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Research Article

Multimodal IT marketing discourse: An integrated approach investigation

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Abstract

Websites of software vendors feature verbal and nonverbal means providing for a number of parameters to be taken into account in order to gain more comprehensive insights into the range and interplay of the means in use. This paper investigates the multimodal website marketing discourse of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* relying on an approach which makes use of multimodal critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, and text linguistics. The integrated framework allows for consideration of the discourse-generating intention of the locutionary source, the discourse function, verbal content categories and audio-visual techniques employed in the nonverbal discourse contributing to the global category of ideologeme consisting of key ideas and aimed at the locutionary target. The intention of such discourse is to persuade consumers to purchase IT solutions which is manifested in the persuasive function. The textual content has been investigated in terms of a set of categories such as: the theme, including IT terms; tonality, made explicit through positively charged words and imperative sentences; time and space, emphasizing time saving efforts to deal with challenges enterprise-wide. The findings are similar to those revealed in the verbal content of customer testimonial videos, with audio-visual techniques such as invigorating music, company settings, contrast colors, etc. being alike. It is of particular interest that the linguistic means in these three marketing discourses are different only when it comes to metaphorical expressions. The global ideologeme is made explicit by urging customers to optimize data and feel IT-powered performance benefits. It is conveyed through multiple antitheses such as data challenges vs. one solution, previously vs. now, old vs. new, and slowly vs. fast. The antitheses in the three marketing discourses are similar as are the typical manifestations of categories and audio-visual techniques which may encourage further research in terms of making the specific discourse of a company stand out to its customers.

Keywords: *marketing discourse, information technology, intention, persuasion, category, ideologeme*

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Мультимодальный маркетинговый дискурс сферы информационных технологий: интегративный подход к анализу

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Аннотация

На веб-сайтах компаний сферы информационных технологий представлены вербальные и невербальные средства, что требует учета ряда параметров в ходе анализа для получения более полного представления о спектре и взаимодействии данных средств. В работе проводится интегративный анализ мультимодального маркетингового дискурса веб-страниц производителей программного обеспечения Microsoft, Oracle и SAP с учетом положений мультимодального критического дискурс-анализа, прагматики, а также лингвистики текста. Полагаем, что целесообразным является учет следующих параметров: дискурсопорождающая интенция адресанта, функция дискурса, реализация категорий в вербальном контенте мультимодального дискурса и использование аудиовизуальных приемов в невербальном контенте, глобальная идеологема, или ключевая идея дискурса, а также адресат. Дискурсопорождающей интенцией является побуждение потребителя к приобретению ИТ-решения, при этом дискурс реализует воздействующую функцию. Текстовое наполнение веб-сайтов рассматривается в рамках таких категорий, как тема (терминология сферы информационных технологий); тональность (положительно окрашенная лексика; повелительное наклонение); хронотоп (экономия времени для решения глобальных задач в рамках всего предприятия). Проведенный анализ позволил получить аналогичные результаты в отношении категорий на материале вербального наполнения видеоотзывов клиентов, при этом аудиовизуальные приемы в виде использования динамичной музыки, видов компании, контрастных цветов и пр. сходны. Примечательно, что использование различных лингвистических средств было выявлено лишь в ходе анализа метафорических выражений, представленных в маркетинговых дискурсах трех компаний. Глобальной идеологемой маркетинговых дискурсов является призыв к реципиенту оптимизировать управление данными для обеспечения эффективного развития в ближайшем будущем. Прием реализации типичной идеологемы становятся многократно используемые антитезы: проблемы работы с большим количеством данных vs. одно ИТ-решение, ситуация до и после, старое vs. новое, медленно vs. быстро. Анализ показывает, что в рамках маркетинговых дискурсов трех компаний используются сходные антитезы, а реализация категорий и аудиовизуальных приемов также аналогична, что может потребовать дальнейших исследований маркетингового дискурса с точки зрения восприятия его специфичности клиентами.

Ключевые слова: *маркетинговый дискурс, информационные технологии, интенция, убеждение, категория, идеологема*

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, enterprise websites are instrumental in paving the way for projecting ideas to customers. The webpages of such websites feature verbal, or textual, information about the benefits of products and services envisaged to meet customers' needs. Nonverbal content, that is nonlinguistic information transmitted through visual and auditory channels, is also an integral part of the websites: users can enjoy background colors, browse through photos, and play customer testimonial videos providing insights into the benefits of products.

Both the verbal and nonverbal audio-visual content makes up the website discourse which needs to be investigated through integrated approaches due to its heterogeneous components aimed at producing some synergetic impact. Contemporary linguistic studies demonstrate an ongoing search for new integrated ways taking into account a number of parameters to deliver comprehensive insights into the material under study (Abbamonte, Cavaliere 2017; Klushina 2012; Klushina 2016; Kress 2010; Mooney 2019). This paper attempts to identify an integrated approach to investigating the verbal and nonverbal discourse of software vendors' websites.

