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Rhetorical structure and persuasive features of advertising: An intercultural analysis of English and Arabic online advertisements

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Abstract

Nowadays, the bulk of e-commerce is carried out in English. At the same time, however, the emergence and growth of Arab e-commerce has attracted attention from e-commerce giants, such as AliBaba and Amazon. Acquiring a deeper understanding of culture-specific advertising practices is thus quickly becoming necessary for digital advertisers and marketers seeking to tap into both English- and Arabic-speaking consumer markets. Despite this, little has been written on online advertising discourse within the particular contexts. To address this, the present study reports on a pragmatic two-level rhetorical analysis of the macro-structure of the sub-genre of online advertisements in English and Arabic and focuses on the identification of the persuasive linguistic features employed to signal constituent moves. Drawing upon Swales' move-step model of rhetorical analysis, the exploration of a comparable corpus of 100 online advertisements of skin care products per language introduced new layers in the rhetorical organisation of [online] advertisements. The results revealed that English and Arabic advertisements consisted of both common and culture-specific rhetorical moves. The persuasive strategies employed common lexico-grammatical features at syntactic, semantic, and discoursal level, albeit to a different extent. Overall, the results of this study illustrate that online advertisements of skin care products could be considered as a particular sub-genre with context-specific macro- and micro-structures. Through the investigation of the specific datasets, this study expands upon the existing analytical frameworks used for the study of advertising discourse and adds to the intercultural exploration of the rhetorical structures and persuasive strategies used in online advertisements.

Keywords: *online advertisement, genre, rhetorical structure, move, persuasive language, technical writing*

Риторическая структура и средства убеждения в рекламных текстах: межкультурный анализ английской и арабской онлайн-рекламы

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Аннотация

В наши дни большая часть интернет-торговли осуществляется с использованием английского языка. В то же время возникновение и рост арабской интернет-коммерции привлекает внимание таких гигантов интернет-торговли, как AliBaba и Amazon. В связи с этим возрастает потребность в более глубоком понимании культурно-специфических рекламных практик рекламодателями и маркетологами, стремящимися выйти как на англоязычные, так и арабоязычные потребительские рынки. Однако, работы, посвященные онлайн-рекламному дискурсу в определенных контекстах, немногочисленны. Настоящее исследование посвящено прагматическому двухуровневому риторическому анализу макроструктуры субжанра англоязычной и арабоязычной онлайн-рекламы. В центре внимания авторов – языковые средства убеждения, используемые как сигналы конститутивных ходов. Рассмотрение сравнительного корпуса 100 интернет-реклам продуктов для ухода за кожей, проведенное с опорой на модель риторического анализа ходов/ шагов (Swales), позволяет выделить новые слои риторической организации онлайн-рекламы. Результаты показывают, что в англоязычной и арабоязычной рекламе применяются как общие, так и культурно-специфичные риторические ходы. Стратегии убеждения в разной степени используют общие лексико-грамматические черты на синтаксическом, семантическом и дискурсивном уровнях. В целом, результаты анализа показывают, что онлайн-рекламу продуктов для ухода за кожей можно рассматривать как определенный субжанр с культурно-специфическими макро- и микроструктурами. Исследование специфических баз данных позволяет расширить аналитические подходы, используемые для анализа рекламного дискурса, и вносит вклад в межкультурное изучение риторической структуры и стратегий убеждения, используемых в онлайн-рекламе.

Ключевые слова: *онлайн-реклама, жанр, риторическая структура, ход, язык убеждения, техническое письмо*

1. Introduction

The term *advertising* derives from the Medieval Latin verb *advertere*, 'to direct one's attention to' a service or product through some oral or written public pronouncement (Danesi 2015). Since its roots in antiquity, the craft of advertising has, ipso facto, created a type of promotional discourse whose mastery requires an understanding of the typical rhetorical structures and lexico-grammatical devices employed for reasons of persuasion. That is, a sensible adoption of linguistic features and an adequate balance of persuasive and objective information are central for turning consumers towards accepting the message transmitted and acting upon it. The study of advertising as a persuasive social discourse has been approached from many disciplinary perspectives, including anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, and semiotics. This is because advertisements clearly enhance intercultural exchange as well as contribute to modern civilisation (Cheung 2008). Persuasive language has also been the subject of investigation in various genres in different languages, including English, Chinese, and Persian sales emails (Ahangar & Dastuyi 2017, Cheung 2010), English and Arabic earning calls (Crawford Camiciottoli 2011, Suchan 2014), English fundraising letters (Goering et al. 2011), English commercial advertisements (Romanova & Smirnova 2019), English online social advertisements (Popova 2018), English media texts (Larina et al. 2020), and English argumentative essays (Al-Momani 2014).

Despite the considerable number of studies on persuasive language, the literature reveals that only a handful have explored it in the sub-genre of online advertisements (e.g. online magazines). Among the few is the study of Labrador et al. (2014), which looked into the rhetorical structure and the persuasive language of online advertisements of small electronic devices in an ad hoc English-Spanish comparable corpus of 100 texts. The gap is more acute when it comes to the intercultural exploration of advertising discourse where, for example, there seem to have been virtually no systematic investigation of persuasive language in online advertisements of skin care products in Western (English) and Non-Western (Arabic) cultures.

To address this, the current investigation attempts to bring to light cultural similarities and/or differences between English and Arabic by examining specifically the rhetorical structure as well as the persuasive linguistic features employed in online advertisements of skin care products brought forward in both languages. In order to ascertain persuasive resources in the two contexts, following past studies (e.g. Cheung 2008, 2010, Labrador et al. 2014), this study draws on a schematic structure analysis that further helps identify persuasive features and connect them to the moves and steps that represent the communicative functions

conveyed in the text. This approach, which adopts genre analysis, aims to explicate persuasive techniques in a series of social interactions, exploring the discursive and linguistic choices involved. In general, the major research questions addressed in the present study are as follows:

1. What are the typical rhetorical patterns used in English and Arabic online advertisements of skin care products?

2. What are the lexico-grammatical resources signalling persuasion in such advertisements in each context?

3. What are the similarities and differences between English and Arabic online advertisements of skin care products in terms of rhetorical structure and persuasive techniques?

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Genre and move-step rhetorical analysis

Culture is an indispensable part of writing and affects its habits. This is because writing, as a product of social activities, is a "cultural object, existing only in the social world of humans" (Mauranen 1993: 4). As with academic genres, discourse construction in professional settings demands compliance with particular norms, which make promotional texts recognisable as belonging to a particular genre. Such norms build up a common pattern where all writings within a given genre are composed of the same linguistic features with nearly similar functions in virtually identical positioning. That is to say, discourse communities develop specific rhetorical patterns for a specific text type. To illustrate, full-length empirical research articles conform to the Introduction, Method, Results and Discussion (IMR&D) layout – a widely accepted conventional format proposed by Swales (1990).

Within the field of discourse analysis, scholars have approached the study of genres from different linguistic angles. A functional perspective was followed in this paper to study the sub-genre of online advertisements. The field of discourse, the participants in the communicative event, and the importance of the context are all aspects of variations across languages that accentuate the social function of language as the key attribute of human communication. Within this framework, Swales initiated the exploration of discourse genres with his pioneering work on research article introductions (1990), establishing the communicative purpose as the focal point shared by all the writings within the same genre. Rather more recently, Bhatia (2004) referred to genre as "language use in a conventionalised communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution which gives rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal resources" (Ibid: 23).

