorder) [188]*

*The Compaq Armada family is lighter, with new rounded  
edges for easier packing. (Compaq) [173]*

...

**c. Make pun and alliteration**

*Give your hair a touch of spring. [170]*

*Ask for more. (More is a famous brand of cigarette) [190]*

*Give your business the sharp edge. (Sharp Corporation)[177]*

...

*..., everything you need for that big bargain basement special.*

*..., and vitamin E to leave skin soft and smooth.*

*Treat your weary ghosts and goblins to a warm bowl of chill  
and ...*

*..., [181]*

**d. Use of weasel words**

*Help*

*Ocean Spray Cranberry Juice Cocktail helps maintain urinary  
tract health.*

*It helps control the bacteria in this system.*

*A breakthrough way to help stop wear-out*

*Help finance the video equipment. [187]*

**4.3.1.2. Similarities of linguistic devices for persuading products  
buyers used in advertisements in syntactic features**

**a. Simple Sentences**

*Lux girls are lovelier. (Lux) [44]*

*Progress is our most important product.(General Electric)[44]*

*Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline.[ 52]*

*Tôi âm cực lớn, dáng cực thon(Sony) [59]*

**b. Imperative Sentences**

Imperative sentences are frequently used in advertising English  
and Vietnamese.

*Taste Me! Taste Me! Come on and Taste Me! (Doral  
Cigarettes)[44]*

*Làm việc ít, hiệu quả cao (Nokia E65) [71]*

**c. Interrogative Sentences**

*Are you having a headache? Do you have Allterest? [200]*

*Bạn đã trị nám đúng chưa? [66]*

**4.3.2. Differences**

**4.3.2.1. Differences in linguistic devices for persuading products  
buyers used in advertisements in semantic features**

**a. Gender identity in advertisements**

**Table 4.2. Distribution of three types of Ads**

		Percentage of ads	
		Women (%)	Playboy (%)
Daily Consumer Goods	Hygiene	10	3
	Beauty	18	1
	Clothes	12	14
	Food, Detergents	31	-
	Tobacco	8	15
	Beer, Spirits	-	25
	Leisure	-	3
Technical Equipment	Vehicle	-	27
	Radio, hi-fi	-	4
	Computer	-	7
Service	Insurance, banking	2	-
	Others	19	1

It can be seen from table 1 that the hygiene, beauty, food and detergents ads are dominant in the women's magazines while technical equipment ads prevail in men's magazines. The reason is that women are potential purchasers of daily consumer goods while men are potential purchasers of technical equipment. So advertising language tries to win its audiences by noticing audiences' gender identity.

**b. Selection of adjectives****Table 4.3. Comparison of frequently used adjectives in daily consumer goods ads and technical equipment ads**

	Descriptive adjectives	Evaluative adjectives
Daily Consumer Goods Ads	radiant, shiny, dazzling, gold soft, smooth fresh creamy, crispy clean	easy, convenient rich, effective, crucial healthy, fast valuable, flew essential good/better/best
Technical Equipment Ads	audible, visible high-volume, full-colour, high-speed magnetic, sharp invisible, multiple flexible, versatile	magic

Table 4.3 shows that descriptive adjectives in daily consumer goods ads such as fresh, crispy, and soft, tend to convey the sense of sight, touch, and taste. The temptation aroused by this vivid description of a product is hard to resist especially for women who tend to be moved by pleasant senses; compared with men, women are inclined to think in terms of images and perceive through senses. However, men, the target audience of technical equipment, are good

at rational thinking. Men are not controlled by senses. On the contrary, the product's interior quality and function is what they pay attention to. So the descriptive adjectives used in technical equipment ads are the ones conveying information of the product, such as audible, visible, high-volume, high-speed, etc.

### c. Compound words

**Table 4.4. Comparison of Compound words used in three types of Ads**

	Compound-used Ads	Total Ads	Percentage
Daily Consumer Goods	5	20	25%
Technical Equipment	13	20	65%
Service	7	20	35%

Obviously, compound words turn up in 65% technical equipment ads, 40 percentage points higher than that of daily consumer goods ads; 30 percentage points higher than service ads.

### d. Use of pronouns .

*What can we do for you?*

*So come on and join us as we celebrate Millennia Mania Singapore.*

*..., we help our neighbors find the best ways to give to their favorite charities*

*We're stronger than ever. [177]*

### 4.3.2.2. Differences in linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in syntactic features

#### a. Headline

A headline has numerous functions. First of all, the headline must attract attention to the advertisement fast. It should take only a few seconds to capture the reader's attention. **b. Comparison of headlines of different types of advertisements**

Table 4.5. tells which type of headline is most used in a certain type of Ads.

