

**A MULTIMODAL GENRE ANALYSIS OF ONLINE PRODUCT  
INFORMATION TO INFORM ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES**

**BY  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Discipline specific writing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be challenging because writing discipline specific texts involves knowing the norms of writing that come with the discipline (Miller & Pessoa 2017). With rapid digitalization of business and communication, it is questionable how Business and Marketing students would cope with genres comprising not just writing, but multiple modes, if they do not possess multimodal literacy. Moreover, hypertextuality affects content (Xia, 2020), in turn creating differences in communicative purposes of the genre. Therefore, attempts to describe any online genre for ESP teaching need to consider the facets of multimodality and digitality. This thesis analyses the Online Product Information (OPI) genre, a micro genre of the online shopping website (Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017). It exemplifies the application of a set of frameworks to comprehensively describe the OPI genre. Also important to this study is the possibility of culture specific differences.

The analysis was based on a corpus of 480 New Zealand (NZ) and Sri Lankan (SL) beauty care and jewellery product information texts sourced from 32 online shopping websites along with 21 semi-structured interviews with specialist informants. Swales' (1990) move structure analysis and selected resources from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Grammar of Visual Design* were adopted to investigate the data sets. The analytical framework for website interactivity proposed by Adami (2015) was utilized and adapted to analyse the actions and effects of the interactive items used within OPIs.

Fourteen common moves – eight interactive and six non-interactive - were identified for jewellery and beauty care OPIs. Some move steps are unique to one particular product category, while others are common to both. Cross-cultural differences were identified in the use of moves and steps. There are more steps employed in NZ product information to realise move functions, while the same functions are achieved in SL product information, but by using a more limited set of steps that are predominantly textual.

Visually, the representational generic pattern characterizing OPI is the use of conceptual analytical structures with offer type images. The pattern was common to both countries.

However, NZ beauty care product information utilizes some images of the narrative process and demand types, something which was not present in SL OPIs.

The website interactivity analysis reveals that both the SL and NZ product information offer customers the basic necessities for viewing and selecting products (purchasing, selecting requirements, facilitating reading/ viewing). However, the cumulative effect one gets when investigating interactivity is of a closed insular environment with limited opportunity to request information/question sellers in a public space, and limited access to additional information. SL storeowners seem to be more interested in promoting their product via the customer through share options and giving additional seller services. NZ online stores, seem to be less focused on getting their product promoted via customers. Their interactive strategy seems to be providing customers with extra information. They also allow customers more opportunities to provide feedback without regulating that feedback, compared to SL OPIs.

The OPI as a whole is informationally dense. It is distinguished by a high use of nouns, adjectives, co-ordinating conjunctions and third person singular present tense verbs, and a relatively low use of auxiliary verbs, adverbs, prepositions or subordinating conjunctions, determiners and modal verbs. Lexical bundles (frequently used word sequences) were identified for Move 3 – Promoting the product - to demonstrate the lexico-grammatical realisation of the move. The analysis indicates that steps operationalizing even a single move could employ a wide variety of linguistic features to realise that move, and that the patterns of language for the genre as a whole may not be a totally accurate indicator of the register of individual moves.

The findings suggest the necessity of considering genre feature variation when crossing national boundaries. They also illustrate that the visual and interactive elements of an online multimodal genre play a significant role along with its textual elements, in determining the genre functions. Therefore, ESP teaching needs to consider how text, visuals and the online environment all contribute to achieving genre purposes, when raising students' genre awareness of a multimodal genre. Implications of the study for ESP pedagogy and online businesses are provided in the Conclusion.

## DEDICATION

*To the memory of my father Kumaradasa Kithulgoda. He was a fighter. His love was unconditional.*

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and rationale for the study**

Teaching English at university level in Sri Lanka is largely geared towards improving student writing with a focus on the written mode of a text. I used to teach my Sri Lankan Business Management undergraduates how to write business proposals, memos, online product reviews, advertisements, and even special occasion speeches such as welcome addresses and votes of thanks. The content was considered crucial, as well as organisation and grammatically correct phrasing. Other modes of a text such as visuals and other aspects such as the medium or channel of communication were viewed as less significant. After all, the semester-end exams and assignments for my students were mainly written. So, it is no surprise that we as teachers, and our undergraduates as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners, were preoccupied with learning the ‘writing’ of a genre. Even if the actual real-life genre had pictures, colours, intonation or gestures included in it, the main concern when teaching and learning the genre tended to be writing. However, the scene is now changing. I believe the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which has pushed us to move online for business and teaching, and everything in between, has presented a unique opportunity to re-evaluate how we teach certain genres to students, genres which are by nature not just written, but are multimodal. As a teacher of ESP therefore, it seemed only natural for me to concentrate on business communication in the online environment as the subject of my PhD. The highly visual nature of the online medium lead to a focus on multimodality.

This research investigates Online Product Information (OPI) that forms part of online shopping websites, by adopting a multimodal approach to genre analysis. In the next few paragraphs, I explain in detail the background and rationale of my research.

As a consequence of the proliferation of digital interaction and transaction in the recent past, we have experienced a variety of digital genres enter our lives in response to our new or

changed rhetorical situations. These genres are now either replacing or are the digital counterparts of some other already existing genres. An example is the rhetorical situation of online shopping where customers now view, read about products, and interact with the digital medium to make a purchase. For this reason, Management and Marketing students who study genres related to shopping, need to be aware of the visuals, written text and resources of the digital medium when engaging with those digital commercial genres. This tendency for higher engagement with multimodal texts in real life needs to be reflected in ESP teaching as well, by shifting from teaching students monomodal texts to teaching them multimodal texts.

Discipline specific writing can be challenging because writing discipline specific texts involves knowing the norms of writing that come with the discipline (R. T. Miller & Pessoa, 2017). So it is questionable how well students of ESP can cope with discipline specific genres comprising not just one mode (writing), but multiple modes if they do not possess some kind of multimodal literacy, and if they lack awareness of how different semiotic modes work together to express socially constructed meaning. Moreover, the medium on which a genre appears affects content and meaning (Jones & Hafner, 2012; Xia, 2020). Therefore, I believe that attempts to describe any online genre for ESP teaching need to consider both multimodality and digitality.

The second reason motivating this study is that there is an increasing need for retailers to have an online presence in order to stay in business. Hagberg, Jonsson, and Egels-Zandén (2017) report that e-commerce accounted for 8.7% of total global retail sales in 2016, and that it was predicted to increase to 14.6% in 2020. However, actual ecommerce sales covered 19% of all retail sales by the year 2020 (United Nations, 2021). The advent of e-commerce has serious implications for traditional business models. Hernant and Rosengren (2017) investigated the impact of introducing online stores to retail businesses with well-established offline stores. Their study revealed that offline customers switched to more online purchasing once the online store was established, instead of purchasing offline as often. In such an evolving global market, texts used in digital commercial environments play a crucial role in attracting potential customers to businesses.



This study is a cross-cultural analysis of the OPI genre, with Sri Lanka and New Zealand as the target countries. These two culturally different countries represent two polarities of existence in global digitalisation, with an internet penetration of 94% in New Zealand and 50.8% in Sri Lanka by January 2021 (Kemp, 2021a, 2021b). Sri Lanka's rate of internet use is fast growing. Between January 2020 and January 2021 alone, the number of internet users increased by 7.9% (Kemp, 2021b), which presents Sri Lankan business owners with many economic opportunities. As early as 2016, Sri Lanka recognised its need for digitalisation to enhance economic development and to promote self-employment and small scale business enterprises (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2016). With this growth of technology, its increasing use as a marketing tool and the ever-growing competitive nature of e-commerce and online marketing, exploring the discourse of online shopping sites will make a worthwhile contribution to ESP and e-commerce.

Genre is considered as a useful tool for analysing and describing discourse (C. Miller, Devitt, & Gallagher, 2018). However, there is need for a more complex genre model to address and describe digital and multimodal genres (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005b; Reid & Anson, 2019). Therefore, this research adapts and applies a set of frameworks to comprehensively describe the OPI genre for ESP pedagogy. Concurrently, the study explores culture specific differences between the OPI of New Zealand (NZ) and Sri Lankan (SL) shopping websites. In the next few sections, I focus on why a study on the discourse of online shopping websites, and the genre of OPI in particular is necessary.

## 1.2 What is the value of studying the discourse of online shops?

While e-commerce involves both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions, e-shopping or online shopping refers specifically to Business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions (Cao, Xu, & Douma, 2012). The value of online store fronts for a business is not merely restricted to online shopping. Pallant, Danaher, Sands, and Danaher (2017) developed a typology of website visit behaviours based on visits to an online fashion retailer. They report on four types of website visits:

1. Touching base - visiting only one or two pages and not going deeper
2. Search/deliberation - searching different products and looking up information
3. Goal-directed - looking to buy
4. Online shopping “cart-only” visits - using the shopping cart to leave items that they wish to buy in order to possibly buy the products later after comparing prices

Types (1) and (2) are not made with an intention to purchase, implying that an online store is as much a tool for searching for information for customers as it is for purchasing. It can therefore be seen that the value of having online store fronts extends beyond online purchasing, a fact which increases the value of a study that explores the discourse of online shops.

### 1.3 What is the value of studying Online Product Information as a genre?

Online shopping mainly involves customers searching for product information online and conducting product transactions using the internet. To situate the OPI in the context of online shopping, Sands, Ferraro, Campbell, and Pallant (2016) point out that searching for information and purchasing are two stages of consumer decision-making in a multichannel buying process. The OPI, by helping customers search for information, helps the initial decision making. Researchers (Cao et al., 2012; Sands et al., 2016) affirm that searching for product information promotes internet purchases as well as in-store shopping, thereby creating multichannel retailing. For instance, even if they do not make a purchase online, the consumers may browse product information and then go to a physical store to buy it. This means that even if a purchase is not made online, the availability of product information online in online stores can help a business increase their sales rates. Such benefits imply that the significance of having an online presence and product information online cannot solely be measured by the amount/percentage of purchases made online. The high value of OPI for business and marketing is a key reason why the current study investigates the linguistic, visual and digital resources of the genre.

## 1.4 What is Online Product Information?

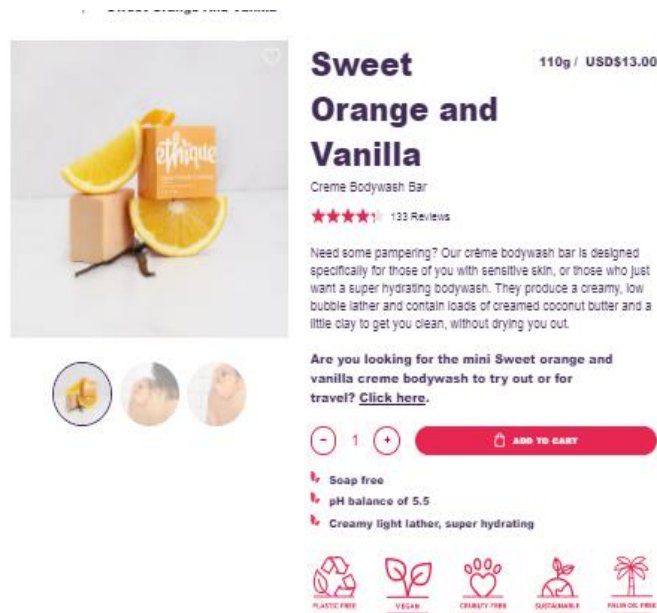


Figure 1.1. An example of the OPI genre (Ethique, 2020b)

The OPI genre is a micro-genre of the online shopping website (T. H. Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017). Product information – sometimes also referred to as product descriptions - is the marketing copy that clarifies what a product is and the reason it is worth buying (Duistermaat, 2019). It therefore has the dual purpose of informing and persuading consumers to make a purchase. The OPI genre generally includes the details that appear on the product page of an online shopping site that describe and promote the product in order to sell it (see Chapter 5). Because textual and visual modes function together to inform and

persuade customers, OPI includes both images and written text. So products are verbally described and promoted using written text, and visually described and promoted using image(s). Interactivity forms part of the genre because of the digital platform on which the genre appears, and because it has an impact on genre purpose. An example of the OPI genre is provided in Figure 1.1. As can be seen, the OPI includes written text, visuals and interactive items.

## 1.5 What research has been conducted on Online Product Information so far?

Although the OPI has been investigated to some extent from the angle of Marketing and System Sciences (Jang & Burns, 2004; Levering, Cutler, & Yu, 2008; Rodrigues, Silva, & Duarte, 2017), it has not been sufficiently explored from a linguistic point of view. In this section, I report on previous research related to online product information/descriptions, and explain why further work on the OPI genre is necessary.

A thread of research on OPI has focused on the food and beverage domain (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020; Labrador & Ramón, 2015), and the move structures that the research presents are specific to one product which they sell. For instance, Labrador and Ramón (2015) identify the following moves in what they call online cheese descriptions: identifying the cheese, showing a picture, describing the product, describing the process, describing smell and taste, offering serving suggestions, suggesting recipes, and providing quality assurance. Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) identify six moves in 'herbal tea promotional texts': identification, promotional description, ingredients, suggestions, processing and nutrition & allergies. The moves such as suggesting recipes and serving suggestions are all food-related functions, and are therefore unlikely to be applicable to the description of any other products, such as shoes, which was the focus of Knight, Walsh, and Papagiannidis (2017) research. They investigated how variations in linguistic characteristics of eBay shoe product descriptions revealed different seller identities. Their study was based on a shopping mall type site and not on specialized store fronts. They did not investigate the rhetorical structure of product information or study it as a multimodal genre. A study on the product information genre by Puga and Gotz (2017), conducted for the purpose of designing data driven teaching

materials for EFL learners, focused on linguistic data. They removed all visual details, as well as some other details such as lists of ingredients from their corpus. Three moves of product information (overview, directions, warnings) are presented, but it is unclear how these moves were arrived at. Only product information texts with all three moves are included in their corpus. The study of the OPI genre by T. H. Andersen and van Leeuwen (2017) on the other hand, is multimodal. It accounted for the 'Add to bag' button in terms of studying the genre's interactivity, but left other interactive functions unaddressed. The study was also based on a single shopping site describing several 'microgenres' within the shopping site, and was therefore of an exploratory nature.

My research investigates the OPI genre by taking into consideration both its multimodal resources and interactive affordances which are still unexplored in literature. Additionally, the research is carried out from a cross-cultural perspective, making it more interesting for marketers, online business owners and Business Management and Marketing student. This is important because it illustrates how the genre draws on its different semiotic resources and medium to achieve its genre functions cross-culturally. By drawing on previous research findings on product information, and exploring two different product categories - herbal skincare and jewellery - my research attempts to identify an OPI macro structure using corpus-based techniques. It is hoped that this multimodal move structure can be applied to all OPI, and will benefit not just one industry or product category, but all types of B2C online businesses.

## 1.6 Research questions

The following research questions (RQs) guide my research:

**RQ1: What is the Online Product Information genre and what are the factors that affect its creation?**

*RQ1.1: What is the difference between product description and product information?*

*RQ1.2: What are the social purpose(s) of the OPI genre?*

*RQ1.3: What are the contextual and non-contextual factors that affect the OPI genre?*

**RQ2: What are the rhetorical moves of Online Product Information in Sri Lankan and New Zealand shopping websites?**

*RQ2.1: What are the moves achieving the genre purposes?*

*RQ2.2: How does product category affect the moves/steps of the OPI genre?*

*RQ2.3: Are there any cross-cultural differences in the use of moves/steps of the genre?*

**RQ3: What are the patterns of language use characterising the Online Product Information and its moves?**

*RQ3.1: What are the grammatical patterns characterising the OPI?*

*RQ3.2: What are the lexico-grammatical features characterising the moves/steps of the OPI?*

**RQ4: How does the visual mode contribute to achieving the genre purposes of Online Product Information?**

*RQ4.1: What sort of ideational meaning is conveyed using the images of OPIs?*

*RQ4.2: What sort of interpersonal meaning is conveyed through the images of OPIs?*

*RQ 4.3: Are there any differences in the use of images between the two cultures or the two product categories?*

**RQ5: What is the relationship between images and text in Online Product Information?**

*RQ5.1: What is the relationship on the syntagmatic plane?*

*RQ5.2: What is the relationship on the paradigmatic plane?*

*RQ5.3: Are there any differences in the image-text relationship between the two cultures or between the two product categories?*

**RQ6: How does interactivity affect Online Product Information?**

*RQ6.1: What is the ideational meaning conveyed through interactivity in OPIs?*

*RQ5.2: What does interactivity imply about the relationship between customers and sellers?*

*RQ5.3: What does the placement of interactive items imply about the significance and value of those items to the genre?*

The next section will outline how the thesis is structured in a manner that addresses the above research questions.

## 1.7 Organisation of the thesis

Chapter 2 is the Literature Review and reviews key concepts of genre, multimodality, digitality, persuasive discourse and corpus based discourse analysis that are relevant to the current study. It also highlights the gaps in research and questions arising from the review of previous research that shape the current research. Chapter 3 describes the multiple analytical frameworks that enable the genre approach to discourse analysis adopted in investigating OPI. Chapter 4 details the process of data collection and analysis in order to answer the six research questions of the study.

Chapters 5 to 9 address the findings of this study. Chapter 5, entitled Identifying and Situating the OPI, addresses RQ 1 ('What is the Online Product Information genre and what are the factors that affect its creation?'). Chapter 6 is on Move Analysis and addresses RQ 2 ('What are the rhetorical moves of Online Product Information in Sri Lankan and New Zealand online shopping sites?'). Chapter 7 focuses on Visual Analysis and answers RQ 4 ('How does the visual mode contribute to achieving the genre purposes of Online Product Information?'). Chapter 8 on Interactivity Analysis answers RQ 6 ('How does interactivity affect Online Product Information?'). Both Chapters 7 and 8 also partly answer RQ 5 ('What is the relationship between images and texts in Online Product Information?'). Chapter 9 on Lexico-grammatical Analysis addresses RQ 3 ('What are the patterns of language behaviour characterising the Online Product Information and its moves?').

Chapter 10, the discussion, reviews some significant findings reported in the analysis in connection to research literature and discusses key issues that emerged in identifying

different types of visuals and moves used in OPIs. The conclusion (Chapter 11) presents implications of this research to the fields of genre analysis, Business and to ESP pedagogy. It also outlines limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with a personal reflection on my PhD journey and words addressed to my fellow ESP teachers.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with an overview of the traditional approaches to genre analysis. I then demonstrate how it is currently the norm to follow an eclectic approach (Section 2.2.). This is the approach that I adopt in this research. I move onto a discussion of how conventional methods of genre analysis are challenged by the properties of the online medium, and illustrate the necessity for a revised genre model in Section 2.3. To capture the online nature of the Online Product Information (OPI) genre, in my study I take into account the two features of multimodality (Section 2.4.) and interactivity (Section 2.5.) in addition to the functions, rhetorical structure and linguistic patterns that are normally explored in a genre analysis. I then argue for the approach to multimodality that is adopted in my study of OPI which employs verbal and visual modes. I present an account of how multimodality has been incorporated into genre analysis and digital genre analysis. In Section 2.6., I explain what is meant by interactivity, and how verbal and visual elements on webpages behave on two dimensions – as static signs, but also as items with which end-users can interact. This explanation drives the need for an analytical framework for interactivity in my multimodal genre analysis. I then move on to consider persuasion which is an important function of promotional genres (Section 2.7) by referring to moves and lexico-grammar that lend themselves to persuasion. Next, I describe what is meant by context, specifically situational and cultural context within the current research, because context has been identified in literature as having an impact on genre features (Section 2.8). Moving on to the area of corpus studies, I discuss why I consider a corpus-based research model fits my investigation of the OPI genre (Section 2.9). I end the chapter with a discussion on how corpus-based lexico-grammatical analyses of a register or genre have been carried out in previous research.

## 2.2 Approaches to genre and genre analysis

Genre analysis is a discourse analytical approach lending itself to L1, L2 and Language for Specific Purposes teaching (Bhatia, Flowerdew, & Jones, 2008; Hyland, 2012; Hyon, 1996). While three schools of genre analysis - English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Rhetorical Genre Studies and Systemic Functional Linguistics- are identified in literature (Handford, 2010; Hyon, 1996), all recognise genre analysis as the study of language behaviour or patterns in particular academic or professional settings (Bhatia et al., 2008), with varying degrees of attention paid to form, function and context of the language used. It is worth looking at these three variations of genre analysis and their epistemological origins since research on language use in professional or academic contexts adopts one or the other of these genre analysis methods, or even combines techniques from more than one of these traditions in carrying out their studies. This exploration helps to clarify and justify the methodological approach to genre analysis I adopt in the current study.

### 2.2.1 The ESP approach

Hyon (1996) points out that researchers in the ESP tradition view genre as a tool for analyzing and teaching genre conventions to non-native speakers in academic and professional settings. According to Hyon (1996), when defining genre, ESP researchers have paid attention to both the formal properties (form) and the communicative purposes within social contexts (social functions) in which different text types occur. However, she states that ESP scholars and researchers in practice, have paid more attention to form and less attention to function when conducting their studies; they have adopted structural analyses, looked at sentence level grammatical features in text types. For instance, proponents of this approach considered genre as guided by some communicative purpose(s) which shaped the structure, style and content of the genre (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). But they did not pay much attention to socio- cultural background and its effects on language.

The ESP approach to genre has been widely used in the second language context in studying English for Academic and Professional Purposes (Ding, 2007; Hyon, 1996; Kathpalia, 1997; Kwan, 2006; Labrador, Ramón, Alaiz-Moretón, & Sanjurjo-González, 2014; Onder, 2013). Hyland (2012) asserts that text analytic approaches to genre analysis have had the biggest impact on ESP by investigating generic structure and lexico-grammatical/discursive patterns. I believe this is due to the applicability of the analytical methods of the ESP approach such as move analysis (Swales, 1990) to teaching ESP.

Move analysis, first introduced by Swales (1990), has been used by numerous researchers (Bhatia, 1993; Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007b; Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Ding, 2007; Dos Santos, 2002; Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2007; Parkinson, Mackay, & Demecheleer, 2017; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013; Tribble, 2002; Upton & Connor, 2001) over a wide range of disciplines to reveal the macro-structure of various academic and professional genres. It is a method of genre analysis that analyses the recurring patterns of meaning that characterise a genre. Section 3.2 contains a detailed description of move structure analysis.

### 2.2.2 Rhetorical genre studies

Rhetorical genre studies (RGS) draws inspiration from various disciplines such as composition studies, professional writing, rhetoric. For the followers of this tradition, the situational and social context in which the genre occurs is more important than the form of the genre, because it is these contexts that define the actions that are performed through the genres (C. Miller, 1984). Proponents (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993; Devitt, 1991; C. Miller, 1984) of the RGS approach regard genre as a typification of social rhetorical action, implying that the rhetorical action is repeatedly used in response to a situation that occurs in the social context. Therefore, that rhetorical action gets recognized as a type of response that can be used to achieve particular requirements of communication in society. Thus, more significance is attributed to the social purpose or the actions that are accomplished by these genres within the situations and wider social contexts. To illustrate this point, Devitt (1991)

identifies and analyses a set of thirteen genres used by the community of tax accountants based on the input that she received from tax accountants. In line with this conceptual standpoint, scholars following this tradition have used ethnographic techniques to analyse texts: participant observation, interviews, document collection in order to explore the contexts which shape the genres.

### 2.2.3 Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics approach

Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was essentially a system explaining the functions of language developed by Halliday (1978) which was later used to analyse genres. SFL is concerned with the relationship between language and functions of language in social context (J. R. Martin, 2014). Language form is shaped by some key features of the surrounding social context, namely the activity that is going on (field), the relationship between participants (tenor) and the channel of communication (mode) (Rose, 2012). According to SFL, these three elements determine the 'register' of language. Halliday's students (J. R. Martin, 1985; J. R. Martin, 2014), developed theories of genre out of this framework. The SFL approach has focused on very general and everyday written and spoken genres such as narratives, explanations and procedures (in the form of service encounters, dinner table conversations, primary school writing), in contrast to Swales' ESP approach which conducts more specific descriptions of written academic and professional genres such as research article introductions, personal statements to universities, grant proposals, advertisements (Koester & Handford, 2012). The SFL approach is closer in its outlook to the ESP approach than the New Rhetoric approach, in that both focus on a genre's form-function relationship. I adopt the SFL approach in some parts of my analysis and the ESP approach in others. I believe they complement each other in my analysis of the OPI genre.

## 2.3 An eclectic approach to genre analysis

From the point of language teaching for specific purposes, both aspects of context and form and function are important. Disregarding the impact of context on the genre, as was practiced in past ESP genre analysis, will not give students a proper understanding of how the genres really function and how and why the genres are used within the discourse communities in which they are used. Neither will it help learners, especially those who are non-native speakers of English, to merely learn the context of genre production, without also learning the rhetorical structure or characteristic lexico-grammatical and discourse features of the genres being studied. I believe that drawing on all three genre traditions to analyse genres, thereby using an eclectic genre analytical method, is the best course of action for analysing genre for pedagogical purposes.

### 2.3.1. Research drawing on an eclectic approach

A mix of methods can be seen being used in more recent studies (Cheng & Suen, 2014; J. Flowerdew & Wan, 2010; Parkinson et al., 2017), as illustrated by the following example. J. Flowerdew and Wan (2010) analyse company audit reports using two genre analysis approaches- the ESP approach and the RGS Approach- in studying the selected genre. The researchers adopt a combination of a linguistic analysis (structural and textual analysis) drawn from the ESP tradition, and a contextual analysis as used in the RGS approach. The linguistic analysis entails a move structure analysis and lexico-grammatical analysis of those moves. The contextual analysis entails observation and interviews. Participant verification (specialist/expert informant) is also used to verify the validity of findings and for interpretation of data. The ethnographic analysis helped J. Flowerdew and Wan (2010) to discern which of the moves needed to be analysed in depth, and what the purposes of those moves were to the insiders of the genre. Hence, my research on a commercial genre, is guided by this previous literature, and benefits from drawing on all genre approaches.

The current study also draws on contextual analysis practiced in RGS and SFL to study the effects of socio-cultural and situational context on genre conventions (see also Section 2.8).

Due to the significance of visuals that form part of the OPI and the medium of the internet on which the OPIs appear, I use two more analytical frameworks – the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006) and the framework for website interactivity analysis (Adami, 2015) that draw on the SFL tradition, to conduct the genre analysis. The analyses are also informed and interpreted by using the information that I gain through semi-structured interviews with members of the online shopping community.

Through combining elements of these genre approaches, I recognize a genre as a group of texts that share similarities in the use of linguistic, visual and interactive features that are used to achieve a particular social purpose in response to a particular recurring rhetorical situation. A genre is also recognised as shaped by the practices and beliefs of its participating professional or non-professional communities and by the larger socio-cultural context in which it occurs. Whether the identification of these factors as shaping the genre holds true for the OPI genre is discussed in Chapter 5.

### 2.3.2. Pedagogical significance of studies following an eclectic approach

The ESP approach of move structure analysis, combined with ethnographic studies, has been used by researchers to teach specialized discourse to students and aspiring professionals. Many researchers (Dos Santos, 2002; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013) employ this model because of its capacity to identify text structure to inform speakers who are unfamiliar with or have problems with understanding a particular discourse type. Swales' move structure analysis is extremely useful to students learning English in academic and professional contexts, to novice members of professional communities who wish to strengthen their knowledge of professional genre norms, and also to non-native students of English who are unfamiliar with certain conventions of writing or speaking in specific contexts of English language use. Flowerdew and Wan's (2010) study (Section 2.3) is an example of how genre analysis becomes useful to students in academic contexts. In that study on audit reports, the researchers highlight the pedagogical implications of such a study and advocate for contextual awareness for both subject trainers and students when teaching professional genres in a pedagogical setting. Another example of genre analysis conducted with the pedagogical intention of instructing novice members of a professional discourse

community is Parkinson et al. (2017). The researchers analyse the Builders' Diary of trainee and apprentice carpenters using a move structure analysis and interviews with carpentry tutors. The study aimed to provide insight into the purposes and stylistic attributes of the Builders' Diary to help carpentry tutors teach. The researchers assume that such teaching will help students use this vocational genre of the Builders' diary in a credible manner. The researchers recommend discussing the purposes of the diary with students, teaching the obligatory diary moves and teaching how each move contributes to the overall purpose of the diary.

The case of genre analysis being informative for non-native professionals speaking English can be illustrated by Dos Santos (2002). She conducted a genre analysis of 117 commercial letters written in English and exchanged by fax between one Brazilian veterinary pharmaceutical company and two European pharmaceutical companies. The research was prompted by the author's need to help adult Brazilians who were non-native speakers of English to develop an understanding of "cultural aspects, attitudes of behaviors, adequacy of lexico-grammatical choices" when communicating with native speakers of English in business settings (p. 167). Similarly, by investigating the context of use, linguistic and visual patterns of the OPI genre, this study can help Business and Marketing students effectively produce and use the OPI genre.

## 2.4. Issues in traditional genre analysis being applied to digital genres

Although theories on genre and genre analysis (Section 2.2 ) have existed for decades, the evolution of technology has introduced new digital multimodal discourse types which cannot be adequately interpreted using traditional frameworks such as move analysis alone. This position is supported by scholars (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005a; Eckkrammer, 2019; Kwasnik & Crowston, 2005; Lemke, 2002; C. Miller, 2017) studying digital genres. They argue that the nature of the digital medium and how it affects the content and structure of a genre, and even the functions of a digital genre demand new approaches. Askehave and Nielsen (2005b) claim that properties of the medium affect the purpose as well as the form

of web-mediated genres; a claim with which I am also inclined to agree. If we read the guidelines and manuals for writing good product information/descriptions (Ferreira, 2019; Patel, 2020), we can see actions such as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) mentioned as one of the functions to be achieved through online product information. This function is unique to the online medium and is sure to affect the genre constituents of structure and lexicogrammatical patterns of language used in attempts to fulfil that function. The effects of the medium on the OPI genre are investigated in this research.

#### 2.4.1. Digital genres as supra genres, genres and subgenres

It is important to clarify how I identify OPI as an online genre. Entire websites are considered as genres, as are single recurrent text types/web pages found inside a particular website. To explain these seemingly conflicting ideas, scholars (T. H. Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017; Eckkrammer, 2019; Kanaris & Stamatatos, 2009; Kwasnik & Crowston, 2005) introduce concepts such as supra genres, sub or micro genres, and genre repertoires. Much like in the print medium where a genre such as the organizational newsletter combines other genres such as letters, announcements and captioned photographs (Kwasnik & Crowston, 2005), the 'supra' genre of the online dating platform (Eckkrammer, 2019) combines several genres to perform the main function of finding a suitable life partner. The composite (sub) genres can be classified as nucleus (sub) genres or peripheral (sub) genres. The nucleus (sub) genre of the online dating platform is the personal profile because it is essential to finding a match. Similarly, Lindemann and Littig (2010) identify one of eight super-genres of the web with more 'fine-grained' genres inside it for the 'shop' digital genre. T. H. Andersen and van Leeuwen (2017) report on seven micro genres that they found in an online clothing store. To sum up, a super or supra genre such as a shopping website combines other micro/sub genres such as product information and home page information inside it.

Web pages can contain several genres within the page (Eckkrammer, 2019; Kanaris & Stamatatos, 2009). Kanaris and Stamatatos (2009) provide the example of an e-shop page which could contain news or search results and which be considered as different genres. For



online shopping, one main function could be to persuade customers to make a purchase of a product which matches customer requirements/desires. In this case, the product page which has a direct link to promoting the product can be considered to be a nucleus (sub) genre in the supra genre of the online store. Inside this product page, we find the (sub)genre of OPI which co-exists with other text such as brief information of related products on a web page. That said, the OPI can well be considered a digital genre which is a nucleus genre inside the supra genre of the online specialized store. Two main reasons to support this categorisation include the specific functions of informing and persuading customers in order to purchase that the OPI performs within the online store and the content it embodies, such as brief or detailed descriptions of the target product including images of the product, and its recurrent use on product pages.

#### 2.4.2. Properties of online genres

Multimodality, otherwise referred to as multi-mediality (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005b), and dynamic non-linearity of text flow afforded by hypertextuality and interactivity are two key properties of the digital medium (Adami, 2015; Askehave & Nielsen, 2005b; C. Miller, 2017). According to Askehave and Nielsen (2005a), multi-mediality refers to how a web designer can combine images, text and audio to create a desired effect or achieve the purpose of the web genre. Hypertexts connect web texts to each other, thereby allowing for a non-linear transmission of information. Lemke (2002) coins the term *hypermodality* to explain the affordance of the digital medium. Regardless of the terminological differences, it remains true that digital multimodal genres cannot be adequately interpreted by using the same analytical models that were used to analyse analogue primarily text-based genres because of the demands that interactivity (having items that respond to user actions) and a highly multimodal nature of the genre (e.g., moving images) place on genre analysis.

### 2.4.3. Revising genre models to analyse digital genres

Miller (2017) points out that any analysis of a genre must provide a characterization of not just its verbal features, but also its visual and auditory features while taking into account a genre's dynamic and non-linear properties. Similarly, Jones and Hafner (2012) and Xia (2020) point out that the digital medium of a genre can affect genre meaning. Askehave and Nielsen (2005a) regard the traditional genre analytical model of move structure analysis as being inadequate to take into account the intricacies of digital genres. Askehave and Nielsen (2005b) argue that one cannot explain the characteristics of web mediated genres by simply analysing 'print-outs' of the web genres. I agree with this view because treating digital genres as static products will inadequately characterise how digital genres are seen and used in reality.

Only Askehave and Nielsen (2005a, 2005b), Bateman (2015) and Eckkrammer (2019) propose alternative genre analysis models. Askehave and Nielsen (2005b) demonstrate the application of such a revised genre model on the genre of the home page. In addition to the traditional dimension of genres being guided by move structure (which is governed by purpose), the researchers apply a second dimension of medium to genre analysis which is realized through hypertexts/links. Askehave and Nielsen (2005b) consider the move structure of a web document to be non-sequential/non-linear due to the use of hypertexts. Askehave and Nielson (2005a; 2005b) refer to this dimension as the navigating mode, while the more traditional move structure uses the reading mode. They suggest that analyzing web documents in a move analysis is two-dimensional because both the reading and navigating (linking) modes have to be accounted for. The primary purpose in the reading mode on home pages is to introduce the site, with two secondary purposes: (1) to create and strengthen the image of the message sender and (2) to present news. In the reading mode, the move structure of the home page contains the following moves: Attracting attention, greeting, identifying sender, indicating content structure, detailing (selected) content, establishing credentials, establishing contact, establishing a (discourse) community, promoting an external organisation. These moves (for instance the move 'attracting attention') include visuals, texts, and audio-visual elements together attract the attention of the reader when

entering the home page. Therefore, verbal text is not separated from visuals in this analysis of moves. Although Askehave and Nielsen (2005a, 2005b) include different textual and visual modes in their analysis of the reading mode and therefore project a reasonable account of the multimodal quality of the home page, their analysis of the genre's dynamic quality by means of analysing hypertexts (navigating mode), is not without problems.

According to Askehave and Nielsen (2005b) the purpose of the navigating mode is to provide access to the web site. The researchers also claim that the purpose of all web documents in the navigating mode is to provide access to relevant web pages and web sites. On the one hand, as the researchers themselves point out, equating hyperlinks to a functional unit akin to moves is questionable. This is because each move in a genre has its own distinctive purpose which taken together achieve the overall purpose(s) of the genre. However, a hyperlink, or even all hyperlinks in general, as proposed by Askehave and Nielsen (2005a, 2005b), perform just one general purpose – to provide access to the website. Also, the purpose of the hyperlinks proposed by Askehave and Nielson (2005b) is not specific to the target genre - the home page- as is normally the case with moves and functions of a genre or genre colony. I contend that considering hyperlinks in the same level as moves is not particularly effective. I believe that another way of investigating the dynamic quality of a web genre needs to be considered. A second concern is that for Askehave and Nielsen (2005a, 2005b), hypertexts are the only determinant of a digital genre's dynamic quality. The researchers demonstrate that hypertexts create dynamicity by enabling alternative reading paths that the web user can select to go from one text chunk to another. This research was conducted over 15 years ago and did not focus on ways that interactive items within the same page promote a digital genre's dynamicity and make changes to the appearance and structure of the text itself, without any 'navigating' away from the text. Examples of such interactive items include items that respond to clicks and mouse over movements. The choice of an analytical framework to account for this dynamicity of OPIs is core to the present research (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4).

Eckkrammer (2019) proposes a revised genre analytical framework and model. Eckkrammer (2019) incorporates multiple dimensions such as function, social setting

(includes institutional setting), content, conception (whether the language use of the genre is closer to the written tradition or the oral tradition despite whether it is a written genre or a spoken genre), communicative form (whether it is a telephone call, a handwritten letter, an email, a book or a website), medium (whether language is mediated by telephone, or by writing on paper, or printing on paper, or using computer and web, or by using an application on the smart phone), form, macro structure and micro structure. This framework resembles an extensive checklist which is not operationalised and without guidance on how the model can be applied to an actual digital genre. It also does not particularly help the cause of the applied linguist who would like to adapt genre analysis for pedagogical purposes. The Genre and Multimodality (GeM) model proposed by Bateman (2015) is reviewed in the next section because of its relevance to both digitality and multimodality. All in all, an analytical framework is required that takes stock of a digital genre's multimodality and dynamicity, and which also benefits teaching ESP. The present research selects from existing analytical frameworks to analyse the dynamicity and multimodality of OPI with the above requirements in mind.

## 2.5. Multimodality and its significance in genre studies

Researchers in the field of multimodality (Cheng & Suen, 2014; Jewitt, 2009; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) recognize language as only one part of a multimodal text, and that each part can be seen as achieving different functions to collectively achieve the purpose of the text. Kress (2012 February 16) and Ochowicz (2018) recognize some of the semiotic modes as the textual mode (written language), visual mode (photographs, icons, infographics) and modes of composition, gestures and gaze. Each mode contains different semiotic resources which allow a mode to accomplish its task. For instance in Baldry and Thibault (2006) and Machin (2007) pauses, hesitations, voice quality, rate of speaking are referred to as semiotic resources of speech. Font type and font size are recognised as resources of the written mode. The affordances of these different modes can be combined to make a richer or fuller meaning than a single mode can achieve by itself (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Kress, 2012 February 16).

As an example, the photographs used with vibrant colours and closeup shots of products in a print advertisement may add to the written text to achieve the purpose of that advertisement. Such a combination of modes necessitates genre analysts going beyond linguistic analyses of texts and adopting varied analytical strategies to support their analysis of multimodal texts.

Exploring the different modes of a genre, rather than using a one-dimensional textual analysis, can help reflect on the impact of particular cultural or social values on the genre. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Jewitt (2009) suggest that the social and cultural context has an impact on the different modes used in texts. Similarly we can expect that the ways in which different modes combine to express meaning will also be context dependent. Therefore, it will be useful for a cross-cultural genre analysis to take into account all modes involved because of the possibility it presents in distinguishing any cultural differences that may exist in how each mode is used or combined with others.

### 2.5.1. Existing approaches to multimodality and frameworks for analysis

Jewitt (2009, 2015) introduces different approaches to multimodality that attempt to describe how different modes work together in communication. The approaches and frameworks that she presents and their proponents include:

- a. Conversation Analysis
- b. Social semiotic multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2005)
- c. Systemic functional approach (Multimodal Discourse Analysis) (O'Toole (1994), Baldrey and Thibault (2006), O'Halloran (2005, 2004))
- d. Mediated Discourse Analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2003)
- e. Multi-modal interactional analysis (Norris, 2004)
- f. Genre and Multimodality (GeM) (Bateman, 2015; Hiippala, 2017)

The last three of these approaches/ frameworks combine different theories, including those of social semiotics and systemic functional approach, to describe instances of multimodal communication.

Each approach/framework seems to take a different standpoint to analyzing multimodal texts. The approach to multimodality that I adopt in my study stems from an analysis of the characteristics of those approaches given below.

The social semiotic multimodal analysis emphasizes the social aspect of semiotics although its root is Halliday's (1978) metafunctions of language. This approach explores how meanings of signs are dependent on the wider social context. This system accounts for how modal resources are used by people in a given community or social context and it places emphasis on the sign maker (signs are talk, gestures and text, etc.). On the other hand, the systemic functional approach as used by those such as Baldry and Thibault (2006), focuses on the meta-functional systems underlying semiotic resources as stipulated by Halliday (1978). They approach textual analysis at a functional level without reference to external social or cultural influences. To illustrate my point, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) use their analytical frameworks to analyse texts with images such as print advertisements, magazine covers and brochures by interpreting them according to their social significance. In contrast, proponents of the systematic functional approach such as Baldry and Thibault (2006) analyse a wide range of multimodal texts (cartoons, webpages, brochures, TV advertisements) by dividing the texts into clusters of images and texts or images, movements and space (see also Section 2.5.4).

Conversational analysis and multimodal interactional analysis mainly look at how verbal as well as non-verbal elements such as gestures combine to make meaning in individuals' interactions with themselves and with other external objects in their local environment. For instance, the multimodal interactional analysis framework introduced by Scollon and Scollon (2003) proposes that any social action derives its meaning from a combination of three elements: some form of interaction (a conversation, a person reading a newspaper), visual elements used or avoided in the interaction, and the actual place in which the action occurs. Although compared to Conversational Analysis, the approach of Scollon and Scollon

(2003) acknowledges the importance of text in making meaning, because of the nature of what they explore – interaction in its geographical context – textual analysis does not have a place within this model. Scollon and Scollon (2003) also adopt Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996; 2001) Grammar of Visual Design to support their visual analysis. They do not present their own framework for that. Conversation analysis does not by its very nature, account for visual analysis.

Considering what I have so far discussed, my study opts for a social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) for two reasons: 1) The OPI is a more static form of multimodality combining mainly visual and textual modes compared to other multimodal texts containing gestures, pauses, interaction (e.g., films, tv advertisements, conversations). The Grammar of visual design also proposes a system to analyse static visual and textual layouts and the meaning of their compositions, and 2) The impact of socio-cultural context on the genre needs to be considered when analysing the genre in a cross-cultural setting. The Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2006) bases interpretation on what certain signs, layouts and such signify in the social world. The analytical framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

There is one more idea that needs to be discussed which relates to multimodal genre analysis – the last framework presented in the above list: the Genre and Multimodality (GeM) framework (Bateman, 2015; Hiippala, 2017). The concepts of genre, medium and material underlie the framework, and therefore it could be considered to be an appropriate tool with which to describe a digital genre which has a visual aspect. However, this application of the GeM model is problematic for the following reasons. Firstly, multimodal genre analysis using the GeM framework has multiple layers of analysis. The base layer divides the page into units that are then analysed in three other layers; (1) the layout layer analyses the layout and appearance of the units on a page, (2) the rhetorical layer analyses the relationship between these different units, and (3) the navigation layer analyses how the page is supported by other sections. Despite the existence of all these multiple layers for genre description, the Genre and Multimodality framework would yet again need to be supplemented with a

separate linguistic analysis if we are to explore more deeply the functions of the textual mode. Furthermore, this approach is very labour intensive and time consuming, and requires knowledge of XML (Extensible Markup Language) for annotation of a corpus. Therefore, it is likely to be unfeasible to use this framework for ESP teaching and learning purposes.

Taking the considerations above into account, I adopted a social semiotic outlook to multimodality. I use an attendant framework - the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006) - in my multimodal analysis to describe the patterns of visual meaning and image-text relationship in the OPI genre.

### 2.5.2. The visual mode and the significance of image analysis

This section addresses why I need to analyse images in particular, as a semiotic resource of the visual mode. The discussion stems from an initial observation of online jewellery and skincare product information which showed that the OPI genre consists of two main modes – the visual mode and the textual mode (Section 2.7 and Section 2.5.3). Images play a significant role in communicating meaning in genres with persuasive functions. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) reflect on how images present themselves as natural representations of reality, and are therefore considered as true and reliable although this might not actually be the case. Similarly, Pounds (2011) acknowledges that pictures in real estate property descriptions are particularly important in persuading potential customers. She reports a higher probability of being misled by visual rather than verbal descriptions because of the supposedly natural depiction of reality that images carry. The researcher points out that property descriptions consequently depend highly on photographs. She herself admits it to be a limitation of her study not to have analysed the use of images in property descriptions. There is, therefore, power in the visual mode to mislead and persuade without actually verbally committing to anything misleading, and this can be a powerful tool in online marketing discourse to which the online product information genre belongs.



Images have been analysed in hotel home pages (Cheng & Suen, 2014) and in student and apprentice carpentry journals (Parkinson, Mackay, & Demecheleer, 2018) using the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The intention was to discover how images, compared to verbal text, create different meanings. A primary finding in Cheng and Suen (2014) is that conceptual images are used to show the quality and abundance of hotel facilities. Such a finding directly contributes to the meaning making process of the genre by contributing to various moves such as attracting attention and introducing accommodation. Parkinson et al. (2018) found that the style of writing of the two groups of student and apprentice carpenters is reflected in their use of images, thereby reinforcing the informal and formal styles of writing these two groups respectively adopt. These two examples from literature show that an investigation of images can provide valuable insight into how meaning is created and conveyed in online product information using different modes. The tool for investigating the meanings of visual resources is described in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.

### 2.5.3. Move analysis of multimodal genres

Various methods have been employed when attributing genre functions to visual elements inside a move structure. Images have been attributed functions at the level of steps (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020; Parkinson et al., 2017), have been considered as moves (Labrador & Ramón, 2015; Suen, 2013) and have also been analysed on their own merit without considering it as part of the move structure (Leelertphan, 2017).