2. Multimodal critical discourse, pragmatics, and text linguistics

First of all, the notions of text and discourse must be differentiated. Discourse can be described as the broadest term for describing all the forms of using language (Kibrik 2009: 1). There exists a definition we consider to be making the most of the existing ideas about discourses intrinsically connected to and associated with some spheres of life (Fairclough 2000), with discourses being identified as collections of texts having some key parameter in common that may be made explicit through adjectives such as, 'Crimean discourse', 'theatrical discourse', etc. (Klushina 2016: 82). The idea of the interaction between discourse and social life was particularly emphasized by N. Fairclough: "The term **discourse** (in what is widely called 'discourse analysis') signals the particular view of language in use I have referred to above — as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements" (Fairclough 2000: 3). Various types of discourses can be in the research spotlight such as the discourse of luxury brands (Adebeshin 2015), tourism (Caruana 2011), consumers (Roper, Caruana, Medway, Murphy 2013), etc.

This paper deals with information technology discourse reaching out to customers through the websites of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP*. Since the websites under study feature not only texts but also nonverbal content such as videos (as demonstrated in Figure 1 below), this discourse is definitely a **multimodal** one (Kress 2010; Van Leeuwen 2013), with visual semiotics being intrinsic to it (Van Leeuwen, 2013) while the meaning results from the use of all the means (Lemke 1998).

The discourse under study is obviously part of computer-mediated communication (Shchipitsyna 2009) being a multimedia one (Oggenhaffen 2001).

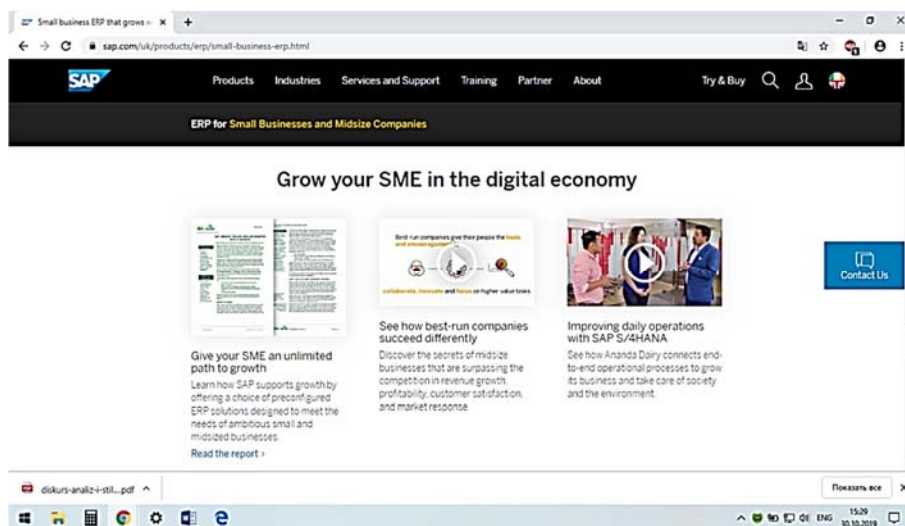


Fig. 1. SAP webpage screenshot

The next point to be clarified within the methodology section of this paper regards the notions of **advertising** and **marketing discourses**. The so-called language of advertising has been in the spotlight for quite a long time (Pirogova, Parshin 2000; Dyer 1988). However, according to E.G. Borisova, today we can speak of marketing linguistics as a particular area of study dealing with ‘marketing discourse’ made of advertising slogans, texts, promotion speeches, brand names, verbal components of logos and so on (Borisova 2016; see also Borisova, Vikulova et al. 2019) and differentiated from other discourses based on the type of social activity. That is, marketing activity is aimed at “creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”¹ in some specific sector so we can speak of tourism marketing discourse, health marketing discourse, etc. (Caruana and Fitchett 2015), real estate marketing discourse (Savelyeva 2015), etc. and—as in this case—IT marketing discourse. Marketing discourse per se is an all-encompassing phenomenon as compared to advertising discourse. Similarly, a carefully elaborated marketing activity consists of advertising campaigns and not the other way around.

The idea of a **multimodal marketing discourse of IT** translated through the corporate websites under study also goes well with the fact that the websites demonstrate the results of implementing some other marketing activity involving case studies, blogs, expert reviews, infographics, customer testimonials, videos, photos, etc. **Critical discourse analysis** unraveling central ideas expressed in the discourse is also instrumental in this respect since it has moved towards including multimodal means into analysis (Kress 2010) showing how graphics also work together to augment meanings communicated through texts.

¹ American Marketing Association [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/> (accessed 02.11.2019).

Since marketing discourse and the company-customer communication are intrinsic, **pragmatic issues** come to the foreground involving both the source and the target of the communicative process.

One of the proven integrated approaches has been elaborated by N.I. Klushina on the material of the publicistic discourse. The so-called ‘intentional method’ provides an outline of the following communicative process: locutive source — intention — text + communicative situation — locutive target — decoding — impact (perlocution) (Klushina 2012) taking into account communicative, pragmatic, and semiotic aspects and demonstrating an undeniable explanatory potential.