The description of communicative units in specific genres and the development of a model for the rhetorical analysis of the internal structure of various forms of

discourse have been attempted by a number of approaches. Among them is Swales'
move-step model of rhetorical analysis, which hierarchically systematised a number
of 'moves' and 'steps'. He defines move as a discoursal segment or an expression
that represents a definitive or a specific communicative goal (Swales 1990, 2004).
In the words of Biber et al. (2007), "each move not only has its own purpose but
also contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the genre" (Ibid: 23). In
essence, a move is likely to be made up of smaller units (steps and sub-steps) that
work together to create "various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style,
content and intended audience" across the text (Swales 1990: 58).

Swales' move–step model has been further expanded and/or modified in
several rhetorical genre studies, such as grant proposals (Connor & Mauranen
1999), research articles (Brett 1994, Dudley-Evans 1994), recommendation letters
(Precht 2000), letters of application (Upton & Connor 2001), and business letters
(Bhatia 1993, Vergaro 2004, Zhu 2001). Intercultural investigation has been an
important line of inquiry in many of these rhetorical studies focusing on different
genres, such as medical research papers (Williams 2012), academic book reviews
(Suárez Tejerina & Fernández 2008), football match reports (Díez-Fernández
2009), and scientific abstracts (Arroyo et al. 2007, Martín 2003, 2005). We will
follow Swales' move–step model in this paper for the study of the rhetorical
structure of online advertisements of skin care products in English and Arabic.

2.2. The sub-genre of online advertisements

Within the genre of advertisements, we may consider online advertisements as
a particular discourse sub-genre, along with other sub-genres including print, TV
and radio advertisements. They all share the communicative purpose of offering a
service or presenting a product in such a way that the reader is convinced of its
quality and utility and reflect on purchasing it. Despite this, online advertisements
"tend to apply a more interactional-conversational language approach [which
affects] language use, message flow, and types of direct user addressing''
(Janoschka 2004: 9–10).

Following Cook's (2001) classification and based on the criteria listed below,
Labrador et al. (2014) offer the following description of online advertisements:

1. Item advertised: product versus non-product advertisements. Online
advertisements may offer services, or they may serve to sell products.

2. Medium: The fact that they appear on the internet (and not in printed books,
newspapers, television, radio, or magazines) greatly determines their internal
structure.

3. Length: short copy versus long copy. Online advertisements belong to the
long copy group because unlike short attention-grabbing advertisements, they are
more informative and descriptive texts.

4. Technique: Services or products may be sold on the internet by the use of
the soft-sell technique that "relies more on mood than on exhortation, and on the

implication that life will be better with the product" (Cook 2001: 15) or by means of the hard-sell technique (i.e. making a direct appeal to consumers).

5. Consumer profile: This criterion deals with the socio-economic background of targeted consumers who are computer-literate adults usually looking for advertisements on the internet.

6. Appeal type: tickle versus reason. "Reason ads suggest motives for purchase. […]. Tickle ads, on the other hand, appeal to emotions, humour, and mood" (Cook 2001: 15). Online advertisements may be of both types.

2.3. The persuasive language of advertisements

By seeking to combine "information-and-publicity (or 'telling-and-selling')" (Fairclough 1992: 279), advertising relies on the use of 'loaded language' (Leech 1966) that exploits emotive words, catchphrases, metaphors, informal expressions, and comparisons to appeal to consumers. This implies that what is typically considered to be colloquial language is used to approach potential customers, for example, by giving the impression of treating each of them as an individual rather than en masse. This strategy, called 'synthetic personalization' by Fairclough (1989), could be achieved through the use of inclusive language, which extends beyond the application of personal pronouns. Examples would be expressions such as "Welcome to Shawarma Palace" or "Have a safe journey" in the case of restaurant and air travel advertisements respectively, which seem to project a personalised message. Other researchers (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, Janoschka 2004) have listed some of the most frequently used persuasive features found in advertisements, such as rhetorical questions, alliterations, or commands. Multiple modifications, specifically of syntactic features, such as combining two or more adjectives, are also used "to give a colourful and attractive description of the [advertised] products or services and [communicate the intended message] more on an emotive level" (Rush 1998: 161).

3. Methodology

This section provides a description of the methodology used in collecting and analysing the data, as well as of the analytical framework developed to suit the purpose of the study.

3.1. The corpus

This mixed-method study was guided by a built corpus consisting of 200 texts (100 per context). The entire corpus amounted to 31572 words (8149 words in English and 23423 words in Arabic). The unequal corpus size was not relevant for the aim of this study as an equal number of advertisements in each context were used. The texts, randomly extracted from online magazines, concerned online advertisements of skin care products written originally in English and Arabic. Although they did not advertise the same products, they were all promoting items,

models, and brands of skin care products for women. The English advertisements were obtained from *InStyle*, *Salon*, and *Glamour*, which are prestigious online magazines in the UK. The texts in Arabic were sourced from the Arabic magazines *Sayidaty*, *Anazahra*, and *Al-Jamela*, which are equally popular in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

3.2. Data collection procedure

Various guidelines were followed in the process of data collection. Firstly, following the understanding of a text as a 'semantic unit' of meaning (Halliday & Hassan 1976), there was no limit set for the length of each advertisement. Secondly, the texts collected were published between 2011 and 2020. Thirdly, the selected texts in each language were grouped according to the functions of the products advertised, including anti-aging products, moisturizing products, sun care products, and eye products (25 texts per function in each context). Finally, while we are aware of the fact that non-verbal elements, like visual features, play an instrumental role in fulfilling the communicative purpose of advertising, we limited the study of persuasive strategies to linguistic resources necessary to express persuasion so that professionals working in both advertising contexts may construct their messages in attractive and conducive ways. We are of the view that the non-verbal elements will not pose a problem in constructing online advertisements in the two cultures as they are similar in that aspect. Therefore, the exploration of the semiotic dimension of online advertising goes beyond the scope of this study. The challenges are to be found in the verbal elements, which were the focus of the work at hand.

3.3. Analytical framework

The current study was guided by the existing frameworks developed by Kathpalia (1992), Bhatia (2004), and Labrador et al. (2014; see Tables 1–3). A preliminary analysis of a small sub-set of the corpus (10 texts per context) showed that the following moves (M) were observed across the corpus: 'identifying product and purpose', 'describing the product' (Labrador et al. 2014), 'justifying the product/service', 'endorsement/testimonials', 'establishing credentials' (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992), and 'urging action' (Kathpalia 1992). Furthermore, the corpus at hand presented some new steps (S), 'pricing' and 'providing extra details', and one new sub-step (Sub) 'instructing the use'. This led to the expansion of the existing analytical models to meet the needs of the analysis of the corpus at hand (see Table 4). It needs to be noted that 'illustrating the product with a picture', which was introduced as a step in the move model by Labrador et al. (2014), was not taken into consideration because as mentioned in the previous section the exploration of semiotic features in advertisement was beyond the scope of this study.