Labrador and Ramon (2015) analyse a subgenre of product descriptions (what I refer to as product information)- cheese descriptions (written in English) – to recognize the rhetorical structure and language of this sub-genre. The purpose of their study is to help Spanish professionals in the industry of food products and tourism. The rhetorical structure that they propose contains eight moves. An interesting observation here is that move 2 - showing a picture - has been considered by the researchers as a move. Pictures being considered as a move poses questions such as ‘what is the functional purpose of move 2 - showing a picture?’, ‘How is this move’s purpose different from the purpose of some of those other moves like

‘describing the product?’. The researchers have not elaborated on the purposes of those individual moves. So it is difficult to see whether there is an overlap between the rhetorical purpose(s) expressed by each move. Equally, Parkinson et al. (2017) include images of student and apprentice carpenters as one of the steps in the move “Detailing work”. However, it is difficult to see how an image can be used to only function as a representation of “Detailing work” and not for instance, as part of “Setting context” (Move 1), because an image could achieve more than one purpose such as detailing work and setting context at the same time.

Similarly Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) assign the image that is used in the Herbal Tea product description to the level of a step in Move 1 – Identification. Even if the function of the image is restricted to the ‘identification’ of the product, one needs to speculate whether the image does not perform any other functions, for instance in a move such as M2 – promotional description. Move 2 is regarded as a move that promotes the tea, with the descriptive and evaluative language used in the steps called ‘making statement’ and ‘tasting note’. This implies that in this study, persuasion is attributed to purely linguistic resources, even though an image could also be promoting the product. An image is a possible persuasive agent which occupies a large space in the layout of the product information compared to all the written text, which is mostly in a small font size, thereby leaving a gap in the rhetorical analysis of the move structure. Also, because of the multiple meanings that can be conveyed by a single image, Parkinson (2019) identifies incorporating visual meaning usefully into move analysis as a problematic task. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether we can conduct a move analysis without disregarding the meaning conveyed by one mode or the other in multimodal genres, and whether images can be analysed in a way that supports its inclusion in a move structure. This largely untouched area is explored in my study.

#### 2.5.4. Research on digital multimodal texts

Recent research on multimodal texts analyses combinations of written/spoken language, gestures, visuals, as well as videos (Carter & Adolphs, 2008; Hafner, 2018; Mehlenbacher, 2017; Nasti, Venuti, & Zollo, 2017; Ochowicz, 2018; Parkinson et al., 2017; Tang, 2013). However, a very few studies exist in which digital multimodal texts have been studied as genres with explorations of their linguistic, digital as well as visual aspects. In the digital medium, the ability with which many different modes can be combined enables image, sound and movement to convey meanings in new and different ways compared to in a printed setting (Jewitt, 2009). This is likely to affect how a multimodal text is structured and consequently how sets of modes are analysed, rendering traditional monomodal analytical approaches somewhat wanting in their analytical power. This section will therefore explore how such multimodal online texts have been investigated in research literature, the different tools used in analysing multimodal online genres, and how the concept of genre itself is applied to various types of digital texts.

There are multiple examples of analysis of online multimodal digital texts in the literature. Most conduct analyses of a single web site or web page. To illustrate, Baldry and Thibault (2006) analyse the Nasa Kids home page and the British Museum Children's COMPASS home page by dividing items on the web page into clusters based on the type of action and function that the clusters perform. For example, one cluster in the Nasa Kids home page is the combination of the website logo and heading. Another cluster is the news links that take the end user to other NASA sites with information. There are also clusters which in actual fact are single items, such as the Cluster 13 which is the image of an astronaut. Unfortunately, the clusters themselves are specific to the selected web page, and would not be relatable to other websites. In addition, as Baldry and Thibault (2006) are mainly focusing on how resources of different modes integrate to convey meanings, there is no linguistic analysis in parallel to the analysis of the visual semiotic resources. Therefore, Baldry and Thibault's (2006) analysis of the web page is similar to a content analysis of the web page. It does not provide a view of the recurring patterns of the use of language, visuals, layout and interactivity. Without testing whether the elements of the web page that they identified recur in other

similar web pages, their findings cannot be generalised. However, the fact that various visual and textual items can be combined to convey a particular action or function can be carried over to other analyses of web genres such as mine.

In a similar manner, Ochowicz (2018) conducts a descriptive analysis of the Amnesty International website with special reference to the home page. The study investigates the website's use of certain text items (vision, mission statement, logos, some news reports), topical icons, infographics, photographs and video materials, colour and composition. The researcher investigates how the use of these different visual and verbal elements contributes to the site's persuasive function of calling for support and increasing Amnesty International's appeal in social media. It also interprets through classical rhetorical strategies (pathos, ethos, logos) how the multimodal aspects evoke emotions (pathos), authenticity(logos), appropriateness of actions(logos) or boost credibility (ethos). In addition, the researcher draws on knowledge from photojournalism and the studies on semiotics to interpret visual elements. However, the selection of items for analysis itself is based purely on personal judgement of what contributes to persuasion. And there is no principled analysis of any linguistic patterns. Although both above studies point to the significant role of the visual mode in realising the functions of any digital genre, such studies on individual websites or web pages do not provide much direction as to analysing web genres of their category (website home pages) in general.

Although not many, there are several studies that analyse digital genres from a multimodal perspective (Cheng & Suen, 2014; Hafner, 2018; Lam, 2013; Leelertphan, 2017; Mehlenbacher, 2017). These studies provide theoretical, methodological and analytical insights which are relevant to my own research. Leelertphan (2017) analyses boutique hotel home pages in NZ and Thailand using a corpus of hotel home pages. She analysed the visual and textual modes of the genre using Bhatia's (1993) genre analytical framework and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of visual analysis. However, Leelertphan's study analyses the visual mode in separation of the move analysis. Cheng and Suen (2014) considered the textual, ethnographic, socio-cognitive and socio-critical perspectives in a multimodal genre analysis of hotel home pages in Hong Kong. The analytical tools adopted

were Bhatia's (2004) critical genre analysis model, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design and Martin and White's (2005) language appraisal framework. They analysed images and written language from a move perspective. However, hyperlinks on the home page were analysed separately. So, neither of the above mentioned studies reflected on the impact of the digital medium on the genre moves. Nevertheless, they provide some direction about the different sets of analytical tools that can be used for online multimodal analysis.

Hafner (2018) analyses the Video Methods article from a multimodal genre perspective, and from a social perspective as well by using data from two specialist informants and related web pages and documents (Journal editorial policies, About the Journal, publishing process). He analyses the genre in great detail analysing each visual frame of the video for the dimensions of speech, action, soundtrack, camera position, and distance angle, for example, to arrive at a move structure. However, the genre itself being a video, the genre analysis does not specifically analyse digital interactivity, although Hafner emphasizes that the digital medium affects the genre. While acknowledging the previous claim that a digital genre is affected by its interactivity, Hafner (2018) points out the necessity of accounting for all modes of a genre when conducting a genre analysis.

Mehlenbacher (2017) adopts an ESP and a RGS perspective in analysing crowdfunding proposals. Using the move analysis from ESP, she contextualises the genre within the rhetorical situation of crowdfunding science. She points out that the different digital and multimodal features such pictures, hyperlinks, text of this genre all work together to create the persuasiveness of the genre. Mehlenbacher restricts her article to studying only the written text (textual mode). She considers this to be a limitation when considering "the full range of modalities at work" in that genre (2017, p. 133). She raises two key concepts in her study that are important to my research. The first is that moves seem to be realising multiple functions in her digital genre. Digitality, such as hyperlinks, interrupts moves. She considers this move interruption to be a characteristic of an evolving genre that has not yet stabilised. The second is that visuals are not analysed and included in the analysis because of what she calls "the theoretical differences in visual arguments" (p. 138). My own research takes up

these two ideas and explores whether digitality affects any digital genre (not just a new and evolving genre), thereby propelling the traditional move to carry multiple functions. Secondly, I explore how best to incorporate visuals in my own move analysis.

## 2.6. What is digital interactivity?

Voorveld, Neijens, and Smit (2011) recognize interactivity as one of the key characteristics of websites, and something that differentiates web sites from the print medium. Voorveld et al. (2011) suggest that one determinant of a website's potential to persuade is its interactive possibilities. Therefore, an analysis of a digital genre cannot be successfully carried out without investigating its interactivity. Interactivity, while including hypertextuality within its definition, refers to how certain items in a text allow viewers to interact with parts of the text with or without leaving that text or part of the text. However, interactivity is not the same as hypertextuality.

Hypertextuality is the affordance of texts allowing one to travel to other texts by using hyperlinks in the text (Lemke, 2002). This is a property that numerous scholars have investigated when trying to account for the dynamicity and non-linearity of web genres. Askehave and Nielsen (2005a) recognize implicit and explicit realizations of hyperlinks, where implicit realizations are not visible except for if the mouse or cursor is dragged over the hyperlink. Explicit realizations of hyperlinks can be clearly seen within the web page as they are realized by icons, pictures, colour shifts and meta-text displaying some of the web genre's interactive elements. These items are not the only ones that contribute to a genre's interactivity (also see Section 2.4.3). Adami (2015) reasons that users of the online medium can do more than creating reading paths; for instance, they have the option of giving feedback by commenting on or rating texts or by transferring texts to other places by sharing or forwarding texts.

By doing an initial analysis of the product page within which OPI appears, I found that hypertextuality is sparse. Consequently, a more important aspect for the present study is how the textual mode and the visual mode themselves are sometimes imbued with

interactivity. For instance, a text or part of a text may be hidden until the user clicks on it. Or, if a user hovers over an image, it may enlarge and cover the text itself in displaying the image.

#### 2.6.1. Types of interactivity and their significance to the meaning making process

Interactivity itself is recognized as being multidimensional (Voorveld et al., 2011) and Voorveld et al. (2011) mention three dimensions to interactivity in their work:

- i. Two-way communication or perceived personalisation – the ability to communicate reciprocally between users and the company or among users
- ii. Synchronicity (time/ speed of response) – features that develop the feeling that the website reacts immediately in response to a user's actions
- iii. Control (active control) - a user's capability of freely taking part in and influencing a displayed message

Such a classification provides a clearer view of the kind of interactivity possible in different types of websites. Cho and Cheon (2005) recognize 23 interactive features and Voorveld et al. (2011) recognize 47 features under the three dimensions that help realize a website's interactivity. Some of these features are feedback forms, chat groups, web logs, online ordering facilities, an animation that shows the time it takes for website loading, an option to select internet connection type, site maps, hyperlinks, and search options. At least some of these interactive features will appear with each of the genres that constitute a website. A content analysis of the OPI web genre can therefore give the researcher an idea of all the interactive features that are common to the OPI genre. Both Cho and Cheon (2005) and Voorveld et al. (2011) identified the interactive features common to each of the websites that they analysed in order to carry out comparisons of websites and to examine the true interactivity of global brand websites.

Cho and Cheon (2005) made use of the different dimensions of interactivity to conduct a cross-cultural analysis of corporate websites of the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and South Korea. They found that there are considerable differences between Eastern and

Western websites in terms of interactivity. Their results showed that Eastern websites offered less means for customers to communicate through different channels of communication or to communicate with marketers. But these Eastern websites provided more options for interactivity between customers, such as chat groups, than Western websites. Therefore, cross-cultural research such as mine has much to gain from analyzing interactivity through first the identification of their features, and then by analyzing the functions of those features. I use Adami's (2015) framework to explore the interactivity of OPIs (see Section 3.4 of the following chapter for a description of the analytical framework) to study its interactivity from a cross-cultural perspective.

#### 2.6.2. Items on a webpage

In order to describe "the functional objects on an internet web-page" (p. 95), Tan (2009) borrows the term "item" from Kok (2004) to denote individual elements on a web page while excluding groupings of elements as its original meaning implied. This study will also use the term 'item' to refer to single objects. Tan's (2009) classification of items on a webpage according to their properties becomes pertinent when analyzing the OPI as a web genre:

- I. Self-activating items: items that move on their own without any action by the viewer
- II. Interactive items: items that respond to an action of the viewer such as moving the mouse over the item or clicking on the item
- III. Unresponsive, static or inactive items: items that do not move or respond to any actions of the viewer.

The text, images and icons in OPI are mainly either unresponsive or are interactive (e.g., images that enlarge with a click or mouse over, text that needs to be read by scrolling down).



## 2.7. Persuasion and ‘interestedness’ in genres

As I consider persuasion to be a primary function of the OPI genre, in this section I focus on types of persuasive genres, analytical frameworks for analyzing persuasion and characteristics of the persuasive genre/ register in order to guide the analysis of my own research. Persuasiveness is a continuum along which different persuasive genres with different degrees of persuasion are located. Virtanen and Halmari (2005) define persuasion as linguistic behaviour that attempts to either change the thinking or behaviour of an audience, or to strengthen its beliefs, if the audience already agrees. Aubuchon (1997) perceives persuasion as obtaining the action that you desire from the others by using communication with them in a positive way. In light of these definitions, many genres can be considered as persuasive or promotional. For instance, in a list of promotional genres from Bhatia (2005), the range of persuasive genres extends from direct and explicit purpose of marketing such as advertisements, book blurbs, sales promotion letters to those that were traditionally recognized as informative or descriptive, such as company brochures, academic introductions, reference letters, and book reviews.

Due to this wide range of persuasive genres, there may be a significant linguistic and rhetorical variation between the genres. Hyland (2005) points out that the way persuasion is achieved depends on the specific institutional and cultural context in which the text appears, and that the rhetorical devices that are used as promotional devices in one context might not appeal as much to an audience in another context. This means it may be extremely difficult and unprofitable in genre studies to identify common features of persuasive text types.

I use Shaw’s (2006) concept of ‘interestedness’ to further refine the concept of persuasion. This idea considers genres as promotional only if those genres attempt to convince genre recipients to do something that benefits the genre producer. This, I believe, is a useful factor to assess the nature and degree of persuasion involved in a genre. Genres such as book reviews or letters of reference possess a degree of persuasion in terms of affecting a person’s beliefs and opinions but they fall outside promotional genres because we cannot exactly say

that the purpose of a book review, for instance, is to attempt to get its readers to do something that will benefit the book reviewer. A review will inform the readers by providing the readers with a critique of the book and might try to persuade the readers to accept the reviewers' outlook on the book. Such an acceptance has no direct benefit for the reviewer. On the contrary, the successful persuasion of readers by advertisements or product information can result in a lot of benefit for the genre producers including increased sales.

There are many different professional, institutional and academic genres such as grant proposals, personal statements, university letters of appeal and academic research articles which benefit the genre producer (Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Ding, 2007; Hyland, 2005; Martín & León Pérez, 2014; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013). For the purpose of this study, these genres are separated from other genres such as sales promotional letters and advertisements which have an explicit and acknowledged marketing intention. This means the benefit is profit oriented.

Such a sub categorization of genre resonates with Bhatia (2005) who considers advertisements for example as core promotional genres. Personal statements or academic research articles are recognized primarily for their informative function. They do not intend to gain financial profit. In contrast, advertisements have an explicit marketing function with an intention to sell. OPs may fall directly into this category of core promotional genres. They have a similar kind of promotional purpose as print advertisements and book blurbs which attempt to persuade the genre audience to buy something that belongs to the genre producers. We could assume that as a core promotional genre, online product information may make strong use of linguistic devices of persuasion, making it worth attention in the present research. Now let us turn to rhetorical and linguistic features of texts that have primarily a marketing intention.

Labrador et al. (2014) and Bhatia (2005) recognize promotional genres as having two main characteristics; describing the product to be sold and evaluating the product positively to convince the reader to purchase it. This explanation suggests that two main functions of a promotional genre with a marketing intention are description and positive evaluation or promotion. Pounds (2011) studying the language of online property descriptions, also

presents ideas that can support this claim by referring to how the promotional function of a genre is connected to positive evaluative content. So we can assume that each promotional genre may consist of different combinations of description and evaluation. I investigate whether this claim applies to the OPI genre as well, and if they do, how OPI combines descriptive and evaluative elements in its rhetorical structure.

#### 2.7.1. Promotional characteristics in moves and lexico-grammar

Onder (2013) and Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) recognize both promotional and informational moves in the promotional genres that they analyse. For instance, Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) identify Move 2 – ‘Promotional description’ of their herbal tea product description as a promotional move containing description and evaluation. One of its steps – step 2.1 ‘Marketing statement’, is regarded as being overtly persuasive. Identifying which functions are performed by each move will help teachers and students get an idea of what each chunk of text performs in the macro-structure of a genre, and by using which functions, persuasion can be achieved.

It is necessary to go beyond the level of a move, and explore lower levels of lexico-grammatical patterns and lexis with persuasive value in order to analyse the persuasive quality of genres. Existing literature on persuasive genres/registers with a marketing intention (Bhatia, 2005; Biber & Egbert, 2018; Biber & Zhang, 2018; Kathpalia, 1997; Onder, 2013; Shaw, 2006; Suau-Jiménez, 2019) suggests that persuasion or promotion in a genre happens at different levels. It happens at move level where whole moves are recognized as carrying the rhetorical function of promotion, and at the level of grammar and lexis where the language used can vary according to the type of promotion that is intended. Sections 2.7.1.1 and 2.7.1.2 discuss how persuasion is achieved at move and lexico-grammatical levels.

#### 2.7.1.1. *Persuasion in moves*

In this section I discuss how researchers have studied the move structure of promotional genres with an intention to sell. Due to the functions that all these promotional genres have in common, such a review of literature can provide important insights about how the OPI can be structured. That is, whether or how the structure of the OPI genre keeps to or deviates from other similar promotional genres with a marketing intention, and what this may mean in a functional, socio-cultural sense.

Kathpalia (1997) identifies six basic moves of the rhetorical structure of the book blurb: Headlines, Justifying the book, Appraising the book, Establishing credentials, Endorsements(s) and Targeting the market. The main purpose - persuading the readers - is achieved by various functions performed by each move. While the Headlines move is used to attract the reader, Justifying the book is used to prove that the book is current and topical. Appraising the book is recognized by Kathpalia (1997) as the main move which performs the function of describing and evaluating the book. Therefore, a key function of a promotional genre such as book blurb is description and evaluation. The next two moves - Establishing credentials, Endorsements(s) - are regarded as performing the functions of convincing the readers of the book writer's credibility as a writer and thereby validate the book. The final move Targeting the market specifies the market the book is most suited to.

Onder (2013) researched UK and Turkish Amazon online book blurbs and suggests that medium could have an effect on the rhetorical structure. He developed a move structure of five to six moves: complimenting the author, book description, justifying the book by establishing a niche, book promotion, author's background and author's website/blog. Studying the moves and their steps reveals that moves of the online book blurbs share a lot of similarities with print book blurbs. New moves, such as information of the author's website/blog are unique to the online medium, which suggests there are novel ways to promote the author through other online sources. My belief is that in the online medium, giving details of the author's website/blog is a means of establishing author credentials by inviting the readers to search for information about the author through the web addresses provided.

*Table 2.1. Moves of some promotional genres with a marketing intention*

<b>Online Cheese Descriptions (Labrador &amp; Ramón, 2015)</b>	<b>Herbal tea promotional texts (Izquierdo &amp; Pérez Blanco, 2020)</b>	<b>Print advertisements (Bhatia, 2005)</b>	<b>Book blurbs (Kathpalia, 1997)</b>	<b>Online book blurbs (Onder, 2013)</b>	<b>Product Information (Puga &amp; Gotz, 2017)</b>	<b>Online Product Information - clothing (T. H. Andersen &amp; van Leeuwen, 2017)</b>
Identifying the cheese	Identification	Headlines	Headlines	Complimenting the author	Overview	Product
Showing a picture	Promotional description	Targeting the market	Justifying the book	Book description	Directions	Definition cluster
Describing the product	Ingredients	Justifying the product or service by establishing a niche	Appraising the book	Justifying the book by establishing a niche	Warnings	Product details
Describing the process	Suggestions	Establishing credentials	Establishing credentials	Book promotion		Further recommendations
Describing smell and taste	Processing	Detailing the product/ service	Endorsements(s)	Author's background		Selection
Offering serving suggestions	Nutrition & allergies	Establishing credentials	Targeting the market	Author's website/blog		
Suggesting recipes		Endorsement or testimonials				
Providing quality assurance		Offering incentives				
		Using pressure tactics				
		Soliciting response				
		Signature line and logo				

Bhatia (2005) identified both visual and textual elements in the move structure of print advertisements, and one move may contain both visual and textual elements (e.g., reader attraction move, product details move). He lists these moves: headlines, targeting the market, justifying the product or service by establishing a niche, detailing the product/ service, establishing credentials, endorsement or testimonials, offering incentives, using pressure tactics, soliciting response, signature line and logo (see Table 2.1). Bhatia (2005) also mentions that the advertising copywriters generally select from this range of available moves and do not necessarily use all the moves and in the same order. Similar moves can also be seen in other promotional and marketing oriented genres as seen in Table 2.1.

All the examples in Table 2.1 demonstrate that these promotional genres share common moves as can be expected of genres that share the purpose of selling (e.g., justifying the product, establishing credentials, detailing the product). Similarly, the OPI genre studied in this research shares the same sales purpose as advertisements and book blurbs. Therefore, an analysis of the OPI's rhetorical structure can be expected to reveal moves similar to the ones given above.

From a cross-cultural perspective, research illustrates the possibility of culture-specific differences to a genre's rhetorical structure at the level of moves and steps. In the case of Kathpalia (1997), the differences lie in how moves are sequenced and embedded as well as how the moves are linguistically realized. For instance, in Kathpalia's (1997) comparison of book blurbs of international publishers and Singapore based publishers, she found that Singapore based writers valued grammatical accuracy over stylistically innovative grammatical deviations. Another significant difference is in the use of evaluative language. Evaluative language in the form of attributive adjectives is spread throughout the international book blurbs, while in Singaporean book blurbs, such language is mostly concentrated in one move which performs an evaluative function. Onder (2013) found differences to move structures at the level of moves: Turkish online book blurbs were recognized as using a five- move structure compared to the UK based Amazon book blurbs which had a six move structure. There were differences to the obligatoriness of moves as well. Turkish book blurbs used significantly fewer adverbs than the Amazon UK book blurbs, signalling a culture-specific linguistic difference in book blurbs. These two examples of Onder (2013) and Kathpalia (1997) illustrate that there could be culture specific differences to the same promotional genres at move level as well as at lexico-grammatical level, and a cross-cultural genre study could yield interesting and important findings.

#### *2.7.1.2. Characteristics of an online persuasive register with an intention to sell*

Biber and Egbert (2018) and Biber and Zhang (2018) identify a sub register called "Description with intent to sell" in their study of online registers which I think shares many of the characteristics with the OPI genre. Although the researchers only identify the book blurb as a text type representing the "Description with intent to sell" sub register, the reason

why I draw a parallel between the OPI and the 'Description with intent to sell' sub register is because the situational characteristics that Biber and Egbert (2018) provide to characterise the 'Description with intent to sell' match the situation in which the OPI genre is made. For instance, the OPI fits the profile of appearing on a commercial website with no known author, and with the audience consisting of anyone who comes online and is interested in the product. The OPI also seems to describe the product while focusing more on the product's positive qualities, with the goal of selling that product. Therefore, although register studies such as Biber and Egbert (2018) do not concern themselves with text structure, it can be assumed that the lexico-grammatical features identified as salient in the "Description with intent to sell" sub register will be relevant for the OPI genre as well.

A multi-dimensional analysis of co-occurring linguistic patterns of the 'Description with intent to sell' register allows Biber and Egbert (2018) to identify adjectives, long words and second person pronouns to be salient features of this sub register using a keyword analysis. Adjectives and adverbs (e.g. acclaimed, award-winning, beautifully, charming, classic, engaging) are evaluative words. Biber and Zhang (2018) also report that adjectives that describe other objects, adverbs of manner and nouns/verbs carrying implicit value judgements (gifts, upgrade) seem to characterise the 'Description with intent to sell' sub register.. Combining the findings of these two studies, we can expect to find the use of positive adverbs and adjectives characterizing OPI.

Another study evaluating the promotional language of persuasive genres is that of Shaw (2006). Shaw investigated the genres of software design proposals, house agents' particulars and academic book reviews, and identifies several features of promotional discourse. One characteristic he found is that these genres contain evidence of the presence of both the recipients and producers by the use of various pronouns and referents (as opposed to disinterested genres where only the authorial voice is prominent and no reference to a genre recipient is made). This may be because promotional genres have an interest in establishing a good relationship with their readers for persuasive purposes. Therefore, the genre producers would be addressing their audience and appealing to their judgement.

## 2.8. Situational and cultural context

C. Miller (1984) sees genre as typification of rhetorical action which acquires meaning from the situation and from the social context in which the situation arose. Martin (as cited in Eggins, 2004) considers genre to be a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of a culture. The definitions emphasize how a genre is inextricably linked to the situation, social context or culture in which it occurs. The current research therefore explores any differences to the OPI genre that may occur on the basis that the context in which the genre is created and used may have an impact on its formal characteristics.

Following the above genre definitions, two types of context are identified: the situational context which is the immediate context in which the genre unfolds, and the wider socio-cultural context within which the genre is realised. The situational context may be interpreted using the three contextual features stipulated by Halliday and Hasan (1989), of field (the subject matter and content, i.e. the marketing activity), tenor (relationship between those involved in the genre – i.e., seller-online user/ online user-OPI relationship) and mode (i.e. online shop, digital medium).

Halliday and Hasan (1989, p.39) also point out “The context of situation, however, is only the immediate environment. There is also a broader background against which the text has to be interpreted: its context of culture” although this cultural context is not explored by the authors. Using school text genres as an example, they point out that whatever a school text and situation is, they derive their meaning from the wider culture which involves among other things, the school as an institution in the culture, the concept of education, the structure of the teaching staff and school principals. Equally, referring to a ‘social and cultural context’ of genre and how students of academic writing could analyse how that context affects a text they write, Paltridge (2000) includes as part of the social and cultural context “the background knowledge, values, and understandings it is assumed writers will share with their readers, including what is important to their audience and what is not.” (p.56). The above examples illustrate how culture encompasses the values and beliefs of a



group of people and the institutional and professional structures and practices which surround the genre.

Resonating with the above view, C. Miller (1984) asserts that for critics and analysts, genres can index cultural patterns of a group of people, while for students, genres provide an understanding of how to become part of a community. With reference to students, this community could be an institution or professional community which students one day aspire to be part of. The reason why genres could guide students to become members of such a community may be that genres reflect the professional and institutional practices and values of that community, with some scholars going to the extent of considering learning and using genres associated with particular institutions to be rigidly conforming and acting according to a set of institutional beliefs, attitudes and values (Paré, 2002). Nevertheless, what does become apparent through the above references is the value of a genre as a pedagogical instrument to initiate learners into the unknown, and how the genre embodies the attitudes, values and beliefs of the communities of people using it.

Within digital interactivity studies, Pauwels (2012), who proposes a framework of website interactivity analysis, identifies phenomena such as websites as being cultural representatives and repositories, and points out how websites may reflect the way ethnic or national groups of people think and do things. This explanation indicates how culture can be interpreted in terms of broader national contexts, as is done in the current study. Therefore, the professional and institutional practices of organisations operating within a geographical area are hypothesized to simultaneously affect and be impacted by the attitudes, values and beliefs and behaviour of the people of that national geographical area. Although citizens living within one large geographical territory may admittedly be diverse and therefore could not perhaps be put into one broad and very general homogenous national group, it may still be interesting to find out whether such national level cultural distinctions can be identified.

## 2.9. Why use corpora in discourse analyses

A corpus can be considered as a compilation of texts that have been collected and stored with a particular purpose in mind and that provides examples of language in use (Hunston, 2002). Corpora of various sizes and formats have been used in language studies to identify recurrent patterns of language by using various corpus analysis software. The use of corpus linguistics in language studies allows researchers to apply empirical techniques of analysis to an otherwise purely subjective form of analysis. Numerous researchers (Biber et al., 2007b; Cheng, 2004; L. Flowerdew, 2004) stress the importance of empirical corpus data rather than intuitive models of language in use. Language patterns are more easily and more reliably identified through analysing collections of texts and quantitative computer techniques than through qualitative analysis alone. In addition, the intuition of a researcher might not always result in accurate pictures of the language under analysis. Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, and Helt (2002, p. 10) point out, “intuitions about language use often turn out to be wrong”. Therefore, in my analysis of the OPI genre, I use a corpus of OPI texts to ensure reliability of my data analysis and findings.

Furthermore, a corpus- based genre analysis allows me to incorporate several different approaches to discourse analysis in my research methodology, thereby allowing for a well-rounded research design. Biber et al. (2007b, p. 1) recognise three approaches to discourse analysis: (1) ‘the study of language use’ which explores how words, phrases and clauses are used within and vary according to different texts and co-text; (2) ‘the study of linguistic structure beyond the sentence’ which investigates how texts are organised; and (3) ‘the study of social practices and ideological assumptions that are associated with language and/or communication’ which examines how the society and culture in which the texts are used affect the text types. My analysis incorporates all three dimensions to discourse analysis. Firstly, conducting a move analysis of the OPI corresponds to discourse analysis through ‘the study of linguistic structure beyond the sentence’. Secondly, conducting a corpus analysis of the characterising lexico-grammatical features (specific to the moves) is a form of discourse analysis through ‘the study of language use’. The third approach to discourse analysis that Biber et al. (2007b) mention is ‘the study of social practices and

ideological assumptions', which he explains can be incorporated into corpus-based studies by supplementing the studies with techniques such as interviews with practitioners from the discipline under study, in order to interpret the linguistic findings. Both lexical, visual, interactive as well as structural findings of my research are interpreted by consulting with the discipline professionals and online shoppers. The move analysis, the lexico-grammatical, visual and interactive analysis as well as the socio-cultural analysis are conducted based on observations made on a specialised corpus of OPI texts that are compiled expressly for the purpose of the research.

I end this section by referring to one more advantage of corpus-based move analysis that is of relevance to my study. Kanoksilapatham (2007) stipulates that a key advantage of a corpus-based approach is its ability to develop genre prototypes. These prototypes can be constructed by referring to the various obligatory and optional moves and steps of a genre's rhetorical structure that is identified by analysing a corpus. Authentic examples of how the steps are operationalised via lexico-grammatical, visual, interactive or discourse features can be provided by using corpus tools (through concordances). These genre prototypes are valuable to help novices to online marketing and copy writing understand and produce a genre that is unknown to them, or raise awareness of culture specific genre conventions that business and marketing professionals are unfamiliar with. The next sections review how using corpora and corpus analysis techniques can benefit English for Specific Purposes research.

### 2.9.1. Using specialised corpora in genre analysis

One way in which specialised discourse has been analysed for practical pedagogical purposes is through corpus-based genre analysis (Swales, 1990). Such move specific corpus-based genre analysis has been followed in Henry and Roseberry (2001), Navarro (2015), Ding (2007), Labrador and Ramón (2015), Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) and Upton (2002). Corpus analyses of different research and professional domains record a variety of corpus linguistic methods that different researchers (Cheng, 2014; J. Flowerdew & Forest,

2009; Knight et al., 2017; Suau-Jiménez, 2019) have used to study professional genres. These methods include word frequency analyses, concordance analyses (to analyse communicative functions of a linguistic feature), comparative examination of lexical bundles (their structure), investigating key words (and their concordances) as well as comparing statistically frequent lexico-grammatical features of a specialized corpus with a reference corpus. These corpus analysis techniques are employed in the OPI analysis because they are useful for identifying linguistic features characterising the genre or move register. I now turn to how corpus techniques can contribute to such discourse analysis.

Researchers (Cheng, 2014; Handford & Matous, 2011; Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Knight et al., 2017) recognize frequency lists as a good starting point in interpreting lexico-grammatical characteristics of a genre. Such can be compared with a general corpus frequency list to give us a good first impression of lexical behavior in a genre. For instance, Kithulgodā and Mendis (2020) compare the 50 most frequent words of a corpus of Sri Lankan Welcome Address speeches with the most frequent words of the British National sampler corpus to identify significant patterns of language use in the Welcome Address speech genre. Henry and Roseberry (2001) compare the most frequent words of a corpus of job application letters with the most frequent words of the Cobuild general English corpus in order to identify salient linguistic features of job application letters. They also compare the language use of the job application genre with the language used in one of the genre's moves and one of the strategies in order to investigate how patterns of language use could vary within a single genre. Similarly a significantly high frequency of certain pronouns or adjectives in the OPI corpus (or a sub corpus of one move) compared to a general corpus can provide us with an empirical foothold to the functional interpretation of the genre's lexico-grammatical characteristics.

Secondly, frequency analysis across different sub corpora of a corpus can provide us with a picture of whether or how lexical or grammatical features vary across those sub corpora. For example, Knight et al. (2017) studied the characteristics of online auction site product descriptions (specifically shoe product descriptions on eBay) and investigated how these product descriptions' characteristics differ according to experienced/novice status of sellers

and new/used status of items using an initial frequency analysis. They used log-likelihood scores as a statistical measure of the relationship between the word frequencies of novice and experienced sellers or new and used status sub corpora. This process indicated whether certain significant differences existed by chance or not. For instance, the researchers compared whether there was a statistically significant difference in the use of certain pronouns (I, my, me) between product descriptions of used and new products. Since the  $p$  value was  $<0.01$  (and the critical value  $>6.63$ ) for the use of pronouns between the two compared categories, they concluded that the difference between the use of pronouns 'I', 'me' and 'my' was not by chance. McEnery (2011) also recommends using normalized frequencies to circumvent the effects of different corpus sizes affecting frequency.

Thirdly identifying some of the high frequency words can lead to a more general description of the genre register. Exploring those high frequency words' collocates, and then by using that information to identify possible lexical phrases. An example is how, using seven collocates identified for the high frequency word "experience" - I, and, have, my, in, of, years- Henry and Roseberry (2001) identify the following lexical phrase containing the word experience:

*I (also) + have + (adj) + experience in + NP (and NP).*

Other sets of linguistic features were also identified,

*I am + NP, I am + adjective/particle, I + consider + NP + (adj) + (to be+ NP).*

However, a problem that I perceive in using frequency lists is identifying a frequency cut off point above which one can consider high frequency words as useful. Should one consider only the 50 most frequent words or the 100 most frequent words? A frequency list of the different parts of speech (grammatical categories) might give a better sense of the linguistic features that are salient in a given genre. Such a grammatical approach is adopted by Pérez-Llantada (2021) to identify linguistic features of Spanish crowdfunding project proposals.

Tagging a corpus for moves can be used to analyse the move register of a genre (Ding (2007); Labrador and Ramón (2015); Upton and Connor (2001) and (Biber, Connor, &

Upton, 2007a) in corpus-based studies of specialised discourse. Such a task allows researchers to identify language patterns characteristic of a genre, and gain a more in-depth understanding of how features characterising a particular genre behave within the different rhetorical units/moves. This technique is labour intensive, and therefore is not used by many. Labrador and Ramón (2015) uses move tags for product descriptions but they limited tags to extracting concordances from moves and steps to help with proposing some model language phrases representing the moves. No other study takes full advantage of the number of corpus techniques mentioned above (as mine does) by combining them to design a genre analysis method that combines both qualitative move analysis and lexico-grammatical analysis using corpus analysis techniques.

### 2.9.2. Analysing grammatical features of a register/genre

Biber and scholars (Biber, 2006, 2012; Biber et al., 2002) have discouraged us from classifying genres or registers as purely written or spoken. Rather, they have shown how certain grammatical features can be associated with certain types of genres regardless of whether it is spoken or written. For instance, Biber (2012) has demonstrated how two spoken genres such as conversation and public speeches can be very different from each other whereas the spoken genre of public speech could be more similar in its characteristics to a written genre such as the written exposition.

Although researchers disagree with the notion of the existence of a uniform or homogenous group of written and spoken genres, they demonstrate that distinctions could be made between “typical speech and writing” based on their situational characteristics (e.g., relationship between communicative participants, channel of communication, communicative purpose) (Biber, 2012, p. 37). In such stereotypical identification, face-to-face conversation has been typically used to represent speech and prose has been used to represent typical writing. Grammatical features that have been linked to the spoken genre of conversation include contractions, lexical verbs, modals and semi-modals, progressive aspect, ‘get’ passive and ‘help’+ bare infinitive. Grammatical features that have been found to characterize the more informational academic prose are nouns, adjectives, dependent

clauses and prepositions (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Recent studies (Barbieri, 2018) have pointed out how written digital genres such as blogs are displaying conversational features (e.g., expression of stance with reference to self – ‘*I don’t want to*’, ‘*I am going to*’). In light of these findings, it would be interesting to investigate how the OPI genre positions itself against two other related spoken and written registers, through an exploration of its grammatical features.

It also needs to be pointed out that most large-scale research into the grammatical features of registers do not attempt to find out whether the features they discover vary across cultures. For example, large scale studies such as those of Biber and Egbert (2018) distinguish general lexico-grammatical characteristics of different online registers. My own research, being more focused and specialized in its design, will in contrast attempt to identify whether the cultural context of the country in which the genre is produced can have an effect on the register of a genre.

### 2.9.3. Lexical bundles in discourse and genre studies

Lexical bundles – a type of multi-word unit - are identified as ‘the most frequent recurring lexical sequences’ in a particular language or register (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Biber, Conrad, & Cortes, 2004; Cortes, 2013). They are contiguous units of words of more than one word (Granger, 2018). In the current study, I attempt to identify lexico-grammatical features characterising the OPI genre by searching for lexical bundles (e.g., ‘*is known as*’, ‘*the beauty of*’) using quantitative techniques.

Research into lexical bundles has been conducted on three or four word bundles (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Biber et al., 2004; Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Wood & Appel, 2014) as well as on smaller two word sequences and any n-length sequences of more than two words (Bestgen, 2018; Cortes, 2013; Crossley & Salsbury, 2011). In the case of two-word sequences being explored as lexical bundles, a distinction needs to be made between two-word bundles and collocations. Whereas collocations that co-occur within a certain span of words can be

contiguous or non-contiguous (e.g., '*significant difference*' and '*the difference was significant*'), lexical bundles are only frequency-based word sequences that are contiguous, meaning they are placed next to each other. In that sense, only the first example - '*significant difference*' - is a lexical bundle (Granger, 2018). The current study, which identifies two-word bundles along with three, four and five word sequences, only focuses on contiguous units of words based on frequency.

Lexical bundles may or may not be non-compositional and are therefore more commonly found within genres, unlike language like idiomatic expressions (which are non-compositional). Lexical bundles are also known to reflect and realise the communicative purposes of the different text types (Barbieri, 2018; Biber & Barbieri, 2007). One drawback of lexical bundles is that they may be syntactically and semantically incomplete (*is an, this is a, skin and, and is, with your other*), and therefore may not reveal any clear discourse functions (Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010). I suggest that even such bundles that apparently do not directly realise any discourse functions can be useful in move-based genre analyses by giving insight into the linguistic features characterising that genre (e.g., use of simple present tense to evaluate products, and amalgamating evaluative ideas using co-ordinating conjunctions and prepositional phrases). Upton and Cohen (2009) point out that even though moves are defined functionally, they are realised by means of linguistic features which include grammatical features, word choice and different types of phrases.

Furthermore, even within a single genre, the linguistic repertoire may change according to the different functions that are carried within it (Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Upton & Cohen, 2009). Cortes (2013, p. 36) recognises the importance of connecting move functions with their linguistic realisations when she writes,

a description of the relationship between lexical bundles and moves in a particular register could provide more evidence towards a complete picture of the tendencies used in the organisational and lexico-grammatical patterns used to build discourse by different speech communities.



Finding recurrent word sequences that perform specific rhetorical functions or that help reveal particular language patterns used within a particular move is a worthwhile task which also has significant pedagogical implications. Byrd and Coxhead (2010, p. 32) report on how recognising and producing repeated language patterns can improve language learners' "appropriate usage for particular settings". Combined with knowledge of rhetorical structure of a given genre, English for Specific Purposes or English as a Second Language learners then have the means to realise those structures in the form of pre-fabricated chunks of language (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). At the same time, exploring these longer units of language by means of corpus techniques ensures identifying patterns that would possibly not be noticed if we were to base our analysis on intuition alone.

As one of the purposes of the present study is to identify how the rhetorical moves of the OPI genre are realised linguistically, I explore any frequent lexical bundles characterising the moves. Not every lexical bundle carries a rhetorical function. Cortes (2013) illustrates how longer lexical bundles with lexical words (e.g., nouns, verbs) are more likely to communicate communicative purposes than bundles constituting function words (e.g., prepositions, articles, pronouns). So, while some of the lexical bundles in this analysis may reveal move functions (e.g., *not tested on animals*, *natural vegan* in 'Making reassurances' step of M3 - Promoting the product move), other lexical bundles (e.g., *as well as*, *can also be*) can reveal how the moves are lexico-grammatically patterned, and help identify distinctive features of that move - the move register.

Biber and Barbieri (2007) and Cortes (2013) identified lexical bundles for the entire genre or register first, and then categorised the bundles according to their discourse functions. In such categorisation, the reliability of assigning functions to lexical bundles needs to be checked using inter-rater reliability. In contrast, Cortes (2013) refers to how a corpus tagged for moves and steps (such as what I do) would be an ideal method of identifying functions of lexical bundles, or identifying the lexical bundles that realise moves/steps. She also acknowledges the difficulty and labour intensity of such a task (therefore, she resorts to first identifying all lexical bundles of a genre and then categorising them into moves using inter-

rater reliability). It would be useful and more reliable if lexical bundles could be generated specifically for each move that is identified in a move structure.

## 2.10. Chapter summary

I began this chapter with an overview of the different approaches to genre analysis, and then justified why adopting a mixed approach would be best suited for the purpose of my study. Next, I elaborated on how conducting a genre analysis of multimodal digital genres requires changes in genre analysis methods, and a larger repertoire of analytical frameworks (which are discussed in Chapter 3). Then I gave an account of how one of the main functions of the OPI genre – the promotional function - is realized through lexico-grammar in related literature. Finally, I provided a discussion of how the use of specialised corpora benefits a genre analysis such as mine, and concluded with elaborating on some useful corpus analysis techniques that can be adopted for the purposes of this study. A description of the analytical frameworks used in my own research is found in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the analytical frameworks that I use for the multimodal analysis of the Online Product Information (OPI) genre. I adopted three analytical frameworks to analyse the rhetorical structure, the use of visuals and the behaviour of interactivity in OPI. The corresponding frameworks are move analysis (Section 3.2.), the grammar of visual communication (Section 3.3.) and the framework for multimodal analysis of website interactivity (Section 3.4).

### 3.2 Move analysis

Move analysis, first introduced by Swales (1990), has been used by numerous researchers (Bhatia, 1993; Biber et al., 2007b; Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Ding, 2007; Dos Santos, 2002; Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2007; Navarro, 2015; Parkinson et al., 2017; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013; Tribble, 2002; Upton & Connor, 2001) to reveal the macro-structure of various academic and professional genres. It is a method of genre analysis that analyses the recurring patterns of meaning that characterise a genre. In the following sections, I will provide an overview of the main constituents of the move structure; moves and steps.

#### 3.2.1 What is a move?

A move is a part of text that performs a rhetorical purpose which contributes to achieving the overall purpose of the genre (Kanoksilapatham, 2007). For instance, Kathpalia (1997) proposes a move structure of six moves for the book blurb genre: Headlines, Justifying the book, Appraising the book, Establishing credentials, Endorsements(s) and Targeting the market. The researcher demonstrates how each move performs a particular function that

contributes to the main purpose of promoting the book. Kathpalia (1997) remarks that the first two moves perform the functions of attracting readers and convincing the readers of the book's novelty or relevance. The researcher also identifies a central move among all moves – Appraising the book – which provides a summary and evaluation of the book. This information is significant in that it implies that there are functions that are essential to achieving the main purpose(s) of a genre while other move functions may have peripheral value to achieving genre aims.

### 3.2.2 What is a step?

Each move may have one or more ways (called a step/ strategy) by which the purpose of a move may be achieved (Bhatia, 1993; Kanoksilapatham, 2007). Writers or speakers may employ one step, a combination of steps or even several optional steps to express a certain move. To illustrate this statement, I cite Labrador and Ramón (2015) who propose the following rhetorical structure for online cheese descriptions:

Move 1: identifying the cheese

Step 1: name of the cheese

Step 2: name of the company/ manufacturer

Step 3: provenance

Move 2: showing a picture

Move 3: describing the product

Step 1: characteristics: shape, size, texture, coating and weight

Step 2: ingredients: type of milk and rennet used

Move 4: describing the process

Step 1: preparation

Step 2: aging

Move 5: describing smell and taste

Move 6: offering serving suggestions

Step 1: temperature

Step 2: presentation

Step 3: food-pairing

Step 4: drink-pairing

Step 5: best season

Move 7: suggesting recipes

Move 8: providing quality assurance

As can be seen through the above example, certain moves do not employ multiple steps to perform their function (e.g., Move 5, Move 7). Other moves such as Move 1 or Move 6 depend on a selection of steps to realise the purpose of the move. The researchers also point out that the appearance of moves and steps is not always sequential, implying that we can expect different move and step sequences for a given set of genre moves.

### 3.2.3 What is the significance of studying the moves of a genre?

Because move analysis breaks a genre down to its composite functional units, as can be seen from the example move structure in Section 3.2.2, it is useful to those who are unfamiliar with the conventions of a particular genre. This knowledge of rhetorical structure can be of use to aspiring professionals whose grasp of discipline specific genre conventions is unstable. It will also be of interest for business owners and marketers working or hoping to work with an international market, to explore whether the structure of the OPI varies across cultural boundaries. Highlighting the significance of move analysis in teaching, Kanoksilapatham (2007) points out how the genre moves could be used by teachers to teach novice writers how to succeed in writing texts belonging to a particular genre. Therefore, this research aims to identify the function based compositional units of the OPI genre.