**Table 4.5. Comparison of headline s in three types of Ads**

	Benefit Headline	News/Infor headline	Provocative Headline	Question Headline	Command Headline
Daily Consumer Goods	15%	25%	15%	40%	5%
Technical Equipment	10%	30%	30%	25%	5%
Service	35%	10%	40%	10%	5%

### 4.4. Some typical linguistic devices for persuading products buyers used in advertisements in English and Vietnamese

**Table 4.6 Relative frequency of LDs in semantic in English and Vietnamese**

	English		Vietnamese	
	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Pun	10	6.7%	0	0
2. Repetition	32	21.3%	44	29.3%
3. Alliteration	28	18.7%	38	25.3%
4. Simile	27	18%	13	8.7%
5. Personification	15	10%	19	12.7%
6. Metaphor	7	4.7%	5	3.3%
7. Hyperbole	12	8%	26	17.3%
8. Parallelism	8	5.3%	5	3.3%
9. Euphemism	8	5.3%	0	0
10. Acronym	3	2%	0	0
	150	100%	150	100%

**Table 4.7 Relative frequency of LDs in syntax in English and Vietnamese**

	English		Vietnamese	
	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1. Imperative sentences	25	50%	30	60%
2. Interrogative Sentences	10	20%	7	14%

3. Simple Sentences	13	26%	13	26%
4. Minor Sentences	12	24%	0	0
	50		50	100%

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION - IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, textual advertising can be seen as one of the most popular means to achieve its purpose because of its attraction to a large number of newspapers' readers. Textual advertising is also regarded as the most effective one since it is the best place where advertisers use lively colourful images, and words in convincing customers to use a new product or service. However, among the two main components of advertising: images, and words, in almost Ads, words are considered the key component since by them people find easier to grasp the advertising message. Hence, how to choose words to be use in an advertisement accurately, sensibly or effectively can be seen as a very important task in making an effective advertisement.

After analyzing 300 sample of advertisements in English and Vietnamese, I find each LD has the distinctive features and different effects in performing the purpose and nature of advertisements. The thesis is carried out through the contrastive analysis in the two languages, the similarities and differences are revealed. Also, through

the quantitative data, the relative frequency of linguistic devices in semantic and in syntax have been displayed. In Vietnamese Ads, hyperbole, repetition and alliteration are used very often in advertising language. Meanwhile, simile is one of the most persuasive and effective way of advertising. Also, in English Ads, the advertisers and businesses use pun, acronym, and deixis but we don't find the linguistic devices in Vietnamese Ads. Although there are some differences in term of syntax and semantic, the LDs' function are almost analogous in the two languages.

During the research, it is found that LDs used in textual Ads categorized into some main semantic fields such as: entertainment, human emotion and relationship, daily consumer goods, technical equipment and economy. The explanation for the pragmatic features focuses on: the reference and inference of LDs used in Vietnamese and English textual Ads; the choice of advertising language in term of social status, family relationship, the cross-cultural aspect of using LDs in English and Vietnamese textual Ads; and the influences of using LDs in English and Vietnamese textual Ads which fall in two: influences on the advertising messages' effect and influences on the trend of using LDs of Vietnamese people.

## **5.2. IMPLICATIONS**

This thesis has been done with the hope that some semantic and syntactic features of LDs used in textual Ads are revealed. And the findings of the thesis will partly contribute to the understanding

of the language learners about the use of LDs used in textual Ads. Besides, advertisers, translators whose jobs deal with writing advertising message for Ads will possibly find it useful.

Besides, pragmatic features of LDs used in textual Ads is worthy for language learners, translators and advertisers to highly focus to get a best job. The reference, inference of linguistic devices; and the choice of theses LDs to be used in an advertisement is a considerable matter of fact. These affect the advertising message remarkably, thus, the effectiveness of an advertisement is built up by this kind of factors. Once an linguistic devices' pragmatic features are made clear, the impacts of LDs are governed; and the effectiveness of an advertisement is rose up.

## **5.3. LIMITATIONS**

Although it has been given much time and effort, the study is inevitable to avoid shortcomings for the limitations in the ability of the researcher as well as the inadequacy of materials. The investigation into semantic and syntactic features of LDs used in textual Ads was done and some findings on examining these features were revealed. However, there are some unsolved matters that should be considered for further studies.

## **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basic of what the study has done, the followings need to be studied further. Firstly, it should take into the consideration the effectiveness of using LDs used in textual Ads in details. Secondly, further researches should focus on aspects of stylish of LDs used in textual Ads.