Table 1. Move model by Kathpalia (1992)

Move 1: Appraising the product/service
Move 2: Establishing credentials
Move 3: Justifying the product/service
Move 4: Targeting the market
Move 5: Offering incentives
Move 6: Urging action
Move 7: Endorsement/Testimonial
Move 8: Headlines

Table 2. Move model by Bhatia (2004)

Move 1: Headlines/Attracting readers' attention
Move 2: Targeting the market
Move 3: Justifying the product or service
Move 4: Detailing the product or service
Move 5: Establishing credentials
Move 6: Celebrity or typical user endorsement
Move 7: Offering incentives
Move 8: Using pressure tactics
Move 9: Soliciting responses

Table 3. Move model by Labrador et al. (2014)

Move 1: Identifying product and purpose
- Step 1: Referring to the manufacturing company
- Step 2: Naming the product
- Step 3: Stating the applications
- Step 4: Illustrating the product with a picture

Move 2: Describing the product
- Step 1: Objective characteristics
  - Sub-step 1: Listing features
  - Sub-step 2: Listing models
  - Sub-step 3: Listing data sheets
  - Sub-step 4: Listing extra options
- Step 2: Persuasive characteristics
  - Sub-step 1: Evaluating the product positively
  - Sub-step 2: Comparing the product with other similar products

Table 4. Framework used in the present study

Move 1: Identifying product and purpose (Labrador et al. 2014)
- Step 1: Referring to the manufacturing company (Labrador et al. 2014)
- Step 2: Naming the product (Labrador et al. 2014)
- Step 3: Pricing (New step)
- Step 4: Targeting the market (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992)
- Step 5: Providing extra details (New step)

Move 2: Describing the product (Labrador et al. 2014)
- Step 1: Objective characteristics (Labrador et al. 2014)
  - Sub-step 1: Listing features (Labrador et al. 2014)
  - Sub-step 2: Listing models (Labrador et al. 2014)
  - Sub-step 3: Instructing the use (New sub-step)
- Step 2: Persuasive characteristics (Labrador et al. 2014)
  - Sub-step 1: Evaluating the product positively (Labrador et al. 2014)

Move 3: Justifying the product (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992)
Move 4: Endorsing the product (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992)
Move 5: Establishing credentials (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992)
Move 6: Urging action (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992)

3.4. Data analysis procedure

The collected data was subjected to two phases of analysis: rhetorical moves analysis followed by the exploration of lexico-grammatical features expressing persuasive meanings. Regarding the first phase of analysis, the study followed Swales' (1990) three-level genre model (communicative purpose, move structure, and rhetorical strategies) to break each text down into distinctive moves, steps, and sub-steps, which were identified based on their functions in the text. Reference was also made to previous studies on the rhetorical structure of advertisements or similar genres (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992, Labrador et al. 2014). However, as discussed earlier, after the preliminary analysis and subsequent modifications to the existing move classifications, a coding schema, which best fitted the purpose of this study, was tailored and used to analyse the whole corpus.

When coding the data, three themes needed to be addressed: (1) the general approach to the analysis of data; (2) the unit of analysis, which refers to a text segment that carries a meaning; and (3) the strategies used to identify the boundaries of moves. Therefore, the study primarily took a top-down approach (based on meaning) when coding the data. However, to code a text segment that its function was fuzzy, a bottom-up approach was used for confirmation, and reference was made to several linguistic features. Since the study is derived from Swales' perspective on genre, the unit of analysis should realise the communicative purpose of the text. Hence, the study was flexible about the unit of analysis, initially proposing the sentence as its smallest one. To identify the writers' communicative purposes and then the boundaries of the texts, a functional approach was taken to identify moves and steps. Following past studies (del Saz Rubio 2011, Khedri & Kritsis 2018, Ozturk 2007), in a likely condition whereby more than one move appeared in the sentence, the most dominant one was selected.

Concerning the prominence level of occurrences of moves, steps, and sub-steps, reference was primarily made to Howe's (1995) four-grade system. However, to avoid possible confusions, the marginal prominence level of frequency — 50% of occurrence as both 'prominent' and 'non-prominent' — was revised as follows: 0-49% and 50-100% of occurrences were considered as 'non-prominent' and 'prominent', respectively.

Regarding the second phase of analysis, following Labrador et al. (2014), linguistic resources expressing persuasive meanings were only searched in the persuasive section (M2S2: persuasive characteristics), as this is the part where we expected more cases to be found. Each piece of text designated as persuasive was read and then all lexico-grammatical features associated with persuasion were identified. Following that, the final list of persuasive features was categorised according to part of speech and then used to determine the frequency of occurrence.

In this study, to reduce the risk of randomness and demarcate the precision of the analytical approaches taken at an adequately high level of consensus, a consistent method was very central to data codification in this study, where the focus is on content analysis across languages or cultures with different rhetorical

norms. As a result, the analysis was improved through a channel of inter-coder agreement, albeit the data was mainly analysed by the researchers. The texts were first coded sentence by sentence and a sheet of analysis was appended to each one for systematic analysis. A PhD graduate, who was bilingual (English and Arabic) and had completed his dissertation on genre-based text analysis, was then recruited to analyse a small sub-set of the dataset (10 texts per context). He received extensive training for several sessions and was also given a coding manual comprising descriptions and examples. Once the corpus was analysed, the coder and the researchers went through the texts to identify any conflicting results. Despite minor inconsistencies in move boundaries, which were ironed out in discussions, the obtained value of the inter-coder agreement measured by Cohen's kappa signalled a high reliability index of .87.

4. Results and discussion

In this section we will first comment on some general findings concerning the rhetorical structure of the English and Arabic online advertisements of skin care products. This is followed by commenting upon the analysis of the different persuasive linguistic features mapped onto moves and/or steps that integrate the rhetorical structure of online advertisements.

4.1. Rhetorical structure in English and Arabic online advertisements

Findings depicting the frequency and prominence level of moves, steps, and sub-steps found in the present corpus are presented in Table 5. The data showed two obligatory moves in each language sub-corpus: M1 (identifying product and purpose) in both corpora as well as M6 (urging action) and M3 (justifying the product) in English and Arabic, respectively. The prevalence of M1 was not unexpected given the high importance the particular function carries in adverts (Labrador et al. 2014). What follows presents a detailed description of the analysis of moves, steps, and sub-steps in each advertising context accompanied with examples sampled from the corpus.

Table 5. Frequency and prominence level of rhetorical moves, steps, and sub-steps
in the English and Arabic corpora

Moves	English sub-corpus		Arabic sub-corpus	
	%	PL	%	PL
Move 1: Identifying product and purpose	59	P	53	P
Step1: Referring to the manufacturing company	9	NP	43	NP
Step 2: Naming the product	100	P	100	P
Step 3: Pricing	93	P	18	NP
Step 4: Targeting the market	48	NP	55	P
Step 5: Providing extra details	9	NP	4	NP
Move 2: Describing the product	29	NP	48	NP
Step 1: Objective characteristics	19	NP	26	NP
Sub-step 1: Listing features	40	NP	47	NP

Moves	English sub-corpus		Arabic sub-corpus	
	%	PL	%	PL
Sub-step 2: Listing models	4	NP	15	NP
Sub-step 3: Instructing the use	13	NP	17	NP
Step 2: Persuasive characteristics	60	P	71	P
Sub-step 1: Evaluating the product positively	60	P	71	P
Move 3: Justifying the product	46	NP	62	P
Move 4: Endorsing the product	30	NP	3	NP
Move 5: Establishing credentials	7	NP	33	NP
Move 6: Urging action	76	P	17	NP

PL: Prominence Level; P: Prominent; NP: Non-prominent.