From a cultural perspective, it is worth studying the genre of specific national cultural contexts. It is because there is the possibility that the way in which a genre is created may be

different from one country to another. This idea is reinforced by Upton and Connor (2001, p. 314) who stipulate that “crossing cultural boundaries requires re-learning at least part of the genre in light of its construction in the new culture.” There is also evidence supporting this position in the research of Mezek and Swales (2016) and Kathpalia (1997). It stands to be seen whether this will prove true with regard to the OPI in my own study.

### 3.2.4 Conducting a move structure analysis

Kanoksilapatham (2005) lists some criticisms aimed at the type of traditional analytical framework of move analysis presented by Swales (1990), such as difficulties in distinguishing move boundaries semantically in genre analysis, and the lack of clear-cut rules for deciding on move boundaries. She points out how these issues impinge on the analytical method’s validity and reliability. Therefore, Kanoksilapatham (2005), in analysing a corpus of biochemistry research articles to identify its rhetorical structure, adopts the research procedure given below:

- i. Compile a representative corpus of 60 randomly selected research articles taken from five key journals.
- ii. Get an expert informant (a biochemistry PhD student) to code a subset (25%) of the corpus (after the researcher identified the move structure) to assess reliability of move identification.
- iii. Analyse the inter-coder reliability between expert’s coding and researcher’s own coding.
- iv. Analyse the entire corpus for the research article’s rhetorical structure.

A similar method is adopted in the current study though with certain alterations. The methodology adopted in conducting the move analysis is discussed in Section 4.8.2 of the Methodology chapter.

### 3.3 The grammar of visual communication

I use Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) Grammar of Visual Design in order to analyse the meanings conveyed by the visual mode of OPI (OPI). This involves an analysis of meanings conveyed by the images used in OPIs as well as the meaning expressed by how images are placed on the web layout together with written text.

To provide an introduction to the Grammar of Visual Design, it is a framework that has been developed to analyse and describe visual communication and explore how the different combinations of visual elements create varying meaning potentials. Based on Halliday's (1978) metafunctions of language, the Grammar of Visual Design describes and analyses visual communication by exploring its ideational, interpersonal and compositional (textual) meanings. The framework can also be used to explore the relationship between images and texts in multimodal texts. This is because systems that are used to analyse compositional meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Machin, 2007) can be used to study a single image as well as the visual layout of an entire multimodal text. An overview of analytical subsystems used in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design which is of significance to the current study follows.

#### 3.3.1 The ideational function of visual communication

The ideational metafunction with reference to visual communication, refers to how a semiotic system must be able to represent different ideas. The two main types of visual representation structures that Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose are narrative process and conceptual representation.

Conceptual visual representation relates to how visuals represent ideas and objects without any representation of actions. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify three types of such conceptual patterns which represent represented participants (parts of the image) with regard to their 'class, structure or meaning': classificatory, analytical and symbolic.

Classificatory representation relates represented participants in the image in a taxonomy. There, one or more participants will be subordinate to another participant(s). The superordinate participant maybe either visible or not in the image. This kind of representation could involve diagrams or charts or images in which there are participants that have been categorized in some way (e.g., a picture of a menu showing different types of meals offered by a business to their customers for breakfast, lunch and dinner). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 80), “Covert taxonomies are often used in advertisements, where the photographs may, for instance, show arrangements of bottles that represent the variety of products marketed under a brand name”.

Analytical processes of representation relate participants in a “part-whole structure” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and include two kinds of participants – a carrier which is the whole, and possessive attributes which are its parts. When considering this explanation, fashion shots or even maps can be an analytical conceptual representation. The model of a fashion shot is the carrier displaying the different parts of the outfit. The world map has the image of the world as the carrier displaying countries and regions as its parts.

The third sub-category under conceptual visual representation is symbolic representation. Symbolic representation is about what a participant means or is through attribution of symbolic value. Such a symbolic visual representation may occur by the presence of both a carrier who is attributed a symbolic value, and its symbolic attribute- the participant that represents the meaning (e.g., in an image of a man carrying a beaker, the beaker becomes the symbol for scientific investigation that attributes the meaning of scientist to the man). Or symbolic representation can occur by means of only a carrier of symbolic meaning (e.g., an apple to represent sin).

Narrative processes, unlike conceptual representations, refer to those that involve human participants doing something to or for each other. Here, the participants are linked by means of a vector (an action or movement angle). Vectors may be formed by people doing things, or even their bodies, limbs or tools in action. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also propose that there are other means by which vectors can be formed. For instance, a vector can be an arrow or diagonal lines marking a form or action.



Two main types of narrative processes are action processes and reactional processes which apply to some of the images in the current study. The action processes of narrative representation involve images where the vector is formed by an action. According to the type of action and number of participants involved, there are three subcategories of action narrative images; transactional, non-transactional and event. Transactional action narrative images have two participants – an actor (doer of action) and goal (recipient of action) – and a vector. The image of a woman talking to another woman is an example. Non-transactional action narrative images have only one participant and the vector. There is an actor but no goal. The image of an old man gesturing (with no indication to whom) or an image of snow falling are examples. Event narrative images contain only a vector and a goal – for example, something happening to someone. Or else, just a small part of an actor is visible like a hand or a leg. Here, by anonymizing the actor or by removing the actor from view, what becomes significant is the event that happens. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) liken this to the grammatical passive voice. Objects such as arrows pointing at certain places in maps also convey the same sense of impacting, and fall under this category.

The reactional narrative processes of representation are those images in which a vector is created by an eyeline or by the direction of a glance of a participant in that image. Here, we call the participant doing the action of looking a reactor (not an actor), and the participant who receives this glance a phenomenon (not a goal). However, the reactor must be human or human like. A woman looking at a man is considered to be a reactional process.

### 3.3.2 The interpersonal function of visual communication

The interpersonal metafunction in the visual system refers to how visual resources address and interact with the image viewers. In exploring interpersonal meanings communicated by images to those who view the images, one distinction that is made is between offer images and demand images. Demand images are the ones in which participants in the image gaze directly at the viewers creating a form of direct address to or relationship with the viewer of the image. In contrast, offer images provide information to the image viewers who are objective viewers of the image content. There are no animate participants represented inside the images making direct eye contact with image viewers.

Another tool for evaluating interpersonal meaning is distance or the frame size with which a human or inanimate participant (object) is shown in an image. Three types of distance are discussed in relation to objects. Close distance (close shot) where the object in the image is seen only in part because of its close proximity, connotes a close interaction with the image viewer as if the viewer him/herself is involved in the image. Middle distance (medium shot) shows an object in full but without much background shown to reflect that the object is within reach of the viewer but not used by them. Long distance between an image object and the viewer (long shot) reflects something that is unreachable by the image viewer.

The third resource that can be used to discuss interpersonal meaning in visual communication is called 'perspective' or attitude. As stipulated by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), attitude towards the product is conveyed and manipulated by the angle of the shot. There are three angles that are identified with three corresponding meanings attributed to them. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the low angle, where the interactive participant (user) sees the represented participant (object) above his/her eye level, connotes that the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. Similarly using a high angle, where the interactive participant sees the represented participant in the image below his/her eye level, may symbolize the interactive participant's power over the represented participant. Seeing the represented participant at eye level connotes equality where there is no power difference suggested. Advertisements may use these different angles to produce the sort of attitude that they would like their customers to have regarding the product they sell. To show that a product is a cut above average or is every person's dream product (e.g., a luxury car), advertisers and marketers may use a low angle in their photographs. If they want to create a perspective that anyone has the power to buy or order a product, they may use a high angle in their images to create that effect.

The fourth resource that can be used to discuss interpersonal meaning in visual communication is called 'modality' (referred to as 'validity' in Kress and van Leeuwen (2021)). As stipulated by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), modality of an image is how true or real an image is, compared to the incident or event portrayed in the image being seen in real life. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) have indicated how images can carry modality

just like language (must, may, might) and point out how modality is interpersonal. The writers further propose that it is not a matter of projecting truth through images, it is about projecting a certain level of truth that the text/ image producer wants the viewer to see. I agree with this point of view, considering how products that we see in images of advertisements for instance may be considerably smaller or less attractive when we buy the actual product. Machin (2007) discusses how the concept of modality is realized in eight scales (modality markers). The modality markers can be used to decrease modality and thereby avoid or change reality as I illustrated through the previous example. These markers span from high to low modality with degrees in between.

The eight modality markers are:

1. Articulation of detail- how much detail we can see on the image (eg: a photograph vs a matchstick figure)
2. Articulation of background- how well we can see the details in the background of an image
3. Articulation of depth- showing the deep perspective (3D, isometric perspective-3D objects drawn flat on pages, to children's picture book kind of images where a tree would be drawn as a circle for the foliage and a line for the trunk)
4. Light and shadow (illumination) – how light/shadow has been used or not used
5. Articulation of tone – levels of gradation of brightness (very bright to very dark)
6. Colour saturation – how full and rich the colours seem (from black & white to fully saturated /vibrant colours)
7. Colour modulation- from showing different variation of the same colour due to light and shadow to flat unmodulated colours
8. Colour differentiation – how many colours there are

To illustrate how interpersonal meaning is created by using one of the modality markers, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) propose that highly saturated colours give a sense of emotional intensity. Therefore, advertisers are said to use these to increase the sensory visual experience of a product. The authors demonstrate how digitally saturated colours

used in a magazine cover showing garden produce add to the lushness and desirability of the produce.

### 3.3.3 The textual function of visual communication

The textual (also referred to as compositional) metafunction deals with how semiotic resources are used to form coherent wholes. The compositional meaning of a particular text can be explored by investigating the composition of individual images or by analysing how images and written text are organised inside the overall layout – their spatial relationship. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduce three interrelated systems for this kind of analysis: salience, information value and framing.

Salience refers to ways in which elements can be made more noticeable than others due to factors such as potent cultural symbols (e.g., symbols of beauty- beautiful face, perfect white teeth, symbol of innocence- child, symbol of danger-gun), size of pictures, colour, tone, focus, foregrounding and overlapping visual and/or verbal resources. Information value of different resources is explored through their relative placement inside larger compositions and the values that are implied by those different placements. For instance, a left and right placement of elements signifies that the elements on the left are already known/ familiar to viewers, and that the elements on the right are introduced newly. A top and bottom placement signifies an ideal and real information value, and other meanings are created by combinations of such placements. Framing refers to how items in a multimodal text are visually divided or are connected together by the use of white space, space lines, similar or contrasting use of colour and font and overlaps. They create various types of meaning of interconnection or disconnection – visual segregation, separation, visual contrast and rhyming, overlap and integration. For instance when items are separated by white space (what is called ‘separation’ in Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), it is an indication that those items are similar in some ways but are also dissimilar in other ways.

Although Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) framework can be used to investigate how meanings are conveyed through visuals or by combining visual and textual resources, the analysis stops at non-interactive signs. Therefore, analysis of visual and textual items will be

supplemented with another framework (see next Section 3.4.) to account for what happens to the images and the image-text relationship after an image or text is acted upon in the digital environment.

### 3.4 Framework for multimodal analysis of website interactivity

In order to account for the various elements of the OPI that become responsive to a web reader's actions and how they contribute to the genre purpose, I use Adami's (2015) framework of web page interactivity. Adami distinguishes between interactivity and interaction. Interaction in a digital context refers to computer mediated human to human interaction. But as Adami (2015) puts it, interactivity is "a person's interaction with media and texts... what users can do (on) to a text, including the interaction with the machine/media ..." (p. 134). Therefore, this study is concerned with the interactivity seen inside the OPI genre and what it implies about the genre.

Adami (2015) developed her framework to analyse web page interactivity based on Halliday's (1978) three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, textual. In this framework for multimodal analysis of website interactivity, she proposes to analyse each interactive item on two dimensions : the dimension of 'sign' (which she calls the syntagmatic dimension) and the dimension of 'site' (which she calls the paradigmatic dimension). As proposed by Adami (2015), 'Sign' belonging to the syntagmatic dimension- the actual web page space on which we see the signs - refers to a signifier-signified relationship. A sign can be any static images, words or symbols that convey meaning that they are supposed to signify. This syntagmatic dimension of signs is actually investigated in my study by performing a visual analysis and a lexico-grammatical analysis. However, analysing the syntagmatic dimension does not explain how the signs dedicated to interactivity (e.g., Add to cart button, share icons) function within the OPI genre. So, this gap is filled by using Adami's (2015) framework, by exploring how such interactive signs become 'sites' for interactivity when online users act on them.

To explain what 'site' means, Adami (2015) explains how texts, symbols or images can sometimes in the digital medium become places for user action, and therefore be interactive. So the paradigmatic dimension, as suggested by Adami (2015), refers to how a sign becomes a site of action by user's selecting an image or text to act on (click/ hover over), thereby creating a textual effect on the genre. The types of actions that are available for a genre user, how those actions affect the genre structure and layout all enable a deeper understanding of genre functions and behaviour. Considering this information, images and even texts can have a dual role in the digital world, which is explored in the current study. So, a conventional analysis which only looks at the signs one dimensionally (syntagmatically) is insufficient. Rather, a two-dimensional analysis (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) needs to be carried out. The analytical framework of multimodal website interactivity complements previously mentioned image/ image-text analyses in Section 3.3 by addressing the interactivity of any signs or visuals found in digital genres. I believe this allows for an additional layer of interpretation to image and textual analysis.

Figure 3.1 depicts the analytical dimensions and functions that constitute Adami's (2015) framework.

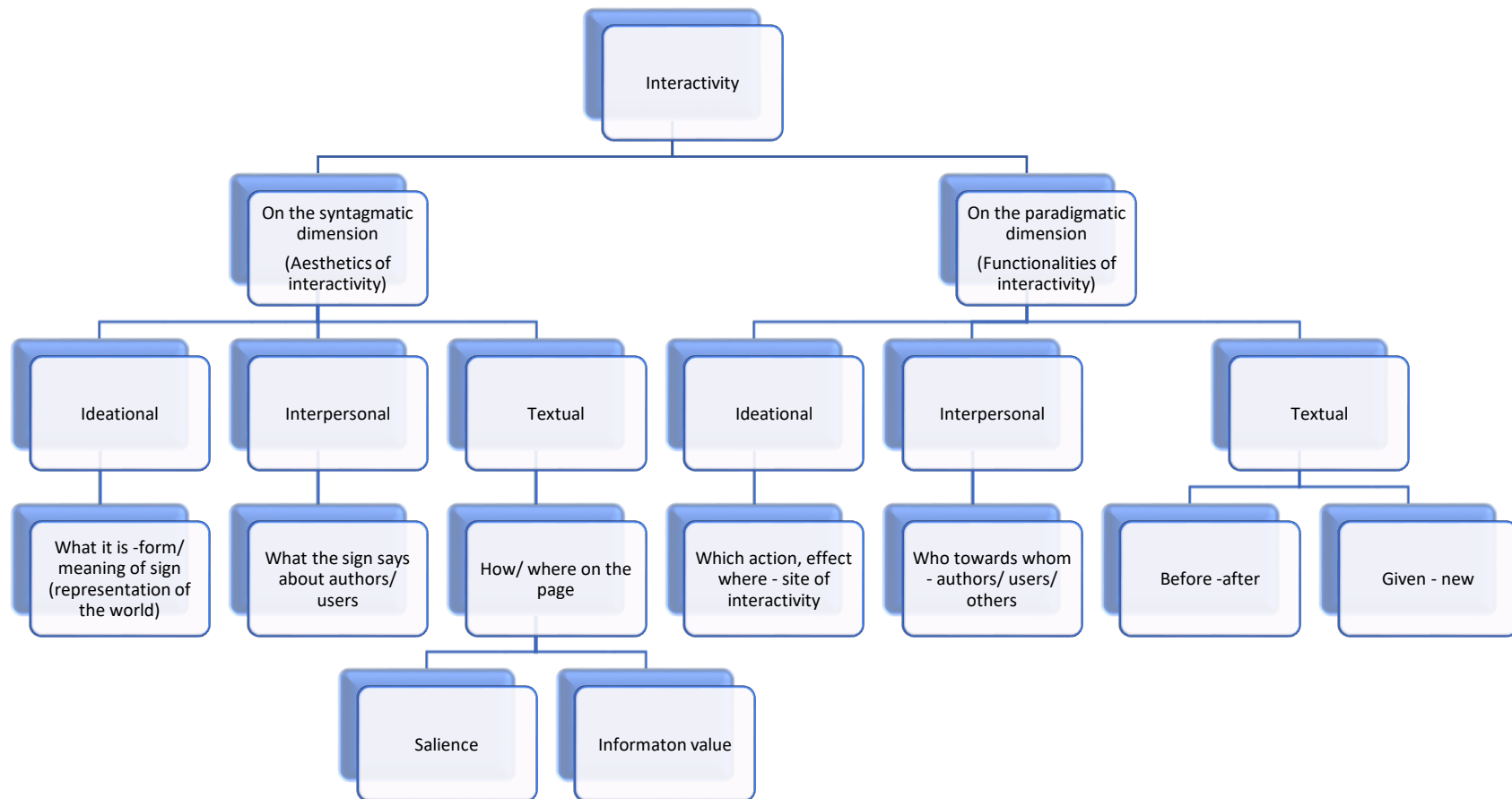


Figure 3.1 Adami's (2015) analytical framework of website interactivity

Under the ideational function in the paradigmatic dimension, we investigate what the interactive site/sign does. Under the interpersonal function, we study what kind of identity is created by the type of interaction, about the author and the user of the digital text. Studying the interpersonal function of interactive items also helps to understand what the kind of relationship is projected between the user and author through the sites/signs. For instance, if New Zealand semi-precious jewellery websites allow their product images to be zoomed in while this type of interactivity is not seen associated to images on Sri Lankan OPI, it could mean that New Zealand businesses are more customer-centric and pay more attention to customer needs while they shop online. Under the textual aspect, it is possible to examine how the interactive items are configured on the page before and after a user acts upon them. This can be interpreted with the meanings given under the compositional function of the Grammar of Visual Design (Section 3.3.3)- the effects that interactivity has on salience, information value and framing of the web text. However, I observe that the framework, while providing a bare outline of what aspects to study when analyzing interactivity, does not provide any systematic meaning potential to interpret web actions as is given in the social semiotic framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006). Therefore, the meanings of web actions must be arrived at through intuition and expert information from participant interviews.

Furthermore, I believe that further refinement of the framework is necessary when applying Adami's (2015) framework to genre analysis. The adjustments that I therefore made, are related to the actions and effects of interactive items, and are further explained in Chapter 8 - Interactivity analysis (Section 8.1).

### 3.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I discussed the different analytical frameworks that assisted me in analyzing the structure, visuals, interactivity and lexico-grammatical features of OPI. In Section 3.2, I elaborated on the main constituents of a move structure – moves and steps, how to conduct



a move analysis and reasons for why it is necessary to conduct a move structure analysis of the genre. Section 3.3 provided a description of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Grammar of Visual Design which I use to analyse images and webpage layout. I detailed how images and image-text relationship can be analysed according to ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions using the set of resources Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose. This was done with specific reference to the resources that I use in my own visual analysis. In Section 3.4, I included a description of Adami's (2015) analytical framework for analysing multimodal website interactivity. I explained how and why the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of her framework are relevant to my analysis of digital interactivity in OPI.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

This research draws on two sources of data - corpus data and participant interview data - in order to conduct a genre analysis. A specialised corpus of Online Product Information (OPI) texts was compiled based on which the move analysis, lexico-grammatical analysis, visual analysis and interactivity analysis were conducted. The research also draws on input from specialist and non-specialist groups involved in the genre's creation and use in order to inform the analysis, and to identify the OPI genre, its social purposes and the context of its production.

This Methodology chapter starts off by explaining the principles, process and issues related to compiling the OPI corpus (Sections 4.2 to 4.6). Then it moves onto describing the data collection through semi-structured interviews (Section 4.7) and its analysis (Section 4.8.1). Sections 4.8.2 to 4.8.5 explain how the move analysis, visual analysis, lexico-grammatical analysis and interactivity analysis were carried out.

### 4.2 Compiling the OPI corpus

In order to carry out the genre analysis, I compiled a small specialised corpus of OPI texts of 78,301 words. The two sub corpora – the Herbal beauty care OPI and the jewellery OPI - are made up of OPI texts drawn from 32 online stores -from 16 New Zealand and 16 Sri Lankan business-to-consumer (B2C) online stores (Cao et al., 2012).

An equal number of 15 OPIs were selected from each online store to ensure representativeness of the corpus. The total size of the corpus in terms of the number of texts is 480 (120 SL beauty care, 120 SL jewellery, 120 NZ beauty care, 120 NZ jewellery).

Answering the Research Questions (see Section 1.6) of the study entails carrying out four types of analyses based on corpus data. They are a move analysis, a lexico-grammatical analysis, a visual analysis and an analysis of digital interactivity of the OPI genre. I use the full corpus of 480 texts for the quantitative lexico-grammatical analysis. For the other qualitative analyses, a subset of OPIs representing the 32 NZ and SL websites was randomly selected (see in Table 4.1). For move analysis, it was a subset of 160 texts, and for visual analysis, a subset of 64 texts. For interactivity analysis, a subset of 160 texts was used to represent the 32 websites that were used in the analysis. This meant analysing the interactive signs on five OPI texts per shopping site to account for the interactivity of OPI of each website.

*Table 4.1 Number of product information texts used for quantitative and qualitative analyses*

	<b>NZ jewellery</b>	<b>NZ herbal beauty care</b>	<b>SL jewellery</b>	<b>SL herbal beauty care</b>	<b>Total no. of texts</b>
<b>Quantitative analysis:</b>					
Lexico-grammatical analysis	120	120	120	120	480
<b>Qualitative analysis:</b>					
Move analysis	40	40	40	40	160
Visual/ image-text relationship analysis	16	16	16	16	64
Interactivity analysis	40	40	40	40	160
	8 websites	8 websites	8 websites	8 websites	32 websites

### 4.3 Corpus design and selection criteria

Corresponding to the focus of this study, I collected OPI texts purposively from online store fronts while adhering to the following selection and design criteria:

- I. Only specialized store fronts were selected. OPIs from shopping mall type retailing websites were not included. This is because shopping mall type retailing web sites sell the brands of a variety of manufacturers, so the same brand's product can be sold in different shopping mall sites. Therefore, in collecting data from only specialized store fronts, I sought to avoid the possibility of any repetition of collecting the same product OPIs across different shopping mall/supermarket type sites.
- II. The websites were selected as belonging to Sri Lankan or New Zealand businesses (found by checking whether websites end with '.co.nz' or '.co.lk' or whether webpages such as 'About us' gave information of where the business is based) due to the selection of these two countries for the cross-cultural investigation.
- III. Each selected shopping site had at least 15 herbal beauty care/ jewellery OPIs because this was the intended number of OPIs to be collected per website.
- IV. Number of texts collected was balanced across the sub corpora, with the assumption that collecting more from one group (Sri Lankan beauty care, Sri Lankan jewellery, New Zealand beauty care, New Zealand jewellery) would skew results.
- V. Collected OPIs could contain either written text, or images/icons or both written text and images/icons.
- VI. The shopping sites were accessed through a laptop/ computer, and then manually downloaded. OPIs in social media platforms or/and accessible through mobile phones or tablets were not considered (because issues of scalability affect OPI layout which may have an effect on analysing the visual mode).
- VII. Each online store from which the 15 OPIs were collected had to contain at least four different types of product (e.g., necklaces, pendants, earrings, rings for jewellery product information).

- VIII. Each website selected for the corpus was predominantly recognized as jewellery or herbal beauty care stores. For instance, a website that sold beauty care products but identified itself as a wellness store while selling other health products as well, was not selected.
- IX. If website interactivity (e.g., clicking on a link), moved one away from the current page to a different page, the content of the second page was not added to the corpus (e.g., care instructions in jewellery websites that are given on a different page which is linked to the product information page).
- X. User generated content was not part of the corpus (e.g., the reviews written by customers, questions they ask). However, sections that provide space for user-generated content were considered as part of the move structure. This is because the genre producers themselves assign that space within the genre for these sections. Therefore, whatever verbal text the genre producers use to refer to sections where users can input information, was counted as part of the corpus (e.g., 'enter your name', 'do you have any questions?', 'ask now', 'write a review').
- XI. Any products in the herbal beauty care corpus that are not applied directly onto skin, hair or nails were excluded (e.g., essential oil).
- XII. Websites where more than 50% of the written details is the same for all 15 OPIs per website were not included in the corpus as I assumed that this would create a false keyness of certain words.
- XIII. If buttons connected to the OPI have written text on them (e.g., print, share, read more, add to cart), they were included in the text files. Anything that appears verbally, including what is inside images, was included in the corpus text files.
- XIV. Not more than four items were selected from a single product type per website. For instance, even if 20 or 30 body lotions are for purchase in a particular online store belonging to the beauty care product category, only a maximum of four body lotion OPIs were selected.
- XV. The number of OPIs selected from each product type (e.g., whether I selected one, two, three or four OPIs for necklaces) was proportional to the number of products for sale under that product type. For example, if there were 10 necklaces for sale

and only five rings for sale in the online store, three or four necklace OPIs were randomly selected while only one or two ring OPIs were randomly selected.

#### 4.4 Corpus specifications

I provide the specifications of the OPI corpus in the following table.

*Table 4.2 Corpus specifications*

Corpus size	78,301 words
Sub corpora	Herbal beauty care (SL and NZ)- 53,778 words Jewellery (SL and NZ)- 24,523 words
Number of OPI texts	480 OPIs texts Herbal beauty care – 240 OPIs (120 SL + 120 NZ) Jewellery – 240 OPIs (120 SL + 120 NZ)
Average word length per OPI	163 words (The avg. word length of a beauty care OPI text is 224 words while the avg. word length of a jewellery product information text is 102 words).
Data collection period	three months (August- October 2020)
Data collection method and processing for analysis	Manually saving each product page containing OPI. Converting the OPIs to plain text (txt.) for the lexicogrammatical analysis. Manually adding text found on images into the text files. Copying and saving all images, text and interactive items of 160 OPI texts on to word documents for move analysis and interactivity analysis.

	Storing the images of 64 OPI texts in a folder for visual analysis.
Language	English
Modes involved	Written, visual (images/symbols/icons/buttons)
Product categories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Herbal/natural skincare products</li> <li>2. Jewellery (luxury/fine+ fashion/semi-fine)</li> </ol>
Product composition in each category	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 240 OPI texts covering 56 herbal/natural skincare product types.</li> <li>2. 240 OPI texts covering 20 jewellery product types.</li> </ol> <p>A full list of product types and corpus composition is given in Appendix A.</p>
Sampling	<p>Use of whole texts</p> <p>15 texts per shopping site (decided after checking potential shopping sites for the maximum number that can be included in the corpus while maintaining a uniform number of OPI texts across all selected sites)</p> <p>Purposive sampling of texts</p> <p>Texts cover as many products as possible given within each product category.</p>
Annotation	Yes (automatic POS tagging with Penn Tree Bank Tagset using Lancsbox software)

## 4.5 Issues of size, representativeness and terminological differences

### 4.5.1 Size

As regards the ideal size for a small specialised corpus, researchers have pointed out that there is no ideal size for a corpus and that size is dependent on the content and needs and purposes of the investigation (Koester, 2010; McEnery, 2011; Reppen, 2010). Also, researchers (Hunston, 2002; McEnery, Xiao, & Tono, 2006) point out that the size of a corpus depends more on the factors of practical considerations and research focus. So there is no pre-determined specific size for a specialised corpus (Biber et al., 2007a; L. Flowerdew, 2004; Koester, 2010; Reppen, 2010).

Considerations in this study involved conducting a move analysis of the genre using corpus data and coding the corpus for moves. In addition, the research focus, which is the cross-cultural multimodal study of Online herbal beauty care and jewellery Product Information, is controlled by the practical considerations of qualitatively analyzing the moves, the visual mode and the interactivity of the OPI. So a small corpus suited the manual and qualitative nature of data analysis. In addition, in order to avoid replication of data and obtaining product information with clear national origins (NZ, SL), OPI texts were collected only from specialized online store fronts which reduces the number of available online sources for data collection. Therefore I believe that a relatively small representative corpus is sufficient for the purpose of my study, due to the highly specialised nature of the discourse, and the fine grained analysis that is intended to be conducted using the corpus.

The studies of Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020), Labrador et al. (2014) and J. Flowerdew and Forest (2009) all provided guidance as to what size a specialized genre specific corpus could be. The size of a genre-specific corpus needs to take into account the number of representative texts in the corpus. This is because it is not the number of words that matter the most in a corpus intended to analyse a genre, but whether the number of texts that are used is sufficient to represent the selected type of genre (Tagg, 2009).

To illustrate my point, I take the following examples. On the one hand, the cross-cultural genre investigation of online advertisements of Labrador et al. (2014) employ 200 online



advertisements (100 English, 100 Spanish) totalling approximately 79,000 words. The specialised HTPPT corpus of Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) contains 200 (100 English, 100 Spanish) herbal tea online product descriptions totalling 36, 266 words. On the other hand, J. Flowerdew and Forest (2009) analyse a corpus of 20 Applied Linguistics PhD Literature Reviews totalling 379,397 words to identify the lexico-grammatical realisation of the moves and steps of the literature review (part) genre. Their corpus only contains a limited number of texts selected for analysis. In another study, the corpus of product information by Puga and Gotz (2017) contains 372 texts with a size of 105,170 words. All these examples indicate the possibility of having anything between 12 to 200 texts with a corpus size of 36,000 to 380,000 words in a specialized corpus for the purpose of studying a genre. The more specific the genre is, the smaller the corpus could get (as seen in the case of herbal tea online product descriptions which is one product type). Therefore, I believe a balance between the number of texts and number of words needs to be struck. Consequently, I argue that a corpus size of 480 OPI texts totalling 78,300 words is a sufficient size for current research purposes (see Table 4.3). However, corpus size will also be discussed in relation to other ideas such as situational and linguistic representativeness in the following sections.

*Table 4.3 Corpus size*

	<b>SL sub corpus</b>	<b>NZ sub corpus</b>	<b>TOTAL SIZE</b>
Beauty care	18,578	35,200	53,778
Jewellery	9,467	15,056	24,523
	28,045	50,256	78,301

#### 4.5.2 Representativeness

As well as size, what is equally relevant to this study is that the corpus is representative of the text type that it will analyse – the genre of Online Product Information. Representativeness is determined by the variety of genres comprising a corpus (also known

as balance) and the method of text selection for each genre(s) of the corpus (known as sampling) (McEnery et al., 2006). However, as with size, representativeness also seems to be an idea wrought with complications. That is because it does not seem to have a uniform system of measurement or assessment. Although scholars assert the necessity of achieving some form of representativeness when collecting the sample to build a corpus (McEnery & Wilson, 1996), they also argue “Balance, representativeness and comparability are ideals which corpus builders strive for but rarely, if ever attain” (McEnery, 2011, p. 10). This is a view shared by other academics (Reppen, 2010; Xiao, 2010). As noted by Xiao (2010), balance and representativeness hinge on the research question and on how easy or difficult it is to collect the data. Balance and representativeness therefore ought to be interpreted relatively – relative to practicalities of corpus compilation and the purpose of the research. Yet, as stated by McEnery and Wilson (1996, p. 22), we need to at least try to obtain a sample which is “maximally representative of the variety under examination”. I therefore, attempt to achieve a satisfactory degree of representativeness and sampling in my corpora by following a set of design criteria and specifications which were discussed in Section 4.3.

#### *4.5.2.1 Situational and linguistic representativeness*

Biber (as cited in Koester 2010) refers to two types of representativeness – situational representativeness and linguistic representativeness. Situational representativeness may be achieved by satisfactorily representing the range of registers and genres of a target population. Being a specialized corpus, the Online jewellery Product Information sub corpus and Online herbal beauty care Product Information sub corpus match the requirements of situational representativeness. In addition, I attempt to cover as wide a range of product types as possible within each product category<sup>1</sup> (e.g, jewellery product category can include different product types such as rings, earrings, bangles, pendants, necklaces). All the online stores that I selected contain at least four product types leading to a wider variety of product information, and therefore contributing to the situational representativeness of the corpus.

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<sup>1</sup> Product category= jewellery, online herbal skincare  
Product type= necklace, pendant, ring, face masque, hand cream, soap  
Product category is the superordinate term.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine the sampling frame of the population of the two OPI categories because there is no formal comprehensive list of all functioning online jewellery and herbal beauty care stores. Therefore, I was left with the choice of listing as many online beauty care stores and jewellery stores as possible through an online search, before applying the design criteria to eliminate webstores that did not meet the corpus design criteria. Although McEnery et al. (2006) stipulate that situational representativeness is not as important when it comes to a specialized corpus because it includes texts from a single genre, I believe that it is still very important when considering the variability that can be found within even a single genre. Such variability is evidenced by the different types of products that can be found even within a single genre such as those I have selected (see Appendix A).

Linguistic representativeness refers to how well the linguistic distribution of a text type is covered in the sample corpus. I consider this a more difficult task to achieve with the practical considerations of a multimodal qualitative analysis weighing upon corpus compilation. The corpus cannot be so large that it becomes too cumbersome to analyse for visual mode, moves, and interactivity. Therefore in this study, I favored a smaller corpus more suited to move analysis which made it difficult to achieve linguistic representativeness. I elaborate below, the process followed to assess the linguistic representativeness of the two SL and NZ OPI sub corpora, and the extent to which this was achieved.

I attempted to apply the concept of closure or saturation (McEnery et al., 2006; Tagg, 2009) to check whether the OPI sub corpora were stable enough to trust the output of the lexicogrammatical analysis that accompanies my move analysis. Saturation is recognized as the point where a certain linguistic feature reaches its capacity, or at least has a very low margin of variation (McEnery et al., 2006). This is when we can understand that the corpus has become relatively stable for linguistic investigation. I followed the method explained in Tagg (2009) to measure the level of saturation in my sub corpora in order to achieve linguistic representativeness. I used the most frequent words to assess saturation. I divided the two SL and NZ sub corpora into five approximately equal sized sections and checked word frequency of each section cumulatively. For instance the size of the first section of the NZ sub corpus is 11978 words (full corpus size is 50200 words). I derived a frequency list for this

section using AntConc 3.5.8 corpus analysis tool. Then I added the second section to the first section and derived a frequency list for those two sections of 22725 words. I repeated this cumulative process until the fifth and final frequency list represented the entire corpus. The 10 most frequent words of each section were checked for stability – whether they changed from one list to the other. If we had arrived at a point where the 10 most frequent words did not change in any way, including in its placement, then we could have assumed that there was linguistic stability within the corpus. The following tables (Table 4.4, Table 4.5) show the degree of corpus stability in relation to the placement and order of the 10 most frequent words in the NZ sub corpus and SL sub corpus.

Table 4.4. Ten most frequent words of the SL sub corpus

SL OPI sub corpus	SECTION 1		SECTION 2		SECTION 3		SECTION 4		SECTION 5	
Ranking	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word
1	152	and	275	and	406	and	546	<b>to</b>	693	to
2	137	to	258	to	403	to	533	<b>and</b>	692	and
3	121	skin	191	skin	342	skin	405	skin	510	<b>the</b>
4	83	for	173	<b>the</b>	272	the	367	the	471	<b>skin</b>
5	78	the	151	<b>for</b>	237	<b>a</b>	305	a	418	a
6	77	a	148	a	233	<b>for</b>	301	for	385	for
7	69	of	135	of	208	of	276	of	380	of
8	63	add	127	add	193	add	265	add	333	add
9	55	with	114	with	182	with	250	with	321	with
10	51	is	104	<b>in</b>	164	in	219	in	301	in
Word tokens										
per	5256		10060		16010		20919		26901	
cumulative										
section										

Table 4.5. Ten most frequent words of the NZ sub corpus

NZ OPI sub corpus	SECTION 1		SECTION 2		SECTION 3		SECTION 4		SECTION 5	
	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word
1	467	and	837	and	1150	and	1486	and	1823	and
2	278	the	546	the	747	<b>to</b>	945	to	1194	to
3	264	to	539	to	723	<b>the</b>	929	the	1156	the
4	208	a	406	a	576	a	749	a	917	a
5	194	of	383	<b>skin</b>	518	skin	648	skin	810	skin
6	185	skin	341	<b>of</b>	453	of	595	of	746	of
7	183	is	320	is	394	is	495	is	624	<b>with</b>
8	159	oil	253	<b>with</b>	391	<b>oil</b>	484	<b>with</b>	600	<b>is</b>
9	135	it	250	<b>oil</b>	360	<b>with</b>	479	<b>oil</b>	591	oil
10	131	in	242	in	344	in	436	in	533	in
Word tokens										
per	11978		22725		31538		40333		50200	
cumulative										
section										

As can be seen, by the 5<sup>th</sup> turn which is an accumulation of all five sections, the most frequent words of both SL and NZ sub corpora do not show as much movement as they did in the previous sections. Unfortunately however, there is still some movement of the lexical items to be witnessed by the last section of each sub corpus. This is shown using a bold font in the tables. This variation indicates that the corpus has not reached saturation. Therefore, the sub corpora with which I conduct my grammatical analyses are not linguistically representative. This is a limitation of the study (see Section 11.6).

The factor that was mainly considered in the corpus compilation was whether the target corpus was large enough to be representative of all the possible major patterns that the OPI genre embodied. Bazerman and Prior (2004) suggest such a method when compiling a corpus for genre analysis. He recommends to keep adding samples to the corpus until the sample size is large enough so that no major new patterns of the genre appear. At that point, he recommends to add another couple of samples just to assure oneself that the corpus covers all possible major variations. This was the method that was adopted and given priority in the current research in compiling the OPI corpus.

#### 4.5.3 Ambiguity in terminology - Genres or sub-genres?

Scholars have referred to the genre that is analysed in this thesis by varying terms including product description (Labrador & Ramón, 2015, 2020), product information (T. H. Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017; Puga & Gotz, 2017) and promotional text (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020). While this research opts to use the name 'Online product Information' (see Section 5.2 for a discussion) to label the genre, the fact remains that the same aforementioned scholars have used 'genre', 'sub-genre' and 'parent genre' when referring to product information/ product descriptions.

Scholars have treated what they call the product descriptions (comparable to 'product information' in this research) of specific product categories as sub-genres of the product description genre (Labrador & Ramón, 2015). However, some researchers have considered product descriptions of a single product category as a genre in itself (Labrador & Ramón, 2020; Puga & Gotz, 2017). Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) studying the herbal tea promotional text (HTPT) examine this issue genres/ sub-genres, and attribute the variations to different levels of text specificity. They call the HTPT a 'genre' at a lower level of text specificity although it is also a sub-genre of the online food product description genre or the online product description as a whole, at a high level of specificity. This same issue of ambiguity in terminological reference is addressed and explained by Yates and Orlikowski (1992) who discuss the concept of level of abstraction in relation to identifying a genre. Yates and Orlikowski provide the examples of a business letter and a recommendation letter as well as a meeting and a personal committee meeting, to discuss how they are both a genre

and a sub-genre. They demonstrate that the recommendation letter and personal committee meeting are different from the business letter and the meeting, primarily by being more specific in subject and form. Therefore, it is possible for genres to be either very general or very specific (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). However, while we could identify a narrowing down of the purpose of the genre when going from a business letter to a recommendation letter, Online Product Information of different product categories are examples of the same genre, and still have the same social purposes. Therefore, in reality Herbal Tea Promotional text or Cheese descriptions would still be exemplars of a 'parent' genre which is left relatively unexplored, unless otherwise proved by the move analysis.

Therefore, whenever I refer to the jewellery product information and the herbal skincare product information as genres, the underlying notion remains that they are merely categories of the Online Product Information genre. There may be certain differences between jewellery and skincare varieties of the genre. These possible differences form the basis for my research sub questions 2.2 *'How does product category affect the moves/ steps of the OPI genre?'*, 3.3. – *'Are there any differences in the use of images between the two cultures or the two product categories?'* and 4.3 - *Are there any differences in the image-text relationship between the two cultures or the two product categories? .*

#### 4.6 Issues of copyright

A single satisfactory answer to the issue of copyright when it comes to online corpus data collection, is still in the making. Nevertheless, scholars (McEnery, 2011; Xiao, 2010) seem to agree that even online texts are subject to copyright laws which makes the matter of corpus compilation a cumbersome task. However, they also offer several solutions to address this issue. McEnery (2011) offers three solutions for navigating the copyright issue. The first solution is to directly contact the copyright holder to get permission to collect and redistribute data. The second approach is to only collect data from websites which allow the use and distribution of web text. The third solution to using online copyright material is to collect the data without requesting prior permission and not redistribute it to others.

However, in this case, the creator of the corpus can use a corpus tool that makes use of concordances and snippets of the corpus to make data available to other researchers without infringing on any copyright laws.

The current corpus of OPIs is made up of texts collected from copyright protected websites, and the texts are collected from 32 different websites. I adopted a combination of the first and third approaches to data collection and distribution. Regarding the third approach, I use a corpus of OPI texts for analysis purposes, and make use of concordances and snippets of the corpus to illustrate textual data.

The first approach is used in relation to using visual data - gaining copyright permission to reuse visual data. I gained copyright permission from 14 business owners to use their online stores' OPI layouts and product photographs in my research. Both phone calls and emails were used to request copyright permission as emails alone did not seem to be effective enough to get a response from the businesses. Phone calls were made using the contact information that was available on the 32 shopping sites that were studied in the current research. Those businesses that were contacted via phone calls, and that agreed to grant me permission to use visuals of their OPIs in my research, were again sent an email with a letter requesting copyright permission. While six businesses scanned and sent back the signed letter granting copyright permission, eight businesses gave me their consent through a reply email. All the photographs and visual layouts are reproduced in this research with due permission from copyright holders. Following a practice used in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), three photographs for which copyright permission could not be obtained were replaced with hand drawn sketches of those photographs.

#### 4.7 Participant recruitment for semi-structured interviews

Genre analysis has been accompanied by various ethnographic analyses to account for the impact that a particular institutional or socio-cultural background can have on the genre (Bhatia, 2014; Cheng & Suen, 2014; Dudley-Evans, 1994; J. Flowerdew & Wan, 2010;



Navarro, 2015; Parkinson et al., 2017; Parkinson et al., 2018; Suen, 2013; Tribble, 2002). One of the methods through which contextual analysis can be done is through interviews with specialist/expert informants (J. Flowerdew & Wan, 2010). This method helps researchers to verify the validity of their analyses and get insight into the values, beliefs and practices of the insiders of the discourse community of which the selected genre is a product. This is especially important if the researchers are outsiders to that discourse community.

*Table 4.6. Number and type of informants interviewed*

	Business owners	Copywriters	Web designers	Online shoppers	TOTAL
Sri Lanka	1	3	2	5	11
New Zealand	1	2	2	5	10
TOTAL					21

Interview data was collected from 21 Sri Lankan and New Zealand specialists as well as non-specialist informants who create, read and interact with the genre (see Table 4.6). The Covid-19 pandemic made it difficult to recruit informants from the two countries, and the recruitment and interview process spanned fifteen months. I conducted semi-structured interviews online with four groups of informants: e-business owners, product copywriters, web designers and online shoppers. They can be recognised as members of professional and non-professional communities who are directly related to the creation and reception of the genre.

Ethics approval for participant interviews was obtained from the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington (approval number: 0000028205) before starting the data collection process. Informants were recruited by using the information given on the selected shopping sites about the owners and the web design companies that created the sites. At the same time, some participants were recruited through mutual contacts (e.g., business owners who provided contact details of their copywriter). Requests for interviews

were made through phone or email. In the case of online shoppers, I recruited eligible participants who contacted me via email in response to advertisements posted on online social media sites (Facebook) and on university notice boards. Written consent from participants was obtained prior to each interview (copies of the Participant Information sheet and Consent form are appended as Appendix C and D). A pre-constructed set of interview questions (see Appendix E) was used to guide the semi-structured interviews. The duration of semi-structured interviews varied between 20 – 60 minutes depending on the amount of information that the participants were willing to provide and discuss.

## 4.8 Analysis

### 4.8.1 Participant data analysis, theme coding

As mentioned in the Literature review Section 2.2, I draw on an eclectic approach to genre analysis in analysing the OPI genre. I compiled a corpus of authentic OPI texts to analyse the genre at a textual/visual level. I also draw on interview data to locate the OPI genre within the socio-cultural context in which it is produced. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 specialist and non-specialist informants – all of whom I identify to be stakeholders of the genre.

Participant interview data play two distinct functions within this research. On the one hand, it helps identify the genre and its purposes and situate it within the larger context of professional practices and similar genre conventions. This contributes to answering RQ1: *‘What are the factors that affect the creation and identification of the Online Product Information genre?’*. On the other hand, it informs the move analysis, image/ image-text relationship analysis and interactivity analysis (RQs 2 - 6). To elaborate, these interviews informed and validated my analysis in that they helped me to identify the move functions and steps of the genre. The interview data helped me better understand the functions of the visual and textual modes as well as the interactive items of the OPI genre from the perspectives of multiple genre co-producers. More importantly, the participant interview data helped me to turn my rather two-dimensional genre analysis into a rich three-

dimensional mosaic view of the genre. I could explore how different professional practices and contextual factors affect, introduce subtleties and depth to the picture I painted of my genre. So, while participant data became the main source of information in answering Research Question 1, which is addressed in Chapter 5, I have woven parts of the participant data analysis through my other main textual, visual and interactive analyses as well (in answering Research Questions 2 to 6), thereby strengthening the texture of my investigation.