So it is of primary importance in my opinion to begin with the pragmatic issues involving the locutionary source since the starting point of generating any discourse is the intention (Klushina 2012) of the locutive source which yields some function (Kozhina 2006: 576) to the generated outcome and finds manifestation in the global category of ideologeme (Klushina 2012) and other categories constituting this or that discourse. The intentional method (Klushina 2012) provides for analyzing discourses through identifying the discourse-related category of the **ideologeme which is defined as the key ideas to be conveyed through the discourse activity** (Klushina 2012).

Texts and the textual content of videos can be also investigated within the framework of other categories of **text linguistics** such as theme, or the matter under discussion (Matveeva 2006: 542—544), tonality, demonstrating the source’s attitude (Matveeva 2006b: 549—552), time and space, as well as the composition, or the structure, which are intrinsic and essential features finding their linguistic manifestation in texts (Matveeva 2006c: 533—536). Since texts make up discourses, textual categories can be easily transposed and projected onto the entire marketing discourse and considered as discourse-related ones.

3. Material and integrated methodology

To apply the integrated methodology outlined above, the paper draws upon both the verbal and nonverbal website content of first-class software vendors such as *Microsoft*^{2,3}, *Oracle*^{4,5}, and *SAP*^{6,7} in the amount of about 80,000 characters

² Microsoft [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365> (accessed 02.11.2019).

³ Microsoft [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business> (accessed 02.11.2019).

⁴ Oracle [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.oracle.com/index.html> (accessed 02.11.2019).

⁵ Oracle [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.oracle.com/big-data/> (accessed 02.11.2019).

⁶ SAP [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.sap.com/index.html> (accessed 02.11.2019).

⁷ SAP [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.sap.com/uk/products/erp/small-business-erp.html>; https://www.sap.com/products/erp/erp-cloud-exp-sme.html?adobe_mc_ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.ru%2F&adobe_mc_sdid=SDID%3D71393FEA67F96A85-1227EC351509D7EF%7CMCORGID%3D227AC2D754DCAB340A4C98C6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1532250423#video=c4496fe2-137d-0010-87a3-c30de2ffd8ff (accessed 02.11.2019).

while relying on a number of proven methodologies elaborated in the fields of discourse studies (Klushina 2012; Klushina 2016), multimodal critical discourse analysis (Bateman 2014; Kress 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001) and visual semiotics (Van Leeuwen, 2013) as well as pragmatics of advertising (Popova 2005) and text linguistics (Kozhina 2006; Matveeva 2006a). The methodology perspective outlined in this paper provides for analyzing both the verbal and audio-visual components of the material under study such as images, colors, and testimonial videos.

So the integrated analysis framework proposed in this paper to investigate the multimodal marketing discourse of IT vendors' websites provides for identifying the **locutionary source's intention** as a discourse-generating component and an **ideologeme**—the key idea to be conveyed through the discourse activity (Klushina 2012)—as a global discourse-generating category.

The **verbal content** of the websites can be investigated through the use of **textual categories** such as composition, theme, tonality, time and space. These categories can also be instrumental in analyzing the verbal content of customer testimonial videos. **Audio-visual techniques** such as music, voice, and color are also taken into account to deal with the **nonverbal content**. The **global ideologeme** is realized throughout the entire discourse made of texts.

Since **the ideologeme of marketing discourse** is supposed to be appealing to existing and potential customers it can be also identified in terms of **lines of appeal** (Dyer 1988)—**themes proven to appeal** to the audience such as elite lifestyles, success stories, etc. (Dyer 1988). However, as compared to such lines of appeal, ideologemes seem to be a more appropriate term in our context because they tend to be more comprehensive, both negative and positive, while lines of appeal deal with specific good things such as success, health, etc.

Thus, the framework proposed in this paper to analyze multimodal marketing discourse of software vendors' websites provides for identifying:

- the intention (or illocution) of the locutionary source aimed at the locutionary target;
- the function of the discourse;
- the categories of the verbal, or textual, content such as composition, theme, tonality, time and space;
- the audio-visual techniques employed in the nonverbal content such as background colors and images, as well as voice, music, settings, and salience, or dominant images that draw attention, in videos;
- the global discourse category of ideologeme.

4. Analysis and results

The marketing discourse of the *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* websites under investigation is generated with the overall intention of persuading customers to purchase IT solutions. Hence, it is the persuasive function that is dominant in the discourse.

4.1. Verbal content

First of all, it is necessary to focus on the categories which find manifestation in the verbal discourse. And this is when the discourse-generating category of intention should be considered as the key one. Hypertextual, interactive, and multimodal websites and webpages (Opgenhaffen 2011; Shchipitsina 2009) consist of multiple texts, videos, etc. having titles and subtitles of their own while users can browse through and choose some content (see Figure 1 above) so it is the global category of intention that brings all these constituent parts together.

The webpages under study have a typical composition and feature the title and some subtitles followed by texts providing insights into specific software benefits. The table below contains some titles and subtitles. These are mostly imperative sentences and can be explained by their dominant persuasive function. There are also nominative sentences to name the products and technologies in use and some interrogative sentences, with the answers to these questions supposed to emphasize the product benefits (Table 1):

Table 1

Webpage titles and subtitles

Software vendor	Microsoft	Oracle	SAP
Title	Microsoft 365 for business	Why Big Data from Oracle?	Solve your specific ERP small business needs
Subtitles	Everything you need, everywhere you need it	Elements of Successful Big Data Platforms	Take control with SME ERP
	Don't drown in paperwork	Big Data Technologies	Meet cloud-based ERP
	Protect what matters most	See the Proof	Simplify life at work

The discourse-generating intention of persuading customers to make a purchase finds its manifestation in the categories of **theme, tonality, time and space**, with one of the most accurate natural language processing APIs—TextRazor⁸—being utilized in the study to extract examples of the categories.