4.1.1. Move 1: Identifying product and purpose

As shown in Table 5, M1 consisted of five steps which were found in each language sub-corpus, albeit to a different extent as far as their prominence levels are concerned. As can be seen in Fig. 1, 'naming the product' was a prominent step within M1 in the two sets of data. However, while 'pricing' was deemed a prominent step in the English advertisements, 'targeting the market' was regarded prominent in the Arabic advertisements. The following figure illustrates the frequencies of steps within M1 in both datasets.
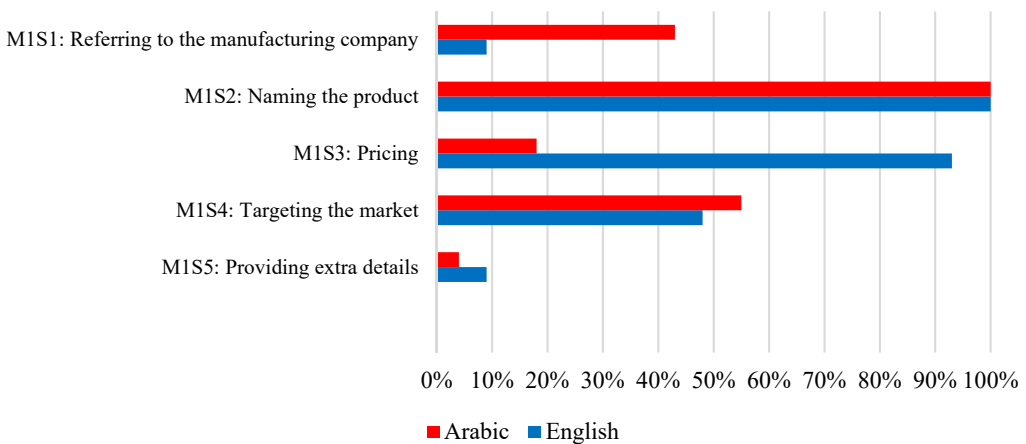
M1: Identifying product and purpose

Fig. 1. Frequencies of steps within M1 in the English and Arabic corpora

When buying a product or acquiring a service, people usually consider the reputation and history of the company or retailer offering it. M1S1 assists in establishing credentials and boosting consumers' confidence towards the product/service on offer. Unlike past studies (e.g. Kathpalia 1992), mentioning the company's name was concluded to stand out as an advertising strategy warranting to be a step on its own within M1, as was also categorised by Labrador et al. (2014),

to give greater accuracy to the matching of moves to their communicative purposes. While this step was not prominent in the corpus at hand, it was denser in the Arabic dataset (43%) than in the English counterpart (9%). This could be attributed to the Arabic greater cultural attachment to the significance and value of name as being a trust-building device, thus deciding to impact this function more 'prominently' in comparison.

(1)
a. *You're probably already a convert to Olay's totally brilliant anti-ageing regenerist line.*
b. ‏لا تجاعيد بعد اليوم مع *Olay*.‏
[*No more wrinkles with Olay*.]

Regarding M1S2, it was extensively employed in all the advertisements in each language sub-corpus (100% per context), which could be considered as a point of departure for content elaboration (see examples in 2). The present result is compatible with Labrador et al.'s (2014) findings.

(2)
a. *Estee Lauder Resilience Lift Sculpting Oil Cream.*
b. ‏كريم" استي لودر" لبشرة نقية خالية من اللمعان.‏
[*Estee Lauder cream for pure skin and free from gloss*.]

Emphasis on M1S3 (pricing) was different in the two corpora as it was more prominent in the English sub-corpus (93%; example 3a) than in the Arabic sub-corpus (18%; example 3b). The norm that stating the price appears to be more important in Western advertisements could be explained through explicit consumerism principles (e.g. consumers' rights) or ethical practices (e.g. fixed price policy). In addition, effective pricing helps avoid serious financial implications. Advertisers would believe in a 'fair' price for their sales. However, the results of the present study indicate that the same perspective is not necessarily shared in the Arabic context. There are different possible explanations. One could be that citing a cost can sometimes lead to a turnoff as consumers might consider it to be (too) high and decide to simply 'flip the page'. Another explanation could be the sense of pride and dignity consumers in Middle Eastern culture(s) feel when being able to negotiate better prices. Therefore, the absence of a fixed price signals the possibility of a special deal or treatment to be held.

(3)
a. *M&S Formula Age Repair Targeted Concentrate, £12.*
b. ‏يبلغ ثمن القارورة حجم 30 مل 209 درهم.‏
[*The price of the flask combating 30 MM is 209 Dirham*.]

Another step within M1 was S4 'targeting the market', which refers to the reaching out by advertisers to the intended audience of the advertised products. M1S4 could be determined by different factors, such as the type of skin or problem, the time of marketing a product, etc. These factors play an important role in the

way(s) in which the product is promoted and the persuasive approach that will be adopted accordingly. This enables advertisers to deliver messages more precisely and to prevent wasted coverage to people falling outside the intended audience. In the English sub-corpus, M1S4 was influenced by different factors, such as type of skin, season, and problem (examples 4a–c). In the Arabic sub-corpus, M1S4 was similarly achieved through mentioning the type of skin, related skin problem, season, and other factors like origin (examples 4d–g).

4)
a. *Murad's new Anti-Aging Blemish Control range is designed to specifically target blemishes in an adult skin while simultaneously addressing the signs of ageing.*
b. *Sensitive skin sufferers, delight: E45 have launched a new range of moisturisers to give your delicate skin a touch of luxury.*
c. *Estee Lauder's ultra-rich new firming cream is perfect for the winter months when your skin is zapped of hydration.*

d. قدمت ديور اطلالة جديدة لعلاج علامات تقدم سن البشرة بتقديم فائدة جديدة اساسية .

[*Dior has launched a new product designed to cure signs of ageing.*]

e. يقدم *Crème Fraîche de Beauté* الجديد من نوكس حلاً فعالاً لترطيب البشرة الحساسة والمصابة

بالجفاف وتلطيفه.

[*Crème Fraîche®de Beauté introduced an effective solution for sensitive and dry skin.*]

f. يتمتّع أحدث *Cream BB* من غارنييه بتركيبة تمتاز بدرجة حماية عالية ، لتتمكّن بشرتك من التنعّم بتأثير

Cream BB الرائع طوال فصل الصيف .

[*BB cream features excellent high-level protection for you to enjoy smooth skin during the summer.*]

g. اختبري فوائد مستحضر الرفع المتطور وتصحيح علامات التقدم في السن من *Re-Nutriv* مع إضافتين جديدتين

لمجموعة *Re-Nutriv Ultimate Lift Age-Correcting* بتركيبة صممت خصيصاً لبشرة المرأة الآسيوية

الرقيقة [...] .

[*Test the benefits of Re-Nutriv Ultimate Lift Age-Correcting Collection which is especially designed for the skin of Asian women […].*]

Despite not being a clearly prominent move in the English sub-corpus (48%), which is compatible with Kathpalia's (1992) findings on move structure of advertisements, in the Arabic sub-corpus M1S4 was considered prominent (55%). Having said that, its strong presence in the two sets of advertisements indicates that it could be viewed as a generic feature (Cheung 2008) in online advertisements of skin care products.

Finally, regarding the last step within M1 (providing extra details), this step provides advertisers an avenue to go into elaborations, such as those that pertain to shape, size, or colour in order to satisfy the consumers' need to know the product (see examples in 5). This sharing of product knowledge revealed a low priority in both English (9%) and Arabic (4%) corpora, which arguably suggests that this step is not viewed as a key element (Cheung 2010) in the sub-genre of online

advertisements. This is not surprising as a compact discourse, such as an advertisement, cannot allocate too much space for elaborations as details may be technical and would not appeal to all consumers. Instead of elaborations, advertisements may rely on other persuasive strategies to promote a product, such as using non-verbal elements that appeal to the sense of sight for effect.