All 21 interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo. I first looked at the set of interview questions (See appendix E) and created sixteen codes/themes. Then using NVivo, I coded the interview data (transcripts of those 21 interviews) for those themes. Whenever a new theme emerged, a new code was introduced. At the end of the interview data coding, data was coded under 25 descriptive themes (see Appendix F) which were used either as the basis of my analysis (Chapter 5) or to supplement my move, visual, interactivity and lexicogrammatical analyses.

## 4.8.2 Move coding

### 4.8.2.1 *Conducting the move structure analysis*

In describing the discourse structure of OPI, I set out to adopt functional semantic criteria as the main criterion for identification of discourse organisation. The approach was also guided by move taxonomies identified in literature on persuasive genres (T. H. Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017; Bhatia, 2005; Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020; Kathpalia, 1997; Labrador & Ramón, 2015; Onder, 2013; Puga & Gotz, 2017) although there was no strict adherence to any move structure in particular. However, it soon became apparent that such identification of discourse functions is also concurrently guided by a text's structural and linguistic criteria (e.g., placement of items on the text, topics, headings, sub headings, bullet points, use of the imperative form) and other semiotic resources like colour and font size. The fact that communicative function itself may not be the only or first contender for move identification is an idea that is acknowledged in literature (Askehave, 1999; Askehave & Swales, 2001; Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Swales, 2004); this proved to be useful

in the case of the current move analysis. There were also instances where assigning an exact function to a text chunk was hard to determine despite considering all the above mentioned criteria, and therefore had to be decided based on input from genre users and creators and their context of use. Consequently, identifying and demarcating the boundaries of moves of this genre was the result of taking into account text functions, content, text layout, linguistic cues, semiotic resources of colour, size, layout and discourse communities' input on the context of use. Through a close reading of 160 OPI texts and input from participant interviews, I derived a set of functions performed by the various text chunks. I explain the process of move coding below.

I iteratively analysed three sets of texts per product category - beauty care and jewellery - to identify moves and steps of the OPI. I selected 32 texts in the first round (one OPI per website), 32 texts in the second round (one OPI per website), 32 texts in the third round (one OPI per website). Once a set of functions was determined for the first set of 32 texts (pilot analysis), the next set of 32 texts was read multiple times to see whether the initial identification of functions was applicable to the second set as well. Changes were made to functions, and certain functions that were not found in the first text sample were added to the list of functions during the second round. For instance, the function of using pressure tactics was not found when reading the first set of 32 texts. The process was repeated for a third time with the third set of 32 texts to see if new functions emerged or changes were required to the existing analytical framework. Since no new functions were apparent, I ended the close reading process. I had a set of nine functions with attendant steps that were initially determined. However, I could observe overlaps in the functions I identified and how they were realized. There was also duplication of the same step in multiple moves (e.g., use of a step called 'suitability' inside two moves). So, the same sample of 96 texts was re-analysed three months later which allowed me to look at the texts from a fresh perspective. This led to a regrouping of the function categories and readjustment of the coding scheme with minimum move overlap.

Using the coding scheme and move/step definitions I developed, I then conducted an inter-coder reliability check of 32 text samples (as explained in Section 4.8.2.2) using NVivo 12

plus. Since the first round indicated disparities in the second rater's and my own coding, adjustments to the moves/steps were made, and another inter-rater reliability check was conducted. With this round proving the coding to be more reliable, I went on to code the 96 texts and an additional 64 texts (160 OPI texts in total) for their moves/steps using NVivo.

I also analysed whether there were any cross-cultural differences between the use of moves/steps. I used Pearson's Chi square test using IBM SPSS Statistics 27.01 software to find out whether there was a statistically significant association between move/step and country (see Chapter 6 Section 16.4). Pearson's Chi square test was selected as both the move/step (used or not used) and the country (New Zealand and Sri Lanka) are categorical variables.

#### *4.8.2.2 Intercoder reliability check*

Checking inter-coder reliability is one way of controlling for coding bias, and has been used in multiple research (Cotos, Huffman, & Link, 2015; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Moreno & Swales, 2018; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013) to assess the consistency of coding. In the current study, a second coder with a background in Applied Linguistics and who is familiar with move coding was employed to code a set of 32 texts using the coding scheme and move definitions I developed. Prior to the coding, the second coder was trained in a 2-hour session during which moves and their definitions were explained and discussed. The coder also watched two videos that I made showing the coding of two sample texts.

Using the 'Coding Comparison' option offered by NVivo 12 Plus, I calculated coding agreement. NVivo offers both percentage agreement and Cohen's Kappa coefficient to calculate inter-coder reliability. The kappa coefficient is considered to be a more robust method of measuring agreement due to taking into account the possibility of two coders agreeing by chance (Biber et al., 2007b; Moreno & Swales, 2018). So the kappa coefficient was selected as the statistic to measure reliability.

NVivo produces agreement results for each file (source) and code (node) separately. I used NVivo's online help guidelines (NVivo) and the faculty statistician's advice to calculate

agreement across multiple sources/nodes to calculate average Kappa coefficients for each move, weighting each source equally. In interpreting the kappa coefficients, most moves had excellent agreement (over 0.75) (NVivo). But there were some moves that fell within fair to good agreement (0.4- 0.75) and one below that which is considered poor agreement. Based on these results, I looked for and noted discrepancies between the second coder and my own coding in the NVivo projects. A discussion with the second coder allowed the resolution of most of the discrepancies (while some discrepancies were resolved by referring to participant interview data as explained in the following paragraph). Accordingly, I made adjustments to the moves to resolve most of these issues.

Although the move 'Grabbing attention' had high inter-rater reliability in the first reliability check, it was decided to merge the move with the second move 'Identifying the product' due to input from interview participants collected during this time. 'Grabbing attention' consisted only of the main product image which due to its vibrant colours and placement, attracted online shoppers' attention. However, the items coming under 'Identifying the product' such as product title, and again product image also perform the function of grabbing attention through extra linguistic resources of colour, use of capitals, font size, placement as single items/short phrases in a background of white space. This indicated an overlap of functions. This fact is borne out in participant interview data, where web designers as well as online shoppers point out how the image and product title capture customer attention first. Therefore, 'Grabbing attention' move was removed and 'Identifying the product' was redefined to reflect both functions.

There was an instance where I consulted the specialist informants- web designers and online shoppers - for their input on assigning a function to a particular discourse unit. This was under the assumption that investigating 'the context in which a genre is used' would give a better understanding of underlying genre functions (Askehave & Swales, 2001). To illustrate, the phrase 'Buy it now' which appears on an interactive button was coded under 'using pressure tactics' by the second coder which was not a function assigned to it by me. This was deemed as a discrepancy which could not be satisfactorily resolved by discussion between coders, therefore requiring contextual explanation (social context of which the professional

context forms part). Eight out of ten online shoppers stated that they do not feel pressurized when they see the 'Buy it now' button in product information although one recognized that the "now' part is for pressure'. To further clarify this point, web designer Munida (pseudonym) recognised the possibility of this phrase being used to pressurize customers - as "a dark pattern where users would unconsciously consider to buy the item". However, he also pointed out that "if it's (Buy it Now button) associated with Add to Cart or Add to Wishlist buttons, it gives user choice. If it's the only button, that makes the user feel compelled to buy it since it's the last option". Since "Buy it now" button almost always appeared in the texts together with other purchase options, it was decided not to code 'Buy it now' under 'using pressure tactics' when both buttons were used on the product page. The above example also illustrates the role of co-text and context in defining the function of a particular item within a text.

Once the coding scheme and the move definitions were edited to solve discrepancies, and revisions were made to the move structure, a second round of inter-coder reliability testing was conducted in order to evaluate the reliability of the move coding. The revised moves for each product type (for beauty care product information and jewellery product information) and their respective reliability values – the average kappa coefficients – were calculated. Almost all moves had excellent agreement (over 0.75) (NVivo) this second time. The coding reliability of just one move of the jewellery product information fell, at 0.71, within fair to good agreement (0.4- 0.75). However, with a 0.71 reliability, it fell within the upper range of fair to good agreement. Considering this fact and the fact that all other moves demonstrated excellent agreement, the second coding was considered to be sufficiently reliable.

#### 4.8.3 Visual analysis (visual mode and image-text relationship)

The visual analysis of this research was carried out to answer two main research questions - RQ4 (*'How does the visual mode contribute to achieving the genre purposes of Online Product Information?'*) and RQ5 (*'What is the relationship between images and texts in Online Product Information?'*). Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) Grammar of Visual Design was

adopted to analyse the meanings communicated by the images used in OPI and to analyse the image-text relationship.

As image analysis is a time-consuming process and as each OPI text usually contains multiple images, I selected the images of 64 OPIs (representing the 32 websites) to carry out the visual analysis. The 64 OPIs gave a total of 212 images to be analysed. The decision to analyse 64 OPIs was made after a pilot analysis of 32 OPIs (see also 4.8.2.1). It made me realise the scale of the visual analysis that I could conduct in a larger study of genre analysis involving a move analysis, interactivity analysis as well as a lexico-grammatical analysis. The pilot visual analysis also helped to select the analytical tools I needed out of those available (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) for a visual analysis of the OPI genre. I used the following analytical resources in order to study the three metafunctions of visuals:

- I. Ideational metafunction: use of conceptual structures vs. narrative processes
- II. Interactive metafunction: contact, social distance, perspective of images, modality markers
- III. Compositional metafunction: information value, salience

By using the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions of this system, I investigated how the images in the product information are represented (conceptual or narrative images), and the kind of interactive meaning that is generated through the images (demand/offer, intimate/ social/personal, subjective/objective images). I also investigated how 'real' or 'true' the images are projected as being (modality) using modality markers such as colour saturation, brightness (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These analyses contribute to identifying the kind of meaning that is projected through the images and how they contribute to achieving the communicative purposes of the OPI. Finally I used the third metafunction of composition to analyse the kind of image-text relationship that exists in OPIs by using the systems of 'information value' and 'salience' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). For this, I examine how the images and text are organised on a page by referring to two kinds of composition (top/bottom, left/right) and what the page layout connotes. Under salience, I identify which textual or visual elements stand out and how that happens by taking into



consideration factors such as size, colour, foregrounding. The use of salience is discussed in conjunction with information value within the analysis of compositional metafunction.

#### 4.8.4 Interactivity analysis

The interactivity analysis addresses RQ6 - '*How does interactivity affect Online Product Information?*'. The interactivity analysis was conducted on 32 online shopping sites (5 OPIs representing each selected online store). Adapting and applying Adami's (2015) framework for website interactivity analysis to the OPI sample allowed me to further refine and adjust the framework in a way that it accommodated and could be combined with a move analysis (see Section 8.1).

On the one hand, I studied text and images of OPIs as static signs as if they were on a printed page, which corresponds to the syntagmatic dimension of analysis of Adami's (2015) framework. On the other hand, if those texts or images were interactive (e.g., could be clicked on, new text could be entered), I analysed how the interactive items created different effects and reorganised the web page using the paradigmatic dimension of analysis of Adami's framework.

I analysed the interactivity within OPIs in terms of its ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. At the ideational level, I recorded the interactive items that the OPI genre uses, and the significance of their presence/ absence on Sri Lankan and New Zealand shopping sites. At the interpersonal level, I investigated the type of relationship that is implied between the users and the authors of the product information by the sort of action users are allowed to perform on the genre (e.g., are users allowed to share content outside the webpage? Can they add information to the OPI?) and what such allowances or limitations imply. At the textual level, I investigated how the actions performed on these interactive items affect the composition (information value, salience) of the OPI in terms of the image-text relationship (e.g., how hovering over an image enlarges it and affects the image-text layout) and what these changes to the image-text relationship imply about the meaning that

is conveyed through the genre. The analytical framework was explained in detail in Section 3.4.

#### 4.8.5 Lexico-grammatical analysis

After investigating the rhetorical moves of the genre and its visual and interactive aspects, I investigated the lexico-grammatical features that constitute the OPI genre. The reason is that the register of one written genre may differ considerably from another depending on their situational characteristics (Biber, 2012), and the characteristics of online written genres may differ from other similar print genres. This part of the analysis addresses Research Question 3 – *‘What are the patterns of language behaviour characterising the Online Product Information and its moves?’*.

Quantitative corpus based techniques were applied to a corpus of 480 OPI texts, obtaining frequency data for the entire corpus as well as for each sub corpus (SL and NZ). This helped detect trends related to national cultural context as well as for the genre as a whole. The analysis consisted of two parts which are further explained in the sub sections that follow. The two sub sections (4.8.5.1 and 4.8.5.2) detail the methodology adopted in the analysis.

##### 4.8.5.1 Frequency of grammatical parts of speech

The linguistic characteristics of a genre are considered as being shaped by the functions and situational context of a particular genre (Biber, 2012; Pérez-Llantada, 2021). Applied linguistics researchers have attempted to compile a linguistic profile of the genres they study via investigating the grammatical characteristics of those genres. In this research, I conduct a basic grammatical analysis of the OPI genre by analysing its Parts of Speech. This was carried out in order to answer research sub question 3.1. – *‘What are the patterns of language use characterising the OPI genre?’*

The analysis was carried out by calculating the frequency of grammatical Part of Speech (POS) categories. I used the ‘Words’ tool of Lancsbox corpus analysis software (Brezina, Weill-Tessier, & MacEnery, 2021) for that. The Lancsbox software offers the option of automatically tagging a corpus uploaded to it using the Penn Tree bank tagset (Santorini,

1991). The tagset uses 36 main POS tags and 12 other tags for symbols and punctuation. I compare the grammatical features of the SL and NZ OPI sub corpora with two other selected sub registers from the two million word British National Corpus sampler (UCREL, 1998). It was decided to calculate Parts of Speech frequency for the SL and NZ sub corpora separately in order to identify any cross cultural differences or similarities.

The two reference corpora – subsets of the 2-million-word BNC sampler – are used to investigate how the grammatical features of the digital genre depart from or align with the ‘typical’ written or spoken registers (see section 3.5.1 for further explanation). The reference corpora represent the spoken business register and the informative written register of commerce and finance (UCREL, 1998). The word counts of each sub corpus and reference corpus are given in Table 4.7.

*Table 4.7. Size of SL and NZ OPI sub corpora compared to the reference corpora*

<b>Target/ reference corpus</b>	<b>Tokens</b>	<b>Types</b>
SL OPI	28,045	3534
NZ OPI	50,256	5146
BNC sampler _spoken_ business	130,168	8651
BNC sampler _written_ commerce and finance	92,799	9647

The purpose of comparing the OPI corpus with the reference corpora was to identify characteristics that set the OPI apart from the more general but still disciplinary area of business and finance which the Business and Finance students will be exposed to through their disciplinary studies. The intention was to make the students aware of what characteristics set the OPI genre apart or even made it similar to the language that Business and Finance students find more generally in a business context.

The spoken business sub section contained texts relating to business meetings, management trainee courses, quality assurance seminars, market research monthly meetings, analyst presentations. The written commerce and finance sub section contained documents such as business news items, financial statements, articles from management related books,

company news releases. So the intention of this study is not to compare the linguistic characteristics of the OPI with a possibly similar genre, but with the wider and more general business and finance context that the students will be exposed to.

The text files pertaining to the two reference corpora were downloaded from the Oxford Text Archives (BNC Consortium, 2007). Using the corpus information given on the UCREL web page (<https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/bnc2sampler/sampler.htm>), the text files related to the Written Commerce and Finance and Spoken Business categories were separated and used as the reference corpora for this part of the research. The header information on each of the BNC sampler text files had to be manually removed since the Lancsbox software was not able to automatically remove the header information using the software's provided scripts for the task. The resultant number of words of the reference corpora after this manual cleaning were slightly different from those given on the UCREL webpage. It was a difference of 4107 words for BNC Spoken Business sub corpus and 742 words for the BNC Written Commerce and Finance sub corpus.

As the sub corpora and reference corpora are unequal in size, a relative frequency per 10,000 words was sought to compare the grammatical features and their differences between the OPI sub corpora of the two countries and the reference corpora. Also, as a result of using the Penn Tree bank tag set which comprised 48 tags for tagging the corpora, there were multiple tags pertaining to each part of speech. For instance there are four tags pertaining to the broader category of nouns (plural noun, singular nouns, plural proper nouns, singular proper nouns). In order to better understand the grammatical characteristics of the OPI genre, I combined the frequencies of related tags where necessary to get an overall value for several grammatical categories (e.g., category of nouns is comprised of plural nouns, singular nouns, plural proper nouns, singular proper nouns). In order to compare the grammatical characteristics of each sub corpus (SL and NZ) of the OPI genre with the reference corpora's grammatical patterns, the POS frequencies of the BNC sampler sub corpora are presented alongside the SL and NZ OPI sub corpora frequencies. The frequency results are also supplemented with participant data from semi-structured interviews and concordances

taken from the corpus. The analysis of the grammatical characteristics of the OPI genre is given in Chapter 9.2.

#### 4.8.5.2 *Lexical bundles*

This part of the analysis was conducted to answer research sub question 3.2. – ‘*What are the lexico-grammatical features characterising the moves/steps of the OPI?*’. As was pointed out in Chapter 3, investigating lexical bundles in the current research is done for two purposes – to identify any recurrent multiword units that realise the move functions, and to identify language patterns that form the building blocks of the moves. So, after investigating the grammatical patterns characterising the genre as a whole and salient cross-cultural differences (described in Section 4.8.5.1), the second part of the analysis explored the lexico-grammar characterising the individual moves and steps. The analysis was carried out using the corpus analysis tool AntConc (Anthony, 2020).

In order to conduct an analysis of how the moves of the OPI genre are linguistically realised, the entire corpus of 480 OPI texts was coded for four out of the six non-interactive moves. These were the moves that had the highest number of words, and therefore could be used in a corpus-based lexico-grammatical analysis. The other two non-interactive moves (M1 - Identifying the product, M6 - Using pressure tactics) either contained too few words for such an analysis and/ or used the visual mode more than the textual mode to carry out the move functions. The words (textual mode) of the following moves were coded to analyse the lexico-grammatical patterns:

- M2- Describing the product
- M3- Promoting the product
- M4 -Offering incentives and service options and
- M5 – Advising, directing and warning

The corpus was coded for moves and steps using the NVivo 12 Plus software. Coding for each move/step created a document in NVivo which showed the textual data belonging to that particular move or step. I uploaded this document to AnctConc 3.5.9 (Anthony, 2020), and

searched for the multiword units of each move or step using AntConc's Clusters/ N-Grams tool.

While lexical bundles were identified for each move to reveal the move register, only the results of one move (M3) are discussed in Chapter 9 firstly because of word limitations, and secondly because lexical bundles for M3 were identified for each step separately. The move of Promoting the Product (M3) contains six sets of lexical bundles. Therefore, the space of this dissertation does not allow me to report on the lexical bundles of all moves and steps of the genre.

#### *4.8.5.3. Frequency of lexical bundles*

Previous studies identify lexical-bundles using principles such as frequency and dispersion (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Biber et al., 2004; Cortes, 2013; Hyland, 2008; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010). They use large corpora for their analyses with the corpora ranging in the size of millions. One key issue in this research is deciding on thresholds for frequency. Researchers have used a frequency threshold of 10, 20 or 40 per million words for four word bundles (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Biber et al., 2004; Cortes, 2013; Hyland, 2008; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) which are acknowledged in literature as arbitrary cut-off points. Therefore, there is no single predetermined cut off point to determine lexical bundles; it depends on the size of the corpus itself, and the type of sequences that are identified as characterising that particular discourse. Since the OPI corpus is a small specialised corpus used primarily for the identification of moves, the frequency cut-offs used in these larger corpora need to be re-evaluated before being applied in the current study. In a study by Biber and Barbieri (2007), lexical bundles have been identified for smaller sub corpora, which includes a classroom management sub corpus of 39,255 words and a course management sub corpus of 52,410 words. Similarly lexical bundles have been identified for a 61,000 written corpus and a 37,000 words spoken corpus by Benson and Coxhead (2022) (also Benson (2020)). I refer to these studies because they indicate the possibility of generating lexical bundles for smaller corpora of a specialised register.

Biber and Barbieri (2007) have used a normalised frequency of 40 per million since the sizes of their sub corpora varied, which would set the raw frequency cut off mark for the classroom management corpus to approximately two for four-word bundles for the smallest sub corpora. Benson on the other hand, uses a uniform raw cut-off frequency of five to search for lexical bundles in his corpora. This includes bigrams as well as three to five word bundles. Research also indicates that the frequency of a bundle drops as the size of the bundles increases (Bestgen, 2018; Hyland, 2008; Omidian, Shahriari, & Siyanova-Chanturia, 2018). Cortes (2013) sets a frequency of 10 per million for identifying five word bundles, while she sets it at 20 per million for four word bundles. Bestgen (2018), who investigated whether a certain standardised frequency threshold is as effective in a smaller corpus compared to larger corpora, proposes a raw frequency of four for four word lexical bundles and a raw frequency of approximately seven (140 per million normalised frequency threshold) for three word bundles for a corpus the size of 50,000 words. For bigrams, the recommended normalised cut off frequency was a much higher 400 per million for all corpus sizes considering how many high frequency words tend to co-occur, and therefore to avoid such sequences occurring by chance. This would mean a frequency threshold of 10 for a 25,000 word corpus.

Considering the practices and recommendations of prior research and also by trialling the sequences that entered and left the lexical bundles list with different cut-off points, different frequency thresholds were set for moves/steps of different sizes as shown in

Table 4.8.

*Table 4.8. Frequency threshold and length of lexical bundles according to size of OPI moves/steps*

If corpus size is	Frequency threshold for lexical bundles		
	2 words	3 words	4-5 words
>20,000	20	5	3
5000 – 20,000	10	4	3
5000<	5	4	3

Following the findings given in literature and explained above, I set the frequency threshold for bigrams at 20 for a sub corpus larger than 20,000 words. It was set as 10 and five for sub corpora of 5000-20,000 words and less than 5000 words respectively. For three- word bundles, the cut off points was five for sub corpora of more than 20,000 words. For any smaller sub corpora, the cut off frequency was 4. Four word and five-word clusters had a cut-off point of three for all corpus sizes.

#### *4.8.5.4 Applying frequency cut-off points to the moves and steps*

As the current research only explores the lexico-grammatical features of Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’, this section describes how lexical bundles were generated for each step of the move. Move 3 constituted approximately 50% of the 78,000-word OPI corpus and it is one of the obligatory moves of the OPI genre contributing to achieving the overall persuasive purpose of the genre. This prompted me to look further into how this move is realised linguistically. Therefore, I decided to search for lexical bundles that performed each step of Move 3 (Promoting the product) separately. The cut off frequencies given in

Table 4.8 above were applied to the sub corpora to generate the lexical bundles. Words of each step of M3 constituted a separate sub corpus. Lexical bundles for each step of Move 3 – Promoting the Product, were generated. The step ‘providing customer testimonials’ was not analysed for lexical bundles for three reasons: it did not contain a lot of words, it supposedly draws on customer generated feedback and it was used by only a very few websites.

#### *4.8.5.5 Range for generating lexical bundles*

The customary practice in previous research is to set the range (number of texts in which the bundle occurs) as five texts. It means counting as lexical bundles only those word sequences appearing in five or more texts, in order to avoid any idiosyncratic use of language. However, the intention of the current study was to find lexical bundles that characterise the OPI genre irrespective of the type of product. Since the files used in this analysis belonged to two product types – jewellery and beauty care, for each move or step, two separate text files pertaining to jewellery and herbal beauty care product types were



loaded to AntConc for analysis. Then the range of the lexical bundles was set as two in order to avoid any word sequences that were unique to product type. This also ensures that the lexical bundles appear in at least two different ecommerce stores removing any possibility of idiosyncratic language use.

#### *4.8.5.6 Challenges related to using lexical bundles and remedies*

Although using very small sub corpora to identify multiword sequences characterising move functions could be considered as a limitation of this study, Cortes (2013) provides justifications for the study of lexical bundles within moves. She showed that when a corpus grows more restricted or focused, the frequency of lexical bundles increases. Therefore, I surmised that even with much smaller sizes, due to the very specific nature of this specialised corpus, I would be able to find lexical bundles realising the functions of specific moves and steps. In answer to research sub question 3.2 of the research, linguistic features characterising Moves/ steps were identified with the aid of the lexical bundles and their concordances.

In this research, bigrams were included and considered as lexical bundles along with three to five word bundles. Although shorter word units such as bigrams could be the constituents of longer bundles (e.g., 'not tested' and 'not tested on'), in this study searching for two-word bundles proved to be useful. For instance, I observed that certain bundles (e.g., 'in stock', 'paraben free') contributed directly to achieving move functions. The decision to include two-word bundles along with other longer lexical bundles is reinforced by observations made by Moreno and Swales (2018). They point out how there may be two word lexical bundles that have not been analysed which may bring out the functions of a certain move or step. Therefore, bigrams were included in the analysis.

Due to the inclusion of bigrams in the search for lexical bundles, the analysis of Move 3 – Promoting the product had a considerable number of lexical bundles that met the criteria. However lexical bundles that occur as frequently in a reference corpus (BNC sampler\_written) were removed by using log-likelihood test scores, to avoid co-occurring high frequency ngrams. I used the online Log-likelihood and effect size calculator

(<https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>) of Lancaster University's Centre for Corpus Research and Language (UCREL) to do the calculations. A sample of the calculations (log-likelihood scores for lexical bundles of M3 Step 3) is given in Appendix G. The filtering process reduced the number of bundles representing the move register and/or move functions. After this process, any overlapping bundles (e.g., 'the perfect', 'the perfect gift', 'makes the perfect gift') were collapsed (Wood & Appel, 2014) in order to reduce the repetitive items. The bundle with the highest frequency was used as the core, while the other words were shown on the perimeters of this core bundle using brackets (e.g., (makes) the perfect (gift)). The frequency reported in such cases, is that of the most frequent bundle.

#### 4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter explained in detail the methodology that I used for data collection and analysis. I used two main sources of data – a corpus of authentic OPI texts and participant interview data in the analysis. The data collection process related to corpus compilation, copyright permission, participant recruitment and ethics approval for interviews were all explained. After that, I elaborated on the data analysis process – participant data analysis, conducting the move analysis, visual analysis, interactivity analysis and lexico-grammatical analysis. The next chapter (Chapter 5 - Context and Identification of the Online Product Information genre) is the first of five chapters that constitute my analysis.

## CHAPTER 5: CONTEXT AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE ONLINE PRODUCT INFORMATION GENRE

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on both literature (Sections 2.4, 2.8) and interview data to address Research Question 1 - '*What is the Online Product Information genre and what are the factors that affect its creation?*'. With the seamless flow of information, navigation between and within pages, and co-existence of multiple items and objects even within a single web page, the first challenge of analysing a digital genre such as the Online Product Information (OPI) was identifying what constituted the genre. The first section of this chapter (Section 5.2) therefore aims to resolve this challenge, and a final conclusion about how to define the OPI genre for the purposes of this study is reached.

After identifying and naming the genre, I explore the OPI genre and its social purposes through an investigation of participant interview data (Section 5.3). In Sections 5.4 – 5.7, I analyse how the professional practices of copy writing, web designing, digital marketing and online user behaviour determine the genre's creation. This is done through an investigation of interview data from both specialists (web designers, copywriters and online business owners) and non-specialist informants (online shoppers).

### 5.2 Difficulties in identifying the genre - product description vs product information

In the world of digital genres, it is sometimes hard to determine where one genre ends and another begins. This is because of multiple navigation paths interlinking different rhetorical actions on the same web page or different web pages, and because of how all these seemingly different rhetorical actions are again unified under the roof of a single web site (see also

Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1). The virtual context of web frames and interactive items within which the genres appear and are fused together which intensifies the difficulty of identifying and analysing one genre in a website in separation to another. Xia (2020) points out this difficulty of demarcating the boundaries of genres in the digital medium when she asserts “A primary difficulty that confronts the researchers in the digital era is the identification of a genre” (p. 151). As such a difficulty was experienced in my own research, this section is dedicated to unravelling some confounding terminological usages, and demarcating the boundaries of the genre that is investigated within my own research through an exploration of participant interview data and research literature.

It must be mentioned at the outset that previous research has identified the genre that I have selected to analyse as ‘product descriptions’ or ‘product information’, with similar social purposes unifying the constituents of those texts and establishing them as a genre (discussed in detail later in Section 5.2). I myself admit to having started off my own research by calling it ‘a multimodal genre analysis of the Online Product Description genre’. In reconciling terminological ambiguity (i.e., labelling the same genre by different names ‘product information’ or ‘product description’), Swales (1990, p. 54) suggests that “a discourse community’s nomenclature for genres is an important source of insight” when it comes to identifying a genre. However, he himself cautions against a strict adherence to this principle, and advises further validation of any such names existing in the discourse communities. Unfortunately, I find that such validation is complicated by the fact that the genre under investigation here, is the property of several communities (specialist and general). It is not the tool of a single group (e.g., academics, doctors, accountants or lawyers) as it has been in some early genre research (e.g., exploring the research article, audit report). Consequently, the terms that each group involved in creating the genre uses to refer to the same rhetorical action could vary, as is seen below through participant interview data in this study. In the section that follows, the terminological ambiguities are illustrated by first referring to comments made by the web designers, copywriters, online shop owners and online shoppers during the semi-structured interviews. Then I look at the terms used in previous research regarding similar genre analyses (Section 5.2.2) before I settle (in Section 5.2.3) on the name that I use to identify the online genre that I investigate.

### 5.2.1 Discourse communities and their nomenclature for the genre

The web designers, one of the specialist informant groups with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews, seem to have at their disposal a plethora of technical vocabulary when referring to the items on the product page. In terms of objects of information on the product page of an online shopping site, they mainly identify items such as image, product heading or title, product description, product specifications or various objective details about the product (size, cost), reviews and ratings. In the words of Bernard, one of the web designer specialist informants:

#### PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWEE (PI) COMMENT 1

Uhm a pretty standard way of doing it is if you think about (it) the information on a product page as these four parts, a title, an image, information about the products like specifications and stuff, detailed text description, and sometimes there's reviews or comments or other things like that...

Luise, a Content Lead (Web designer category) that I interviewed, had this to say:

#### PI COMMENT 2

So this here would be a product page (pointing at the whole page). And then it would have different attributes about the product associated with it. So it would have the name, it would have the product (I would call the) description if you scroll down. This title. And this paragraph here I would say as a product description. And then it has these other attributes about it that would be kind of additional information to that. Yeah, so ingredients, dimensions, any kind of other additional information about I don't know, I guess, allergies, all those kind of associated bits of information that would be included with it as well. And then the bit at the bottom the reviews, I will consider that, sort of user generated content. So it's not necessarily been written by the company, but they may moderate it.

Taken together, Luise and Bernard consider information related to the product on the product page as being made up of a product title or heading, product image, product description, product details or specifications, and reviews. Luise' remark on the possibility of the user generated reviews being moderated, places it squarely in the sphere of genre being the product of multiple authors, and of reviews forming part of product information.

The copywriters on the other hand, mainly use the term 'copy' to refer to whatever words that they write, be it online or in print. When asked to comment on the items on a product page, one of the specialist informants Gemma, who is a copywriter, identified the same item that the web designers identify as product description. Regarding what a product description is, she explained

### PI COMMENT 3

you need to highlight the unique selling points of that product. Because you've only got two to three lines there, so you want to say what's really unique about it (and you can expand on it on that page, you can give all of that). Maybe you can include one feature and benefits.

All the other additional details about the product such as key ingredients, usage directions were together identified as either 'product copy' or 'website copy'. When encouraged to identify further what all of them could be called together, she introduced the terms 'product related copy' or "product-based copy because it's copy about products". However, this terminology does not include any images of the product, seeing that (as copywriters) their professional practices do not directly involve visuals.

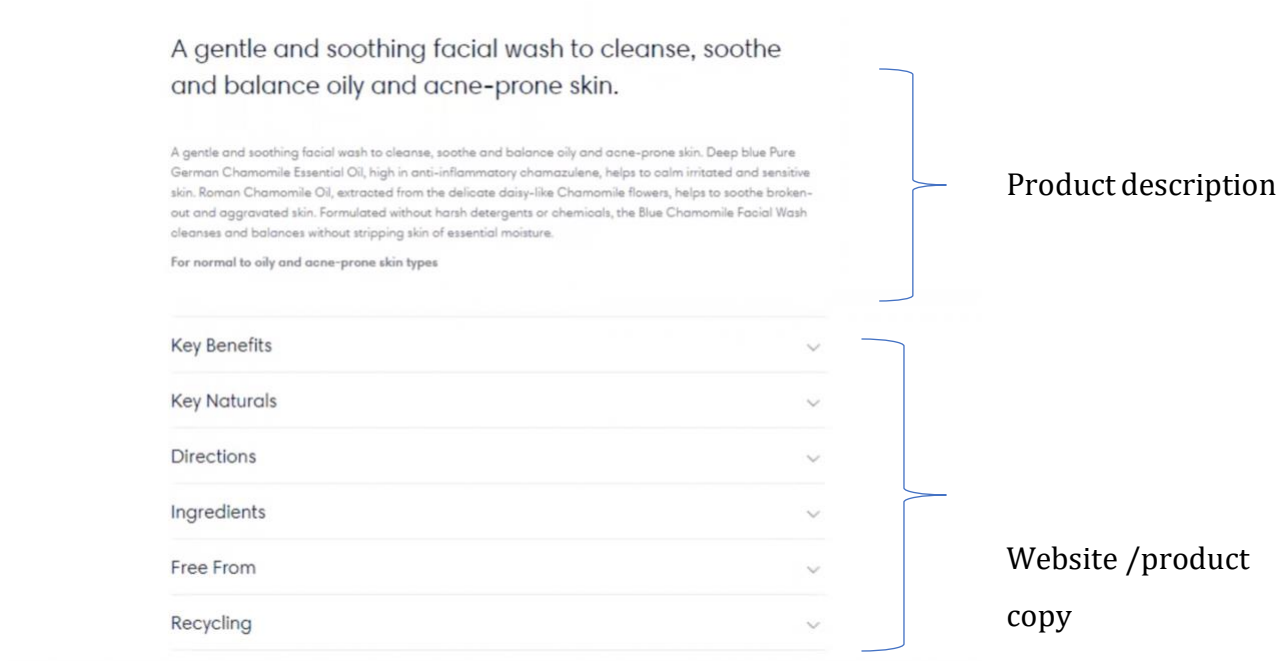


Figure 5. 1. The product description and some parts of the website copy making up what copywriters call product-based copy

The product title or name would be amongst the product-based copy, but its place in product-based copy depends on whether the copywriters actually gave the product its name or not. So the title may or may not be part of copywriter's contribution to the product based copy. To quote copywriter Gemma:

#### PI COMMENT 4

these were already named (by the brand). But if you're working in the new product development space, which if you work inside a brand you often do, you need to name products. So yes.

For online shop owners, everything that is written by copywriters or themselves is product copy. And then there are images and icons that along with the copy, help describe the product. Online shoppers on the other hand, do not identify any of the items on the product page separately, other than an image, description which could be all the written details on the product page, and reviews. Hence I find that the idea of "a discourse community's nomenclature" (Swales, 1990, p. 54) hard to apply to identify a genre in a situation where

the discourse (that shows a clear purpose of describing and persuading to sell a specific product and is in a recurrent rhetorical situation (C. Miller, 1984)) is created by multiple professional and non-professional communities.

### 5.2.2 Research community's terms for the genre

Turning to the literature, the researchers who have studied the genres of online shopping sites seem to use two terms to refer to the same content about a product with the same intent to sell the product. T. H. Andersen and van Leeuwen (2017) recognize a 'micro-genre' which they call the 'product information' inside an online shopping website. They define the purpose of the genre as "serv(ing) to present further information about products users have selected from Catalogues<sup>2</sup>" (p. 195). Inside the genre, they recognize elements such as "Product, Definition Cluster, Product Details, Further Recommendations and Selection". Here, 'Product' refers to the image of the product. 'Selection' includes an "Add to Bag" button which implies that the researchers recognize interactivity as being an intrinsic part of the online product information genre. Puga and Gotz (2017) seem to vacillate between the use of the terms 'product description' and 'product information' in the first pages of their article, but then decide to settle on the term 'product information' (as evidenced in the article title) to refer to the kind of text that they investigated and used in a corpus for language teaching purposes. They identify the genre as being "any type of information that comes with a product to inform the consumer about its usage and possible side effects, which is a legal requirement for the kind of products that were chosen" (p. 398). However, in their product information, there is no inclusion of any visual details. The researchers identify three moves: overview, directions and warnings. Knight et al. (2017) use the term 'product description' in their study to refer to the "description of the product". However, they remark that there was some other information that they did not use for the linguistic analysis that they carried out. These details are "additional secondary information such as their (the product's) condition,

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<sup>2</sup> Catalogue page or Product Listing Page is the web page on an e-commerce site that carries a list of products that are sold by the seller. Each of the products is generally listed using a thumbnail product image, product title and price though there may be other details included too depending on the ecommerce site.



the seller's feedback scores, and product location". Like Puga and Gotz (2017), these researchers do not include any images in their analysis. Labrador and Ramón (2015), study the "online cheese description". Their use of the term thus draws on the term 'product description', although 'product' is replaced by the specific product being described. The content that they include is 'Identifying the cheese' (name of the cheese, name of the company/ manufacturer, provenance), 'Showing a picture', 'Describing the product' (characteristics, ingredients), 'Describing the process' (preparation, aging), 'Describing smell and taste', 'Offering serving suggestions' (temperature, presentation, food-pairing, drink-pairing, best season), 'Suggesting recipes' and 'Providing quality assurance'. A similar set of contents is identified by Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) who identify a sub-genre called the herbal tea promotional text under the genre of product description in online shopping sites. They recognize the herbal tea promotional text (HTPT) as a "subgenre where a specific food is promoted through the description of different attributes, such as origin, taste, appearance, and ingredients, amongst others" (p. 44). They also acknowledge the importance of multimodal resources and interaction in analysing digital genres, although they themselves only deal with the textual mode. So the content and purpose of these genres overlap, with varying degrees of emphasis given to the persuasive and informative rhetorical purposes.

### 5.2.3 Identifying and naming the genre as Online Product Information - Reconciling differences

Three ideas emerge from the discussion in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. Some researchers recognize the image as playing a role in communicating meaning in the genre that describes and persuades in order to sell a product, 2) they also recognize analysing interactivity to be important in any digital genre analysis, 3) the product description seems to be more persuasive in character and smaller in content than a product information genre since the product information carries in it aspects of warning and directing as well, as seen in Puga and Gotz (2017). In light of these considerations and in view of how the term 'product description' has been used by web designers and copywriters, I conclude that the product description is a sub-genre that exists inside a bigger genre that can be called the 'product

information'. The product information genre (which is a micro genre of the online shopping site (T. H. Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017)) contains in it the purpose of describing and persuading with the intention to sell, just as the product description does. However, it has elements of directing and warning in addition to describing and persuading. Therefore, I opt to use the term 'product information' over 'product description' to describe the genre that is the object of this research. Other research into this same genre, although dealing with single products such as cheese or tea (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020; Labrador & Ramón, 2015), will also henceforth be called 'product information' in order to avoid confusion. Due to the medium on which the product information appears, I use the term 'Online Product Information' to refer to the types of text that are investigated in this research.

I equally hesitate to use the name 'product page', which might be considered as an obvious and simple choice, as to what to call the genre. The reason for this is that the product page of an ecommerce website carries in itself more elements such as headers with menus (main menu, footer menu – see Figure 5.2) and recommended/related product listings that do not achieve the purpose of describing or promoting a specific product. So it is difficult to consider the entire product page as a single genre.

Why this inclusion and exclusion of content is important is because Lam (2013) and Janoschka (2004) view interactivity on a website not as separate features, but as part of the genre itself. So, assuming that interactivity aids in carrying out the social purposes of a digital genre, it is important to identify which interactive items fall within the OPI genre, and which do not.

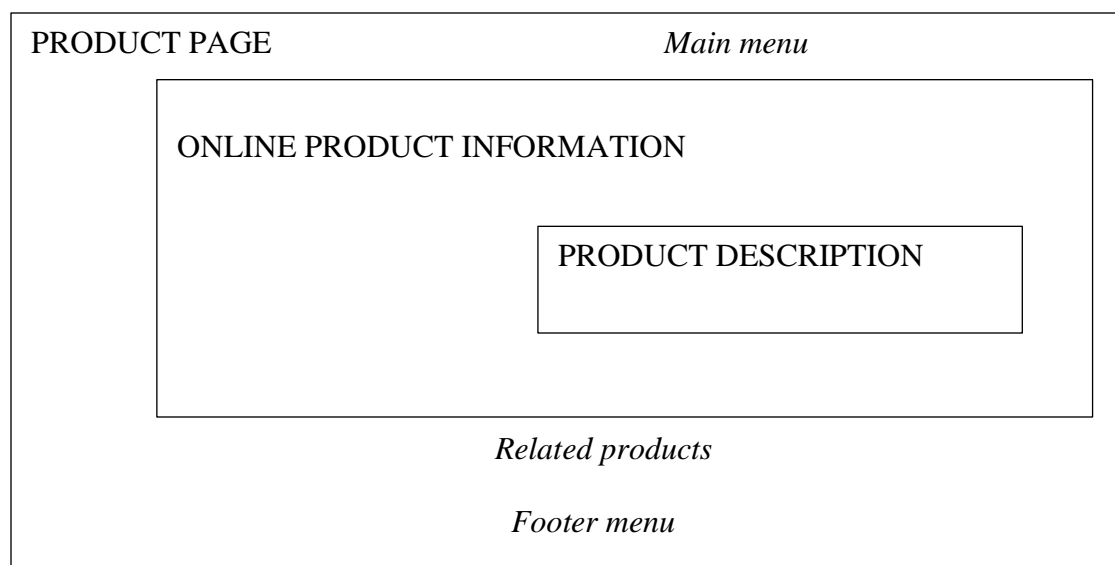


Figure 5. 2 Association between Online Product Information, Product description and Product page

The next section discusses the socially recognized purposes of the OPI genre by means of exploring how the stakeholders of the genre – the online shop owners, online shoppers, copywriters and web designers - perceive the OPI genre.

### 5.3 Social purposes of the OPI genre

To discuss the social purposes of the OPI genre, I will start by taking into consideration how previous research identifies the OPI. According to T. H. Andersen and van Leeuwen (2017, p. 195), the OPI “serves to present further information about products users have selected from Catalogues”. An analysis of participant interview data helps to extend and revise this general purpose for my own research purpose. In regard to the first part of the sentence, the OPI genre does perform the function of informing customers about the product - I consider ‘inform’ to include within its meaning functions of describing, advising, directing and warning. This function of informing is made evident by the corpus-based move analysis (Chapter 6) and participant data analysis (as illustrated in the discussion that follows) of my research. However, in addition to informing, a significant purpose of the OPI seems to be its persuasion of potential customers. These two main social purposes, which are sometimes

interwoven, come through strongly in my discussions with online shop owners, web designers and copywriters, and are reiterated in online shopper comments.

Two comments made by Munida (a user experience (UX) designer) and Luise (a content designer) whom I interviewed under the web designer category, are particularly useful when illustrating how the main purposes of informing and persuading underlie the OPI genre. When asked about the purpose of the OPI genre, Munida stated:

#### PI COMMENT 5

People want to see what they're looking at right now, what they're buying and most of the time they want to feel how it looks like. Because if I say something like maybe a product which you apply on your face or can be a either a health product or something or maybe an electronics item, when you say the name we don't get that feeling. So we need to see what you're looking at and you know, what I am trying to buy. So that is our basic human nature...It helps me to kind of determine whether I should go for something else based on the colour, the size, the description and how it looks and feels, whether it has the features that I wanted based on the image. Plus the description helps me to understand whether I am getting the full amount of things or the features for the money that I'm paying.

Munida's statement highlights the informative nature of an OPI from the perspective of a potential customer. This also clearly delineates how the professional practice of UX design is rooted in users' experience. In addition to this fact, his statement suggests the collaborative roles of both the textual and visual modes in achieving the informative function.

Luise who specializes as a content designer on a product design team had this to say regarding the purpose of the OPI genre and its informative and persuasive nature:

#### PI COMMENT 6

to clearly communicate what the product is, and why I would buy it. So for me, it's a combination of sort of describing the thing in a meaningful way in a truthful and accurate way. But also weaving in why I would buy it as well. So I guess it's a bit of science and art

there. Like there's it's just straight up description, but also, you know, it's selling it to me a little bit.

Her comment directs attention to the fact that while the product information is intended to describe or give an authentic picture of the product, it is also intended to 'sell' to the customer, meaning a form of persuasion. The negative coordinating conjunction 'But' (underlined) suggests a possible juxtaposition of meaningful, truthful and accurate details on the one hand, and artistic 'selling' on the other hand achieved through strategies such as highlighting 'why' a person should buy the product.

A similar kind of interplay between the persuading and informing purposes is seen in the explanations given by the copywriters, but with a little more emphasis on the persuading function. Gemma stresses the importance of selling to the right customers, while Flory actively concentrates on the persuasive purpose of an OPI. Gemma states:

#### PI COMMENT 7

The purpose of it (the genre) is to just is to communicate to a customer, a potential customer, whether or not this is a product for them to purchase..... You just want to communicate to a customer the unique selling points of a product and inform them as to whether or not this product is suitable for the need they're trying to fill. And you do want to, you do want to sell it. So there's an element there where you want to sell the product, but you want to sell the product to the right people. And you do that by communicating the unique needs and giving information onto the features and the benefits.