The theme manifests itself through repetitive uses of words such as neutral IT terms *application, software, data, cloud, etc.* and related words *customer, business, company, etc.* The themes identified in the study are very similar for all the three software vendors: *customer — business — productivity — application — data — cloud — email* for Microsoft; *business — data — cloud — application* for Oracle; and *business — customers — cloud — solution* for SAP.

The tonality of the material under analysis is generally positive, with the words such as *easi(ly), quick(ly), rapid(ly), fast, etc.* being repeatedly used in all the three discourses to emphasize the fact that customers can improve their performance in no time:

⁸ TextRazor [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.textrazor.com/> (accessed 02.11.2019).

(1) *Make repetitive tasks **easy**; **Quickly and easily** automate processes [Microsoft].*

(2) *Prepare and manage your data **more easily**; Combine your data **more easily**; And start analyzing it **more easily** to uncover insights you've never seen before; Utilizing big data allows organizations to make smarter and **faster** decisions using data and insights [Oracle].*

(3) *Maximise business **agility** with standardized processes, **rapid** innovation, and **fast** time-to-value [SAP].*

The comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs are also typical: *more easily, better, greater, etc.* to focus on the positive change. In addition, words such as *efficiently* and *effectively* can be used in this way:

(4) *Learn how Fissler uses an intelligent cloud ERP solution to **efficiently** implement new subsidiaries in strategic markets worldwide [SAP].*

The terminology and theme-related words can be preceded by positive adjectives such as *best-in-class productivity, intelligent new way, advanced, world-class security* [Microsoft]; *smarter and faster decisions, true data discovery* [Oracle]; *ambitious businesses, profitable growth* [SAP], etc.

All three discourses of the software vendors demonstrate the presence of popular marketing words which can be classified as lines of appeal to potential customers. A good example is the word *insight(s)* which denotes valuable, visionary information enhancing company performance:

(5) *Create surveys, polls, and questionnaires to **quickly** gather data and **insights** with Microsoft Forms [Microsoft].*

(6) *And start analyzing it **more easily** to uncover **insights** you've never seen before—with true data discovery [Oracle].*

(7) *Use it to streamline processes from finance to CRM, act on real-time analytics **insights**—and jump on new opportunities; gain **greater insight** into your business, and make decisions based on real-time information—so you can drive profitable growth [SAP].*

The marketing discourse is abundant in imperative sentences starting with positively charged verbs such as *streamline, enhance, improve, innovate, etc.* encouraging and persuading customers to try the IT products:

(8) ***Improve** productivity and **foster** a culture of collaboration; **Enhance** customer relationships; **Stay up to date with** the latest versions; **Streamline** customer feedback; **Defend against** malware [Microsoft].*

(9) ***Maximize** efficiency and increase revenue; **Discover** the top big data use cases [Oracle].*

(10) ***Solve** your specific ERP small business needs; **Gain greater control** over your SME with small business management software and ERP tools designed to grow with you; **Innovate and transform** at the speed of digital; **Streamline** key processes [SAP].*

It is of particular interest that the theme-related and positively charged words are similar in all the three discourses of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP*, with words such as *easi(ly)*, *quick(ly)*, *efficient(ly)*, *great*, *data*, *insight*, *streamline*, etc. being repeatedly used. This can make it really challenging for customers to differentiate between the discourses of the three companies and—respectively—to choose a solution among some counterparts. For example, verbs such as *transform*, *enhance*, *streamline*, etc. [Microsoft]; *enhance*, *improve*, *leverage*, etc. [Oracle]; *improve*, *innovate*, *transform*, *streamline*, etc. [SAP] tend to be used by all three vendors.

At the same time, the discourses under study make very specific use of positively charged metaphors to emphasize the benefits of their IT solutions:

(11) *Don't drown in paperwork* [Microsoft].

(12) *Unlock new levels of performance across your organization; Jump onto new opportunities; Use automation and intelligent technologies to break new ground* [SAP].

(13) *Only Oracle delivers a data management platform that absorbs and delivers data of any size and shape for any type of application: analytics or algorithm, across any type of environment: public cloud, local cloud, or on-premises; ERP software is the backbone of many organizations* [Oracle].

Thus, theme and tonality find their manifestation in the *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* discourses through a similar use of IT-related terms and popular marketing words, positive adjectives and adverbs being part of imperative sentences urging customers to benefit from the IT solutions. It is also due to a specific use of metaphors that the discourses of the three vendors get their specific appeal.

Time and space categories are also closely intertwined in the discourses under investigation. The present days are described as a time of dealing with massive amounts of data:

(14) *22 Big Data Use Cases for the Modern Business; Data arrives from everywhere these days* [Oracle].