(5)
a. *Plus, it comes in a sizable bottle and lasts for ages.*
b. كل مجموعة مغلَّفة بشكل مثالي داخل حقيبة شبكية فاخرة.

[*Each package is covered perfectly in a luxury bag.*]

4.1.2. Move 2: Describing the product

The main body of all advertisements consist of product description which is further subdivided into two sections, namely a) object characterisation and b) persuasive aspects of the advertisement. Thus, M2 was divided into two steps portraying 'objective characteristics' (M2S1) and 'persuasive characteristics' (M2S2). The former, which was non-prominent in the two sets of data (19% in English and 26% in Arabic), was further split into three sub-steps: 'listing features', 'listing models', and 'instructing the use'. All these sub-steps were also found to be non-prominent in both corpora. On the other hand, M2S2, i.e. the persuasive characteristics, which only consisted of the sub-step 'evaluating the product positively' (M2S2Sub1), was found to be prominent in the two sets of data (see Table 5).
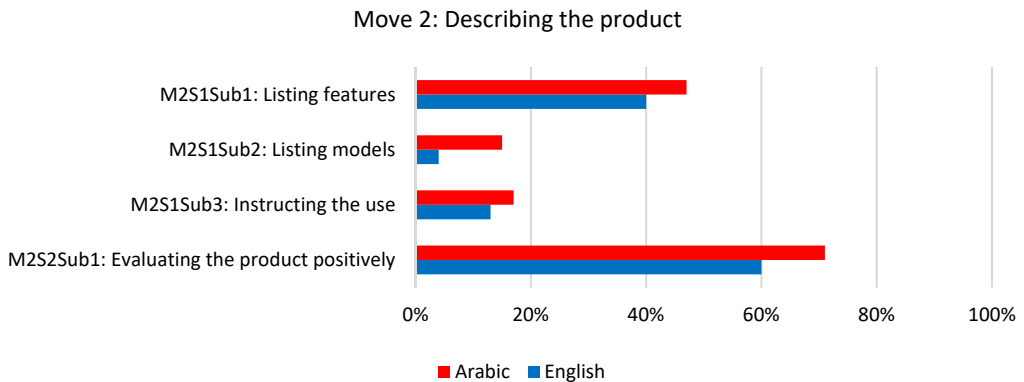
Move 2: Describing the product

Fig. 2. Frequencies of sub-steps within M2 in the English and Arabic corpora

M2S1Sub1 refers to the listing of the product' ingredients that render it unique and attractive (see examples in 6). This in turn helps increase the consumers' trust in the product. As discussed above, it was found to be non-prominent in both corpora recording the frequencies of 40% and 47% in the English and Arabic advertisements, respectively. The same sub-step was also observed in the corpus of Labrador et al. (2014), albeit to a different extent compared to the present findings

(100% in both English and Spanish advertisements). This notable difference in frequencies can be attributed to the type of products studied. Believability of electronic products depends significantly on their technical features, while buying skin care products depends on other factors, such as the type of skin or skin problems. Although advertisers of new products need to be more attentive to listing their features in comparison with known products, the features of skin care products are varied, and technical names of ingredients do not appeal to most consumers. Advertisers of skin care products in general might be of the view that product features should be simple and that adding new features may affect the profitability of the company and decrease established product usability.

(6)

a. *The anti-aging formula contains Dr. Murad's Resilient-C Complex, which is 50 per cent more powerful than ordinary topical vitamin C and maximises collagen production, while Retinyl Palmitate minimises the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and Tangerine Butter smoothes and hydrates.*

b. وقد تم الآن إثراء تركيبته بإضافة أربع مستخلصات نباتية عضوية هي: أوراق شجرة الجنكة الصينية

"جينكفو *Cornflower*" بيلوبا" و زهرة الحقول وزهرة البابونج والصبار.

[*The texture has been enriched through the addition of four organic plants which are: the leaves of Ginkgo biloba, cornflower, chamomile and cactus flowers.*]

M2S1Sub2, which concerns reference(s) to the collection range of a product (see examples in 7), was non-prominent in both English (4%) and Arabic (15%) corpora. This result is in line with Labrador et al.'s (2014) findings. Variation in the frequencies of the particular sub-step in both advertising contexts can be attributed to the fact that advertised products often are regarded as single products. In case there are multiple products, they are packaged as a combination of different items, but not as variants of the same product.

(7)

a. *The range includes E45 Touchably Smooth, E45 Nourish and Restore and, our pick, E45 Silky Radiance.*

b. وهي تتألّف من سيروم *Revolumizing Serum* المقدّم في عبوّة أنيقة (والمصمّم ليبدو كالحقنة)

إضافة إلى الكريم النهاري.

[*Revitalift is packed in a beautiful bag and consists of serum and day cream.*]

As illustrated in examples in 8, the advertisers provided information on how to apply the product. This is a new sub-step (M2S1Sub3) named 'instructing the use', which is absent from the existing frameworks (Bhatia 2004, Kathpalia 1992, Labrador et al. 2014). Some cases were found in the dataset (13% in English and 17% in Arabic); however, the sub-step was regarded as non-prominent in both corpora, which is not surprising as there is not much space in online advertisements

to give detailed information about how a product should be used unless it is very new in the market or there are very specific instructions that need highlighting.

(8)
a. *To get the best out of your Moisturizing Soft Cream, take a small amount between the fingertips and press gently into the skin. It works miracles*!
b. يستخدم مرة كل أسبوع ليصبح مظهر البشرة أكثر تماسكًا ، ورفعًا وشبابًا .

[*Use once a week to make skin look firmer, lifted, and younger*.]

As regards the only sub-step within M2S2, 'evaluating the product positively' plays a key part in persuading consumers that the advertised product is worth buying as it highlights its qualities and properties using positive adjectives (see examples in 9). Positive adjectives in M2S2Sub1 also contribute to consumer satisfaction, which is benchmarked on how well the product is supposed to work. M2S2Sub1 registered a high frequency of occurrence and was considered as prominent in both corpora (60% in English and 71% in Arabic). These results were close to Labrador et al.'s (2014) findings. This may imply that M2S2Sub1 is a generic part of online advertisements and is viewed as a common strategy of product differentiation (Bhatia 1993). While this sub-step is deemed necessary to elicit sufficient and positive evaluations from consumers and motivate purchase, the results showed that its use was moderate as the use of too many strong adjectives could result in too much of a 'hard' sell that could affect the credibility of the product.

(9)
a. *Darphin's Eye Sorbet Mask is a real wonder product. It has a beautiful light texture that melts into skin and leaves the eye area hydrated and smooth.*
b. يتمتع هذا السائل البودري الناعم ، بخفته وأدائه المدهشين ، حيث ينساب ويتوزع على البشرة على نحو رائع ، فيجعل
تطبيق كريم الأساس أكثر سهولة. كما يتميّز بتقنية Elasto-Smooth™ ، التي تصقل سطح البشرة و تنشر الضياء
لإخفاء العيوب.

[*This liquid is soft, wonderful, and easy to use. It flows and distributes on the skin in a wonderful way, making the application of the foundation cream easier. It also features ™Elasto-Smooth technology which refines the skin's surface to hide the flaws*.]