So, while communicating the suitability of a product to a particular type of customer, the copywriter also draws on concepts such as product differentiation in marketing where it is important to highlight how a product differs from other similar products in the market in order to make a sale. This for her, is achieved through writing about the product's claimed needs, features and benefits.

On the other hand, Flory prioritises persuasion as the main purpose of the OPI:

## PI COMMENT 8

The number one thing is to get them to buy it. That is number one. Also if it is a product description, it is to lure them to buy the product. Second it could be also that if they don't buy, just keep it in mind and recommend it to someone or buy it sometime later. So to get the person to buy it is the main aim of the product description.

Here, a word such as 'lure' that Flory uses is interesting because it connotes persuasion through any means (truthful or otherwise). It reflects the copywriter's awareness of the persuasive purpose of OPI. At the same time, her comment suggests that the outcome of the informing and persuading need not be just purchasing. The outcome could also be recommending or for later reference.

Online shop owner Janet's comments about the purposes of the OPI sheds more light on these additional intended outcomes:

## PI COMMENT 9

I guess giving them enough information without overwhelming them, and enough visuals as well to make them find out more and click more onto the products to try and get them down that funnel of actually wanting to get requests and samples or purchase the product.

So, the OPI genre, by virtue of its digital medium, informs and persuades not just to sell a product, but also to make a customer recommend the product to others, or request and accept more information and services from sellers. The interactive nature of an online genre becomes apparent through this statement. The imagery evoked by the statement of 'get them down that funnel' is that of a herder, actively guiding her flock towards a particular destination, the destination in this case being the product purchase.

The online shoppers, although they are not professionals specialising in any disciplines related to digital marketing or web designing, seem to be well aware of both informative and persuasive purposes of an OPI. In their comments, all ten online shoppers I interviewed highlight the importance of OPIs in providing them with specific details of a product both

verbally and visually (e.g., size, colour, ingredients, price, volume in comparison to price, possibility of allergic reactions). At the same time a majority talk about the need to explain in the OPIs, about the purpose of the product and benefits. The OPI needs to talk about the “problem it’s going to solve” which according to Gemma’s comment given above about giving ‘unique selling points’, is a principle means of persuasion.

In addition to these functions, comments made by two online shoppers bring to light another purpose that the OPI achieves. The following comment was made by Macy when I asked her whether the OPI helps her when shopping online:

#### PI COMMENT 10

Yeah, no, they do. They definitely do help. If I saw something without (product information), I would probably assume it was like a scam, to be honest, you know, like those fake ones. And yeah, it just tells you more about the product. Like, you know, what it's made for and what it's made with

So the presence of the OPI seems to establish credibility for the product. In the next part of her statement, we also see how Macy establishes her own identity as a New Zealander and how her identity seems to influence her buying choices. This might explain the presence of the lexical bundle “(in) (of) New Zealand” as characterising the “Evaluating the product positively” (M3S2) step of “Promoting the product” move, when I was investigating the move register of the OPI genre (Chapter 9, Section 9.3).

#### PI COMMENT 11

Macy: Yeah, like I'm, like on Amazon and stuff. I don't like buying things from overseas. And so sometimes you see stuff that says it's from New Zealand, but then it's like really badly spelt in the product description. So you'd like know it's probably not a New Zealand person who wrote it.

Interviewer: So like, basically, the language gives it away? If it's like..

Macy: Yeah, I use it to assess like, if I think it would be like a reliable product.

The fact that a product is made in their own country seems to appeal to the New Zealand buyers. The credibility of a New Zealand made product which is sold online also seems to hinge on correct language and spelling of the product information.

Added to the above use of the textual mode to establish product credibility, the comments made by web designer Munida stresses the importance of the visual mode in product information in establishing the credibility of a product:

#### PI COMMENT 12

If you don't find much of images, then the first thing is that people will get a bit discouraged because they don't see the whole thing. ....(if) I don't see (the product), then I get really worried that why, thinking maybe this is like a scam or something like that because people do it, because internet these days you can find scam everywhere. That's why I go for images, but I'm not telling that the description is not that needed. But description is also important in order to understand what is not displayed in the image. But images I would think that would create a positive emotion from the user because it can generate a certain level of trust and the description anyway would proceed the user to make a decision on whether to buy you product or not. That is my point of view.

Despite what is stated in literature about the misleading potential of visuals (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006; Pounds, 2001 - see Section 2.4.2.), seeing photographs of the product is a way in which customers build trust towards the product. The idea of using written description to 'understand what is not displayed' in the product image suggests how the two different modes come together to describe a product. What is lacking in the level of description using one mode, can be fulfilled by using another mode. Describing the product either verbally or visually, is one of the functions used for the purpose of informing the customer. The above comments all together convey how describing the product using two different modes as well as having the OPI in a shopping site (not just pages of product listings) contributes to generating product credibility.



To sum up this section, after analysing both participant interview data and research literature, the social purposes of the OPI genre on an online shopping site are proposed: 'to inform, persuade and interactively assist online users in order to purchase, recommend, find out more or communicate with the seller about a product, and to establish product credibility'.

#### 5.4 Mixing professional practices and cultures

The OPI genre is a site of conglomeration of professional practices. When analysing the interview data of web designers, copywriters and the shop owners, it becomes clear that all three groups interact and co-produce the genre. The data also shows how each professional's role within the genre creation process is influenced and shaped by the other's and how all their practices are oriented towards customer satisfaction.

All the copywriters seem to start their copy for products based on some initial information or brief provided by the business that hires them. Mahela, one of the copywriters states "Generally, when we write copy for a for a product, especially online, there's a little brief that is given by the client or the agency. And in the absence of such a brief, we will maybe ask for a brief". When asked what the process of interacting with a business owner is like, Gemma reveals how she sometimes has to negotiate with the business owners and convince them to change their own wishes and beliefs as to what goes into the product copy and as to what suits that brand's ethos. She makes it explicit that what (content, phrasing) the owner might want in the product information may not be what is best to persuade a customer to buy a product, highlighting the importance of a 'trained' copywriter's role to draw in customers to the product:

##### PI COMMENT 13

So when you're working with the business owner, if they're not a copywriter, which they're often not, there's sometimes can be conflict between what they think it should say

and what you, as a trained copywriter knows is going to be most effective for the business to create the transaction. So we've I've had business owners come up with names for products that are just ridiculous. And and maybe they sound fun to the business owner, but that's because they're emotionally invested and they love the product already. But you're trying to familiarize a customer with a product that they've never seen before. So you need to write to them on the product in a way that they can understand. And if you're using lots of jargon or you're using, you know, like slang, we had a range that was all meant to be Aussie slang. And it may be it seems kitsch and it seems fun, but it wouldn't translate to the end customer, especially if they haven't seen the product before. So they can. You can be at loggerheads sometimes with business owners, because it can be subjective. But that's where a business owner needs to trust the copywriters and bring a copywriter in who has a tone of voice or who can write in a tone of voice that reflects the brand.

The shop owner Janet in turn confirms the sort of interaction that was explained by Gemma. Her comments indicate that the final OPI genre that is seen on the product page is the result of striking a balance between the owner's need to put in a lot of (technical and emotive) details and the copywriter's practice of including only the right amount of text (balanced between technical and non-technical) in the right tone of voice and a flow to it:

#### PI COMMENT 14

We'd give her the brief, the old copy and and she said, 'let's just trial it with one or two products and I'll see what I come up with'. And then we kind of spent quite a lot of time just on the first few ones that she did, trying to get it, tweak it, to get it to the more the style that we wanted. Yeah, because I think she is prone to, she's more of a commercial copywriter I suppose. She could maybe oversimplify. So we kind of had to get that balance between having really detailed product descriptions and then something that wasn't too simple either. So yeah, it's still probably on the simplified side.

The above comment indicates how the business owner compromises on the amount of detail that goes into the product copy based on the copywriter's judgement and expertise, but still maintains influence over the copywriter's style of writing to reflect the style that the

business owner thinks best fits their brand. At the same time, Janet the business owner acknowledges the quality of the final web copy written by the copywriter in terms of length, clarity, style and customer focus:

#### PI COMMENT 15

She took out a lot of the wording. So yes, she reduced like, before we'd have like, maybe I'm not sure how many words, before you know it would be quite dense paragraphs. So she would like remove that. Because online, you know, you could have a brief product description that's like only a sentence or two, things like that. Yes. She reduced, literally reduced the amount of text. And I think the quality of what she's written is really good. And the fact it flows or just says enough about the product to get that customer more interested. But again, I reckon we could have had in tabs. We, you know, the customer can click on to find a lot more information.

I take the last two sentences of the above quotation to illustrate the relationship between the web designers and businesses in creating their online shopping platforms. Janet seems to think that they could have added more information if they had used more tabs in their OPI on the product page. Tabs and accordions are both types of interactivity that allow structuring and organizing of information on the product page. All the information put inside tabs and accordions is organized under headings and hidden from view until a user clicks on the heading to bring the hidden information into view. However, such ideas seem to be regulated by the professional practices and beliefs held by the web designers. Bernard, who was a UX (User experience) designer, commenting on interactive functions such as accordions, remarks:

#### PI COMMENT 16

I think, I think in many respects accordions are sort of bad UX. Because if you just wrote, if you just serve up your content better, maybe you could just have it all on one page, like why make people select again to see more? I think though, that when you do usability testing on some of that stuff, some people like them, because they feel like that allows him

to focus on a particular part of material. But But if I was, if I was talking with a client (business), and they had all this information they wanted to go into an accordion, I might be going "well, how much of this do we need?" And "can we cut it down?" And "why is this required?"

So whatever goes on a product page seems to be judiciously controlled by the web designers. However, the final layout of the web pages still needs to be approved by the business owners, as made clear by a comment made by Manuga, another business owner that I interviewed:

#### PI COMMENT 17

Well the layout should be certified by the board of directors. Then then it's it's being passed on to the CEO to certify. And if doing adjustments, we usually directly contact the web designers and alter.

While Bernard's comment on how much information goes into the OPI seems to suggest the role of the copywriter in being professionally discerning of the amount of content that fits on the online page, the copywriter Gemma's comment in this regard also shows similar awareness of writing copy for the web page:

#### PI COMMENT 18

Depending on how the web designer has set up, you may have room to have a product description and then a whole section where you can extrapolate on the ingredients and then you can give more information onto usage instructions so that people have a bigger picture into how the product they're buying will fit into their routine.

So overall, there is an interplay between the roles and professional practices of web designers, copywriters and business owners and they together coproduce the OPI. The OPI genre, as well as the other micro genres on the online shopping website, shows evidence of interdiscursive practices.

## 5.5. Professional and non-professional voices - Ratings and reviews as part of the genre

In addition to the different professionals who participate in co-producing the OPI genre, the genre can also be considered to be the property of both professionals and the non-professional online users. I look at ratings and reviews to further explore the idea. Ratings and reviews have to be looked at keeping in mind concepts such as the dialogic and heteroglossic nature of genres, where genres are made and shaped in anticipation of responses (at the moment or delayed) and involve multiple voices (Bakhtin, 1986) creating 'multivocality' in a genre (Bazerman 1994). So the multiple functions of ratings and reviews from the perspectives of both the sellers and the buyers who create and interpret them needs to be recognised. Ratings and reviews can be recognized as:

1. an information source for potential buyers about the product, which buyers consider as 'authentic' information about the product,
2. a way for buyers to interact with the product site by providing response regarding the information and subsequent purchase/use of the product (the genre thus extends over time, and not in a single moment in time), and
3. a method of persuading customers on the part of the sellers through the control and strategic manoeuvring of ratings and reviews.

This is an instance of multivocality (Bazerman, 1994) which involves several subjects – sellers, web designers and buyers. That being said, sellers themselves do not acknowledge the third function. It becomes apparent only in analysing the interactivity allowed to the customers when writing reviews, and in web designer interview data.

Web designer Samanthi, when asked about the functions of Ratings and reviews, states:

#### PI COMMENT 19

If the customer can see the reviews the person has written, another another set of people has written who have already used, it will develop the trust on the product. So in that way we can ensure that trust is there.

Samanthi regards ratings and reviews as a trust building mechanism that persuades the customers into buying a product. Ratings and reviews can be construed as a persuasive tool wielded by the businesses, when looking at UX designer Bernard's following comment. When asked whether he starts designing the placement of items on the product page only when he actually sees the product content, Bernard remarked:

#### PI COMMENT 20

Totally. Like, like you can, you can have a template, like if you said to me, "I need to make a jewellery ecommerce site" and say, Okay, well, I know that I know the components that we're going to need, "we're going to need headlines and titles and descriptions and images. And do you have reviews you already know? okay, no reviews..", like you basically have, go through a catalogue of the types of, the different content types.

While on the one hand, this comment reveals the dependence of the layout and content of product information on the type of product being sold, on the other hand it reveals how it is at the discretion of the business owner that reviews are inserted into the product information.

Considering how ratings and reviews contribute to furthering the persuasive function (from a business perspective) and informative function (from online shoppers' perspective) of the genre, it was decided to include ratings and reviews in this study at the level of interactivity. That means reviews and ratings will be part of the interactive moves and will be part of the website interactivity analysis (Adami, 2015). However, the linguistic data in reviews was not collected and did not form part of the corpus data. This decision falls in line with the pedagogical purposes of the research which are to raise genre awareness of Business and

Marketing students and online sellers, and to provide them with the means to describe and promote products online.

I would like to raise two final points before I conclude this chapter. They are the impact of practices such as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and the use of online shopping templates on the OPI genre. These will be the topics of the next two sections.

## 5.6. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Search engine optimization (SEO) is recognized as a digital marketing technique that is crucial for online business success. It is the technique of getting a company's website to rank higher in web search results by optimizing or making changes to one's website (Aydin, 2019; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Mota Pinto & Guarda, 2020). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016, p. 487) point out that one of the two most important methods of improving search engine rankings of a website is "Matching between web page copy and the key phrases searched" which is also known as on-page optimisation. In the context of OPI, this involves knowing and adding the right keywords (that users of relevant products use to search similar products) into the online product copy. This way, an online user searching for such products as sold by an online store sees the product page of that business towards the top of their search results, thereby increasing site visits, brand and product awareness and sales (Mota Pinto & Guarda, 2020). Such digital marketing practices can be seen to be influencing the copywriting practices of copywriters. Mahela, one of the copywriters I interviewed shows some resistance to the idea of having to adapt the copy that he writes to include keywords at the request of a digital marketing professional:

### PI COMMENT 21

So now one little thing that needs to be borne in mind is on the web, we are also told that people have very little time to read. So people don't really read. So economy of words, very

important .... Now in addition to that, there's a technical guy who tells you for his SEO, we need to squeeze in certain words. That's terrible.

Mahela's comment also reflects how he has to adjust his writing to user behaviour in the web environment (communicated to him possibly by a UX designer or digital marketer). My interview with copywriter Gemma provided another instance of the requirements of Search Engine Optimisation influencing the copy writing process:

#### PI COMMENT 22

...I have worked with a digital marketing person when they wanted to change the title page of all of our every page on our website, and we would, they would say "this needs to be", for SEO I think it was "This needs to be maximum of 6 words", it needs to be this. So then the copywriter could work within those kind of parameters so that the writing and the copy is still on brand. However, it is useful for SEO.

Gemma is more accepting of the requirements of Search Engine Optimisation influencing copywriting, and acknowledges Search Engine Optimisation as a useful digital marketing technique. The two examples where copywriters talk about having to change or add words to their product-based copy illustrate how OPI can be influenced and shaped by the digital marketing practices of Search Engine Optimisation.

### 5.7. Conventionalization of genre features and use of templates

Genres, over time and recurrent use, develop conventionalized characteristics which the users of the genre will become accustomed to (Bazerman, 1994). This idea is reflected from a design perspective by Bernard, the UX design expert, when asked about the layout of a product page, and reasons behind the placement of images and written description on the page:



## PI COMMENT 23

It's become pretty common across masses and masses of online retail, that there's a certain way of doing things. And when you're designing a site there, you have to sort of design within that context, you have to understand that going along with a set way says something about the product. And it makes it easier for people to kind of skim and use all of the systems that are used to skim across sites. In your site, if you are going to break that, you're going to break that mental model or whatever, it's going to have a negative or a positive impact. And you have to be cognizant of that as a designer.

So the web page layout is guided by standard web design conventions that have their roots in perceived user experience. One possible outcome of standardization of a genre is the development of a genre's own templates and forms. The online store, as a super genre has stabilized over time, and its outcome can now be seen in the creation of ecommerce platforms such as Shopify and Squarespace which provide businesses with tools to build their own shopping sites. Platforms such as Shopify offer themes or templates that a business owner can use to create their own online store. This has significant implications in terms of what it allows business owners to do with the content that goes on the web pages and their format. The shop owner Janet uses such predesigned web templates to construct her own online store:

## PI COMMENT 24

We've just built our website on Shopify templates. So that's what a lot of companies are doing. So it's like a really built way of organizing. So you can just choose like a different theme or layout and build the website that way. But ultimately, when you become a bigger company, you're going to have a custom-built website. ...With Shopify template, you might be a bit restricted about what you can do.

These online ecommerce platforms are less expensive and easily allow one to select from available themes and templates. But it also restricts the amount of variation that business owners would be allowed if they had a custom-built website, designed and created especially

for their brand by web developers, UX/UI designers and content designers. Here, one can argue that stabilization of patterns of the genre allows companies to build platforms such as Shopify and Squarespace which offer predesigned genre formats for their users to choose from. On the other hand, it also controls the amount of genre variation seen within a genre. Web designer Bernard shows high awareness of the mutual relationship between the use of genre templates and standardization of user expectations which he calls a “kind of virtual cycle”:

#### PI COMMENT 25

The reason that's (building online shops using templates) so successful is because user expectations have become so standardised and places like Shopify have also standardised users' expectations.

The analyses that follow in Chapter 7, Section 7.5 on the textual metafunction of the Online Product Information layout (placement of images, text and interactive items) need to be considered in the context of the new technological developments mentioned above. For instance, the analysis and interpretation of the information value or salience of an image or interactive item may not directly reflect the online store owners' own intentions. It would also affect any investigation of culture specific (Sri Lankan or New Zealand) differences, if some sellers from both countries use the same website creation platforms. Yet, the fact remains that online store owners who make use of pre-designed templates to build their online store, choose their templates from a variety of available themes, giving some allowance to choose according to their own preferences. The web templates themselves have been recognized by the web designers and business owners as the result of the ‘standardisation’ of ecommerce sites. These reasons encourage one not to entirely abandon an analysis of the information value of the visual layout of OPI (OPI).

Nevertheless, the aforementioned comment by Janet (business owner) about how they may have to shift to a custom-built website when they “become a bigger company” reveals the possibility of moving away from this standardization. This fact is reinforced by Bernard's comment above on how breaking a standard/ mental model is “going to have a negative or a

positive impact". To shed more light on deviation from conventional genre features, I report more from my interview with Bernard. When we discussed the use of product photographs in OPIs, Bernard made a distinction between 'standard' ecommerce sites and 'fancy' sites:

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I think that as ecommerce sites have evolved, they've become quite standardised. There's quite a sort of a system to work and it's just like, show me the image in its best possible light. If you've got multiple images, let me see those. Don't be too fancy with it, unless it's like, sometimes, really, really fancy sites will break these rules, because they want to see these, seem to be luxurious. And to have something that feels bespoke, suggests luxury to people. But in standard ecommerce sites, they do tend to follow pretty standardised systems these days.

From the above input from both Bernard and Janet, it becomes clear that a 'bigger company' or a company that wants to be identified as 'fancy' or unique, does not necessarily stick to the conventions applied in ecommerce sites, which at that point would seem 'restrictive' to such companies. So, there could be 'positive' impacts of deviating from conventional genre features (such as being perceived as luxurious or bespoke), and not just negatives. Introducing novelties has to be weighed against customer expectations and user experience. It would therefore be safe to assume that conventionalization of genre features applies differently to different online businesses owing to factors such as brand recognition, scale of the business and whether the business is starting out or is well established. The ecommerce websites that were analysed in the current research can mainly be considered as small-scale businesses that are either new (started within the last ten years) or old, but all well established in their own country. Analysed together, they display some recurring patterns of OPI that can be considered as forming the standard or the genre of Online Product Information. These patterns will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

## 5.8. Chapter summary

This chapter started with a review of the various terminology that could be observed being used to label the same genre in research literature and amongst professional and non-professional communities using the genre. The review resulted in identifying the genre under study as Online Product Information, with the product description being a constituent of the OPI genre, and the OPI being located on the product page of the shopping website. At the same time, analysing participant data revealed multiple functions that are achieved by the OPI which are persuasive, informative as well as interactive. The main social purposes of the OPI were identified as informing, persuading and facilitating online shoppers in order to purchase, recommend, get more information and communicate with the seller about a product. Another purpose of the genre was identified as establishing product credibility. Then the OPI genre was contextualized within the professional practices of copywriting, web designing and digital marketing. It was seen that different professional groups collaborated in the creation of this digital genre. Online shoppers also were considered as part of the OPI genre producers due to the sellers' strategic inclusion of user generated content of product reviews inside the genre to further the communicative purposes of the genre. The involvement of multiple professional and non-professional groups in producing the genre establishes that fact that the OPI genre is not the product of a single professional or non-professional group or community. Finally, the use of ecommerce platforms and their templates in online business raises the issue of how they at the same time become the vehicles and proof of the conventionalization of genre features. Also interestingly, the breaking of conventional genre features is seen as carrying not just possibly negative, but also positive outcomes.

## CHAPTER 6: MOVE ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses Research Question 2- '*What are the rhetorical moves of Online Product Information in Sri Lankan and New Zealand online shopping sites?*'. I conducted a move analysis of the Online Product Information (OPI) genre based on a set of 160 authentic texts collected from 32 Sri Lankan and New Zealand online shopping sites. The analytical method used was Swales' move structure analysis since move analysis is recognized for its instructional value especially in ESP teaching. Move analysis describes the communicative purposes of a text by classifying the discourse units of that text into the rhetorical functions they perform (Biber et al., 2007b). A move is a discourse unit that performs a rhetorical function that taken together with other moves of that genre, fulfil the overall communicative purpose of the genre.

In this Chapter, I describe and define the set of fourteen moves that was identified as performing the social purpose of the OPI genre (Section 6.2). This answers research sub question 2.1 – '*What are the moves achieving the purposes of the OPI (OPI) genre?*'. I then move on to a description of the steps that operationalize each of the six non-interactive moves (the steps used to realise the interactive moves are discussed in the Interactivity Analysis chapter). I point out how the steps of the moves vary according to the product category (Section 6.3). In this research, the two product categories selected are jewellery and herbal beauty care. This addresses research sub question 2.2. – '*How does product category affect the structure of the OPI genre?*'. Next, in Section 6.4, I investigate the differences that are observed in the use of moves and steps according to the country in which the OPIs are used (sub question 2.3 – '*Are there any cross-cultural differences in the use of moves/ steps of the genre?*'). The analysis, being of a digital genre, also required me to identify two types of moves: interactive and non-interactive moves. In Section 6.5, I explain this decision. As move coding is not a cut and dried process with boundaries between moves or steps that are always clear-cut, the last section of the chapter (6.6) is dedicated to discussing some issues

that were encountered in the move coding process, and the decisions that were taken to resolve those issues.

## 6.2 Moves of the Online Product Information genre

Through an analysis of the 160 OPI texts (80 jewellery, 80 beauty care), it was possible to identify a common move structure for both jewellery and beauty care product information. The set of moves and their prominence are given in Table 6.1.

Following previous studies (Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Parkinson, 2017; Parkinson et al., 2017), moves and steps that appear in 80% or more of the texts are considered as obligatory. Those appearing in 50-79% of texts are considered as typical or usual (Parkinson, 2017). Any move or step that appears in less than 50% of the texts is considered to be optional to achieving the functional purposes of the genre.

Based on the premise that the medium/hypertextuality affects the genre (J. Andersen, 2017; T. H. Andersen & van Leeuwen, 2017; Jones & Hafner, 2012; Mehlenbacher, 2017; Xia, 2020), the move model used in the study makes a distinction between two move types: interactive moves and non-interactive moves. Out of the fourteen identified moves, six are non-interactive (two textual and four multimodal) and eight are interactive. In Table 6.1, an asterisk (\*) in front of a non-interactive move name indicates that more than one mode has been used to realise the move's functional purposes.

Table 6.1. Move structure and prominence of the OPI genre

Moves - Online Product Information		N. beauty care texts	N. jewellery texts	TOTAL texts (percentage)	Prominence
Non-interactive	M1 - Identifying the product*	80	80	160 (100%)	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>
	M2 - Describing the product*	79	80	159 (99.4%)	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>
	M3- Promoting the product*	79	80	156 (97.5%)	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>
	M4 - Offering incentives and service options	20	32	52 (32.50%)	OPTIONAL
	M5 - Advising, directing and_or warning*	56	51	104 (65%)	<b>TYPICAL</b>
	M6 - Using pressure tactics	11	13	24 (15%)	OPTIONAL
Interactive	M7 – Selecting requirements	71	58	129 (81%)	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>
	M8 - Purchasing	67	58	125 (78%)	<b>TYPICAL</b>
	M9 - Transferring information	37	49	86 (54%)	<b>TYPICAL</b>
	M10 - Accessing additional information	30	35	65 (41%)	OPTIONAL
	M11 - Using additional seller services	20	34	54 (34%)	OPTIONAL
	M12 -Requesting information	5	17	22 (14%)	OPTIONAL
	M13 - Facilitating reading and_or viewing	70	59	129 (81%)	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>
	M14 - Providing feedback	60	15	75 (47%)	OPTIONAL

Asterisk (\*) = multimodal move

Out of the six non-interactive moves, the two textual moves are M4- Offering incentives and service options and M6 – Using pressure tactics. The four non-interactive multimodal moves which use both the visual and textual modes to achieve the move functions are: M1 - Identifying the product, M2 – Describing the product, M3 – Promoting the product and M5- Advising, directing and/or warning. In these four multimodal moves, resources of the visual

mode and their functions (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) were considered alongside text to define the rhetorical purpose of each move.

The eight interactive moves account for the affordances of the medium and the rhetorical meaning of interactivity in the OPI. These moves are realised by application of affordances of the digital medium (interactivity) on either the textual or visual modes or both modes in order to achieve their purpose. Therefore, the moves are called interactive. Through these moves, the customers are allowed to take action in response to what they have read/viewed and also to help with the reading/ viewing itself. A customer's ability to interact with the OPI can be indicated in the form of an interactive link, icon or button or cursor movement responsive areas (e.g., image that can be enlarged by clicking or hovering over it).

As can be seen in Table 6.1, five out of the fourteen moves are obligatory, and therefore are essential to achieving the social purposes of the OPI genre (to inform, persuade and interactively assist online users in order to purchase, recommend, find out more or get seller services and communications about a product, and to establish product credibility). These five moves are M1 - Identifying the product, M2 – Describing the product, M3 – Promoting the product (non-interactive moves) and M7 – Selecting requirements and M13 – Facilitating readability and viewing (interactive moves). Three moves, M5 - Advising, directing and/or warning, M8 – Purchasing and M9 – Transferring information, are typical in that they will be commonly found in the OPI genre. Six moves are optional (two non-interactive, four interactive). They are M4 - Offering incentives and service options, M6- Using pressure tactics, M10 - Accessing additional info, M11 - Using additional seller services, M12 - Requesting information, M14 - Providing feedback. Those moves therefore need not be included in every genre exemplar.

An above-the fold view (the section of a web page visible before scrolling down) of the OPI is given in Figure 6.1 with its moves highlighted in different colours to show how moves appear in the Online Product Information.



## Move analysis - Online Product Information

**Deep Cleansing Milk – Aloe Vera**

Write a review

For total purchases over R\$ 1200, delivery cost is R\$0. For Total purchases below R\$ 1200, delivery cost is R\$ 300.

This soft milky facial cleanser enriched with Aloe Vera moisturises and cleans your face, removing all traces of makeup. Your daily moisture recovery solution. It removes deep seated impurities and cleans pores for healthy, moisturised, soft skin.

**Best For**  
Removes Makeup & Moisturises

**Key Natural Ingredients**  
Aloe Vera, Virgin Coconut Oil

**Skin Types**  
Normal & Dry

**\$2.00**

Collection  
Classic

Skin Types  
Normal & Dry

Size  
100ml

ADD TO CART

17 items

Print Add to compare

**Non-interactive moves:**

1. Identifying the product
2. Describing the product
3. Promoting the product
4. Offering incentives and service options
5. Advising, directing and warning
6. Using pressure tactics

**Interactive moves:**

7. Selecting requirements
8. Purchasing
9. Transferring information
10. Accessing additional info (*not in this exemplar*)
11. Using additional seller services
12. Requesting information (*not in this exemplar*)
13. Facilitating reading and/or viewing
14. Providing feedback

Figure 6.1. Above the fold view of the OPI genre with moves highlighted (Nature's Secrets, 2020)

A discussion of move definitions follows. Each of the fourteen moves are defined and described. At certain points, any salient lexico-grammar as well as semiotic resources such as colour, layout and typography that help to identify the moves have been noted.

### 6.2.1 Non-interactive moves

#### 1. Move 1 – Identifying the product (M1)

The purpose of the move is to provide salient verbal/visual cues that give an idea about the product at a glance. This usually enables the customers to make a quick buying decision if required. Identifying the product happens in two ways – by grabbing customer attention and by signalling to potential customers the nature/type of product on offer. The move generally appears at the top of the OPI – generally in the part of the OPI which is immediately visible when accessing the page without having to scroll down.

## **2. Move 2 – Describing the product (M2)**

The rhetorical purpose of the move is to give an objective idea of the product to potential customers who want to know more than the quick identifying details (in “Identifying the product” move) of the product. The move is both textual and visual. The presentation of information in this move is neutral. While description is seen in other moves as well (in promoting the product or in advising, directing and/or warning), the move ‘Describing the product’ refers to sellers providing objective and/or factual details about the product.

E.g., NZjeca12 – *“Pendant 25mm x 20mm  
Chain length 45cm plus 5cm extender chain  
Sterling Silver plated in 18k gold stone setting.”*

## **3. Move 3 - Promoting the product (M3)**

The purpose of the move is to vaunt the merits of the product and thereby persuade the customer to buy the product. Textual and visual resources combine to convey the move function.

E.g., NZskca12 – *“Pure Essential Oil of Rosa Damascena hydrates dry skin, relaxes the body, reduces signs of ageing with its sweet and exquisite fragrance”*

## **4. Move - Offering incentives and service options (M4)**

The purpose of the move is to incentivize customers to buy the product. The incentives can be of different forms depending on product category - jewellery or beauty care.

## **5. Move 5 - Advising, directing and/or warning (M5)**

This move advises, directs and/or warns customers regarding the product, product selection and care, customer services, delivery, navigating the page/website. This sort of advising/directing/warning is also a risk management strategy on the part of the sellers, where the seller reduces risk of legal action against themselves by warning shoppers of potential problems. The move is termed “Advising, directing, warning” because it was observed that steps under this move combine and perform one or several of these rhetorical functions together which cannot often be consistently separated from each other (see Section 6.6 for further discussion). The move although predominantly textual, uses resources of the visual mode too (e.g., in showing how to use the product) to convey its move functions. The language in the move, there is a high usage of the imperative form seen in the move. At the same time, the move while being informative is not entirely devoid of persuasion. Some steps such as M5S4- ‘Giving storage instructions’ or M5S6 –‘Disclaiming’ have evaluative language embedded into them to soften the effects of the instruction or warning.

E.g., NZskca1 - *“Store in a cool place away from sunlight as it is a natural cosmetic without synthetic preservatives.”*

## **6. Move 6 - Using pressure tactics (M6)**

This move is used to pressurize the customer to buy the product. For instance, sellers can show customers a low quantity of product availability and suggest that the customer should quickly buy the product before it is sold out .

E.g., SLskna1 - *“ Warning: Last items in stock!”*

### 6.2.2 Interactive moves

While the chapter on Interactivity analysis discusses in detail how interactivity is used in Beauty and Jewellery OPI in the two countries, the next section will briefly introduce each of the eight interactive moves.

#### **7. M7 - Selecting requirements**

The move enables customers to select the specific requirements of the product they wish to buy such as size, quantity, length or colour.

#### **8. M8 - Purchasing**

This move allows the customers to make a buying decision – to decide whether to purchase the product or not ('Add to cart', 'Buy it now'). Two main Call to action (CTA) buttons are normally seen as carrying out this function within the OPI ('Add to cart', 'Buy it now'). The buttons are placed in a strategically prominent place within the product information and are salient due to the choice of colour and font used on the buttons.

#### **9. M9 - Transferring information**

The move allows the customers to share information about a product with other customers or friends/followers. Social media icons such as 'Facebook' and 'Pinterest' as well as other icons such as 'Drop a hint' enable customers to perform this action.

#### **10.M10 - Accessing additional information**

Through this move, customers can access any additional information available through links or buttons (e.g., to learn more about a particular payment method or certification).

### **11.M11 - Using additional seller services**

Through this move, customers can make use of the services that the seller offers through buttons or links (e.g., add to wishlist, add to compare, currency convert) to facilitate product purchase or selection.

### **12.M12 - Requesting information**

The move allows a direct path to sellers for directing any problems/concerns/ questions users may have regarding the product or to request an appointment with the seller. This interactive function is achieved through options such as 'Ask a question'/'inquiry' hyperlinks or 'Request quotation' hyperlinks.

### **13.M13 - Facilitating reading/viewing**

This move helps with managing the page layout and categorizing information in order to create an effective/uncluttered reading and viewing experience. It changes the layout of the existing page so that some content is made visible that is usually hidden from view (due to the genre producers' content prioritization and need to manage a limited space).

### **14.M14 - Providing feedback**

This move provides the customers with the means to give their opinions or express their thoughts about the product on the public product page space. 'Like' icons/buttons and 'Ratings and reviews' are used to carry out this type of interactivity.

A detailed description of interactive items pertaining to each non-interactive move is given in Section 8.2 of Chapter 8 – Interactivity Analysis.

### 6.3 Steps of the Online Product Information genre

Steps are the various strategies used to realise a move function. This section details the steps that are used to operationalise each non-interactive move. It was found that the steps of the non-interactive moves vary according to the type of product – jewellery and beauty care - that is being sold (as can be seen from Table 6.2) although there are common steps shared under both product categories as well. The next section will explain each step in detail with examples provided from the corpus. When a step that realizes a move is used only in one product category, I note this within parentheses next to the name of the step. Move 6 -Using pressure tactics is not included since no steps could be identified for this move.

#### 6.3.1 Steps of Move 1 – Identifying the product

“Identifying the product” move (M1) uses two steps:

**i. M1S1 - Grabbing customer attention.**

Grabbing attention includes displaying the product and/or packaging through the default photograph of the product which is visible at a glance. If there are multiple images, only the default product photograph falls within this classification; the others are not immediately visible due to being just thumbnails that need to be clicked for proper visibility, or they cannot be seen at all without clicking left/right arrows.

Interview data from both online shoppers and shop owners indicate how the product image plays the role of grabbing the customers’ attention as they enter the OPI. Janet, a shop owner, comments:

I suppose, first impressions would be the visual, because that's going to attract you first. And then if you're interested, you're going to read the messaging with a copy, the product description, the text.

Manuga, a Sri Lankan business owner has a similar opinion: “you have to first grab the customer's attention through photo, and customer's intrigue, before they start reading the description.”

A high resolution mid-range image of the product with vibrant colours is generally used as the default product image (see Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3).

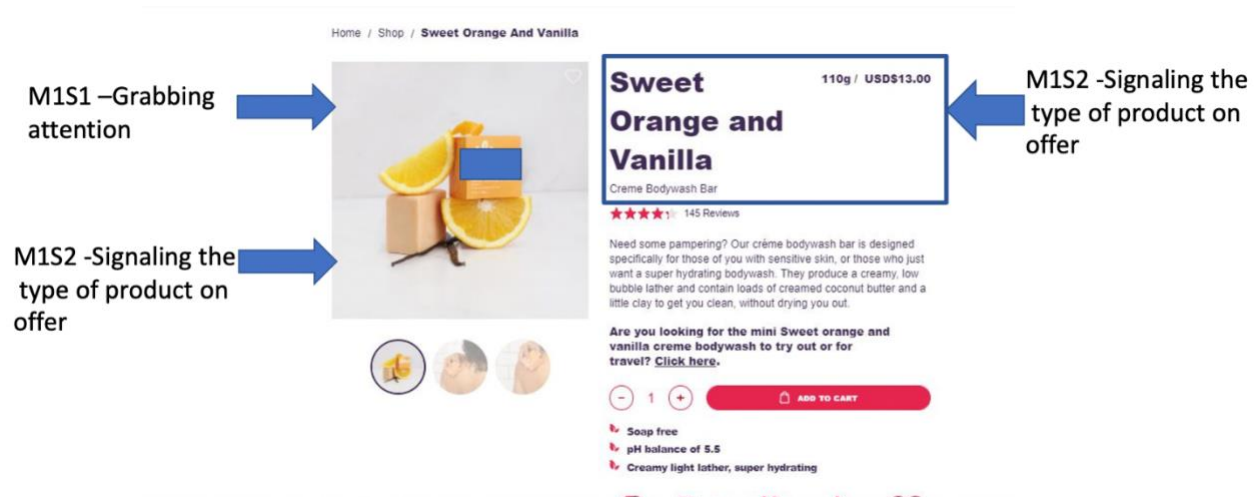


Figure 6.2. Steps of M1 - Identifying the product – beauty care (NZsket2) (Ethique, 2020b)

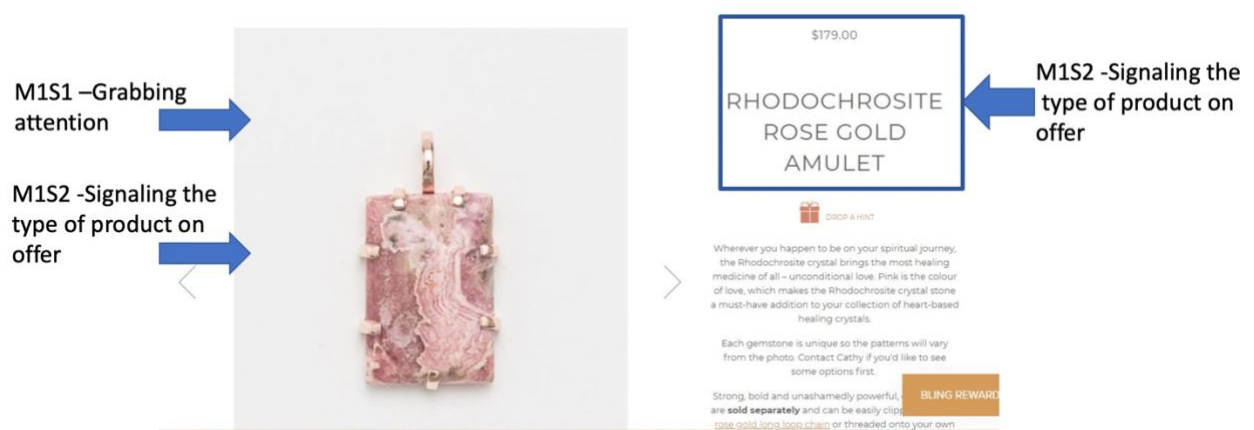


Figure 6.3. Steps of M1- Identifying the product - jewellery (NZjeca1)(Cathy Pope, 2020)

## ii. M1S2 - Signalling to potential customers the nature/type of product on offer.

Details such as the product name (heading), brand name, price, size, weight, a caption/ catch phrase (e.g., *SLskci3* - “A Soothing Sensation”) given at the top of the OPI and visually displaying the product and/or packaging can signal to customers the type of product on offer. All these details help to identify the product at a glance. The written details use semiotic resources of colour, different orthographic styles (bold type face, uppercase letters, large font sizes) and prominent placement inside the OPI layout (usually top of the OPI) to make these written details more salient than others in order to give an idea about the product at a glance (see Figure 6.3). The default product image which can be seen as soon as a customer visits the OPI due to being large and placed at the top left, gives the customers an idea at a glance of the type of product being sold.

So the two steps of Move 1 – ‘Identifying the product’ are visual as well as textual, based on the premise that the meanings of a multimodal text are created using all modes involved (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). A mode, alone or in combination with another mode(s), can contribute to achieving the purpose(s) of a genre.

### 6.3.2 Steps of Move 2 – Describing the product

The move ‘Describing the product’ (M2) contains four steps. Three steps (‘Describing product characteristics’, ‘Showing categories, codes and tags’, ‘Stating availability’) are common to both product categories. One step (M2S4 – ‘Disclosing ingredients’) is seen only in beauty care product information.

#### i. M2S1 – Describing product characteristics

In the ‘describing product characteristics’ step, customers are given some objective details about the product. For beauty care products, the details are related to color/appearance (as gel or cream or liquid), weight. For jewellery it is details such as size, length, weight, diameter, metal type/composition, names of any stones used, colour, product finish (e.g.,



matt look, oxidised) origin and design. These details are not made salient by any visual resources such as colour, or larger font size. They form part of the written product copy. Parallel to the verbal description, the visual mode is used to show certain product characteristics such as the product's size, length, colour, design.

E.g., SLskgr2 – *“Net Wgt: 125 gms”*

NZjelo2 – *“Two chains on one clasp, with the hand stamped fob falling at 45cm.”*

## ii. M2S2 - Showing categories, codes and tags

This step indicates how/under what code the product is classified

E.g., NZskkd3 – *‘Category: Body Products’*

SLsk4r1 – *“SKU: N/A”*

NZjesi1 – *“Type: Earrings”*/ SLjeai1 – *“CHAIN COLLECTION”*

SLjeta5 – *“TAG: #WEDDING”*

## iii. M2S3 - Stating availability

The step indicates whether the product is available or not and where it is available.

E.g., SLskgr2 – *“Availability: In Stock”*

SLjeai1 – *“This product is currently out of stock.”*

SLjela2 – *“In stock”*

## iv. M2S4 (only in beauty care OPI) - Disclosing ingredients

The step ‘disclosing ingredients’ reveals information about all ingredients used. Here, a detailed list of ingredients may be provided which may include ingredients’ generic names, their scientific names or both. The verbal realisation of the step often appears towards the bottom of the OPI after a promotional description (product description) of the product. It appears as a list, sometimes accompanied by images of ingredients. The use of the step also allows sellers to align with health and safety protocols associated with marketing beauty care products. Revealing all ingredients used ensures that there is no misleading of customers about product composition. It also protects sellers from

customer complaints. Declaring ingredients is generally visible only if the customer scrolls down.

E.g., NZskca1 – *“ingredients Distilled Water (Aqua), Vitis Vinifera (Grape) Seed Oil, Cetearyl Olivat, Sorbitan Olivat, Glycerin, Dehydroacetic Acid, Benzyl Alcohol, Bisabolol, Chamomilla Recutita (Matricaria) Flower Oil, ...”*

### 6.3.3 Steps of Move 3 – Promoting the product

There are eight steps that can be used to operationalize the “Promoting the product” move. Four steps (M3S3, M3S5, M3S6, M3S8) are unique to beauty care product information, and one step (M3S8) is unique to jewellery product information. The other three steps (M3S1, M3S2, M3S4) are used in both product categories to realise the ‘Promoting the product’ move.

#### i. **M3S1 – Targeting the market**

The step ‘targeting the market’ indicates to which type of customers and occasion or purpose the product suits best.

In beauty care OPIs, this is done by way of stating

1. which skin or hair type the product can be best used with (NZskox1 - *“The perfect cleanser if you have blemishes and acne”* / SLsksp1 - *“Dosha Type – Tridosha: Suitable for All Skin Types”*)
2. intended recipient (*“The Mini Kit also makes the perfect gift or travel companion.”*)

In jewellery, the target market is specified according to

1. the personality of the product user (SLjesv3 - *“This collection is for the woman who is bold, confident and unafraid to make a statement”*)

2. the birth month of the product user. This becomes relevant when referring to jewellery with special stones (SLjeta5 - *"A good look for the August birthday girl"*)

3. the occasion for which the product is used (NZjelo1 - *"made for everyday wear"*)

4. the intended recipient (Nzjepa2- *"A gift that would be admired and appreciated"* / Nzjeme2- *"Perfect as a special gift to yourself or celebrating love"*).

'Targeting the market' is a step that can appear alone or embedded in another move such as the 'identifying the product' move (d).

E.g., SLsksp1 - *"FRANKINCENSE - Face Wash For Men 150ml"*

## **ii. M3S2 – Evaluating the product positively**

The step 'evaluating the product positively' promotes the product by building a positive image of the product. In beauty care it does this by vaunting the look, value, feel, smell (features) and benefits of the products and ingredients. In jewellery, it builds this positive image by vaunting the design, style and value of the product.

In beauty care, the written mode of the step uses content such as product attributes, product benefits and functions, characteristics and properties of main ingredients, nutrients included, packaging details and the scent in combination, to make the product appealing to the audience:

E.g., NZskso3 – *"Very gentle Face Cleanser..."*

NZskso3 – *"to draw out impurities and hydrate the skin."*

NZskox1 – *"The best bits Mandarin Essential Oil – refreshing, calming, uplifting, antiseptic"*

In jewellery, the written mode of the step uses in combination, details of craftsmanship, design and inspiration, appraisal of product (style, benefit, stones, materials and care taken to select).