This is when the solutions of the IT companies are supposed to come in handy to easily and quickly solve this problem so the idea of saving time due to optimizing data management is crucial in this respect.

As for the category of space, all the vendors under study focus on the feature of providing powerful all-encompassing enterprise-wide solutions within just a single software suite:

(15) *Manage your files from anywhere with 1 TB of OneDrive storage* [Microsoft].

(16) *Only Oracle delivers a data management platform that absorbs and delivers data of any size and shape for any type of application: analytics or algorithm, across any type of environment: public cloud, local cloud, or on-premises; Bring all of the different types of data into your organization. Whether it's data at rest or data in motion, internal or external data, all of your data must be moved and prepared so that others can consume it* [Oracle].

(17) *Control your entire organisation with streamlined business processes and integrated business intelligence—all in one affordable, scalable ERP software solution; Transform your business with unparalleled service support enterprise-wide* [SAP].

So the discourse manifestation of the time and space categories contributes to the locutionary targets of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* the same idea of getting an all-encompassing solution to handle current data challenges enterprise-wide while the use of *you* and *your* is typical (Serrano 2018) in reaching out to potential customers.

Ultimately, the categories of composition, theme and tonality, time and space work together to deliver **the global ideologeme**, or the central idea, of the marketing discourse under study. This ideologeme of IT-powered efficient performance is made explicit by urging the locutive targets to quickly optimize data management through the use of a single efficient solution for managing all company data to feel the benefits of enhanced performance as soon as possible.

This typical ideologeme is conveyed to the locutionary target through sophisticated antitheses, or juxtapositions (Roper, Caruana, Medway, Murphy 2013), embedded in the marketing discourse for persuading the recipients to experience the benefits of the IT solutions.

The analysis of the *SAP*, *Microsoft*, and *Oracle* webpages demonstrates the use of the following antitheses summarized with only a few of examples from above (Table 2):

Table 2

Antitheses of the marketing discourse

	Microsoft	Oracle	SAP
Multiple data challenges vs. a single solution to deal with all these challenges in a company	Microsoft 365 integrates with hundreds of third-party cloud apps so you can sign in once to access all your tools ; etc.	Bring all of the different types of data into your organization ; etc.	Capture all of your data in an integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for small businesses and midsize companies; etc.
Previously vs. nowadays implying old vs. new, slowly vs. fast, inefficiently vs. efficiently	Microsoft 365 brings together the best-in-class productivity of Office 365 with simple device management and security to connect people and information in an intelligent new way. Quickly and easily automate processes within your business with Microsoft Flow; etc.	Utilizing big data allows organizations, analysts, and line-of-business users to make smarter and faster decisions using data and insights that were previously unobtainable or unknown ; etc.	Use it to streamline processes from finance to CRM, act on real-time analytics insights—and jump on new opportunities ; etc.

One more important part of the verbal content is **customer testimony** demonstrating the same manifestations of the data-related theme, positive tonality,

business-focused time and space as well as the antitheses identified in the marketing discourse above.

The similar antitheses of multiple data vs. one solution and previously vs. now are repeated in the customer comments below, for example, while talking about using one solution to handle lots of data:

(18) *Microsoft 365 Business is pretty much the baseline for how we start running everything. We need creativity to push that next thing. We use Microsoft 365 Business. It's all the things we need in one place* [Microsoft].

(19) *With Oracle Cloud, we automated our procurement and inventory processes on a single cloud platform with in-depth reporting on all commercial cement operations* [Oracle].

It's also important for the customers to feel the difference between how it was before and how it is now:

(20) *Microsoft 365 Business brings a new level of confidence and security we didn't have before* [Microsoft].

(21) *Oracle Advanced Customer Services optimized our deployment and their services ensure that we always have expertise to resolve any issue* [Oracle].

Focusing on the before vs. now juxtaposition, the customers also emphasize the fact that they can do things faster and better:

(22) *With Teams, we immediately felt the impact of having channels where you get a fast response because your question is relevant to that channel rather than something that could get lost in a giant group chat* [Microsoft].

(23) *Deloitte Mexico achieves faster time-to-market with Oracle Big Data Appliance. Clover Infotech. Oracle ERP helped Clover Infotech better manage their data and reporting, save time, and automate processes* [Oracle].

(24) *Find out how a cloud-based ERP system helps a growing candle business save time and boost operational efficiency while creating customised goods* [SAP].

However, the composition of the customer testimony is different since it is a narration delivering such lines of appeal as success, security, etc. without any use of imperative sentences as compared to the imperative discourse of the vendors.

Thus, the imperative discourse, the IT theme, positive tonality, all-encompassing time and space categories of the verbal content work together to deliver the juxtaposed prior vs. now positive ideologemes of the IT-powered efficient performance as the locutionary sources encourage their customers to feel the benefits of the IT solutions while the locutionary sources share their success stories focusing on their lines of appeal.

4.2. Nonverbal, or audio-visual, content

The IT marketing discourse under analysis is multimodal, with colors, images, and videos also playing their role.