4.1.3. Other rhetorical moves

The following figure shows the frequencies of Moves 3–6 in both English and Arabic corpora. M3 (justifying the product) is an effective means of establishing a positive brand image of the advertised product. It aims to persuade consumers that the product is important and worth buying by highlighting its benefits as well as abilities to overcome real-life challenges. Highlighting the benefits of the advertised product is a key strategy in persuasive advertising, and the language used must be such that it conveys the uniqueness of the product. Addressing skin problems is arguably linked to the promise that the advertised product can and will offer the

best solution. Considering that the skilful use of such linguistic resources lies arguably in the secret of successful selling (Bhatia 1993), one would have expected this move to have been more aggressively used.

M3 was regarded as non-prominent in the English sub-corpus (46%) and was realised only by highlighting the benefits of the advertised products in the English data (example 10a). In the Arabic sub-corpus, on the other hand, this move registered a high frequency of occurrence (62%) and was materialised by features not only to highlight the benefits of the advertised products but also to establish a niche (examples 10b–c). One possible reason for it being non-prominent in some contexts, such as English, could be the exercise of caution, as false claims could invite painful lawsuits. As such, advertisers are unlikely to go overboard with 'benefits' claim preferring instead to spread out the persuasion elements. However, the Arabic advertisements were found to use this move more strongly, which could be attributed to differences in cultural practices in the business world.

(10)

a. *Not only does it wake up and illuminate lacklustre skin but the ingredients also nourish and visibly reverse signs of ageing.*

b. ويعمل هذا الخليط على تخفيض مستوى التجاعيد ومظهر الخطوط الدقيقة في غضون 14 يوماً فقط ، مما يمنحك بشرة أكثر نعومة ويخفي الخطوط الدقيقة .

[*This mixture works to reduce the level of wrinkles and the appearance of fine lines in just 14 days, which makes the skin appear smoother and hides fine lines*.]

c. تتيح هذه المجموعة الفرصة للحصول على بشرة ناعمة ومتوهجة مع فوائد محاربة لعلامات تقدم البشرة في السن ، ويساعد على حماية البشرة ضد الإعتداءات البيئية . لقد تم تصميم لوسيون *The Reparative Face Sun Lotion SPF30* ولوسيون *The Reparative Body Sun Lotion SPF30* بفاعلية عالية لحماية البشرة من الأشعات فوق البنفسجية *UVA* و *UVB* . وللمساعدة على الحد من تضرر البشرة في المستقبل ، بينما يعملان على ترطيبها وإصلاح علامات الأضرار السابقة .

[*This group provides an opportunity to get a smooth skin, fighting against the signs of skin aging and helping to protect the skin against the effects of the environment. The Reparative Face Sun Lotion SPF 30 and lotion and the Reparative Body Sun Lotion SPF 30 High were designed effectively to protect the skin from ultraviolet UVA and UVB rays, and to help reduce damage to the skin, as well as hydrate and repair previous damage marks*.]

Regarding M4, this move refers to comments made by consumers, who had used the product, experts, or famous people, i.e. celebrities, for the purpose of persuading consumers of the quality and value of the advertised product. Sharing testimonials helps in raising the confidence level of the target market. Although to a different extent, 'endorsing the product' was another non-prominent move in the English (30%) and Arabic (3%) texts (see Fig. 3), with comments made either by experts or specialists (example 11a) or by famous people like celebrities in the form

of recommendations (example 11b). English advertisements appear to be more open to include the sharing of experience in this manner, while the newness of some of the products advertised in the Arab contexts could explain the lack of such public display of confidence.
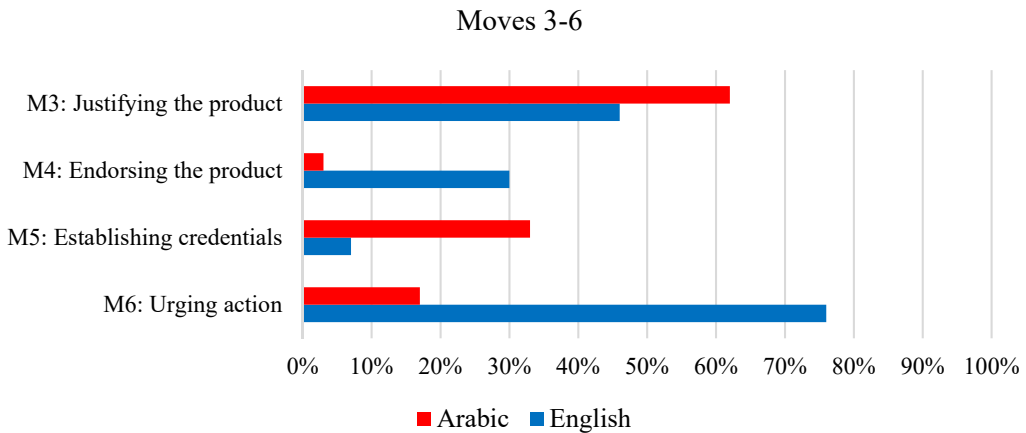

Fig. 3. Frequencies of Moves 3–6 in the English and Arabic corpora

(11)

a. *We loved the fresh scent and the easy applicator of the Age Defence and Age Repair pens we tested.*

b. وقالت الممثلة **ثاندي نيوتن** حول تجربتها مع كريم' أولاي توتال إفكتس تتش أوف فاونديشن 'وتفضيلها له:" أنا مغرمة بمنتج 'أولاي توتال إفكتس تتش أوف فاونديشن بي بي كريم 'الجديد ، وأواظب على استعماله منذ مدة طويلة ، فلطالما رغبت بالماضي بالحصول على منتج مثالي كهذا ، وها هو بات اليوم متوفراً بين يدي جميع السيدات " .

[*The actress Thandie Newton talked about her experience with Olay Total Effects Touch of Foundation cream and her preference for it: "I am in love with the new Olay Total Effects Touch of Foundation BB cream. I have been using it regularly for a long time. I always wished to get such a perfect product, and here it is available today in the hands of all ladies".*]

As an 'adversary glorification' move (Bhatia 1993), M5 helps advertisers glorify the credentials of the company or the brand of the advertised product. As illustrated in examples in 12a–b, M5 was realised through different paths, which include giving rewards, achievement display, and historical profiling. These approaches help increase the consumers' confidence and trust towards the advertised product leading to product buying. Regarding its frequency, the advertising option was non-prominent in both groups of advertisements (see Table 5), with the English advertisements (7%) employing it less than their Arabic counterparts (33%; see Fig. 3). One possible explanation for such difference might

be that emergent markets may consider credentials as an important factor in persuading consumers of the worth of the advertised product/service.

(12)
a. *It won the Best Eye Cream for Crow's Feet gong in our 2014 and 2015 Best Beauty Buys*.

b. *تتميز بـ 25 براءة اختراع وأخرى بانتظار الحصول عليها عالميا* .

[*It features 25 patents and pending for one more patent*.]

Regarding the last move, 'urging action' aims to 'force' consumers to decide on buying the product. This can be achieved by mentioning the website, contact number, email address, and/or the name of outlet in the advertisement (see examples in 13). The data analysis revealed that the two languages varied in the frequency of occurrence of M6 (see Fig. 3), which was considered prominent in the English sub-corpus (76%) and non-prominent in the Arabic sub-corpus (17%; see Table 5). Contrary to the English advertisements, which encouraged consumers to visit the company's website where they would be able to get more information about the brand and its products, the Arabic advertisements appear to have preferred to rely more on persuasive features related to the description of the product advertised (see examples in 13). This proclivity among the English advertisers could be attributed to the wider use of digital interfaces to facilitate communication, which may be lacking in Arabic countries making it more difficult for advertisers there to invite consumers to use other means of communication for product verification.