E.g., SLjede1 – *“The true mark of artisanship always lies in the finer details.”*

NZjesi12 – *“Hand-sewn hematite, glass pearls and crystal neckpiece with interwoven fine chain detail. Feathers have been layered with fine net and sits beautifully on a velvet backing.”*

NZjesi1 – *“inspired by New York and modern vintage design”*

NZjela2 – *“Our adorable little Manuka pod”*

NZjesi1 – *“Wear these statement beauties to elevate any outfit and be seen!” / “SS Dendritic Opal helps with one’s growth physically as well as spiritually”*

SLjesv3 – *“We meticulously handpick only the best stones and always look out for unique, one of a kind gems.”*

The use of multiple attributive adjectives, active voice transitive verbs, subjectless predicates can be identified as forming the lexico-grammar of the step.

The product photograph by typically displaying a highly illuminated image with high colour saturation, colour differentiation and detail also contributes to this positive evaluation. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 155), the use of modality markers in such a way “enhance(s) the affective attractiveness of the product”. So, the step has a strong persuasive function which is achieved both verbally and visually.

### **iii. M3S3 - Justifying against alternatives (only in beauty care)**

This step gives reasons for the manufacturer’s selection of ingredients against other alternative ingredients. One characterising linguistic feature is the comparative form of adjectives.

E.g., NZsket2 – *“so it’s palm free, unlike many surfactants”.*

### **iv. M3S4 – Showing someone using/wearing the product**

The step is visual and demonstrates how the product is used on the body, hair or face, and what the product looks like when it’s used. Alternatively in jewellery OPIs, the step shows a model wearing the particular jewellery and posing.

**v. M3S5 - Making reassurances (only in beauty care)**

The 'making reassurances' step addresses and satisfies potential customers' sense of safety, ethicality, eco consciousness and nationalism. The step's lexical realization contains adverbs (e.g., completely) and predicative adjectives (e.g., biodegradable, sustainable, harmless). Both textual and visual elements (e.g., icons) are used to achieve the functions.

E.g., NZskca1 – *“with no harsh detergents and chemicals”*

NZsksk2 – *“CRUELTY FREE”*

NZsket2 – *“Sustainably sourced from renewable natural vanilla”*

NZskta1 – *“NZ made”*

**vi. M3S6 (only in beauty care)- Establishing credentials**

This step authenticates the product by mentioning any awards won by the product or any testing or certification received, reflecting its recognition in the beauty care industry.

E.g., NZsksk2 – *“Bronze award winner at the Pure Beauty Awards 2018 for Best New Organic Product!”*

NZskox1 – *“In-vitro studies, independently test by TRINITY BIOACTIVE Laboratories,...”*

**vii. M3S7 - Providing customer testimonials and results (only in beauty care)**

The step brings an outside party's (not the seller's) view/ opinion of the product. This can be considered as a strategy to validate the facts and claims that were mentioned in other moves/steps (e.g., 'describing the product' and 'positively evaluating the product') in order to fortify their effect on the buyer. It is interesting to note that testimonials have been given in the form of images with before and after images of using the product. Some images contain written text in the form of customer testimonials (see Figure 6.4).

### viii. M3S8 - Pairing jewellery (only in jewellery)

The step 'pairing jewellery' gives details of how the jewellery can be paired up with other jewellery or clothes. Parallel to the written promotion, the visual mode is used to show how jewellery has been worn by a model together with other pieces of jewellery from the same seller.

E.g., NZjeca12 - "...looks stunning paired with our citrine earrings"

NZjelo1 - "Perfect alone or layered"

**M3S1 - Targeting the market**

**M3S2 - Evaluating product positively**

**M3S3 - Justifying against alternatives\***

**M3S4 - Showing someone using the product (visual)\***

**M3S5 - Making reassurances**

**M3S6 - Establishing credentials**

**M3S7 - Providing customer testimonials and results (visual/verbal) \***

"Itchy and dry scalp got you down? Our Shampoo is here to help! Chock full of oatmeal and a selection of ancient ayurvedic oils, our top-selling bar works a treat to help calm and nourish touchy scalps. As with all our shampoo bars, is 100% soap-free, pH-balanced and super gentle - yet wonderfully effective in washing your scalp woes away."

"There is nothing wrong with SLS strictly speaking in terms of health concerns, it's readily biodegradable and naturally derived but it's incredibly harsh on the skin and hair so we choose not to use it. We have found over about 7 years of testing that people respond better to SCS than similar SLS based products, due to the SLS's harshness."



"Seriously your products have changed my life! I used to not want to go out because of my acne, but I feel so confident in myself now, I'm so happy!"



Figure 6.4. Steps of Move 3- 'Promoting the product' in beauty care (Ethique, 2020a; Tailor skincare, 2020)

### 6.3.4 Steps of Move 4- Offering incentives and service options

This move is operationalised through seven steps. Three steps (M4S1, M4S2, M4S3) are common to both product categories. Three steps (M4S5, M4S6, M4S7) are unique to jewellery OPIs and one step (M4S4) is unique to beauty care OPIs.

**i. M4S1 – Offering free items and services**

This step offers customers either free items (gift box, card) or free of charge services such as free delivery, gift wrapping or personalised message. Different font colour, size or capitalization are used to highlight this information.

E.g., SLskna2 - *“For total purchases over Rs.1200, delivery cost is FREE..”*

NZjeao4 - *“Comes packaged with stone information and instructions for use” / “Comes in a signature Silk & Steel box and gift-wrapped to perfection.”*

**ii. M4S2 – Offering discounts**

This step provides customers price reductions to buy the product or to subscribe to the brand.

E.g., NZskta2 - *“Subscribe & Save (20%): \$28.00”*

**iii. M4S3 – Introducing payment options**

The step offers customers the option of paying in instalments and introduces different payment platforms.

E.g., NZskox1 - *“or 6 weekly interest-free payments of \$5.08”*

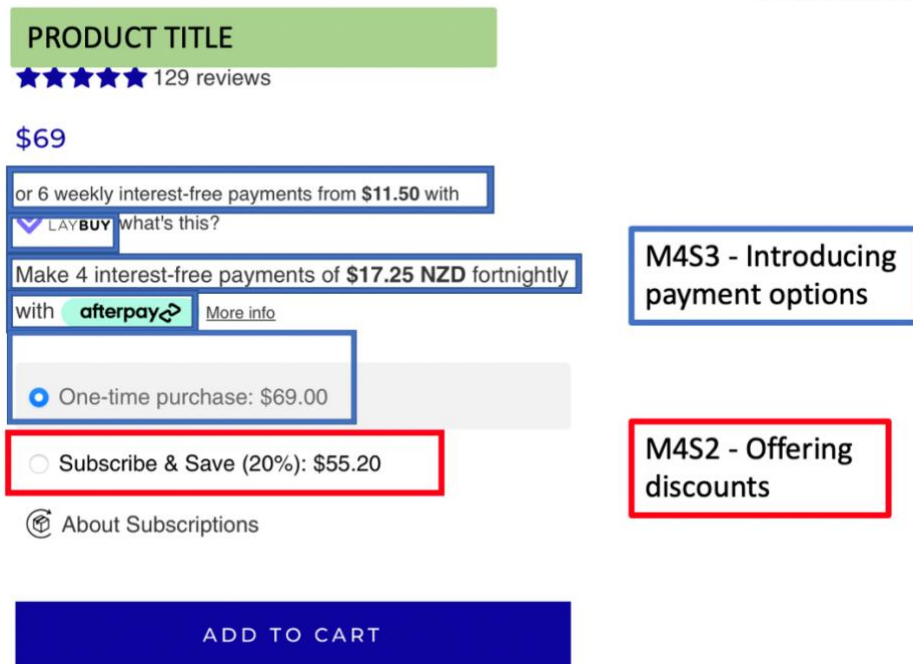


Figure 6.5. Steps of M4 - Offering incentives and service options (Tailor skincare, 2020)

**iv. M4S4– Providing online offers (only in beauty care)**

Through ‘providing online offers’ step, customers are incentivized by providing special online only offers for purchases

E.g., NZskta4 – “ *ONLINE EXCLUSIVE // Add a Gold Scoop for just \$7*”

**v. M4S5 - Offering jewellery and/or stone certification (only in jewellery)**

This step offers customers certificates to prove the authenticity of the product and/or materials.

E.g., “*Certificates can be issued for the stone*”

**vi. M4S6 - Offering purchase points (only in jewellery)**

“Offering purchase points” step provides a system of earning points with each purchase from that store



E.g, NZjewi2 - *“Earn 1490 Jewels”*

**vii. M4S7 - Providing customization and variation options (only in jewellery)**

This step is used to offer customers the choice of making changes to the product according to the customers’ own wishes.

E.g., NZjepa2 – *“(can be custom made by us to any length)”*

**6.3.5 Steps of Move 5 – Advising, directing and/or warning**

The move consists of ten steps. Three steps (M5S5, M5S6, M5S7) are common to both product categories. Four steps are unique to beauty care product information (M5S1, M5S2, M5S3, M5S4) and three more steps are unique to jewellery OPIs (M5S8, M5S9, M5S10).

**i. M5S1 - Instructing how to use (only in beauty care)**

The customers are given instructions/ guidelines as to how to use the product. This can be considered both as advice and direction. Directions on use can be given both visually (by using a series of photographs, or videos) and verbally. Sometimes the directions come along with reasons.

E.g., NZskso1 - *“How: Morning and night, start with a damp face and neck. Why: Cleanse in the morning to get rid of toxins that come to your skins surface while sleeping, and at night to clear away makeup and the dust and grime from your busy day. If your skin is damp the cleanser will gently foam up.”*

**ii. M5S2 - Recommending measures to prevent possible adverse effects (only in beauty care)**

Genre producers warn customers of possible adverse effects, and advice or direct them about what to do in such instances. Such sentences are used both as a warning and as

advice. In addition, instructions are given to patch test before using the product. This can be considered as a direction, warning and advice

E.g., NZskca1 - *“To ensure skin compatibility, patch test first. If minor irritation occurs, stop using the product for 1-2 days”*

**iii. M5S3 - Recommending follow up/ accompanying products (only in beauty care)**

Customers are advised on which products should be used following the use of the target product.

E.g., SLskna2 - *“Follow with BRAND NAME Toner and Aloe 94% Gel”*

**iv. M5S4 - Giving storage instructions (only in beauty care)**

Customers are advised/directed on how to store the product.

E.g., NZskca1 - *“Store in a cool place away from sunlight as it is a natural cosmetic without synthetic preservatives.”*

**v. M5S5 - Instructing on how to seek additional information/services**

In this step, customers are advised and instructed on how they should proceed to get more information or services. The product sellers advise customers on identifying the right skin type through quizzes they offer. Customers are also prompted to ask questions through email (advice/direction) and they are provided with answers for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (a form of advice).

E.g., SLjeta2 - *“Contact our customer support for more details”*

NZjeao1 - *“please message us for pricing”*

NZskca1 - *“Please refer the product packaging for the most updated ingredient list”*

This step is different from the interactive steps used in M10 - 'Accessing additional info'. M10 offers a gateway/channel to access extra information (e.g., hyperlink 'What's this?'). Interactive items under M10 are generally hypertextual links or buttons. In contrast, in this step - 'Instructing on how to seek additional info', customers are directed about where they can find more information.

#### **vi. M5S6 - Disclaiming**

In disclaimers, customers are warned of possible changes to their expectations so that the sellers will not be liable for any changes from standard information given on product information. Or the step can be used when the product deviates from what is expected of a regular product or purchase (last example – NZjeca4). In that sense it is a combination of a warning and advice to customers.

E.g., NZsket1 – “ *This ingredient list is subject to change*”

NZskso4 – “ *Please note that Face Mist may look cloudy (or different in colour & scent) from batch to batch*”

SLjeai1 - “*Note: All specifications and weights are approximate*”

“*Please note - When worn and body oils soak into Aotea, the minerals can undergo a deep colour transformation...*”

NZjeca4 - “*This chain is plain and has no clasp to join the ends together*”

The identification of the step is helped by some linguistic cues – use of the imperative form (sometimes together with 'please') and through lexis such as 'note', 'please note'.

**vii. M5S7 - Instructing on dispatch, delivery and returns**

This step advises customers on the delivery costs that will be incurred along with product cost. It also advises and warns at the same time about the time it will take to dispatch the item. The same applies to delivery. The return policy instructs customers about time duration and/or in which condition to return the items .

E.g., SLskna1 - *“For Total purchases below Rs.1200, delivery cost is Rs.300.”*

NZjesi1 - *“dispatch 1-3 business days”*

SLjeai1 - *“Delivery Time if Item Out of Stock: 2 Weeks”*

NZjesi1 - *“Returns or exchanges welcome within 7 days of purchase. Your item must be unused and in the same condition that you received it. It must also be in the original packaging”*

**viii. M5S8 - Buying/page maneuver directions (only in jewellery)**

This step directs/advises the customers on how to manoeuvre the webpage in order to purchase the product

E.g., NZjewi1 - *“Choose your CHAIN LENGTH by clicking on the ‘Choose an option’ button. Once you have selected the one you prefer, click on the ‘ADD TO CART’ button.”*

**ix. M5S9 - Metal/jewelry care and size selection guidance (only in jewellery)**

In this step, customers are guided as to how to select correct size/length, and how to take care of the jewellery according to its metal which can be considered as both advising and instructing.

E.g., NZjeca4 - *“We recommend using a tape measure to test the length on yourself before purchasing.”*

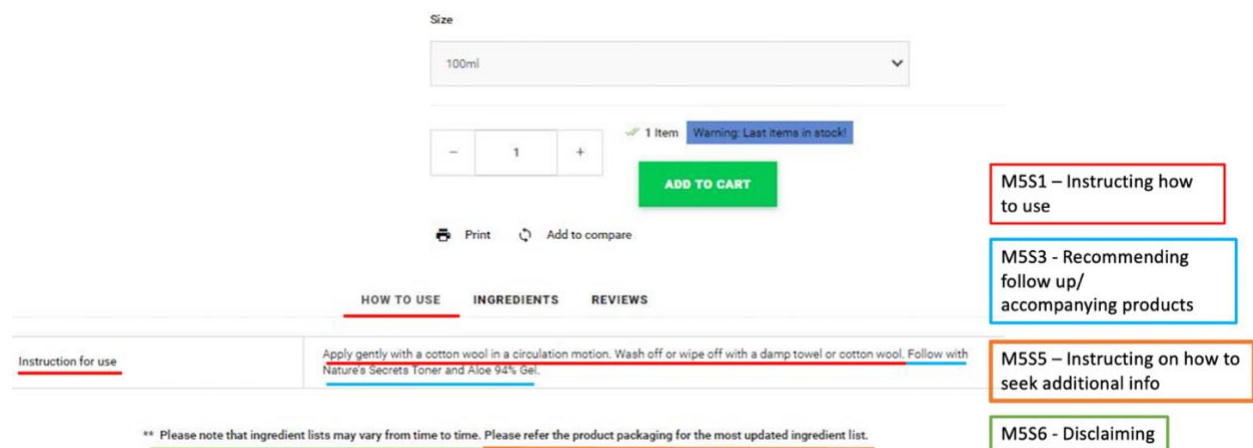
NZjeca4 – “Please refer to the Care Instructions to ensure you get the best out of your BRAND NAME pieces”

**x. M5S10 - Order/Purchase type (only in jewellery)**

In the order/ purchase type step, we find phrases such as “made to order” which warns the customer that the product is not for immediate purchase and advises the customers to order the product

E.g., NZjeme13 – “Please Note: This item is MADE TO ORDER”

Figure 6.6 illustrates some of the steps of Move 5 – ‘Advising, directing, warning’.



*Figure 6.6. Steps of M5 - Advising, directing, warning (Nature's Secrets, 2020)*

In order to avoid overlaps, the interactive steps/elements operationalising the eight interactive moves will only be described in Chapter 8 – Interactivity Analysis.

## 6.4 Cross-cultural differences in moves and steps

I have so far described the moves of the OPI genre and the non-interactive steps. Some steps vary according to the product category of the OPI. Similarly, differences were found in the use of moves and steps when these moves and steps are compared according to the country in which the OPIs were produced. Table 6.2 depicts how the moves and steps were used in the two different national cultural contexts – Sri Lanka and New Zealand - that are under study.

Pearson's chi-squared test was used to determine whether there was a significant association between location (SL/NZ) and the use of each move/step (explained in the Methodology chapter Section 4.8.2.1). As a consequence, the use of moves and steps which differs significantly between the two countries was found and those moves/steps are indicated in the table (Table 6.2) with an asterisk mark (\*) next to the move/ step name.

The frequency of steps/moves that are found in both product categories is given out of 160. Steps that are used only in one product category has a frequency out of 80. These steps are italicized in the table. Steps displayed in green coloured font are unique to beauty care OPIs. Steps displayed in blue coloured font are unique to jewellery OPIs.

The percentage of the frequency of moves and steps for both countries is given in the last column. Percentages of the frequency of moves/steps for each country - Sri Lanka and New Zealand - are given in the 3rd and 6th columns respectively.

As can be seen through Table 6.2, both SL and NZ OPI texts use the same 14 moves. However, the prominence of the use of moves differs according to country.

Table 6.2. Frequency of moves and steps of SL and NZ OPIs

MOVE	SL	%	PROMINENCE	NZ	%	PROMINENCE	SL & NZ	SL & NZ %
<b>M1 - IDENTIFYING THE PRODUCT</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>
M1S1- Grabbing attention	80	100	Obligatory	79	99	Obligatory	159	99
M1S2 - Signalling the nature of product	80	100	Obligatory	80	100	Obligatory	160	100
<b>M2 - DESCRIBING THE PRODUCT</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>99</b>
M2S1 - Describing characteristics	78	98	Obligatory	79	99	Obligatory	157	98
M2S2- Showing categories, codes and tags*	65	81	Obligatory	19	24	Optional	84	53
M2S3- Stating availability	16	20	Optional	11	14	Optional	27	17
<i>M2S4 - Disclosing ingredients*</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>55</i>	Typical	<i>32</i>	<i>80</i>	Obligatory	<i>54</i>	<i>68</i>
<b>M3- PROMOTING THE PRODUCT</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>98</b>
M3S1 - Targeting the market*	24	30	Optional	41	51	Typical	65	41
M3S2 - Evaluating product positively*	64	80	Obligatory	79	99	Obligatory	143	89
<i>M3S3 - Justifying against alternatives</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	-	<i>8</i>	<i>20</i>	Optional	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>
M3S4 - Showing someone using the product*	1	1	Optional	30	38	Optional	31	19
<i>M3S5 - Making reassurances</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>58</i>	Typical	<i>28</i>	<i>70</i>	Typical	<i>51</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>M3S6 - Establishing credentials*</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>10</i>	Optional	<i>11</i>	<i>28</i>	Optional	<i>15</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>M3S7- Providing customer testimonials and results</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	-	<i>4</i>	<i>10</i>	Optional	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>M3S8 - Pairing jewellery*</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	Optional	<i>20</i>	<i>50</i>	Typical	<i>21</i>	<i>26</i>
<b>M4 - OFFERING INCENTIVES AND SERVICE OPTIONS*</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>33</b>
M4S1 - Offering free items and services*	5	6	Optional	13	16	Optional	18	11
M4S2 - Offering discounts	1	1	Optional	2	3	Optional	3	2
M4S3 - Introducing payment options*	0	0	Optional	33	41	Optional	33	21
<i>M4S4 - Providing online offers</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	-	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	Optional	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>M4S5 - Offering jewellery and_or stone certification</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	Optional	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	-	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>M4S6 - Offering purchase points*</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	-	<i>6</i>	<i>15</i>	Optional	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>M4S7 - Providing customisation and variation options</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>8</i>	Optional	<i>5</i>	<i>13</i>	Optional	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>

<b>M5 - ADVISING, DIRECTING AND_OR WARNING*</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>M5S1 - Instructing how to use</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>48</i>	Optional	<i>28</i>	<i>70</i>	Typical	<i>47</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>M5S2 - Recommending measures to prevent possible adverse effects</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>13</i>	Optional	<i>7</i>	<i>18</i>	Optional	<i>12</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>M5S3 - Recommending follow up accompanying product</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>13</i>	Optional	<i>4</i>	<i>10</i>	Optional	<i>9</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>M5S4 - Giving storage instructions</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	Optional	<i>5</i>	<i>13</i>	Optional	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>
M5S5 - Instructing on how to seek additional information*	6	8	Optional	15	19	Optional	21	13
M5S6 - Disclaiming	16	20	Optional	16	20	Optional	32	20
M5S7 - Instructing on dispatch, delivery and returns	15	19	Optional	12	15	Optional	27	17
<i>M5S8 - Buying_page maneuver directions</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>13</i>	Optional	<i>12</i>	<i>30</i>	Optional	<i>17</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>M5S9 - Metal, jewellery care and size selection guidance</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>20</i>	Optional	<i>4</i>	<i>10</i>	Optional	<i>12</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>M5S10 - Order_purchase types</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	Optional	<i>6</i>	<i>15</i>	Optional	<i>7</i>	<i>9</i>
<b>M6 - USING PRESSURE TACTICS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>M7 - SELECTING REQUIREMENTS*</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>M8 - PURCHASING</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>M9 - TRANSFERRING INFORMATION*</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>M10 - ACCESSING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION*</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>M11 - USING ADDITIONAL SERVICES*</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>M12 -REQUESTING INFORMATION</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>M13 - FACILITATING READING AND_OR VIEWING*</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>OBLIGATORY</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>M14 - PROVIDING FEEDBACK*</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>OPTIONAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>TYPICAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>47</b>



#### 6.4.1 Differences in moves

There are eight differences that exist at move level between SL and NZ OPIs that were revealed through observing move prominence and by conducting a Pearson's chi-squared test. Two are related to non-interactive moves, but the other six are related to interactive moves.

One significant difference is in the use of M4 – 'Offering incentives' which is typical for NZ product information, and is merely optional for the SL production information. Pearson's chi-squared test determined that there is a significant association between location and the use of M4,  $X^2(1) = 32.934$ ,  $p < .001$ . It can be seen that 53.8% of texts in NZ used M4, compared to only 11.3% of texts from Sri Lanka (see Table 6.3 and Table 6.4). Thus the use of M4 is significantly more common in texts from NZ compared to Sri Lanka.

*Table 6.3 Cross-tabulation of M4 – Offering incentives for location*

<b>Location * M4 Crosstabulation</b>					
			Use of M4		
Location	NZ	Count	No	Yes	Total
		% within location	46.3%	53.8%	100.0%
	SL	Count	71	9	80
		% within location	88.8%	11.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	108	52	160
		% within location	67.5%	32.5%	100.0%

Table 6.4 Pearson chi-squared test for M4 – Offering incentives

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.934 <sup>a</sup>	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	31.026	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	35.059	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
N of Valid Cases	160				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

In addition to this cross-cultural difference, Pearson's chi-squared test also showed that the use of Move 5 -Advising, directing, warning (despite being a typical move for both countries) differs significantly in terms of the location in which it is used (see Table 6.5 and Table 6.6). Pearson's chi-squared test determined that there is a significant association between location and the use of M5,  $X^2(1) = 7.033$ ,  $p = .008$ . While move 5 is used 75% of the time in NZ OPIs, it is only used 55% of the time in SL OPIs.

Table 6.5 Cross-tabulation of M5 – Advising, directing and/or warning for location

<b>Location * M5 Crosstabulation</b>					
		Use of M5			
		No	Yes	Total	
location	NZ	Count	20	60	80
		% within location	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	SL	Count	36	44	80
		% within location	45.0%	55.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	56	104	160
		% within location	35.0%	65.0%	100.0%

Table 6.6 Pearson chi-squared test for M5 – Advising, directing and/or warning

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.033 <sup>a</sup>	1	.008		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	6.181	1	.013		
Likelihood Ratio	7.107	1	.008		
Fisher's Exact Test				.013	.006
N of Valid Cases	160				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 28.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The risk management function of the move where the seller reduces risk of legal action against themselves by advising and warning shoppers of potential problems may be why the move is used more commonly in NZ. Interview data from the NZ shop owner Janet revealed how conscious businesses are of and how they are held accountable to government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Authority and the Commerce Commission. NZ online businesses therefore seem to use Move 5 more to avert any customer complaints and to comply with the requirements of the government institutions within New Zealand. Interview data from the Sri Lankan business owner did not portray such practices or compliance to regulations within the Sri Lankan business context.

Therefore, it can be said that the non-interactive Move 5 (Advising, directing, warning) as well as non-interactive Move 4 (Offering incentives and service options) are both used significantly more in NZ OPIs than in SL OPIs.

With regard to the interactive moves, Pearson chi-squared test again showed that the use of six out of the eight interactive moves differs significantly in terms of the location in which the OPI is used. The four moves ‘Selecting’ (M7), ‘Accessing additional info’ (M10), ‘Facilitating readability and/or viewing’ (M13) and ‘Providing feedback’ (M14) are used significantly more in NZ OPIs (90%, 54%, 90%, 63% respectively) than in SL OPIs (71%, 29%, 74%, 31% respectively). Pearson’s chi-squared test determined that there is a significant association between location and the use of M7 – Selecting,  $X^2(1) = 9.002$ ,  $p = .003$ ; M10 – Accessing additional info,  $X^2(1) = 10.316$ ,  $p = .001$ ; M13 – Facilitating

readability and/or viewing,  $X^2(1) = 7.118$ ,  $p = .008$ ; and M14 – Providing feedback,  $X^2(1) = 15.686$ ,  $p < .001$ .

In contrast, the two moves ‘Transferring information’ (M9) and ‘Using additional services’ (M11) are used more in SL OPIs (76%, 46% respectively) than in NZ OPIs (41%, 21% respectively). Pearson’s chi-squared test determined that there is a significant association between location and the use of M9 - Transferring information,  $X^2(1) = 18.128$ ,  $p < .001$ , and location and the use of M11 - Using additional services,  $X^2(1) = 11.181$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Therefore, the interactive Move 7 (Selecting), Move 10 (Accessing additional info), Move 13 (Facilitating reading and/or viewing) and Move 14 (Providing feedback) are used significantly more in NZ OPIs than in SL OPIs. The interactive Move 9 (Transferring information) and Move 11 (Using additional services) are used significantly more in SL OPIs than in NZ OPIs.

The interactivity of the OPI genre is discussed at length in Chapter 8, by looking at the interactive signs/sites that operationalise the eight moves.

#### 6.4.2 Differences in steps

Pearson’s chi-squared test was conducted for each step of the moves, and cross-cultural differences become more apparent at step level.

As seen in Table 6.2, in Move 2 - ‘Describing the product’, the step M2S2 – Showing categories, codes and tags is used more frequently in SL (81%) than in NZ (24%) OPIs. Contrarily, the step M2S4 – Disclosing ingredients has been used more frequently in NZ (80%) than in SL (55%); ‘Disclosing ingredients’ is an obligatory step in NZ M2 while it is only typical in SL M2. To explain these variations in the use of the two steps, while OPIs of both countries provide brief objective details about products, it was observed that the SL OPIs tend to give more technical details (categories the product belongs to, Stock keeping unit number, reference number) that NZ OPIs avoid using. Disclosing ingredients being used 80% in NZ OPIs, and only a 55% in SL can be due to compliance to certain

institutional regulations in New Zealand, which are not in place in Sri Lanka. Although compliance with standards does not directly apply to OPI, the requirement by the New Zealand Environment Protection Authority to display a full list of ingredients on the product label seems to have an impact on the OPI as well. Janet the New Zealand beauty care shop owner responding to my question on whether her company needs to be registered under a government body in New Zealand, stated:

At the moment, the only thing we really, it's it's more voluntary. So they I think the only thing that you really need to make sure is that your labelling, so your packaging, descriptions and things meet basic, I think it's EPA, ... Yeah, it's like a responsibility for safety. That you're disclosing a full list of ingredients.

Janet is also aware of how “you just risk maybe breaching one of the Commerce Commission acts. If you Yeah, if there was a problem medical ingredient, and then that you haven't disclosed”

So, awareness of and compliance with government standards and regulations seem to dictate the inclusion of certain details in NZ OPIs as well, whereas there is no such exigence on the SL companies from Sri Lankan authorities.

In Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’, out of the range of steps that are available to realise the move, the NZ OPIs utilize a wider range of steps to achieve the M3 rhetorical purpose than the SL OPIs. The SL OPIs use only a limited number of steps. The two steps M3S3 – ‘Justifying against alternatives’ and M3S7 – ‘Providing customer testimonials and results’ which are found in NZ OPIs, are not used at all in SL OPIs. The five steps M3S1- ‘Targeting the market’, M3S2- Evaluating the product positively, M3S4- ‘Showing someone using or wearing the product’, ‘M3S6- Establishing credentials, and M3S8 - ‘Pairing jewellery’ are used significantly more in NZ OPIs than in SL OPIs. The SL OPI texts seem to mainly depend on two steps (one obligatory, one typical) to achieve the function of promotion through M3. They are M3S2 -‘Evaluating product positively’ (80%) and M3S5 - ‘Making reassurances (58%)’. However, these two steps are used as frequently (and in the case of M3S2, more frequently) in the NZ OPIs. In the interview data, the professional genre producers seem to hold two views, although these views are not reflected in online shopper data: 1) that the European shoppers are “really into the written description” and

that they check the benefits more than SL shoppers (SL shop owner Manuga), 2) that the SL customers do not consider much about the ingredients and are not as health conscious as the European customers (web designer Munida). These two views may explain some of the written promotional strategies being used significantly more in NZ OPIs than in SL OPIs (e.g., Evaluating product positively, Establishing credentials).

When it comes to Move 4, 'Offering incentives and service options' is a typical move in NZ OPIs but is only optional in SL OPIs. The move is operationalized most frequently by 'Introducing payment options' (41%) in NZ OPIs. The three steps M4S3 - 'Introducing payment options', M4S1 - 'Offering free items and services' and M4S6 - 'Offering purchase points' are used significantly more in NZ (41%, 16% and 15% respectively) than in SL (0%, 6% and 0% respectively). The steps M4S4 - 'Providing online offers', M4S3 - 'Introducing payment options' and 'M4S6 - Offering purchase points' steps are actually not found at all in SL OPIs. So once again, there seems to be a higher number of steps operationalizing a move, in this case Move 4 – Offering incentives and service options, in NZ OPIs than in SL OPIs. However, the step 'Offering jewellery and/or stone certification' is an optional step that is only found in SL OPIs.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this section, there is a significant difference in the use of Move 5 – Advising, directing, warning of the two countries. Within this move, the Pearson's chi-squared test conducted on the steps indicates a significant association between the use and location when it comes to M5S5 – Instructing how to seek additional info. This step is more frequently used in NZ (19%) than in SL (8%).

Overall, it was found that although the genre across cultures maintains a stable move set, the frequency with which the moves appear and the steps used to realize moves can vary according to the culture in which the genre exists.

## 6.5 Two kinds of moves – interactive and non-interactive moves

In the overall move structure of the OPI genre, I distinguish between two basic kinds of moves. This part of the chapter is dedicated to an explanation of why I include and distinguish between interactive and non-interactive moves in my analysis.

I believe that including interactive as well as non-interactive functions within the move set of a digital genre is necessary because I believe that the analysis of a digital genre is an analysis of both its multimodality and its web medium which interact with each other – where the textual and visual and interactive elements combine - to make the substance and style of the genre. The user action responsive areas, buttons, icons, links and the interaction allowed to the user by those items and sites have a direct impact on the meanings expressed by the genre as well, even if they may be considered as just standard features of the web page or a standard item/section that comes with the wire frame. This was clearly shown by the participant interview data in this study. Online Shop owner Janet's comments showed that the purpose of the OPI was very much interconnected with the digital environment it is housed in (see Chapter 5 Participant Interview Comment 9). So the interactivity afforded by the medium does not stop at just shaping the substance and style of the genre. It directly affects the functionality of the genre. The interview data confirms the view of Jones and Hafner (2012) and Xia (2020) that the medium on which the genre appears/ hypertextuality affects content, in turn creating differences in the communicative purposes of the genre. My research therefore takes into account both multimodal resources and interactive affordances within its move analysis.

The resources of the web frame also provide the genre part of its context – context of the digital environment/web frame - which shape the genre. This is in addition to the situational/ professional contexts (where business owners, designers and copywriters co-produce the OPI genre together with online users in response to user/ customer desires) and the cultural context (where different cultural groups with different values and lifestyles – as consumers and as sellers - may have an impact on the OPI genre). Hafner (2018) talks of the necessity to consider these factors when analysing a digital genre. He recognizes the importance of studying the physical environment, the virtual environment, and the screen environment of an online genre, when studying that genre. I would say that the more traditional approach to genre considers the physical environment which encompasses both the situational context of genre production and the larger cultural context. The screen environment can be interpreted as the context of the web frame which houses the genre. How items are placed within the genre (its layout) may create its own informational values (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). I take into account this screen environment, by studying the interactive items and sites of the genre.

When it comes to research literature relating to the digital medium and genre, the distinction between two types of moves that I make, is also made by Askehave and Nielsen (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005a, 2005b) who suggest a reading mode and a navigational mode when analysing the move structure of digital genres. However, I hesitate to use the terminology used by Askehave and Nielsen (2005b, p. 6) for the following reason. They remark that their “notion of the functional value of links is concerned with the relationship established between the two chunks of information being connected; i.e. what is webpage B (the textual point of destination) doing in relation to webpage A (the textual point of entry)?”. The idea of connecting two texts (on the same or a different page) is the basis of why they take up a ‘linear’ approach to analysing hypertextuality and call for a ‘navigational mode’. Considering their object of analysis is the landing page of a website, this is justified because one of the main functions of the home page genre is to link/ navigate web users to other pages of the site. However, when it comes to pages such as the product page on which we find the OPI (as one goes further into the website), there is more interactivity visible which does not fall entirely within the idea of hypertext connecting one text chunk to another. There are instances of zooming in/out, adding in new text and selecting requirements like choosing a correct size or weight that are used on product information. Hence, a distinction needs to be made between interactive and non-interactive moves although it is not appropriate to use the same distinction as that made by Askehave and Nielsen (2005b). The interactive items such as the ones I have identified are also constants or parts of the ecommerce site that do not change from product page to product page on the same site. That is why I viewed distinguishing between interactive moves and non-interactive moves to be more appropriate to describe the structure of the OPI genre. The function-based interactive moves as defined in this analysis are also realized via multiple interactive steps through different types of links, icons, buttons, and user responsive sites (described in Chapter 8).

Another reason to distinguish between interactive and non-interactive moves is that the affordances of the medium (embodied in moves M7 to M14) can act upon the other non-interactive moves that use the textual and visual modes to convey their rhetorical purposes. Mehlenbacher (2017) who investigates the genre of crowd funding proposals, recognizes the effects of hypertextuality on the integrity of a move although she attributes these effects to the novelty of a still stabilizing genre. She refers to how



hypertexts ‘interrupt’ the move. So this points to how the affordances of the digital medium have an effect on the traditional structuring of genres, and how moves can have more than a single function and can overlap when in a digital environment with hyperlinks. The same behaviour is seen in the OPI genre.

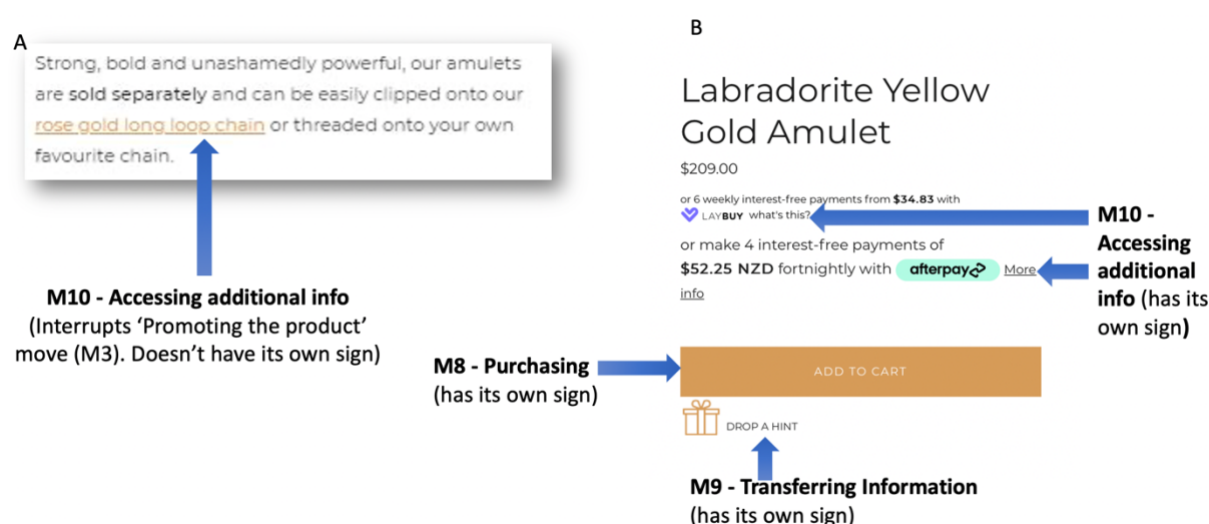


Figure 6.7 Two forms of interactivity. A: M10 interrupting another move- M3, B: Moves having their own textual and/or visual signs (Cathy Pope, 2020)

As seen in Figure 6.7, interactivity appears in two forms. Interactive moves can have their own dedicated signs to signal its interactive function like 'Add to cart' button or share icons (Figure 6.7B). Or, they can be embedded in other meaning making text and visuals (Figure 6.7A). Therefore, a distinction between the two types of move provides more clarity as to how interactivity operates within a digital genre.

## 6.6 Issues related to move coding

The analysis of moves/ steps was not without its share of problems. So I dedicate this section of the chapter to explaining some issues that I encountered in identifying, defining and coding moves and steps in my move analysis.

One of the setbacks of trying to adopt the genre model of move structure analysis to describe a relatively short online genre is handling the multi functionality of discourse that I encountered on multiple occasions. Due to the relatively short length of the OPI and

the requirement of conveying the maximum amount of meaning within a short time before the customer's attention wanders elsewhere, the OPI needs to pack all the functions that it aims to achieve within the space of a short text. The result is a high incidence of propositions containing 1) embedded moves, 2) embedded steps and 3) the same text chunk conveying multiple functional interpretations. Examples are given below for each of these three points. How the issues were addressed follows each explanation.

## 1) Embedded moves

E.g., “ours is derived from rice bran, coconut or olive oils, depending on the season, which are much more environmentally friendly sources than palm.”

The above example contains two different moves; the larger segment makes reassurances (step 5 of ‘Promoting the product’ move) inside which the underlined segment makes a disclaimer (step 6 of ‘Advising, directing, warning’ move).

E.g., “FRANKINCENSE - Face Wash For Men 150ml”

M3S1 - ‘Targeting the market’ (step 1 of Move 3 - ‘Promoting the product’) can sometimes be found embedded in Move 1- ‘Identifying the product’, where it is used along with the product name.

In such situations, each move was coded separately. For example:



Figure 6.8 An instance of embedded moves

## 2) Embedded steps

E.g., “We have found over about 7 years of testing that people respond better to SCS than similar SLS based products, due to SLS's harshness.”/ “..a certified palm-free alternative to fatty acids.”

The two examples illustrate a step of one move being embedded inside another step of the same move; the larger segment belongs to ‘Making reassurances’ (M3S5) and ‘Justifying against alternatives’ (M3S3) steps respectively. Inside these steps there is the “establishing credentials” (M3S6) step which is underlined in the example above. All are steps operationalizing the ‘Promoting the product’ move (M3).

In such cases, words pertaining to each step were coded separately just as was shown in the Figure 6.8 above for embedded moves.

## 3) Same text chunk conveying multiple functional interpretations

### 3.1. E.g., “Buy it now”

3.1.is an example of two different moves being conveyed by the same item. Example 3.1 can be interpreted as both “M6 - Using pressure tactics” and “M8 - Purchasing” due to its hypertextual function, written words and colour as a semiotic resource. The button inside which the text ‘Buy it now’ appears usually uses a fill colour to make it stand out from other similar buttons such as “Add to cart’. These are two clearly distinct move functions that are conveyed through the same text chunk here; one is ‘Purchasing’ enabled by interactivity, the other is ‘Using pressure tactics’ that is realized through the imperative form of the text itself and the use of colour. This illustrates the play of multiple modes and online interactivity affecting the realization of genre functions.

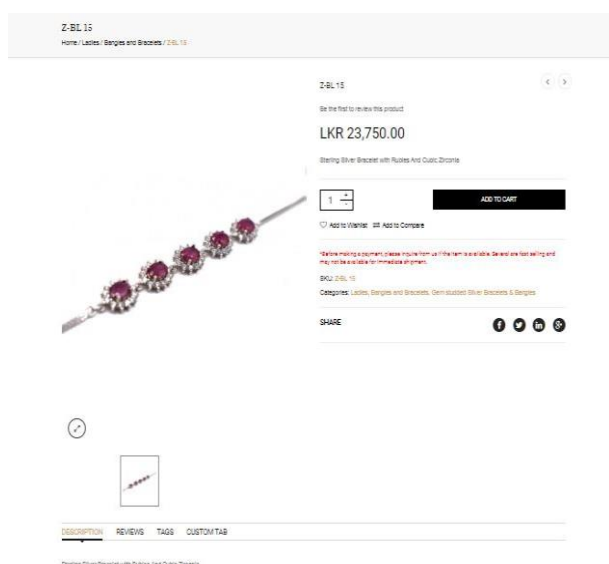
Hence such sections were coded under two moves in the move coding process if there was no ‘Add to cart’ button used alongside ‘Buy it now’ button (the use of both buttons alongside each other provides customers with different options for purchasing, and therefore removes any pressure for buying).

3.2. *“If minor irritation occurs, stop using the product for 1-2 days then try using it again. If irritation continues to occur, discontinue to use and seek medical advice.”*

Example 3.2. can be interpreted as instances of a combination of warning, directing and advising. These functions seem to be very closely interlinked that it was often difficult to consistently and reliably disambiguate them into two or three separate moves. They could not also be identified as different steps of a single function (because what happens is that more than one function of warning or advising or directing is communicated together at once within a single proposition). Assigning the stretches of text to one salient function – either as warning, or as advising or as directing – would not successfully convey its full meaning. An attempt to do so it was felt, would also bring an unfavorable amount of subjectivity to the coding since such a distinction would not be very clear cut.

Therefore, a decision was made to consider certain text chunks containing two or three of those inter-related functions of ‘advising’, ‘directing’ and ‘warning’ as a single move. The move contains six steps each of which realises one or all three functions to different degrees.

### 3.3. *The same image expressing multiple functions*



*Figure 6.9 Product image conveying multiple functions (Ridhi Jewellery, 2020)*

The product image of the OPI was identified as carrying multiple functions. For instance, the default product photograph (e.g., Figure 6.9) can achieve the functions of Identifying the product (M1), Describing the product (M2) and Promoting the product (M3) due to different resources of the visual mode. Therefore, the product photograph was coded for each of these different moves. The issue is discussed further in Chapter 7 – Visual analysis and Chapter 10 – Discussion.

The above documented instances (embedded moves, embedded steps, same text chunk conveying multiple functional interpretations) further lead to the observation that the rather short length of the OPI which necessitates an economy of words prompts a high degree of multifunctionality, move embedding and step embedding in this genre. This idea is supported, from a textual perspective, by views and practices of copywriters. Copywriter Mahela states “people have very little time to read. So people don't really read. So economy of words, very important”. The idea of people not reading or not having time to read also requires sellers to introduce alternative means (such as introducing visuals and interactivity) through which to achieve the communicative purposes of the genre in this rhetorical situation of online selling.

## 6.7 Chapter summary

The OPI genre constitutes fourteen moves. Six moves are non-interactive and eight are interactive. Each move is realized either textually, or using both the textual and visual modes, with affordances of the online medium applied to visuals/text in the eight interactive moves. Out of these fourteen moves, five moves are obligatory, three are typical and six are optional. Each move is operationalized by multiple steps (except for the ‘Using pressure tactics’ move). The steps of the non-interactive moves were described in this chapter. While there were differences in the frequency with which the moves are used in the genre between Sri Lanka and New Zealand, the analysis of the genre at step level revealed certain significant differences between the OPI of the two product types, and between the two countries. Certain steps were used in only one country or for only one product category. It was found that the OPI genre contains many instances of move embedding and that a single move text chunk/visual could contain multiple move functions due to the concise nature of the genre, the multimodality and due to the effect of the digital medium on the genre.

## CHAPTER 7: VISUAL ANALYSIS

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates how visual semiotic resources have been used in Online Product Information (OPI) to achieve their informational and persuasive functions. This answers the 4<sup>th</sup> Research Question guiding this research (*‘How does the visual mode contribute to achieving the genre purposes of Online Product Information?’*) and 5<sup>th</sup> Research Question (*‘What is the relationship between images and texts in Online Product Information?’*).

I start the chapter by providing a general description of the images and the layout used in OPI (Section 7.2). In Section 7.3, I analyse the representational meaning of the photographs used in beauty care and jewellery OPIs according to the framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2021). In Section 7.4, I move on to analysing the interpersonal meaning conveyed through the visuals. In Section 7.5, I investigate the compositional meaning that is projected by how images and text are organized within the layout of the OPI. The analyses are supplemented with participant interview data where necessary. The analysis will also discuss how the OPI images perform the different functions of identifying the product (M1), describing the product (M2), promoting the product (M3) and advising, directing and warning (M5). I will end this chapter by discussing patterns of visual meaning characterizing the OPI genre as a whole, and by making a note of any notable differences that are found in the genre due to text type and country.