The importance of using background contrast colors cannot be ignored: lines between the texts of SAP (see Figure 1 above); the grey-and-white background of

Microsoft (see Figure 2 below); contrasts in black, blue and white colors on the Oracle website (see Figure 3) help information stand out.

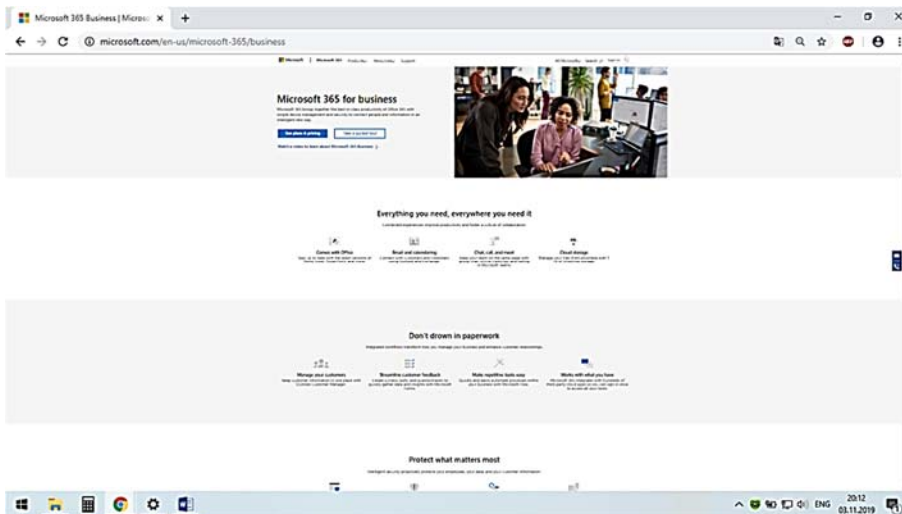


Fig. 2. Microsoft webpage screenshot

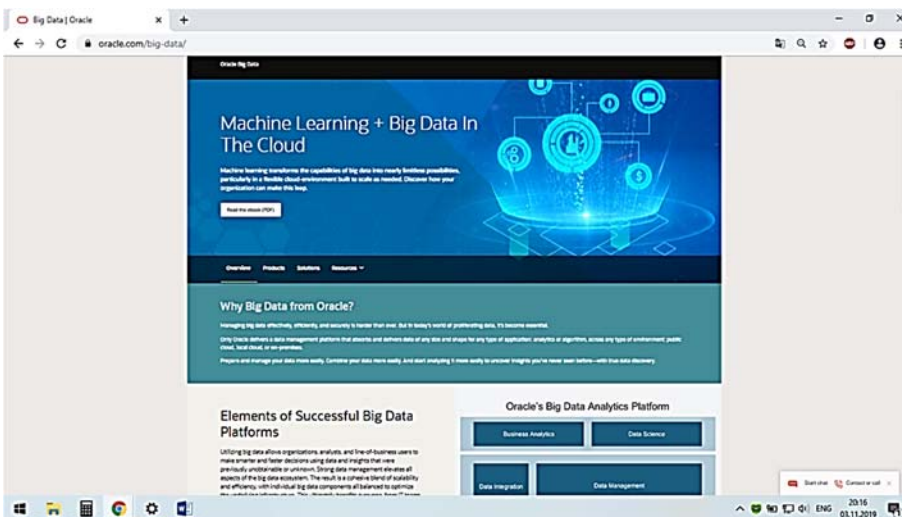


Fig. 3. Oracle webpage screenshot

The photos on the websites feature customers in the working settings (Figure 2 above). Customer testimonial videos can also be found on the websites under study making them part of the multimodal marketing discourse.

Nine customer testimonial videos will be analyzed below taking into account a number of parameters for investigating the verbal content such as speeches and nonverbal components including music, settings, and salience (the dominant image that draws our attention). The following parameters seem to be the most relevant in our case: composition, antithesis, theme, tonality, time and space, audio techniques (voice and music), visual techniques (salience and setting), and ideologemes.

As mentioned before, the **ideologeme** of the locutionary source is made explicit by urging the locutive targets to quickly optimize data management through the use of one efficient solution to manage all company data and to feel the benefits of enhanced performance as soon as possible. Via the customer testimonial videos, this ideologeme transforms into some experience of a particular company focusing more on lines of appeal such as success, security, etc. while this transformation has also been identified earlier in the customer testimony texts.

Generally, the textual content of the customer testimonial videos is a narrative providing some information about the successful implementation of the vendors' solutions similarly to the customer testimony texts. The composition of the customer testimonial videos analyzed relies on the typical antithesis of the situation prior and after implementing the solutions.

All the videos of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* under study have a similar composition:

1) Company information: providing some information about the company, including facts and figures;

2) Challenges: focusing on the challenges the business had to face and cope with;

3) Solutions and benefits: commenting on how the acquired solutions have contributed to solving all the problems;

4) Future outlook: outlining future perspectives for the growing and evolving business.