(13)
a. *Available at www.boots.com from August*.

b. *كريم UV Plus HP متوافر في عبوة حجم 30 مل ، وتباع بحوالي 100 درهم إماراتي أو ما يعادلها ، في الصيدليات و جميع فروع Boots*.

[*UV Plus HP cream, available in a 30 ml package, is sold for approximately AED 100 or its equivalent, in pharmacies and all Potts branches of Boots*.]

4.2 Persuasive language in English and Arabic online advertisements

As mentioned earlier, the present study also aimed to explore persuasive strategies used in the sub-genre of online advertisements of skin care products. To this end, the corpus was searched for persuasive linguistic features exclusively employed in the persuasive section (M2S2: persuasive characteristics). As can be seen in Table 6, persuasive language was characterised by syntactic, semantic, and discoursal resources used to express positive evaluation and thus contribute to the overall persuasive force of the moves. As previous studies have long established, positive evaluation is achieved by mentioning different properties, qualities, and/or characteristics of the advertised product within the same paragraph or even sentence (Hunston & Thompson 2000, Labrador et al. 2014, Martin & White 2005). The lexico-grammatical resources used to express evaluation in discourse in the corpus

at hand were found to be wide, including superlatives (*smallest*, *best*, etc.), comparators (*brighter*, *smoother*, etc.), personal pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, as well as enumerations (*in addition to*, *also*, etc.), and personifications (*this cream allows*…). What follows is a detailed description of the analysis of each set of persuasive linguistic features found in the corpus at hand.

Table 6. Incidence of use of persuasive features in the English and Arabic corpora

Features	English sub-corpus	Arabic sub-corpus
	Frequency	Frequency
Syntactic	**309**	**401**
Adjectives	140	243
Personal pronouns	86	82
Adverbs	40	41
Multiple modifiers	23	24
Rhetorical questions	8	11
Non-finite clauses	12	0
Semantic	**49**	**41**
Personifications	29	17
Similes	14	7
Hyperboles	6	11
Metaphors	0	6
Discoursal	**61**	**192**
Emphatic enumeratives	61	192

4.2.1. Syntactic features

Different persuasive syntactic features, namely adjectives, personal pronouns, adverbs, multiple modifiers, rhetorical questions, and non-finite clauses were found in the advertisements in each advertising context. As can be seen in Table 6, adjectives were prevailing in the two corpora, especially in the Arabic texts (243 vs 140 cases). To be specific, non-gradable positive adjectives were used more often in the corpus, typically signalled by terms, such as جديد (*new*; 44 cases) and طبيعي (*natural*; 43 cases) in the Arabic advertisements and *new* (25 cases) in the English counterparts. Such features help advertisers give an attractive description to the product advertised and communicate its unique qualities (Ahanger & Dastuyi 2017, Bhatia 1993, Lapanská 2006, Leech 1966, Pilatova 2015). As illustrated in examples in 14, there was also evidence of gradable adjectives in the dataset. For instance, comparative adjectives were used to help establish a positive attitude towards the product advertised by offering consumers a comparison between an assumed present situation and an improved situation made possible by using the product. Superlative adjectives, on the other hand, were employed to express the high quality of the product, thus emphasising its superiority over competitors. Below are some actual uses sampled from the data.

(14)
a. *It also contains SPF, **perfect** for protecting the sensitive eye area from 20sun-related ageing.*
b. *You'll notice your skin looks **brighter** and feels **smoother**.*
c. *L'Occitane's Divine Cream is still considered one of **the best** anti-ageing creams in the industry.*
d.

تعطي لون ذهبي **رائع** و ترطيب مثالي للوجه .

[*It gives a wonderful golden color.*]

e.

ليظهر البشرة بمظهر **أكثر شبابا** .

[*It makes the skin look younger.*]

f.

وهو لوسيون الخاص بالنساء **والأكثر شهرة** .

[*Losyon is specially designed for women and it is the most famous one.*]

At other times, the two groups of advertisers used personal pronouns carrying a persuasive value to set a conversational tone, create a sense of solidarity with consumers, establish a rapport between themselves and consumers, and reduce the impression that consumers are only being addressed as part of a mass audience. Results showed that in the English advertisements personal subject pronouns, namely *you* (33 cases) and *we* (19 cases), were more frequent than objective and possessive pronouns, which were only characterised by *us* (4 instances) and *your* (30 instances). However, in Arabic where personal pronouns are typically attached to a word (acting as subject pronoun) or detached from it (acting as either object or possessive pronoun), only attached personal pronouns, such as the object pronoun ك (*you*; 40 cases) and possessive pronouns اليك and لك (*your*; 42 cases) were found in the dataset. In general, the use of the possessive pronoun in both English and Arabic makes instruction more personal. Linguistically speaking, they refer to a single person or a group of people; however, when reading the advertisement, consumers feel that they are individually addressed (Janoschka 2004, Sternkopf 2005). Below are text examples in both languages.

(15)
a. *This all-in-one anti-ageing product works its magic as **you** sleep.*
b. *After just one use **you**'ll notice **your** skin looks brighter and feels smoother.*
c.

يساعد على تجديد **جمالك** بمفهوم جديد ليلاً .

[*This will help you in renewing your beauty at night.*]

يوفّر لكِ منتج كريم الأساس الجديد من مكياجي طبقة من المسامّ تسمح **للوجه** بالتنفّس والحفاظ على حيويّة البشرة ونقائها. d.

[*It provides you with a layer of pores that allow your face to breathe and keep your skin pure.*]

Adverbs were also used as means of persuasion to describe action or the state of being (e.g. *instantly, perfectly, quickly, powerfully, effectively, freshly,* etc.; see examples in 16). Although the data analysis showed a similarity between the two corpora in the incidence of use of adverbs (see Table 6), with *instantly* being the most frequently used adverb in both datasets, the adverbial features appeared in more various forms in English than in Arabic.

(16)
a. *[…] the cooling cream and ice-cold roller ball will **instantly** refresh and leave your eyes feeling tighter.*
b. وبالتالي ينعّم البشرة **على الفور**.
[*It smoothens the skin instantly.*]

Another notable resource carrying persuasive value was multiple modification of a single noun phrase. This implies the coordination of two or more adjectives in a single noun phrase (see examples in 17), building up a positive evaluation of the advertised product in an attractive way. Scholars like Rush (1998) have also highlighted the complex noun phrase structure used in advertisements where descriptive pre-modifiers (and post-modifiers) allow for a more compacted, colourful, and attractive description of the advertised service or product, and so communicate more on an emotive level. Although multiple modifications were attested at a similar frequency in English (23 cases) and Arabic (24 cases), the cases found in the English sub-corpus were either pre- or post-modifiers (examples 17a–b) whereas all cases in the Arabic sub-corpus belonged to the post-modification type (examples 17c–d).

(17)
a. *This roll-on version has all the **brilliant de-puffing**, **cooling** and **brightening** benefits […].*
b. *[…] is perfect for keeping your skin **shine-free**, **smooth** and **toned**.*
c. ستكتسبين تدريجياً **رونقاً متألقاً** و صحياً **جميلاً** و **طويل الثبات** .
[*Elegant, beautiful, healthy, and long stable appearance.*]
d. يجعل البشرة **ناعمة** ،**حريرية** و **ملساء** .
[*It makes the skin soft, silky, and smooth.*]

Other noteworthy syntactic features conveying persuasive characteristics of the product advertised were rhetorical questions and non-finite clauses. The former make consumers feel engaged and as a result can lead them to agreeing with what the text is about (Fuertes-Oliver et al. 2001, Janoschka 2004, Leech 1966). The results showed that rhetorical questions were present in both corpora, albeit to a slightly different extent (8 cases in English vs 11 cases in Arabic; see examples in 18). Regarding non-fine clauses, like past studies (e.g. Labrador et al. 2014), they were observed only in the English advertisements, totalling 12 cases (see examples in 19). This is likely due to structural differences between English and Arabic languages, which merits further focused study.