### 7.2 A general description of the images and layout used in SL and NZ OPIs

Thirty-two NZ and SL beauty care websites were investigated by using two OPIs from each website for this visual exploration (64 OPIs in total). This resulted in analysing 81 images found on 16 NZ beauty care OPIs as opposed to only 34 images on 16 SL beauty care OPIs. At the same time, 72 images of 16 NZ jewellery OPIs and 25 images of 16 SL jewellery OPIs were analysed (see Table 7.1). Going by the number of images alone that

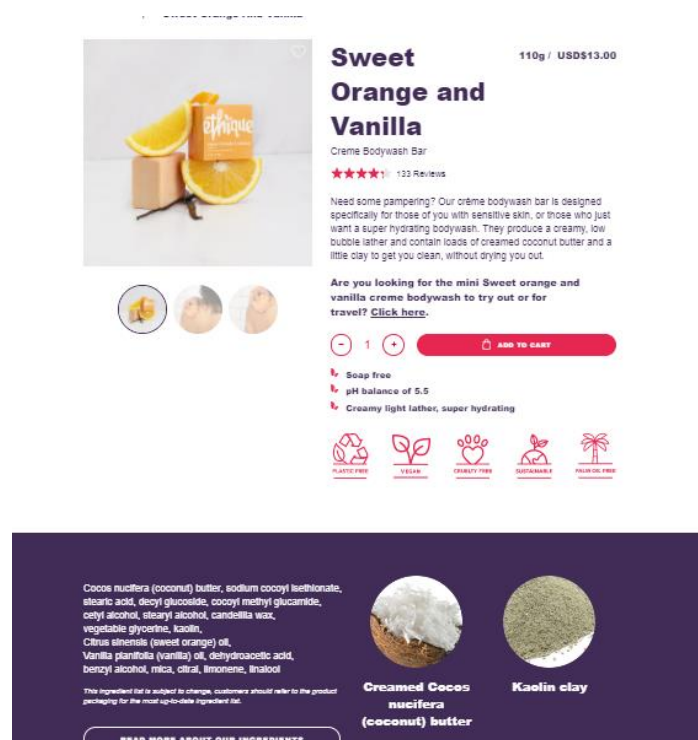
are used in SL and NZ OPIs, it seems to indicate a higher tendency amongst NZ genre producers to adopt the visual mode in carrying out genre functions.

*Table 7.1. Number of images for visual analysis*

	Beauty care images	Jewellery images	Total images
SL OPIs (16 beauty care + 16 jewellery)	34	25	59
NZ OPIs (16 beauty care + 16 jewellery)	81	72	153
No. of images	115	97	212

In both SL and NZ websites, each OPI seems to have a specific place reserved for a product image -usually at the top left. Sometimes (especially in the case of jewelllery OPIs), it is even the entire left side of the OPI. This main product image space is occupied by either a single product image in the case of SL OPIs, or in the case of NZ OPIs, it is a set of images with one image of the product as the default (called default image hereafter).

Apart from the space assigned for a product image in the upper half of the web page, a few images and pictograms can also be found in the middle and bottom half of the OPIs (see Figure 7.1). Of these, the images are mainly of main ingredients in beauty care, or of a box and card offered in jewellery. The pictograms are usually for making assurances (e.g., cruelty free, vegan) or to highlight the target market or key ingredients (e.g., best for\_ skin type) where pictograms are accompanied by written text.



*Figure 7.1 Use of pictograms in the OPI (Ethique, 2020b)*

The default image in an OPI is of the product without a human element in it. It is an image of only the piece of jewellery, or only the beauty care product in its container/packaging/ingredients against a white or plain coloured background (see Figure 7.2 and Figure 7.3). Even when there are multiple images or when there are other images with human participants, the product on its own is still the preferred choice as default photograph

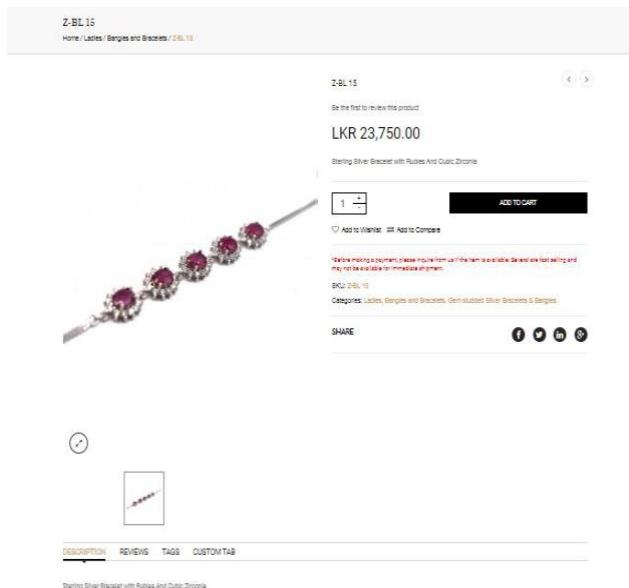


Figure 7.2 SL jewellery OPI (Ridhi Jewellery, 2020)

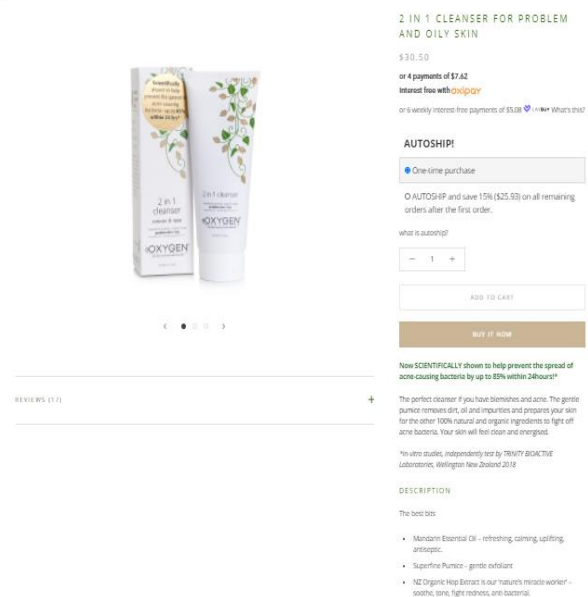


Figure 7.3 NZ beauty care OPI (Oxygen Skincare, 2020)

In the SL OPIs, none of the 34 SL beauty care images and only one out of the 25 SL jewellery images contained a human participant in the OPIs (altogether one out of 59 images – 1.7%). In contrast 26 out of 81 NZ beauty care images and 22 out of 72 NZ jewellery images contain human participants (altogether 48 out of 153 – 31.4%).

Other types of images that can be seen amongst beauty care images are:

- i. the cream/mixture that is inside the product container which is displayed as a splash/dollop/drop.
- ii. the product being used (showing a close up of part of the body such as hands or back shoulder)



- iii. before/after effects of using the product -by displaying within a single image, two close up shots of the face before the product was used and after the product was used.
- iv. ingredients

Other types of images that can be seen amongst jewellery images are:

- i. a model wearing the jewellery
- ii. the box or card that comes with the jewellery

### 7.3 Representational meaning



*Figure 7.4. Conceptual analytical image – NZ beauty care (Carol Priest, 2020)*

As seen in see Table 7.2, the representational generic pattern that seems to characterise the SL and NZ OPI is the use of conceptual analytical representational structures (e.g., Figure 7.4). Hundred and thirty six (64 beauty care +72 jewellery) out of the 153 NZ images and all 59 SL images (34 beauty care + 25 jewellery) were conceptual representations (altogether 195 out of the 212 images). Six out of those conceptual images were conceptual classificational while all the other 189 were conceptual analytical (see Section 3.3.1 for definitions). There are only 17 narrative type images in all the OPIs combined.

And all those narrative type images appear in NZ OPIs. So the main purpose of the visuals of OPI at an ideational level can be considered to be static impersonal representations of the product.

Table 7.2. Representational meaning of images in OPI

	SL beauty care	SL jewellery	NZ beauty care	NZ jewellery	No of Images
Conceptual -analytical	32	25	60	72	189
Conceptual - classificational	2	-	4	-	6
Narrative action (transactional)	-	-	1	-	1
Narrative action (non- transactional)	-	-	3	-	3
Narrative action (event)	-	-	12	-	12
Narrative reaction (transactional)	-	-	1	-	1
	34	25	81	72	212

### 7.3.1 Conceptual analytical images



Figure 7.5. Conceptual analytical image – SL jewellery (Tash, 2020)

Hundred and eighty-nine images (89% of total images) fall within the conceptual analytical category. Fifty seven SL images and 132 NZ images seemed to be analytical representations of the product. In a majority of these images, each part of the product is made visible to the viewer in extreme detail. In jewellery, the amount of detail represented in these product images turns the product itself into a carrier where design, colour, metal/material, stones used are all clearly

displayed. In addition, the product is artificially posed against a plain background. The

conceptual analytical structure used in the images enable sellers to clearly display the product, and contribute to achieving the function of describing the product (M2).

Similarly, the image of a model wearing the jewellery turns the model into the carrier with the jewellery displayed as being 'part of' the model or her outfit (Figure 7.6). In skincare, images of participants whose faces are shown as containing a lot of acne next to an image of a face that is free of acne, were also considered as conceptual analytical structures (Figure 7.7). The same was the case with images of human participants photographed with cream on their faces. Using the conceptual analytical structure - "presenting a visual 'this is'" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 83), sellers are able to set two images of the face of a person side by side, to show that 'this is what her skin looked like before using the product' and 'this is what her skin looks like after using the product', providing a visual customer testimonial (M3S7).



Figure 7.6. Conceptual analytical image - SL jewellery (Aadna, 2020)

Due to including human participants on whom the jewellery can be displayed, the sellers



Figure 7.7. Conceptual analytical image - NZ beauty care (Tailor skincare, 2020)

are able show how a product such as jewellery can be worn together with other jewellery (see Figure 7.14). In this way sellers demonstrate how to pair the piece of jewellery that the customer is looking at with other matching jewellery. Therefore the sellers are able to visually achieve the function of Promoting the product (M3) by using the step Pairing jewellery (M3S8) .

Support for such a categorizing of images such as Figure 7.6 and Figure 7.7 as conceptual analytical can also be found in the following statement: "...photographs,

particularly posed photographs, can also be analytical, as in the case of fashion shots, or of advertisements which give a detailed depiction of the advertised product,..." (Kress &

van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 89). However, classification of images such as Figure 7.6 as conceptual analytical is not without problems (see Chapter 10, Section 10.9 for further discussion).

### 7.3.2 Conceptual classificational images

There were six occurrences where the default product image displayed a conceptual classificational pattern, in a SL or NZ beauty care website (2 SL and four NZ). In SL images, it is when the product image displays two sizes of the same body lotion bottle side by side, one big and the other small. The set of participants (the two bottle sizes) play the part of subordinates with respect to another participant – an invisible superordinate which is ‘the product size’. Hence images such as the one in Figure 7.8 were considered as classificational images. This identification is further supported by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) who identify an image of an assortment of bottles belonging to the same product as being classificational: “*Covert taxonomies are often used in advertisements, where the photographs may, for instance, show arrangements of bottles that represent the variety of products marketed under a brand name*” (p. 79). So here, the genre producers have opted to project the fact that the product they offer is available in two sizes. Yet even in this image, there is the embedded representational structure of the conceptual analytical where each bottle can be seen very clearly with each detail written on the bottle clearly visible by the viewer. The classificational structure as well as the embedded analytical structure help to provide details about the product, and therefore contribute to achieving the function of describing the product (M2) through the strategy of describing characteristics (M2S1).

Images such as the one given in Figure 7.9 were also categorized as a classificational image. Although arrows are used which can be an indication of a vector



Figure 7.8 Conceptual classificational image -SL (4Ever Skin Naturals, 2020)



Figure 7.9 Classificational image – NZ  
—(Tailor skincare, 2020)

(therefore a narrative process), these arrows are not vectors imposing any impact on a goal. The arrows are used by the web designers to visually demonstrate the properties of the product. Therefore, the image presents several types of advantages/functions of the product. This makes the image an example of a conceptual classification. This is a case of a super ordinate participant (product properties) being connected to two or more subordinate participants (each property) by using arrows. By classifying the different types of product properties using visual means (with the textual mode edited into it), sellers evaluate the product positively (M3S2), and thereby promote the product (M3).

### 7.3.3 Image – text relationship within a single image

Although this visual analysis mainly focuses on the information value of how the written information is placed in relation to the product photographs on the OPI layout, it is worth exploring at least briefly how in certain instances, both textual and visual modes have been used together within a single image to express meaning. As seen in Table 7.3, twenty-three images (11% of total images) belonging to six online stores use such hybrid images.

*Table 7.3 Details of images with text inside them*

<b>Country/product</b>	<b>N. Images</b>	<b>N. Stores</b>	<b>Details of text on image</b>
NZ Jewellery	0	0	-
SL Jewellery	3	2	Brand name, a slogan, physical store location, web address, contact details
NZ Skincare	20	4	Awards won by product, product features and benefits, customer recommendation, deictic words of time, (scientific) name of ingredient, slogan
SL Skincare	0	0	-

It is interesting to note that in beauty care OPI, only four NZ stores, and no SL stores use such hybrids. In jewellery OPI, only two SL stores, and no NZ stores use such hybrids. This makes it somewhat difficult to identify any culture-specific or product specific patterns.



Figure 7.10 Image with text edited into it (Svelte, 2020)

However, what does become clear is that when it comes to jewellery OPIs, the written details that are provided hold an equal status to the image. The written details stand in an either independent or in a complementary relationship to the image, where the entire image is related to the entirety of the text (Martinec &

Salway, 2005). With the product itself on view, the sellers edit onto the image, details of the physical store location, contact details for the seller (achieving M5S8 – Buying/ page manoeuvre directions), the name of their brand (realising M1 – Identifying the product)), or a slogan about the product (e.g., SLJeSv2 – “Every unique piece is destined to end its journey with its final admirer” achieving M3S2 – Evaluating the product positively). Figure 7.5 is an example of the independent relationship. The product is represented in minute detail visually, while details of the product brand and where it is located physically/virtually are given textually underneath the product. Figure 7.10 is an example for the complementary relationship between image and text. The carrier – necklace with its attributes of yellow faceted stone, silver pendant bail and silver chain all shown in great detail and highly modulated saturated colours (achieving M3S2 – Evaluating product positively) - and the written slogan combine to convey a meaning of exclusiveness and beauty worth being admired, achieving the rhetorical function of promoting the product (M3). The name of the brand ( achieving M1 – Identifying the product) given in capital letters, connects all the visual and textual beauty and exclusiveness to the brand.

In skincare OPIs, the images and text within a hybrid seem to be in complementary relationship to each other (see Figure 7.7 and Figure 7.9). Out of the 20 hybrid images, hybrids such as Figure 7.9 combine both visual and textual elements in a classificational structure in order to carry out the message of the multiple properties that the product

provides users. The visual of the product acts as a superordinate, and written details ‘anti-aging’, ‘anti-blemish’, ‘anti-redness’ are the types of properties of the product connected to the product by arrows. This classificational structure is connected in a complementary relationship to a slogan where the product with those three properties is identified as being an innovation. The product name further identifies which product is innovative. So in many of these hybrid images, the visual and textual modes carry their own distinct meanings which combine to convey a richer message to the customer.

#### 7.3.4 Narrative images

Only NZ beauty care OPIs were found to contain narrative type images (see Section 3.3.1 for definition). It was interesting to note that eight out of the 16 NZ beauty care OPIs utilized at least one image of the narrative process type (altogether 17 images – e.g., Figure 7.11) amongst the visual structures employed in the series of images after the



*Figure 7.11. Narrative event type image – NZ (Ethique, 2020b)*

default product photograph. In contrast, none of the SL beauty care websites represented their products narratively. So the visual representation that you find in SL beauty care OPIs is rather static and formal. In 50% of NZ OPIs, the viewers are provided with visuals of the product being used by someone, after providing the conceptual static view of the default product photograph. So there is more activity or movement to be seen and felt in the NZ OPIs. However, interestingly, most of these narrative images seen in NZ OPIs are of the narrative event type (12 out of 17 narrative images). It means there is mainly only a vector and goal visible. Or just a small part of the actor such as a limb or body part is visible which doesn't allow us to identify who exactly the actor is (see Figure 7.11). This immediately anonymizes the actor. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) likens such a visual structure to the linguistic passive, agent deletion. The significance of employing such a representational process is that you see people actively using the product, and it could even be you, using the product. You also see how the product is used, and how simple using it is.



In one instance, an OPI text combines the product photographs in a series of pictures giving a step-by-step demonstration of how to use the product (see Figure 7.12). After

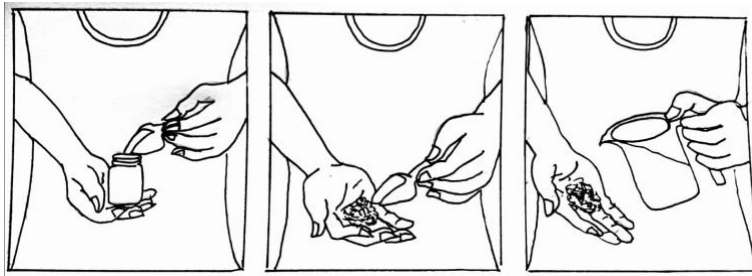


Figure 7.12. A series of narrative event type images – showing how to use product

the default image which is the usual conceptual analytical representation of the product, follows the series of narrative images unfolding to create an almost video like quality, a sense of movement to achieve

the function of showing how to use the product. This contributes to visually representing move functions such as Advising, directing and/or warning (M5) through the step of instructing how to use the product (M5S1).

Overall, the highlight of all these narrative event representations in NZ images is that it could be anyone who's using these products; the anonymity allows the user to identify with the person using the product. In contrast, only six out of the SL 16 OPIs use more than one product photograph, and when they do use additional photographs, it's just an image of the product either from another angle, or in its packaging or showing the cream or liquid inside.

### 7.3.5 Conceptual analytical vs. narrative?

There were instances where it was difficult to decide whether the image belonged to the narrative non-transactional reaction type (because a human participant gazes at somewhere outside the image) or conceptual analytical (because the image shows the acne and acnes patches on the face). One example is seen in Figure 7.13. However, in these cases, according to the purpose of the image, which is to show the reduction of acne on the face after using the product, I classified this kind of image as a conceptual analytical although it carries a human participant forming a vector with her gaze. Similarly in jewellery OPIs, models wearing jewellery are seen to be gazing at some far-away place,

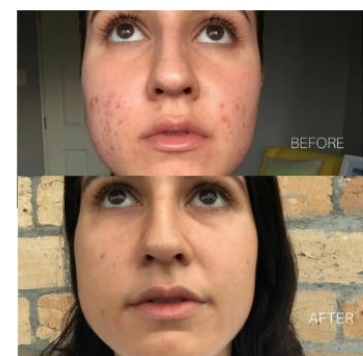


Figure 7.13 NZ beauty care image showing narrative non transactional reaction and conceptual analytical characteristics (Oxygen Skincare, 2020)





Figure 7.14 NZ jewellery image showing non-transactional reactional and conceptual analytical characteristics (Cathy Pope, 2020b)

while posing for the photograph (see Figure 7.14). Since the model was considered as the carrier of the jewellery, and since it is a posed photograph where no real action or reaction is actually taking place, such photographs were categorized as conceptual analytical structures. Due to the difficulty which I encountered trying to distinguish between conceptual analytical and narrative, the issue is taken up and discussed again in the Discussion chapter (Section 10.9).

## 7.4 Interactive meaning

I used the dimensions of Contact (offer/demand), size of frame (close/ middle/ long distance) and involvement (low/high/ eye level angles and frontal/oblique angles) to conduct the interactive analysis of the OPI visuals (see Section 3.3.2 for definitions).

### 7.4.1 Gaze - Contact



Figure 7.15 Middle distance eye-level offer image – SL (Nature's Secrets, 2020)

With regard to the interactive metafunction, all 59 (34+25) SL images are offer type visual representations (see Figure 7.10, Figure 7.15). The customer is offered an objective view of the product for scrutiny. There was only one image in which there was a human participant. However, the model has her eyes closed (Figure 7.6), thereby distancing herself from any direct contact with the interactive participant (viewer).

Table 7.4. Offer vs. Demand images in NZ and SL OPIs

Contact	SL beauty care	NZ beauty care	SL jewellery	NZ jewellery	No of Images
Offer	34	74	25	67	200
Demand	-	7	-	5	12
	34	81	25	72	212

When it comes to NZ images, 48 (26 beauty care, 22 jewellery) out of the 153 NZ images contain human participants (in the form of a face or part of the body – represented participants) (e.g., Figure 7.12 Figure 7.13, Figure 7.14, Figure 7.16). However once again 141 out of the 153 NZ images are offer type (Figure 7.17) making offer images the pattern of visual representational meaning of the OPI genre.

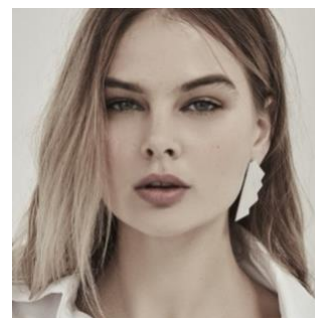


Figure 7.16. Close-distance eye-level demand image - NZ jewellery (Silk & Steel, 2020)

Of the 48 images containing human participants, only 12 out of these 48 NZ images are demand type images (e.g., Figure 7.16). Therefore, in terms of the interactive metafunction of the visuals, the models in 36 out of 48 NZ photographs with humans do not directly engage with their viewers (see Figure 7.14). They only offer themselves and their actions up to the viewer



Figure 7.17 Middle distance offer image (Cathy Pope, 2020)

as objects of their perusal. In the instances where the face of a model is visible, the model again does not hold the gaze of the viewer, and is just the object of viewer scrutiny. These images only offer information to the viewer without engaging them in any form of visual dialogue. Therefore, in both SL and NZ OPIs, the dominant function seems to be to present a detailed view of the product for the customer, not to engage the customer in any social relationship with the participants in the image.

At the same time, as was mentioned in Section 7.3.1, the models are used to showcase more than the piece of jewellery that is described within that target OPI. Although the models do not directly engage with the viewer, the genre producers use the model as a platform to suggest other jewellery of their brand that complement or match the described piece.

In the twelve cases where the human participants do make eye contact with the viewer, as seen in Figure 7.16, Figure 7.18 and Figure 7.19, such images are used for a very particular purpose. In the five NZ jewellery images that are of demand type (e.g., Figure



Figure 7.18 Middle-distance eye-level demand image - NZ jewellery (Cathy Pope, 2020)

7.18), the model, wearing casual and sometimes revealing clothes, gazes alluringly at the viewer with her mouth slightly parted or with a hint of a smile, communicating a message of sensuality and promise. The sellers seem to be projecting the jewellery to be the mark of such sensuality by association which lends itself to a positive evaluation of the product (M3S2).

In NZ beauty care demand type images, one image consists actually of two photographs used within a single edited visual along with text in a before and after scenario (Figure 7.19). The visual is joined by a customer's written testimonial. The humans in such images, by demanding viewer attention through eye contact, want viewers to engage with the truth of the results of using the product, as visible on their faces. So the use of the demand type photograph seems to be employed to build that visual dialogue with the potential customer, to make them believe in what is shown by establishing eye contact. And the fact that the photograph of the participant before using the product appears on the left and the photograph of her after using the product appears on the right,



Figure 7.19 Close distance eye-level demand image – NZ beauty care (Tailor skincare, 2020)

seems to connote that having acne or bad skin is a common, given or normal. The result brought upon the skin by using this beauty care product is new and revolutionising. This visual message teams up with the written customer testimonial to show proof both visually and verbally that the product has been effective on the customers who have already used it. These demand type visual images together with the written mode, provide customer testimonials and results (M3S7), thereby performing the function of promoting the product (M3).

Overall, both SL and NZ OPIs display a pattern of using offer images in their OPIs more than demand images. So in terms of the interactive dimension of contact, there is a prioritization of objective viewing over customer engagement through the visual mode

of OPIs. However, there is more engagement or addressing of the potential customers in NZ OPIs by using demand images, compared to SL images.

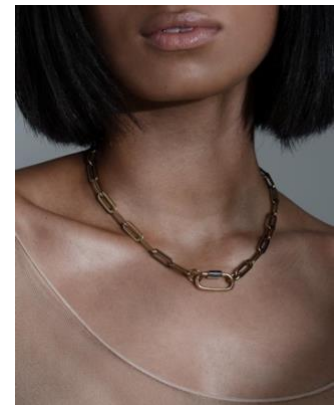
#### 7.4.2 Frame size – social distance

I used three basic frame sizes – close, medium, long distance - to describe the OPI images, whether they contained human or non-human participants. I did not use a more fine-grained set of seven frame sizes that Hall (as cited in Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) suggests for analysing images with human participants. It is because the analysis required something that suited the description of both images with human participants and those with non-human participants.



*Figure 7.20 Close high-angle shot – SL (Ridhi Jewellery, 2020)*

A close shot of objects would be an image where only part of the object is visible due to its large size (see Figure 7.20). A close shot of human participants would include once again a shot where a head and shoulders or part of the body occupies the full frame of the image (see Figure 7.21). The principle guiding this is that such participants are within the close personal space of the viewer. Such proximity in close shots, where the viewer is introduced within the intimate personal space of the model, as if the viewer is able to touch the model, creates a sense of intimacy between the represented participant and viewer. This suggests that the product is something very familiar and within the reach of the viewer, as if the product is something that belongs to the viewer.



*Figure 7.21 Close eye-level shot – NZ (Cathy Pope, 2020b)*

A medium shot with human participants requires at least the above knee level upper body of the human participants to be shown (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, p. 124) (e.g. Figure 7.18). When the participant is only an object, a medium shot entails the object to be shown in full with only a little space around it (e.g., Figure 7.22). Once again, use of such a frame size connotes a social distance where the represented participant is of personal interest to the viewer.

In regards to the size of frame, what is conventional for the OPI genre is using only



Figure 7.22 Medium high angle shot – NZ (Oxygen Skincare, 2020)

medium or close shots (see Table 7.5), with a preference for medium shots. There is no use at all of long shots in either NZ or SL OPIs. Both SL and NZ OPIs in both product categories seem to prefer the use of medium shots more than close distance shots. This tendency is more pronounced in SL beauty care OPIs (33 out of 34 images are middle-distance) than amongst other OPIs.

The lack of long shots can be explained by the fact that using long shots would reduce proper visibility of the product on a computer, laptop or tablet screen. It could also be that the producers do not want the viewers to feel as if the product is out of reach and distant. So the genre producers can get their viewers to closely engage with the product and feel as if they are even using it or that the results of using the product are right in front of them, when using close and medium shots.

Table 7.5 Interpersonal meaning - social distance

Distance	SL beauty care	NZ beauty care	SL jewellery	NZ jewellery	No of Images
Close shot	1	31	11	25	67
Medium shot	33	50	14	47	143
Long shot	-	-	-	-	-
	34	81	25	72	212

A decision had to be made whether an image such as that in Figure 7.21 was close or medium shot. The reason was if you consider the product only, the full product is visible on the neck of the model. In that case, the image is a medium shot. However, images such as Figure 7.21 were classified as close shots because the full view of some participants (e.g. the human wearing the product) is not visible. And the image is projected as if the viewer is in very close proximity to the represented human participant.

Images of various ingredients were displayed as close and medium shots in NZ OPIs (see



*Figure 7.23 Close eye-level shot – NZ (Ethique, 2020b)*

Figure 7.23) while in SL OPIs, those images were only medium shots (see Figure 7.24). So once again, there seems to be hesitation to invade the customers' personal space by SL sellers by getting too close to them. Rather, the SL genre producers seem to maintain a certain level of social (not personal/intimate) distance which is not too close, but placing the product just within the reach of the customer.

#### 7.4.3 Camera Angle - power

When it comes to what sort of perspective towards the participants is reflected by the use of camera angles, 88 (57.5%) out of the NZ 153 images used an eye-level angle thereby projecting a point of view of equality between the customer and what is on offer (see Figure 7.16, Figure 7.18, Figure 7.19, Figure 7.21, Figure 7.23). High angle was used by 62 NZ images (40.5%) (see Figure 7.22). The pattern of depiction connotes the genre producer's desire to create a relationship with the viewer in which there is customer equality or customer primacy and power over the product they see. The eye-level shots create a sense of equality between the brand and viewer. It also implies that the product is within the customer's buying capacity and can be ordered/ purchased anytime the customer wants to (customer power).



*Figure 7.24 Medium eye-level shot – SL (Nature's Secrets, 2020)*

A similar trend is seen regarding the attitude that the SL image producers try to create in the viewers. They use eye-level and high angle shots with almost equal frequency. Twenty-nine (49.2%) out of the 59 SL were eye-level shots (see Figure 7.15 and Figure 7.24). Twenty-eight SL images (47.5%) used a high or top-down angle (as seen in Figure 7.20). It seems to connote that the product (or its results) is not above the customer's ability to purchase. The interactive participant (customer) looking at the represented participant (jewellery/ beauty care product) from above, projects a sense of primacy of the customer over the product. It is as if the products are within the customers' reach and command or within their buying capacity, and can be obtained at any given time the customer wants it.



Table 7.6. Interpersonal meaning – perspective

Perspective	SL beauty care	NZ beauty care	SL jewellery	NZ jewellery	No of Images
High	16	20	12	42	90
Eye-level	16	58	13	30	117
Low	-	-	-	-	-
Undetermined	2	3	-	-	5
	34	81	25	72	212

From the perspective of product category, beauty care images prefer eye-level shots over high angle shots. This is the opposite for jewellery. The nature of the product itself may be the reason for this difference (jewellery photographed on a surface would require high angle shots while beauty care products placed upright on surfaces require eye-level shots to better see the product packaging/ features).

The use of the low angle is significantly absent from all images. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the use of the low angle is recognized as connoting a relationship where the represented participant (in this case the product) has power over the customer/viewer or the product is above the reach of the customer. So the absence of any low angle seems to strengthen the genre producer's purpose of projecting the product as buyable.

There were also some images for which an angle could not be identified. This was due to the lack of detail in background (hence lowered modality) which could have hinted at the angle (see Figure 7.25).

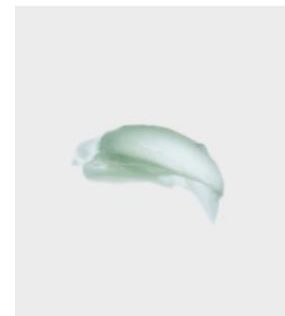


Figure 7.25 Image with undetermined angle (Carol Priest, 2020)

#### 7.4.4 Practical implications

The implications of using close to medium shots and the lack of long shots, or the use of only high angle or eye-level shots could be due to more practical reasons of product visibility. The size of both jewellery and skin care products would not allow good visibility at a long range. In that sense, although in a social semiotic approach, meanings are socially constructed (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006), the idea of assigning values to distance seems to be too presumptuous, as we also need to take into account practical constraints of the genre. For instance, the idea of how a model wearing a necklace whose face is not

included in the shot, and photographed at a close distance, can be considered to be intimate or personal is questionable (as seen in Figure 7.21). This point reiterates the idea that the application of analytical systems to a particular discourse or genre needs to be tempered by considering the situational requirements and exigencies prompting specific genre or discourse.

#### 7.4.5 Modality (validity) markers – reality and affect

Although modality markers are used to assess how we represent reality, they are touched



*Figure 7.26 Image with high colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation and illumination (Oxygen Skincare, 2020)*

on in this study to explain how they have been used to “enhance the affective attractiveness of the product” (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, p. 155). As realism depends on our point of view of reality (coding orientation), the coding orientation adopted in this analysis is that of naturalistic realism, where reality is that of what we perceive with our own eyes and as if a photograph were to be taken. This coding orientation is relevant to analysing the visuals of OPI because the OPIs are supposed to display ‘real’ photographs of the product that the

companies sell.

Almost all photographs used in OPIs contain high colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation and illumination (see Figure 7.26). In that sense, the representations in these photographs become a little ‘more than real’. Kress and van Leeuwen point out that the use of modality markers in such a manner increases the attractiveness of a product. So these affordances contribute to ‘evaluating the product positively’ (Step 1 of Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’).



The reason why I said that ‘almost’ all images had high colour saturation, high colour differentiation, colour modulation and illumination was because, five out of the 212 images (3 NZ jewellery and two SL beauty care) were rather dull in colour (low colour saturation) and were not well illuminated (e.g., Figure 7.27). Therefore, these images were not coded under the ‘evaluating the product positively’ step (M3S2) of Promoting the product move (M3).



*Figure 7.27 Image with low colour saturation and low illumination (Green Pearl, 2020)*

Contextualisation is another one of the validity markers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). The absence of background or plain coloured background in an image (a decontextualized image) enables sellers to present a piece of jewellery or beauty care product without associating it to any particular time or location. This makes the product more generic and therefore open to a larger customer base, without linking it to a specific group of audience. Forty nine out of the 81 NZ beauty care images and 28 out of 34 SL beauty care images have white or plain coloured backgrounds (see Figure 7.17, Figure 7.26). Thirty nine out of the 72 NZ jewellery images and 16 out of the 25 SL jewellery images, are set against a plain white, grey or blank background. The total images with white or plain coloured backgrounds represent 132 out of the total 212 (62%) images. Therefore, the typical pattern in using backgrounds for OPI visuals is considered to be plain or white coloured backgrounds. However, 88 out of the 153 NZ images (58% of total images) have white or plain backgrounds, while 44 out of 59 SL images (75% of total images) have white or plain backgrounds, indicating a cross-cultural difference.

The other 80 images have various backgrounds. For beauty care products, products are displayed with their main ingredients (e.g., Figure 7.22), or with no background visible due to the image being a close shot of the ingredient or human participant (e.g., Figure 7.12, Figure 7.19). For jewellery also these different backgrounds constitute rocky or sandy backdrops or items being placed on wooden, granite or clothe surfaces (see Figure 7.5, Figure 7.18). Again, six of them do not even display a separate background due to the extreme close shot of the model filling up the entire space of the image.

## 7.5 Compositional meaning

The meaning of composition as proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) was used to analyse the layout of the OPI. The overall OPI layout incorporates both textual and visual elements. Therefore, I thought that it would be fitting to investigate how the main visual element (the main product image) and the written text combine to create a composite whole, and the meanings that are endowed to their relative placement.

*Table 7.7. Layouts used in the OPI genre*

	SL beauty care	NZ beauty care	SL jewellery	NZ jewellery	No of layouts
Image on top left/ text on top right/ text at bottom	6	4	10	4	24
Image on top left/ text on right	-	4	-	-	4
Image on left/ text on right	2	2	6	8	18
Image on top left/ text and image on right	-	2	-	-	2
Image on left/ text and image on right	-	-	-	-	-
Image on top left/ text on right and bottom left	2	4	-	2	8
Image on top left/ text and image on top right/ text at bottom	2	-	-	-	2
Image on top left/ text on top right/ image and text at bottom	4	-	-	-	4
Image on top left/ text on top right/ image at bottom	-	-	-	2	2
	16	16	16	16	64

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose a set of principles of composition which include information value, salience and framing. For the current study, I make use of the principle of information value together with salience and framing, to analyse the layout composition. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the different placements of elements on the page imply different meanings. There are three types of placements (creating three types of information values) that Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) discussed: left-right, top-bottom and centre-margin. The first two (left-right, top-bottom) are of value to this study, and variations of their combinations can be observed in the OPI

genre layout (seen in Table 7.7). The third type of placement (centre-margin) is not observed in the OPI layouts.

These different top/bottom and left/right layouts can be identified due to the compositional resources of framing – separation (separation by empty space) and segregation (separation by frame lines) (see Figure 7.28). The most frequently used layout is where the image is on top left and the text is on top right and at the bottom half of the page. The second most frequent is the layout of the images occupying the left with the text occupying the right. These two types of layout together (42 out of 64) account for 66% of the different types of layouts used in OPIs. The next sections analyse the meaning of such typical layout according to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) framework.

### 7.5.1 Information value – left/right

As seen in Table 7.7, the trend that seems to characterize the OPI layout is one where the image is placed at the top left and text is at the top right and bottom half of the page (e.g., Figure 7.28). This is seen in 24 out of the 64 OPIs. This trend is closely followed by the layout where the image occupies the left and the text occupies the right side of the page in 18 OPIs (e.g., Figure 7.29). So, according to the analysis, the main product image of all NZ and

SL beauty care web sites had the same position of being placed at the (top) left-hand side of the OPI. And the top right is always occupied by written text.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) interpret the left-right orientation of two elements as the given-new dimension. What is seen on the left is what is given or what is already known or familiar to the customer. If an image is to the left of the text, they suggest “the picture is presented as Given, as a well-established point of departure for the text, and the text contains the New” (p. 183). So here in the OPI genre, the image becomes the starting point

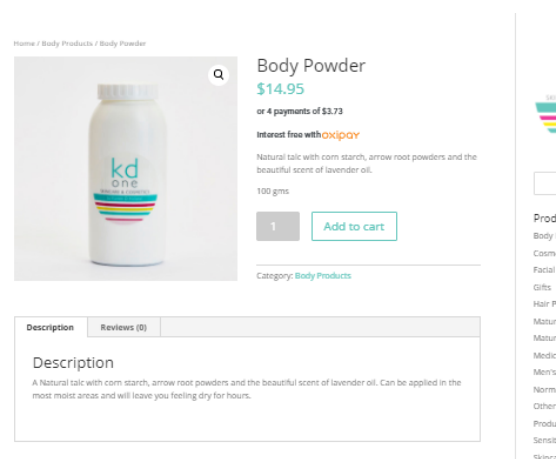


Figure 7.28 Image on top left/text on top right/text at bottom layout (Kd One Skincare and Cosmetics, 2020)

for a more detailed verbal description that includes written detailed description of the product that the viewer/ customer is unaware of.

## 7.5.2 Information value – top/ bottom

In terms of the information value of the top-bottom placement, all NZ and SL OPIs use the image at the top (left) of the OPI, along with some general details of the product such as product name, price and company name at top right.

The top-bottom layout implies an ideal-real meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The ‘ideal’ can be interpreted as containing the essence or the most important information in

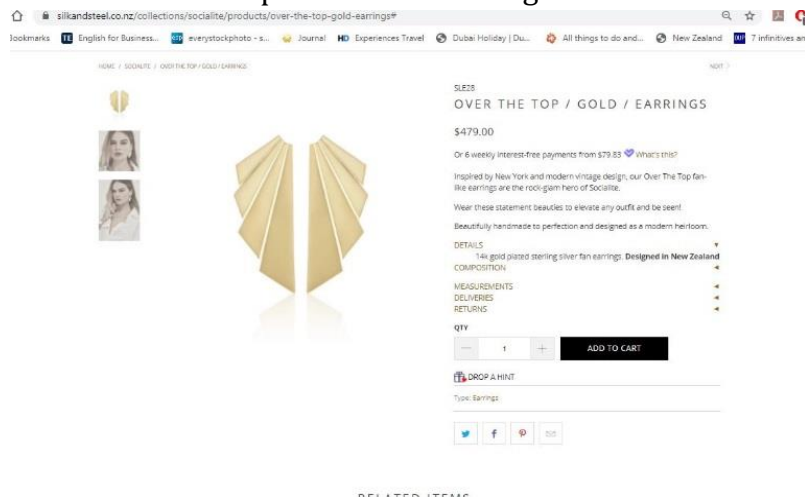


Figure 7.29 Image on left/ text on right (Silk & Steel, 2020)

a document. It is ideal in the sense that the top elements do not give any specific detailed information. That task is assigned to the lower parts of the OPI to really get to work on the concrete details. The top part is used to create a ‘wow’ effect/ a certain kind of desire or

appeal on the viewer. In the words of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), elements at the top of a layout or image represents “the idealized or generalized essence of the information”, elements at the bottom indicate “more ‘down-to-earth’ information ... or more practical information”(Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 187).

Reflecting this concept, the top part of the OPI is not information heavy. The genre producers make use of the resources of the image to create this overall effect of the ideal product by suspending a big, colourful product shot at mid/close distance eye level at the top of the OPI to grab the customers’ attention, and to provide an instant identification of the product, without any practical or health concerns that may bother the customers later on. The written text that starts from the more general information of name, price, size and placed at the top right also contributes this function. Normally these written details

are given using a larger font size or upper-case letters which make these written details more salient than others and stand out from the rest of the textual information. Together, the image and the written details of name of brand, product, price and size, by virtue of their information value and salience, grab the customers' attention (M1S1) and signal to them the nature/type of product on offer (M1S2), thereby performing the function of Identifying the product (M1) at first glance. The customers first identify the product via an ideal view of the product.

The content of the OPI progresses to more informative and practical text (ingredients, directions for use, shipping details, review details) when reaching the bottom half of the OPI.

### 7.5.3 Interview data on the information value

The typical layout that is used in OPIs seems to align with the preference of online shoppers when it comes to a product information page layout. I showed my ten participants who are online shoppers five basic OPI genre layouts, and requested them to select one or more web page layouts that they would prefer when they shop online (see Table 7.8). Eight out of the ten online shoppers selected the layout where the image is on the top left as their preferred layout.

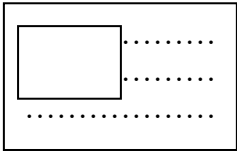
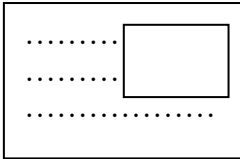
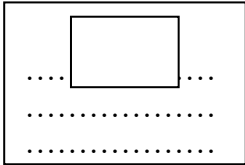
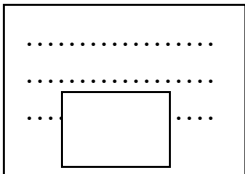
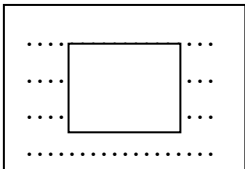
The reasons they give for preferring that layout include the natural reading pattern for these participants (from left to right), the layout being what they are used to seeing commonly, the image being a prominent source of information, and considering it an advantage seeing both images and the written 'description' side by side. For instance, online shopper Macy who explains her choice of layout 1, states:

I mean, with one I think, at least in English, you know, you read left to right. So it makes sense that like the most prominent information should go on the left, like any, anytime the picture's on the right, it feels wrong to me. I feel like I have to, I have to move my eyes backwards. And then the number three is good as well, because like it's it flows downwards, but I like to be able to see the description and the photo at the same time.

And if you put the photo at the top, you can't read the description at the same time. So that's why I like number one the best.

The participant reveals how she places higher value on the image of the OPI, with her comment on the image being 'the most prominent information'. The same comment also reveals something else about the information value of the top left placement of an

*Table 7.8 OPI layouts preferred by interview participants*

Layout number	Layout	Number of participants who prefer the layout
1		8
2		1
3		5
4		1
5		0

element; if some information is important, it is placed on the top left. Her remark about it feeling 'wrong', that she feels like she has to move her eyes backwards if the image is placed on the right, may very well be due to her innate association of the image as the point of departure of information in this multimodal genre. The interview data at the same time reveals how the two modes – visual and textual – complement each other in serving the communicative purposes of the genre.

The participants' interview data altogether reveal how user behaviour, (being accustomed to) prevailing 'standards', the different values attributed to different modes, and the relationship between the different modes, all combined, contribute to making a certain type of layout, the typical pattern of in the OPI genre.

#### *7.5.3.1 Impact of product type on the visual layout*

A difference between the jewellery and beauty care layouts also comes to light when exploring the information value of the top-bottom placement of elements. It is that there is a higher tendency for jewellery images on the left to occupy the entire expanse of that half of the page extending from top to bottom (see Figure 7.29). The jewellery OPIs make use of the 'image on left/ text on right' layout more (14 OPIs) than the beauty care OPIs (only in four OPIs). This implies a merging of the ideal and the real. The product image is at once the ideal image of a product with its shine, and bright colours and overlarge size, making it nearly jump out of the page to quickly grab viewer attention. At the same time, on closer inspection, the customer is able to scrutinize the product image or the set of images to absorb the product's finer design details, the texture of the metal, its fixtures, how it's worn. Therefore, I believe that the jewellery image carries in it both idealised as well as descriptive practical functions. Compared to this trend, in beauty care OPIs, the bottom half of the page layout carries detailed written description about the product such as a full list of ingredients or information on how to use the product (see Figure 7.28).

The entire left half of the OPI being occupied by visuals in 50% of jewellery OPIs is significant because it suggests the higher role that visuals play in jewellery OPIs compared to beauty care OPIs. The higher preference for 'image on left/ text on right' layout for jewellery is reflected in interview data as well, where participants remark on

the higher importance of visuals in jewellery. To quote web designer Bernard to clarify how the amount of reliance on visuals varies according to product category:

If there's less of a visual aspect to the product, the images is less important. So for example, you're selling perfume. The bottle may be part of the thing, but the ultimately it's it's not about that. You're selling lotion, or body lotion, things like that. The there's definitely an image of the product, I mean, the reason they spend so much money on on making vessels for things like that is because, it's to attract people. But it's not as important as, say, a piece of jewellery or a shirt, or, you know, other things that have a very strongly visual aspect.

This changing role of the semiotic mode according to the type of product that is sold is resonated by online shoppers. When asked whether the written description in jewellery is as important for the shopper as written description in beauty care, Harriet (online shopper) commented:

I think jewellery descriptions, just because it's more of a material item, I don't think it's as important as skincare descriptions. Just because jewellery, it is a very visual object. So you can give the information you need from that image itself. But skincare, like chemicals and stuff you're putting on your skin, you would wanna be knowing you know, what is in there, what are you getting for the price, things like that. I don't think the image is going to really support any of that.

In addition, participants who selected layout number three (see Table 7.7) as a preferred layout when shopping online mainly did this because they thought that that layout (image at the top, text at the bottom) is more suitable when shopping for jewellery.