Below are Tables 3, 4, and 5 providing the details of this analysis, with some changes being evident in the customer testimonial videos since the theme shifts from the IT terms to core values such as *quality*, *innovation*, *saving*, *security*, etc. while the tonality remains positive. The categories of time and space find a typical manifestation since the information is just about doing things faster on an enterprise-wide scale. As for the antitheses employed in the customer testimonial videos, they are generally related to the situation prior and after, however, the spokespeople tend to dwell into more detail such as *non-customized vs. customized*, *old vs. new*, *worse vs. better*, etc. Some audio-visual techniques are used in this case to make the content more persuasive through a synergy of verbal and nonverbal means, for example, invigorating music, scenes of the facilities, and top spokespeople enumerating the benefits gained.

Table 3 below outlines a summary of the *Microsoft* customer testimonial video analysis providing insights into the composition, antitheses, appealing themes, tonality, time, space, and audio-visual techniques, such as: music, voice, setting, and salience. The findings demonstrate that *Microsoft* customers tend to focus on such themes and lines of appeal as *quality*, *security*, *integration*, *innovation*, *growth*, etc. The composition is typical being centered around company spokespersons—both males and females—and evolving from the company details and settings through *challenges* to *solutions* creating the positive tonality of the resulting *faster*, *better*, *right*, *rocketing*, etc. performance backed up with

invigorating music. Having been put together, the constituent elements contribute to creating an antithesis of the *prior* and *current* state of things, with the former being disintegrated and slow and the latter—consolidated and fast—due to a single efficient solution:

Table 3

Analysis of Microsoft customer testimonial videos

Video	Microsoft customer testimonial video 1 ⁹ . Duration 02:13	Microsoft customer testimonial video 2 ¹⁰ . Duration 02:03	Microsoft customer testimonial video 3 ¹¹ . Duration 01:30
Company	UMBAGROUP	Urban Agriculture Co.	Garner Food Company
Composition	1) company information: five world-wide units of a world-leading provider for the space and energy market 2) challenges: reduce costs and increase the security and agility level 3) solutions: they can share KPIs across the company and with their partners, make decisions faster, scale processes faster 4) future outlook: they can get better	1) company information: operating in 50 states of the USA 2) challenges: start running the business effectively 3) solutions: improved company performance 4) future outlook: they can grow further	1) company information: a family business producing tens of millions of sauce bottles 2) challenges: handling lots of things 3) solutions: better company operation 4) future outlook: they can expand
Antithesis	prior: disintegrated and slow now: consolidated and fast	prior: disintegrated now: consolidated	prior: lots of things to handle now: one solution for everything: it's all the things that we need in one place
Appealing themes	quality, innovation, integration, success	security, partnership, growth	quality, change, security, integration
Tonality	seamless interplay; faster decisions; an open dialogue; a better integration	healthier, easier life; excited	the right message to the right people; rocketing performance
Time and space	now and across the company	on the fly	enterprise-wise and around-the-clock
Audio-visual techniques: music, voice	invigorating music, male and female speakers	invigorating music, only male speaker	invigorating music, male and female speakers
Audio-visual techniques: setting and salience	working and office settings, happy customers, people browsing through infographics, planes at take-off	working and office settings, infographics, organic food	working and office settings, through infographics, bottles of sauce

⁹ URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXuDYk8QDH0>

¹⁰ URL: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business>

¹¹ URL: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business>

Table 4 gives the details of analyzing *Oracle* customer testimonial videos, with the customers providing testimony on themes, such as: *speed, flexibility, security, saving, etc.* Similarly to that of the Microsoft client testimonials, the composition focuses on company information and settings, challenges, and—eventually—solutions in order to create a similar antithesis of the *prior* and *current* situations culminating in the positive tonality of *better, leading, faster, etc.* experience:

Table 4

Analysis of Oracle customer testimonial videos

Video	Oracle customer testimonial video 1 ¹² . Duration 03:11	Oracle customer testimonial video 2 ¹³ . Duration 01 :14	Oracle customer testimonial video 3 ¹⁴ . Duration 01:00
Company	Allianz	FireEye Cyber Security	CARE
Composition	1) company information: leading financial services provider 2) challenges: consolidate data management, work faster, reduce costs 3) solutions: they are faster and on-premise, they've overcome all the challenges 4) future outlook: they can achieve a higher maturity level	1) company information: security solutions provider 2) challenges: improve performance, tens of millions of emails 3) solutions: they can save costs 4) future outlook: protect their customers better	1) company information: helping mothers and babies 2) challenges: high maternity mortality 3) solutions: they have accelerated organizational change, helping people and saving lives 4) future outlook: to succeed in making an impact on lives
Antithesis	prior: problems with migrating data now: consolidated and fast, less expensive, more flexible	prior: lots of emails to scan now: consolidated effort, saved costs	prior: maternity and infant deaths, lost hope now: fewer deaths, positive transformation underway
Appealing themes	flexibility and elasticity, speed	security, saving	commitment, impact, change
Tonality	faster, more elasticity; solid experience; a real mission; a lot of positive experience; an exciting journey/path to the positive	leading technology; better protected; significant improvement	accelerating change
Time and space	faster and on-premise	Quickly	anywhere
Audio-visual techniques: music, voice	invigorating music, male speaker	invigorating music, only male speakers	invigorating music, female speakers
Audio-visual techniques: setting and salience	working and office settings, happy customers, people browsing through infographics	working and office settings, through infographics, organic food	ethnic settings, India, females and infants