(18)

a. *You know how most high SPF creams are thick and greasy*?

b. هل تعلمين أن" كلينيك " كانت إحدى أوائل شركات مستحضرات التجميل التي قدمت حلاً لجفاف البشرة ؟

[*Do you know Clinique is the first company that provides a solution for dry skin*?]

(19)

a. *Avoiding that fake, sweet scent that many creams possess, the fragrance is deliciously organic and natural.*

b. *[...], it has been specifically formulated to emulate the results of Botox, peels, lifting and injection treatments to restore radiance and eliminate signs of tiredness and aging.*

4.2.2. Semantic features

As illustrated in Table 6, persuasive semantic features were materialised by various rhetorical properties, such as personifications, metaphors, similes, and hyperboles, but were used to a lesser extent than syntactic and discoursal features. This could be attributed to the possibility of the particular advertisers' aversion to the risks of meaninglessness and misinterpretation entailed in the use of figurative language (Larson 1998).

As a figure of speech that attaches human-like qualities to inanimate objects, personifications are used in advertisements to encourage long-term memory (Labrador et al. 2004, Lapanská 2006) and create more personal and engaging advertisements. Cases of personification were found in both English (29 cases) and Arabic (17 cases) corpora. As shown in examples in 20, the advertisers tried to make their products 'real' by personalising them through life-like characteristics (Cuddon 2013, Pilatova 2015).

(20)

a. *Pledging to increase skin hydration by 66% in just two weeks, **it also promises** to decrease wrinkle depth by half, in four weeks.*

b. يسمح هذا الكريم للبشرة **بالتنفّس**.

[*This cream allows the skin to breathe*].

Other resources conveying a persuasive effect were similes and hyperboles. The former refer to "a figure of speech whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared" (Cuddon 2013, Wales 2001: 358; see examples in 21). As regards the latter, a hyperbole is the deliberate use of overstatements or exaggerations to achieve emphasis so that consumers are persuaded to try out the result of using a specific product (Lapanská 2006; see examples in 22). The two sub-sets of semantic features occurred in both advertising contexts, albeit to a different extent. Similes appeared in the English advertisements twice as often as their counterparts used in the Arabic advertisements (14 vs 7 cases). In contrast,

hyperboles were almost two times more frequent in the Arabic context than in the English one (11 vs 6 instances).

(21)

a. *This wrinkle-tackling amino acid complex might feel **as light as tears to the touch***.

b.
وهو ناعم كالحرير.

[*It is soft as silk*.]

(22)

a. *We smoothed some on the fine lines around our eyes and noticed **an impact within seconds***.

b.
في عشر دقائق فقط ، تبدو البشرة أكثر توهّجاً وشفافية وانتعاشاً وتحافظ على مظهرها لغاية أسبوع .

[*In just 10 minutes, the skin looks more radiant and transparent*.]

Despite metaphors playing a key role in advertising by stimulating curiosity and expressing a message in a compact manner (Lapanská 2006, Tanaka 1999), in the present corpus they were exclusive to the Arabic sub-set (6 cases; see example 23) with no evidence in the English counterpart. As mentioned earlier, the limited use of such figurative language is arguably the result of the advertisers' strategy to pre-empt possible misinterpretation or lack of reference on the consumers' end.

(23)

a.
للقضاء على أعداء محيط العين.

[*To eliminate the enemies around the eye*.]

4.2.3. Discoursal features

Discoursal features have not been frequently highlighted as persuasive linguistic features in the literature. A notable exception is the study by Labrador et al. (2014) where the authors found that emphatic enumeratives are discourse elements with persuasive effect and force in online advertisements. Likewise, emphatic enumeratives were persuasive discoursal features that frequently occurred in the present data, materialised by different phrasal and clausal resources in English (*in addition to*, *also*, *even*, *plus*, *not only … but also*, *as well as, that's not all it offers, go beyond*) and in Arabic (الى بالاضافة ,تقدمه ما كل ليس هذا ,أيضا etc.). By using such features, advertisers lay emphasis on elaborating certain ideas in a seamless way and without burdening consumers with much conscious effort. Interestingly, enumerations were more than three times more prominent in the Arabic context than in the English one (192 vs 61 cases). Text examples are:

(24)

a. *The multi-functional moisturizer assists **not only** in improving the overall appearance of the skin, **but also** leaves skin feeling moisturized and looking smoother and firmer.*

b.

يتمتع هذا المزيج القوي بالقدرة على تنعيم البشرة ، **بالاضافة الى** مفعول تلطيف البشرة الذي يدوم

ل *24* ساعة.

[*It smooths the skin. Additionally, it refreshes the skin for 24 hours*.]

5. Conclusion

This corpus-based linguistic study reported on an intercultural investigation of rhetorical structure and persuasive strategies used in an ad hoc English-Arabic comparable corpus of 100 online advertisements of skin care products. Regarding rhetorical structure, while similarities were observed in the way the two groups of advertisers organise their advertising discourse, the results also revealed subtle differences in the two advertising contexts. These differences are mainly related to different culture-specific practices in terms of retail trade traditions (M1S3: pricing) and caution exercised towards false claims (M3: justifying the product) as well as different levels of access to digital media (M6: urging action).

As for persuasive strategies found in the corpus, they comprised syntactic, semantic, and discoursal features used to express positive evaluation and thus contribute to the overall persuasive force of the moves. The results indicated variations in both the frequency and use of persuasive strategies, especially when both corpora were compared for contrasting effects in terms of non-finite clauses and metaphors used. The absence of the former in the Arabic sub-corpus is to be attributed to the structural characteristics of the particular language, while the absence of the latter in the English sub-corpus can be explained by advertisers' attempt to forestall any misinterpretation or inability of the consumers to decode the intended message.

Overall, the genre-based approach followed by the work at hand revealed that online advertisements of skin care products constitute a particular sub-genre with context-specific macro- and micro-structures requiring advertisers to tailor their discourse to represent values, beliefs, and perception processes that are congruent with the culture addressed.

As for implications, in addition to contributing to the intercultural investigation of the rhetorical structures and persuasive strategies used in online advertisements, this study further adds to the growing body of research on genre analysis by expanding upon the existing analytical frameworks used for the study of advertising discourse. Despite not being a central concern of the present study, one cannot overlook its potential usefulness for the creation of pedagogical materials to facilitate comprehension of how specific text types achieve their communicative purposes.

There are some limitations to this study which further research could tackle. The dataset was limited to specific products advertised within specific cultural contexts. Therefore, the findings cannot be extrapolated to other types of (beauty) products or to other cultures represented by the working languages. Future research will help determine whether the rhetorical differences found in this comparable corpus of online advertisements of skin care products are relevant in these and other advertising cultures. Another limitation to the present study is that the observations here were restricted to the scrutiny of verbal elements. It would be interesting to replicate this study taking into account the semiotic features in advertisement to cast more light on advertising discourse in the two contexts.

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