¹² URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S12xJXw71AQ>

¹³ URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stWqDXh0TCc>

¹⁴ URL: <https://www.oracle.com/customers/infrastructure/care/>

Table 5 illustrates the results of analyzing *SAP* customer testimonial videos whereas the customers focus on *growth and future* as well as *security*, with the other elements of testimonials being very similar to those of *Microsoft* and *Oracle* outlined above:

Table 5

Analysis of SAP customer testimonial videos

Video	SAP customer testimonial video 1 ¹⁵ . Duration 3:00	SAP customer testimonial video 2 ¹⁶ . Duration 05:50	SAP customer testimonial video 3 ¹⁷ . Duration 01:00
Company	ISlide	Markgräflisch Badisches Weinhaus	Devialet
Composition	1) company information: customised slide producer 2) challenges: keep all the data in one place, manual reporting 3) solutions: they have achieved the growth they need 4) future outlook: they are excited about the future	1) company information: German wine maker 2) challenges: collect data, convert the business into a viable structure for the future 3) solutions: they can collect data from all the sensors in the vineyard to send it to the cloud 4) future outlook: protect the data in real time, help decision making for the future	1) company information: best sound provider 2) challenges: growth 3) solutions: manage distribution, supply chain 4) future outlook: grow in the business
Antithesis	prior: problems with reporting and handling data, no communication now: integrated, increased communication effort	prior: lots of information to be collected from sensors now: just one laptop to get information from all the sensors	prior: growth challenges now: focused on the data
Appealing themes	vision, growth, efficiency	benefit, decision-making, security, future	growth, future
Tonality	happy, extremely excited; comfortable; personal touch; a huge part of their growth	revolutionize; easy, amazing; competitive edge; proud, excited; magic; an easier process; a fully-blown system; a more superior product	best; a fast-growing company; new ways; confident
Time and space	fast and on-premise, focused on the future	real-time and on-premise	anywhere
Audio-visual techniques: music, voice	invigorating music, male speakers	invigorating music, female and male speakers	invigorating music, male speaker
Audio-visual techniques: setting and salience	working and office settings	working and office settings, through infographics, vineyards	sound equipment, dancing people

¹⁵ URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1sIELDwMuQ>

¹⁶ URL: <https://news.sap.com/2018/09/blending-tradition-technology-markgraeflich-badisches-weinhaus/>

¹⁷ URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDiTMFyslAs>

As can be seen from the tables above, despite some differences, all the customers of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* are very likely to focus on very similar themes, or lines of appeal, such as *growth*, *success*, *future*, *security*, etc. Thus, the audio-visual part of the multimodal discourse in the form of customer testimonial videos delivers some experience of a particular company while heavily relying on the same antitheses as previously employed in the marketing discourse of the locutionary sources.

5. Conclusion

Ultimately, this paper has attempted to gain insight into the multimodal marketing content of the *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* websites using the integrated approach which incorporates the assumptions of pragmatics, multimodal discourse analysis, and text linguistics in a search for a more comprehensive understanding of how the verbal and audio-visual means of the websites work together to deliver the ideologemes of the IT marketing discourse.

Since it is the intention that is behind the positive marketing discourse of IT under investigation, the discourses delivered by the vendors and the customers can be different. The vendors encourage and urge their clients to try the **benefits of the IT-powered performance** in the predominantly imperative discourse while the existing customers share their appealing stories of success achieved through the use of the solutions focusing on lines of appeal such as **positive change, growth, success, quality, security, speed, integration, saving, etc.** Nevertheless, it is the global persuasive intention of the software vendors that is dominant in constructing and delivering the overall marketing discourse.

It is of particular interest that all the three marketing discourses of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* as well as their textual and audio-visual customer testimonials make use of very similar antitheses juxtaposing *multiple data vs. one solution* and *previously vs. now*, implying *old vs. new*, *slowly vs. fast*, *inefficiently vs. efficiently*, etc.

The manifestation of IT themes, positive tonality, time and space is also very typical in all the three *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* discourses making the most of words such as *insight(s)*, *data*, *streamline*, *enhance*, *easi(ly)*, *quick(ly)*, *now*, *across*, *enterprise-wide*, etc. and demonstrating some striking differences only when it comes to metaphors yielding some company-specific appeal, for example, *don't drown in paperwork* in the *Microsoft* discourse; *jump on opportunities* on the *SAP* website; or *absorbing data* in the *Oracle* context, etc.

The multimodal messages from the customer testimonial videos tend to focus more on the metaphorically and positively laden ideas of the IT solutions helping the inspired customers to feel the positive enterprise-wide change they have desperately aspired to before while the audio-visual techniques such as invigorating music and specific company settings are very typical.

Through the synergy of verbal and nonverbal means, the overall marketing discourse of *Microsoft*, *Oracle*, and *SAP* employs juxtapositions to render

the global, all-pervasive and persuasive ideologeme of a more efficient IT-powered performance, with the resulting benefits being fully embraced by customers.

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