The above comments therefore may explain why the visuals occupy a larger space in jewellery layouts than in beauty care layouts. The online shopper's comment also highlights the varying functions that each mode brings to the table – things that one mode can and the other mode cannot do.



## 7.6 Chapter summary

When looking at both jewellery and beauty care OPIs together, the genre producers seem to represent their product mainly in a conceptual analytical structure where the viewers are given a rather static view of the product. Although small in number (17 images, 11% of all NZ images), the use of narrative type images in NZ OPIs and not in SL OPIs can be identified as a cross-cultural difference. In NZ OPIs, in 25% of the cases, those images include a dynamic narrative element of how the product is used as well. The visual mode is used by the NZ OPIs to achieve the functions of instructing how to use the product (M5S1), pairing jewellery (M3S8), and providing customer testimonials (M3S7) which are unique to NZ OPIs.

The sellers prefer to use either eye-level or high angle offer type images that are medium or close shots of products in their OPIs. The pattern of interpersonal meaning points out that genre producers generally do not intend to engage the customer with a gaze. Instead, they provide an objective view of the product for scrutiny. Another observation is that none of the SL OPIs contain demand type images where a model builds a dialogue with the viewers, while NZ OPIs do include a few demand images in their visual repertoire. Therefore, there is more customer engagement through eye contact in NZ OPIs than in SL OPIs.

The lack of use of the low- angle shots in both NZ and SL OPIs affirms that all sellers want to create the sense that their product is something that customers can afford. The sellers' use of visual angles seems to relate the viewers to the product in a way that connotes viewers' superiority (high angle shots) or viewer being equal to the task of buying (using eye-level shots). This is true for both SL and NZ online shop owners. A similar trend is visible in the use of shot distance. Medium and close shots used in OPIs work towards making customers feel that the product is buyable and something that is close to them or that is familiar to them. However, it also needs to be noted that almost all SL beauty care product images indicates a higher preference to project a social, rather than intimate relationship with the viewer. Using the visual resources of modality markers, sellers present a well illuminated decontextualized and detailed image of the product with high colour saturation, colour differentiation and colour modulation which is attractive to customers which conveys a 'more than real' representation of the product.

The most common layout for OPIs is where the image is on top left, the text is on top right and there is text occupying the bottom half of the page. This is closely followed by another layout, of the image occupying the entire left while the text occupies the entire right side of the OPI. Out of both these layout types, the pattern of visual-textual organisation that becomes apparent is of an image on the top left being the point of departure for the more unfamiliar written details that are presented on the top right. Also while the text leads from the more attention grabbing and quicker and easier to grasp information on the top to the more detailed specifics at the bottom, the image can play the role of both the ideal and the real depending on whether a customer looks at the image for a quick view or spends more time on the image to identify details of the product.

There were a few differences that emerged from the analysis with regard to product category, including higher use of (by sellers) and reliance (by customers) on the visual mode for the more aesthetic or visually appealing products like jewellery.

There was one issue rising from this analysis - of distinguishing between conceptual analytical and narrative structures when communicating ideational meaning. I discuss this issue further in the Discussion chapter.

## CHAPTER 8 - ANALYSIS OF WEBSITE INTERACTIVITY

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the fifth research question guiding this study - *'How does interactivity affect Online Product Information?'*. Section Effects of user interactivity with images on OPI layout) also partly addresses Research Question 4 - *'What is the relationship between images and texts in Online Product Information?'*. The analysis of this chapter uses data from 32 Sri Lankan and New Zealand Online shopping websites (16 SL, 16 NZ).

When analysing a digital genre, using traditional methods of analysis would only allow an analyst to explore the interactive signs (e.g., hyperlinks, icons, buttons, images) as forms, and analysing what these signs **signify**. This is limited to analysing them in terms of what the presence of those signs means in the genre either alone or in combination with other text and images. It affords the analyst no means of accounting for how the interactive signs **'behave'** (the actions that can be done to them and the effects they create) in the genre, and how they therefore affect the genre. Therefore, when studying a digital genre, studying interactive signs in the same way as written words, images or icons on print paper are analysed would be to ignore an entire dimension of a genre that appears on the digital platform and that has access to a wide range of digital affordances.

One affordance of digital genres is that online users are able to interact with the text while reading or viewing its content. Most online genre producers make use of this affordance in order to achieve the rhetorical purpose of the genre, by including different buttons, icons, text, images that users can interact with in different ways. Therefore, an analysis focusing only on the textual dimension (as when print genres are analysed) is insufficient when it comes to digital genre analysis. The framework proposed by Adami (2015) is therefore adopted to investigate the interactive items used within the Online Product Information (OPI) and how they behave. The framework and how it is used in this research is briefly described in the next few paragraphs before moving onto the interactivity analysis (see Analytical Frameworks Chapter, Section 3.4 for more information).

Adami (2015) calls the traditional spatial dimension of a web page the 'syntagmatic' dimension where an analysis of the signs on the screen (text, images, icons, buttons, their layout) is carried out. In addition to analysing this syntagmatic dimension, investigating how the signs react and create textual effects when users are given the choice of acting on the signs becomes the scope of digital genre analysis. This intertextual dimension is referred to as the 'paradigmatic' dimension by Adami (2015). The framework proposed by Adami (2015) is particularly useful for exploring this paradigmatic dimension of a digital genre. Espousing Halliday's (1978) metafunctions of language, she proposes a set of factors related to interactive items that can be investigated on the syntagmatic plane and the paradigmatic plane. This enables an analysis of website interactivity, which is better than conducting a mere content analysis of a digital genre's interactive items without exploring what these images and icons do. Using this framework, I analyse the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of interactive items on both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic planes. The analyses on the two planes (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) sometimes meld into each other because it is not always easy to discuss the sign in separation from its interactivity.

In exploring the ideational metafunction of interactive signs under the syntagmatic dimension, a full list of interactive items that enable the interactivity is presented. Consequently in this study, I first list the assortment of interactive items that are used in the Online Product Information (OPI) and their forms – whether they are hyperlinks, icons, text or some other form. On the paradigmatic plane of the ideational metafunction, Adami (2015) suggests exploring the actions (click, type and click, hover on the site/sign with the cursor) that online users can perform on those signs and what kind of effects (providing text, accessing new text, transferring text) result from those actions. However, I do not use the three general types of effects that Adami (2015) uses to refer to all the effects that are found in the OPI genre. Distilling all the different types of effects into these three basic categories does not serve a fruitful purpose in this research. In a function-based genre analysis such as the present one, investigating and categorising interactivity in terms of the types of interactive functions the interactive signs are intended to perform will render better insights into the interactivity of the genre. Therefore, all the interactive signs found in the OPI were categorized into eight types of interactivity (interactive moves – see Section 6.2.2) according to how the interactivity is realised. The eight types

of interactive functions were described in Section 6.2.2 of the Move analysis chapter. So they will not be explained again in this chapter. In this chapter, the focus is on discussing what kind of interactive signs/sites realise those eight interactive functions (Section 8.2), both through their appearance as signs (syntagmatic dimension) and through the effects they create in response to user action (paradigmatic dimension).

In analysing the interpersonal metafunction of interactive signs/sites (Section 8.3), what the presence or absence of certain interactive signs/sites and what it implies about the genre producer is investigated. This includes an exploration of what the signs'/sites' presence or absence may indicate about the relationship that the genre producer has with the user/customer (the syntagmatic dimension). I also explore what the effects of user actions imply about the relationship between the online genre producer and user (the paradigmatic dimension). The analysis also adopts a cross-cultural perspective.

Under the textual metafunction (Section 8.4), the focus is on what the placement of certain interactive sites/signs within the genre layout implies about the salience, framing and information value of those interactive signs (the syntagmatic dimension). The difference in the placement of certain interactive items within the genre before and after they are acted upon (the paradigmatic dimension) is also investigated. Implications of the use of different modes (textual/ visual) to convey genre functions are discussed where special attention is given to interactivity applied to visuals and text of the genre.

## 8.2 Ideational metafunction of interactive sites/signs

Thirty-seven interactive signs make up the interactivity of the OPI genre. Figure 8.1 illustrates some of these signs that belong to the genre.

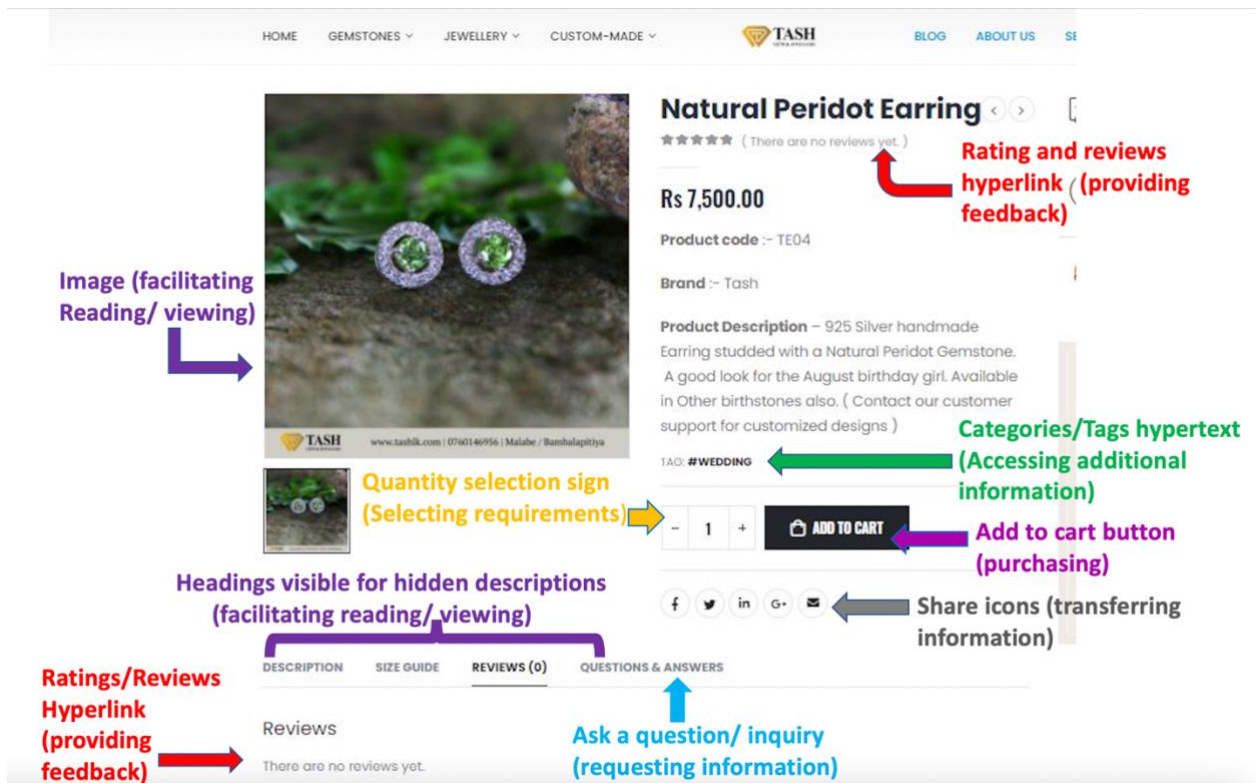


Figure 8.1. Interactive sites/signs of the OPI and their functions (Tash, 2020)

These interactive signs include share icons, 'Add to cart' buttons, quantity selection signs, hyperlinks to size guides, etc. Based on the kind of effect that acting on the interactive sign creates, the signs are categorised into eight interactive functions (e.g., selecting requirements (M7), purchasing (M8), transferring information (M9)). For instance, due to the effect created by acting on 'Drop a hint' icon and hyperlink or by acting on Facebook or Twitter share icons, product information can be transferred (M9) to online customers' contacts. The full list of interactive sites/signs categorized according to the type of interactive function is shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 All interactive sites/signs in 32 websites categorised according to their function (move)

Interactive sign realizing each move (M) function		SL	NZ	N. websites using the sign (out of 16 or 32)	% websites using the sign
<b>M7 - Selecting Requirements</b>		13	15	28	87.5
Product size selection	+ and - sign	3	5	8	25
Quantity selection	+ and - sign	13	15	28	87.5
Metal type/ colour selection	drop down menu/ radio button	0	3	3	18.8
Jewellery length selection	drop down menu/ radio button	0	2	2	12.5
Jewellery style selection	drop down menu/ radio button	0	1	1	6.3
Purchase plan options	radio button	0	2	2	12.5
Text input for customized message	text input box	0	1	1	6.3
<b>M8 - Purchasing</b>		15	16	31	96.9
Add to cart/bag	button	15	16	31	96.9
Buy it now	button	1	4	5	15.6
Buy more than one	button	1	0	1	6.3
<b>M9 - Transferring information</b>		13	9	22	68.8
Share (e.g., via Facebook, Pinterest, print)	icons	13	7	20	62.5
Drop a hint	icon and hyperlink	0	2	2	12.5
<b>M10 - Accessing additional information</b>		5	10	15	46.9
Back to main/related product category	hyperlink	5	3	8	25
Information about payment platforms	hyperlink	0	8	8	25
Information on packaging (compostable) used	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
Information on mini versions/trial pack	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
Size chart/guide	hyperlink	1	2	3	18.8
Care instructions/ metal guide	hyperlink	0	2	2	12.5
Matching products	hyperlink	0	3	3	18.8
Explanation of terms in description (koru, kawa kawa)	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
<b>M11 - Using additional seller services</b>		10	6	16	50
Add to wish list	icon/ hyperlink	6	5	11	34.4
Add to compare	icon	7	0	7	21.9
Skin consultation quiz	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
Currency converter	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
Try on product	button	1	0	1	6.3
<b>M12 - Requesting information</b>		2	4	6	18.8
Ask a question/ inquiry	hyperlink	0	3	3	9.4
Enquiry if product is out of stock	button	1	0	1	6.3
Requesting quotations (for prices of different jewellery sizes)	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
Book an appointment	button	1	0	1	6.3
<b>M13 - Facilitating reading/ viewing</b>		16	16	32	100
Zooming in/out	product image	16	14	30	93.8
Toggling (switching) between visual content	image tiles/dots/arrows near main product image	4	13	17	53.1
Expanding/ collapsing written content	tab/ accordion	9	6	15	46.9
Read more/ less	hyperlink/ button	1	2	3	18.8

Click to play	video	1	3	4	12.5
Navigating from bottom of page back to 'View images'	hyperlink	0	1	1	6.3
M14 - Providing feedback		8	10	18	56.3
Like	icon	2	0	2	6.3
Ratings and reviews	icon and hyperlink	8	10	18	56.3

Some signs are found in OPIs of one product category only (e.g., only in skincare or only in jewellery). These include signs like hyperlink to 'size chart/guide' that are found only in jewellery product information. Such sites/signs are italicized in Table 8.1. Other signs/sites are common to OPIs of both product categories – both skincare and jewellery). To reflect this, the last column of Table 8.1 ("% websites using the sign/site") gives the frequency of the use of all signs as a percentage, for purposes of comparison (e.g., for 'metal type/colour selection':  $3/16 \times 100 = 18.75\%$ ).

The 37 listed interactive signs in Table 8.1 represent a whole range of interactive options that NZ and SL jewellery and skincare websites can utilize in order to make the OPI more interactive. According to Table 8.1., Selecting requirements (M7), Purchasing (M8) and Facilitating reading/ viewing (M13) are the most frequently used interactive functions that sellers employ in the OPI genre (in more than 80% of the websites). This is true for both Sri Lankan and New Zealand OPIs. Requesting information (M12) and Accessing additional information (M10) are the interactive functions that are the least frequently used in the OPI genre (in less than 50% of the websites).

As can also be seen through the multiple '0's and '1's in the table, many of these available interactive signs are rarely made use of by the NZ and SL shopping sites. In fact, 13 of the 37 interactive signs (35% of all interactive signs) are used by only one of the 32 websites. For instance, 'the skin consultation quiz' interactive sign is used by only one website. A further five signs (14%) are each used by only two websites. This brings the number of signs that are used very rarely (by two or fewer websites) to 18 (49% of all interactive signs used in OPI). So, although there are multiple interactive steps available to carry out the eight interactive move functions (e.g., selecting requirements, purchasing), each interactive function is primarily carried out using a limited set of one or two signs. This is more applicable to SL websites than to NZ websites. Seventeen out of the 37 interactive signs are not used at all in SL websites, while in NZ websites only six out of the 37 interactive signs are not used. So in terms of the variety of interactivity, NZ shopping sites



seem to employ a wider array of interactive options compared to SL shopping sites to realise the interactivity of OPI.

### 8.3. Interpersonal metafunction of interactive sites/ signs

According to the variety of interactive sites/signs listed in Table 8.1, it becomes apparent that both the Sri Lankan and New Zealand OPIs have at their disposal a significant number of interactive sites/signs, to provide a highly interactive platform to their customers. The sellers are trying to compensate for the lack of physical interaction and transaction by providing the customers with facilities to have a similar shopping experience to what they would experience if they were physically present at a shop. The variety of interactive sites/signs enables the customers to check every external detail of the product and packaging minutely (through facilitating reading and viewing functions like zooming in/out), select what they require from the product (e.g., through size/quantity selection signs), and decide on purchasing (through 'Add to cart/bag' buttons). They also help to keep products in cart to allow more buying, give the choice of getting more or less information according to how much information the customer really requires in order to make a purchase decision, and allow the customer to share pictures and details of the product with others.

It also seems that by utilising the interactive options used in the OPI, the shop owners can actually allow customers a more immersive or easier shopping experience than when shopping at physical stores, with options such as providing videos on how to use the product, by giving purchasers different payment plans or by enabling shoppers to add products to wish lists. However, only a limited number of websites actually use these available options in both Sri Lankan and New Zealand websites; as mentioned in the previous section, there are 13 interactive sites/ signs that are each used by only one website). This indicates that although these shopping sites promote and describe their products in a standard way, most shop owners do not attempt to go beyond offering customers a basic online shopping experience.

To elaborate, almost all the shopping sites use at least one of the interactive sites/signs representing the interactive move functions of M7 - Selecting requirements (28

websites), M8 - Purchasing (31 websites) and M13 - Facilitating reading/viewing (32 websites). These interactive functions can be considered as basic interactive options enabling a customer to easily read/view and purchase a product. There is comparatively less use of a site/sign for M10 - Accessing additional information (15 websites), M11 - Using additional seller services (16 websites), and M12 - Requesting information (six websites). An implication of this is that although sellers satisfy the basic customer necessities by facilitating and optimizing customers' reading/viewing experience of product information and making a product purchase, only about half or even fewer of those websites are as enthusiastic about making themselves available for customer queries, and providing extra help in terms of helpful information (e.g., jewellery care guide/ size selection guide) and services (e.g., skin consultation, add to Wishlist).

After providing customers the basic interactive features for M7 - Selecting requirements, M8 - Purchasing and M13 - Facilitating viewing/reading, what shop owners and web designers of both countries seem to be interested in is promoting their product via the customer (used in 22 websites). Shop owners give customers more opportunity to share product information (M9) than opportunity to request information (M12) about the product or to give feedback (M14). Giving customers more opportunity to share product information is in the shop owners' best interest, as it markets the seller's products more. NZ stores that give the option to share their product on social media sites, restrict the number of sites to three (Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest). This could suggest on which social media platforms the NZ web users are considered to be most active. There are other options available (such as LinkedIn, Google +, WhatsApp, Gmail) in Sri Lankan OPIs in addition to those the NZ OPIs provide. This could suggest a wider range of social media usage by SL customers. Alternatively, it could suggest the sellers' desire to get the product information shared amongst as wide an audience as possible, which is not entertained by NZ sellers.

Exploring the Requesting information interactive function (M12), only a couple of NZ websites and no SL websites give customers the option of asking questions about each product in a public space (by using 'Ask a question/ inquiry' option in the OPIs – see Table 8.1). This minimal use of an interactive site/sign to make inquiries publicly, hinders the customers from getting any questions clarified. Consequently it does not leave any clarifications for future customers who might have the same questions about the product

(since any customer questions and answers about a product are normally displayed towards the bottom of the OPI). This low use of the inquiry option within the public space reflects the tight control that shop owners have over their web content. One has to rule out the possibility that this low use is due to an unwillingness to answer customer questions. This is because although not part of the OPI genre, there is an option for private messaging/ chatting with the seller through a pop-up chat function which appears on the website regardless of which web page a customer is on. This option is used by 10 out of 32 websites as opposed to only four websites using the more public request information/ inquiry interactive site/signs within the OPI. So at least 30% of the websites allow private messaging although they do not allow it in the public forum. This private messaging/ chatting is however regulated by most of those 10 websites, requiring users' email address even for chatting. Reflecting altogether on how the requesting information function (M12) operates, the amount of public interaction that the customer is allowed with the product and the shop is minimal. So the overall flow of information reflects more of a top down transmission of information from the web owners to the customers where the genre producer has high control of the genre.

It is true that almost all websites provide interactivity that helps a customer to make a purchase decision (M8) from within the product information itself (through call-to-action buttons like 'Buy it now' and 'Add to cart'), without having to look for the option elsewhere on another page. One significant observation is the frequent use of "Add to cart" button and very rare use of "Buy it now" button in most SL and NZ shopping sites. There are two implications in this usage. The first is that it allows customers to make a purchase without committing to the purchase. It takes the pressure off having to decide at that point whether the customer wants the product or not compared to an alternative such as having only a 'Buy it now' button on the page. Macy, one of the online shopper informants, when asked whether she feels pressurized to buy a product when seeing 'Add to cart' or 'Buy it now' buttons, stated:

"If someone puts 'Buy it now' instead of a cart, I'm just not going to buy that thing. Yeah, I do feel very pressured. And it's like if you went to a supermarket and you pick up a piece of food and then someone said you have to pay for it instantly and you can't put it back. But when you put it in the cart, you get to decide and you can think about it and come back."

Only one shopping site adopts an interactive strategy of using only 'Buy it now'. In that sense, most sellers do not exert any undue pressure on their customers when it comes to the actual purchase. Customers are made to feel that they are free in their transactional process, with the choice of returning to the website to buy the product if they want to (if 'Add to cart' button is clicked, the product will remain in the virtual cart even if the customer leaves the page and returns later). The other implication of having only an 'Add to cart' button is that it encourages the customers to remain on the same webpage, and to keep shopping. Twenty six out of the 32 websites have the 'Add to Cart' button only. In contrast, if both "Buy it now" and "Add to cart" buttons were to be used together, it would also give the customers the immediate choice to exit their shopping if they wanted to. Only five websites use two purchase options (both 'Add to cart' and 'Buy it now' / 'Buy more than one'). So a majority of sellers adopt a strategy of making the customers feel in control of their own buying decision, while at the same time increasing their own chances of a product being bought by using only the 'Add to cart' button for purchasing function (M8).

In line with the previous point, accessing additional information (M10) is mostly limited to information that customers can access from other pages within the website. Even a link to other web pages to explain terms used in OPIs (e.g., words such as 'koru', 'kawa kawa') directs the customer to a page of the same website. It is the same with other hyperlinks such as back to main product category, care instructions, or other matching products from the same site. So the customers are encouraged to explore the online shop and discover other product related information by using the interactive items on the current product information. The only instance where customers are navigated outside this shopping website is a link to information on payment plans, but this navigation to an external website is seen in only one out of the eight shopping sites that use payment platforms. In the other seven websites, when users click on a hyperlink to a payment platform, the information appears in a pop-up window that can be closed without being directed to an external site (see Figure 8.2). So, accessing additional information (M10) refers to accessing additional information within the same shopping site (unless it is a chance for online shoppers to transfer information about the seller's product on social media). The shop owners are not keen for their customers to be directed away from their

shop. So the online shop owners and web designers create an insular environment in which they attempt to hold the customer for a prolonged time period.

Customers are allowed the interactive function of Providing feedback (M14) by liking or adding a review about the product. Although only two websites give the interactive option of liking a product, 18 out of the 32 New Zealand and Sri Lankan websites give their customers an option to review the product. Therefore, this gives a chance for the customer to express himself/herself inside the shopping domain. However, reviewing a product is not a straightforward process. Six out of the eight SL sites that give the

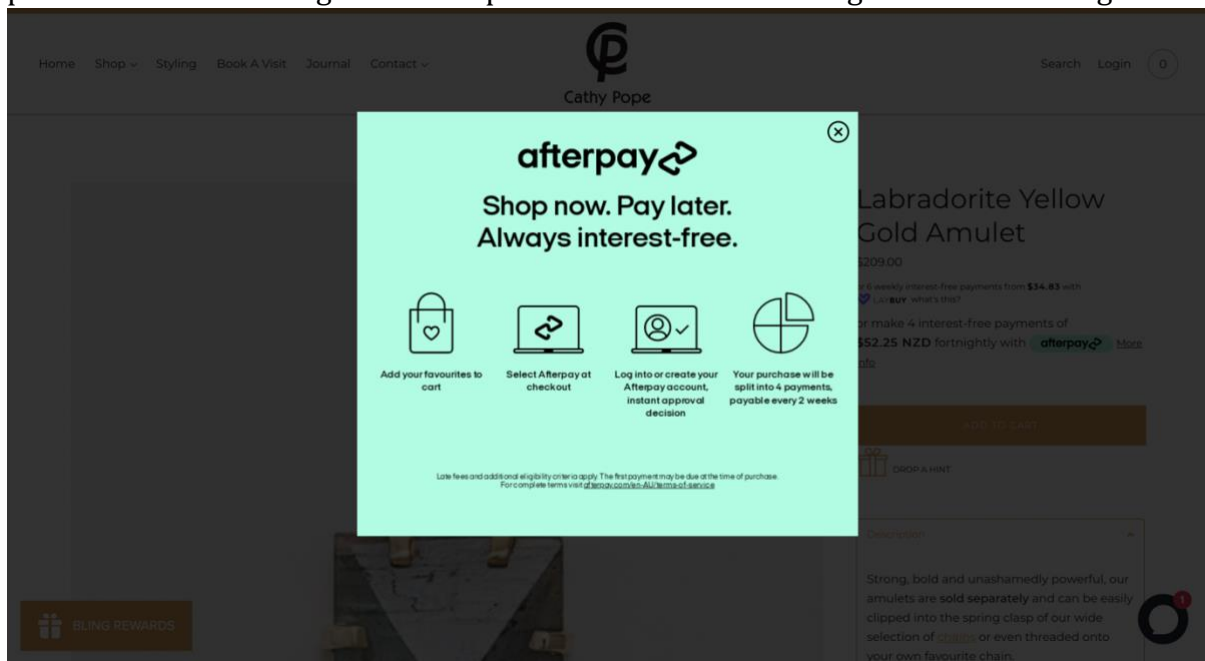


Figure 8.2 Pop up window that appears giving access to additional information about payment plans (Cathy Pope, 2020)

customer the interactive review option require the customer to be registered with that shopping store in order to post a review or will moderate the review once the customer submits it. One SL website review process does not impose any prior registration or moderation, but still requires shoppers' email address (and name) if they wish to submit a review. So, there is a high level of manipulation of product reviews by the store owners. The moderation of customer reviews connotes that the seller hopes for positive appraisal of the product which may encourage other buyers, and that the process of reviewing is used as a form of free advertising by sellers.

Compared to the SL online stores, none of the NZ stores moderate customer reviews. Thus, the customer can more freely express his/her thoughts about the product. Only one NZ website requires the customers to be registered with the website. Nevertheless, all

ten New Zealand websites require customer contact information in the form of their email address when submitting a product review, thereby indirectly regulating the product review process. The collection of such information could later be used for further promotional purposes. Therefore, in fact, the provision of freedom to review a product does not necessarily mean customers are guaranteed anonymity or free expression. Also, when it comes to the 'like' icon, the interactive action of liking benefits the sellers as this is positive information that is retained on the page. There is no icon that is used on these pages to express dislike (as seen on channels like YouTube).

So the cumulative effect that is created when investigating the OPI, especially SL product information, is of a very closed insular environment with a top down transmission of information from seller to customer, where customers are given limited opportunity to comment/ask questions in a public space and customers are allowed limited access to the virtual world external to the site.

#### 8.3.1. Comparison between NZ and SL OPI

The above discussion of the interactive links and icons that only a few NZ OPIs use and no Sri Lankan OPIs use, suggests that there is much to be improved in terms of serving customers in many New Zealand sites and all Sri Lankan shopping sites. However, when comparing the two countries, the customers of NZ webstores are given more interactive options than the customers of the Sri Lankan webstores. For instance, when selecting products according to the requirements of the customer (M7), customers of SL shopping sites can only specify product quantity and size. However, there are multiple requirements related to the jewellery product information that the customers would possibly like to specify (jewellery length, metal, payment options) which are used by a few NZ shopping sites, but not at all in SL shopping sites. So there is more versatility in selecting products according to the customer's requirements in NZ online shops compared to SL online shops.

OPI on eight NZ shopping sites provide hyperlinks to information about payment platforms in the OPI itself (realising M4 – Accessing additional information). No Sri Lankan websites offer customers such information on payment plans in the OPI. Making

customers aware of the opportunity for payment plans could be a decisive factor in making a purchase decision. Therefore, it would be important to give links to such information during the decision-making stage itself when the customer is reading/viewing the OPI, without waiting till they go to checkout. Including information on payment plans can also be a means of enticing customers into purchasing although they may not be able to afford the product. In that sense, the hyperlinks to payment plans become a promotional strategy that SL OPIs do not utilise, but NZ OPIs typically use.

Another example of higher interactivity in NZ shopping sites is the way in which NZ websites allow customers to toggle between different and multiple images to get a better sense of the product. They give customers a more vibrant narrative of the product by giving the option of toggling between a series of images (realising M7 - Facilitating reading/viewing). This also allows shop owners to take maximum advantage of limited page space to provide their customers a better visual experience. Most Sri Lankan websites on the other hand cannot use this interactive option because they provide only a minimum number of images per OPI text. However, it must be noted that both countries still do not make full use of available interactive options to give the customers a better multimodal experience (e.g., as seen by the fact that only one SL OPI and three NZ OPIs use product videos). Such a better multimodal experience could have maximised benefit to the seller by encouraging the shopper to engage in more depth and for longer with the OPI.

When accessing additional information (M10), OPIs of three New Zealand shopping sites give links for customers to access other OPIs of their own shop by embedding in the current OPI, links to other matching products or a mini/trial version of the same products. This is a marketing strategy which is not made use of by SL shopping sites, and one that more NZ shopping sites could also use .

When it comes to using additional seller services (M11), seven out of the 16 Sri Lankan websites use the “Add to compare” interactive option, while none of the NZ websites use it. Although this is a service/facility offered to the customers, it also connotes an attempt by the shop owners to keep the customers engaged in the shop owners’ own products, spending more time in their own online store. So in a sense, customer engagement and

persuasion through interactivity is sought by sellers of both countries, but through different interactive strategies.

The above discussion also indicates how the interactivity of OPI contributes to achieving the genre purposes of informing and persuading customers as well as facilitating customers to interact with the OPI.

#### 8.4. Textual metafunction of interactive sites/signs

The analysis was conducted with a view of the product page layout on a 14-inch computer screen with a 75% size view. I mention this fact since a smaller or bigger screen could have some impact on how items on the product information become visible on the screen. Under the textual function of interactive signs on the syntagmatic plane, in what follows I analyse the placement of some interactive sites/signs on the product information layout and its significance with the help of the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Using these same resources, I interpret the changes seen on the product information layout, after an interactive item is acted upon on the paradigmatic plane.

I use the three interrelated systems that Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduce for analysing the textual function where necessary: salience, information value and framing. Salience refers to ways in which elements can be made more noticeable than others due to factors such as size, colour, or overlapping of visual and/or verbal resources. Information value of different interactive sites/signs is explored through their relative placement inside the larger composition of the Online Product Information, and the values that are implied by those different placements. The semiotic potential of framing refers to different types of framing such as segregation, separation, integration which promote conjunction or disjunction of content. The three systems will be used together to analyse the interactive items. The analysis will concentrate on interactive items that can be found in at least 50% of the SL and NZ product pages (see Table 8.1).



### 8.4.1. Textual function of interactivity on the syntagmatic plane

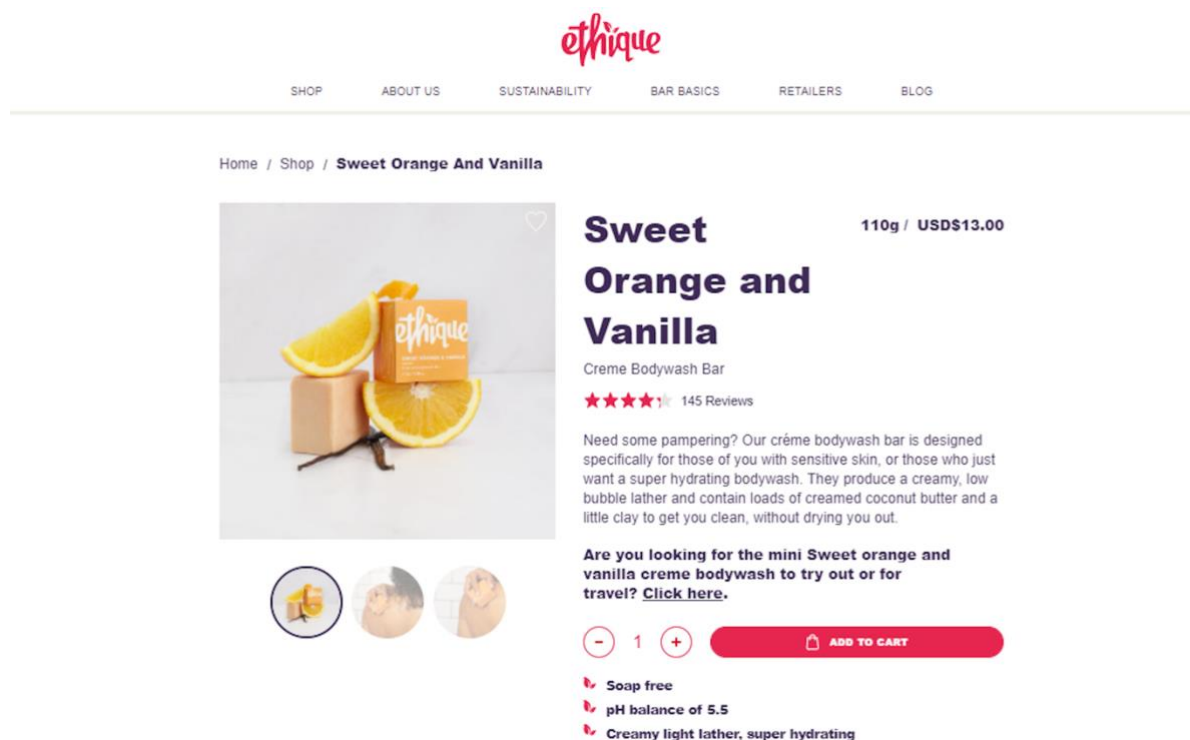


Figure 8.3. NZsket product information (Ethique, 2020b)

In a clear division of the OPI layout, the product image typically appears on the top left while the “Add to cart/bag” button and the quantity selection interactive items appear with other textual information on the right parallel to the image (see Figure 8.3). This left/right layout is identified due to the white space that separates the image on the left from the text on the right. Under the visual compositional principle of framing, such use of white space is called separation, and lends itself to invoking the meaning of what is known/unknown. According to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) compositional analysis of the image-text layout, what is seen on the left is what is given, meaning it is what is already known or familiar to the customer. If an image is to the left of the text, they suggest “the picture is presented as Given, as a well-established point of departure for the text, and the text contains the New” (p. 183). So the image seems to be the starting point for a more detailed but yet to be introduced description that includes other interactive items and written detailed description of the product.

The product image is highly salient on the product page for two reasons: 1. It is the single largest item (interactive or otherwise) on the product page, 2. It uses a mixture of vibrant colours that makes the image stand out from a white or light-coloured background.

Furthermore, the fact that in many cases, the image is the only item on the left side of the OPI and all the rest of the details are on the right helps make the image the most salient item on the page. It also becomes apparent that the textual information on the top half of the OPI is mostly located on the right-hand side. This forms an invisible line in the OPI between the image and the text due to a vertical line of white space running through the middle of the OPI (known as 'separation' under the compositional principle of framing). The positioning of items thus indicates perhaps how web designers keep the well-known more familiar form of the image unhindered or not overridden by a lot of unfamiliar

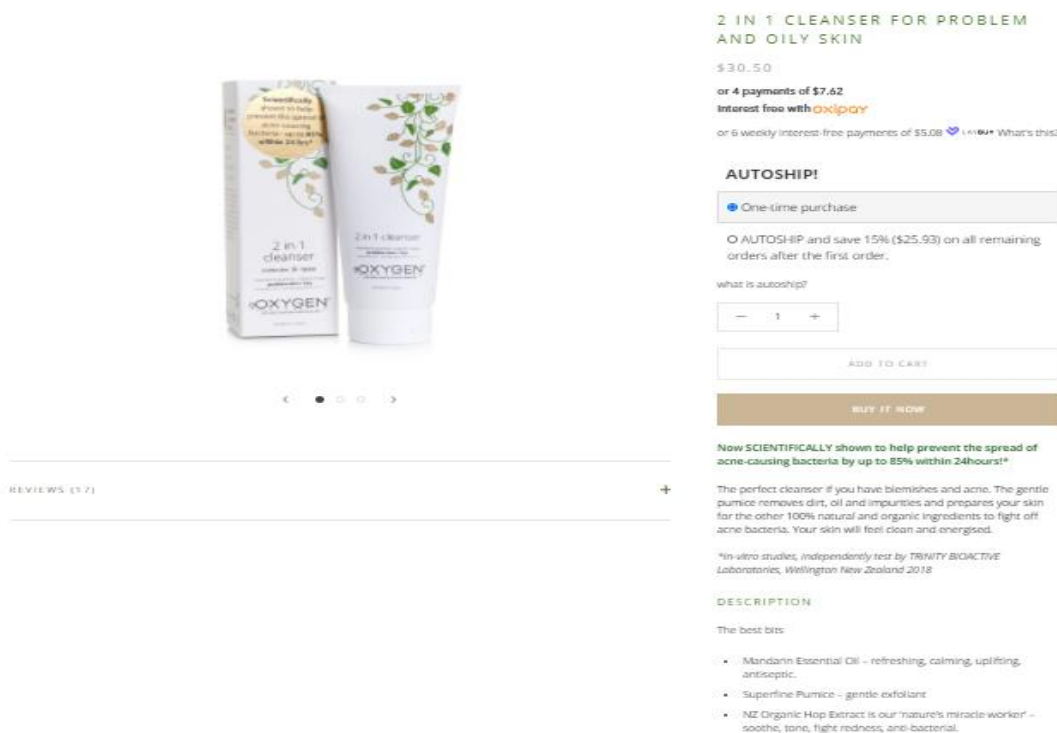


Figure 8.4. Add to cart and buy it now buttons found above the promotional description (Oxygen Skincare, 2020)

information. People may have seen the product already on the product listing page. Or familiarity may be induced by participants of the image such as a familiar ingredient in the photograph such as a known fruit (see Figure 8.3), or the anonymized hand or shoulder which could belong to anybody. The fact that the given is more salient than the new on the syntagmatic plane suggests that web page designers believe that customers will be attracted by the image they are familiar with, rather than by the information they will read next.

Regarding the second type of invoked meaning (ideal/real), the fact that certain interactive items appear in the upper half of the web page frame that is visible as soon as one navigates to the OPI, makes those interactive items more salient than some others. In all NZ and SL websites the image, the “Add to cart/bag” button (realising M8 - Purchasing) and the quantity selection (realising M7- Selecting requirements) are interactive items that are immediately visible to any visitor to the OPI. These interactive items stand out of the rest of the written description (are visually salient) and are as conspicuous as the product image and product title due to size, shape, colour of the sign and use of uppercase letters. In all NZ and SL product pages, the “Add to cart” or “Buy it now” button jumps out of the OPI because it uses a bright fill colour or bright coloured outline for the button that contrasts with the generally white or light coloured background (see Figure 8.3 and Figure 8.5). In many instances the “Add to Cart” button colour is the predominant colour of the product brand name. Visual salience of the “Add to cart” or “Buy it now” buttons connects it with the product photograph and product title that have similar salience. Such salience/high visibility connotes the desire on the part of web designers/shop owners to make it clear to customers the primary action they are expected to take after reading/seeing the ideal view of the product – to select requirements and make the purchase decision.

In terms of the exact placement of the “Add to Cart” interactive item(s) on the OPI, in eight out of 16 NZ websites, the “Add to Cart” appears even before the written promotional statement – the product description - of the OPI (see Figure 8.4). However, such a placement is seen in only three out of the 15 SL websites that use the “Add to cart” button (one of those three websites however didn’t contain a written promotional statement in their OPIs). In the other 12 websites, this interactive item appears only after the written promotional statement (see Figure 8.5). So this seems to connote that NZ websites expect their customers to read the written promotional statement less in order to make a buying decision, at least not as much as the SL websites do. So, the attributed significance of the promotional statement to the buying decision is considerably less in NZ websites than in SL websites.

In addition, the payment options that are found in NZ OPIs appear above the “Add to Cart”/ “Buy it Now” buttons (see Figure 8.4). So overall, the call to action of buying is stronger in NZ websites than in SL websites. Accompanying this “Add to Cart” button, the

quantity selection and size selection interactive items (realising M7 – Selecting requirements) almost always appear to the left of or above the “Add to Cart” button in OPIs of both NZ and SL websites, making the action of buying a product more efficient.

Another interactive item that is seen in the top half of eight out of the 32 NZ and SL OPIs

is a Reviews hyperlink (see Figure 8.3, Figure 8.5, Figure 8.6). This interactive item (realising M8 – Providing feedback) appears right below the product title and price when it is used. If there are already reviews from customers, a bright coloured star rating accompanies the Reviews hyperlink (which shows the number of product reviews) attracting the customer’s attention to the (normally) high rating (Figure 8.3). The placement of a star rating at the top of the

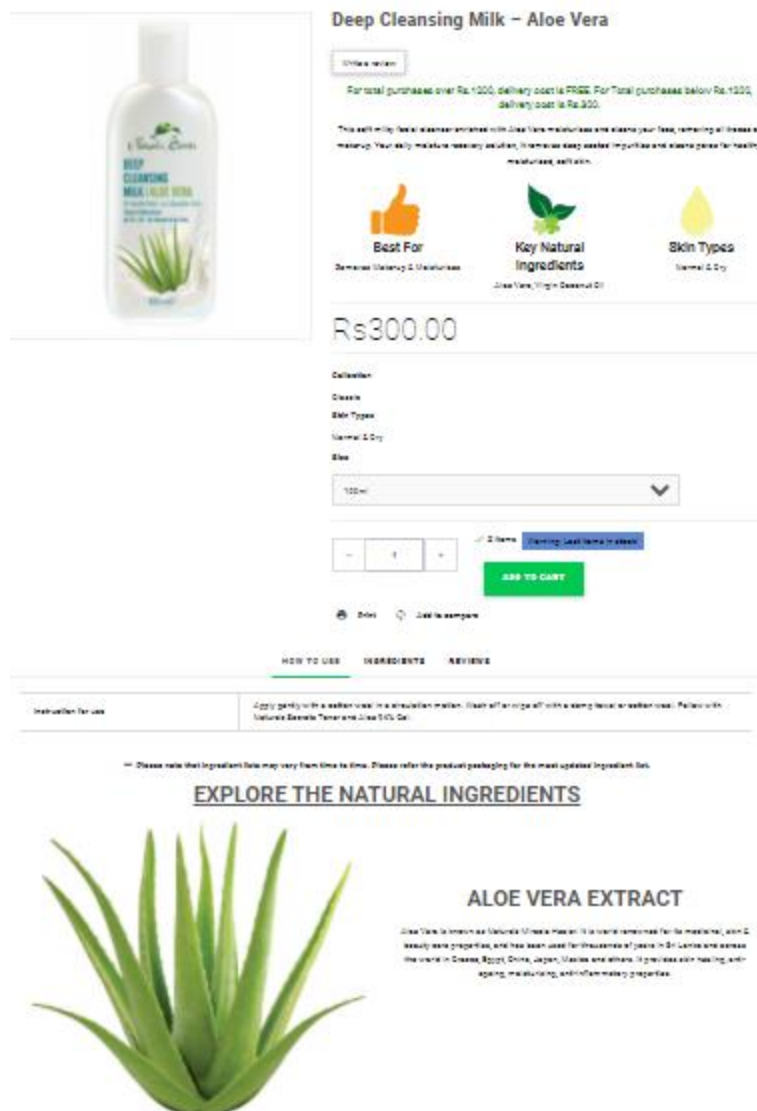


Figure 8.5 SL OPI layout with 'Add to cart' button appearing after product description (Nature's Secrets, 2020)

OPI near the product title seems to make a general statement about the quality of the product without having to read or give specific review details. The product image, product title, price and rating combined give the customers that ideal view of the quality of a product. If there are no reviews already, the colours used for the rating/review are faded and blend into the background (see Figure 8.6). This focuses customer attention on

the other salient items on the page, detracting attention from the fact that the product has not been reviewed. However, if a customer clicks on the ratings/ reviews icon or hyperlink at the top, they are guided to a separate “Write a review” hyperlink that exists in the bottom half of all the 18 out of the 32 websites (10 NZ and eight SL) that use this product reviews interactive option to give feedback. This is where the real work of reviewing takes place, and other customers’ feedback and opinions can be found. So the placement of a rating/ review interactive item at the top of the OPI near the product title functions more as a promotional technique than as the actual avenue for customers to provide feedback (which is found in the bottom half of the page).

So, all in all, following Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) concept of the ideal real information value, it could be stated that the sellers present an ideal picture of the

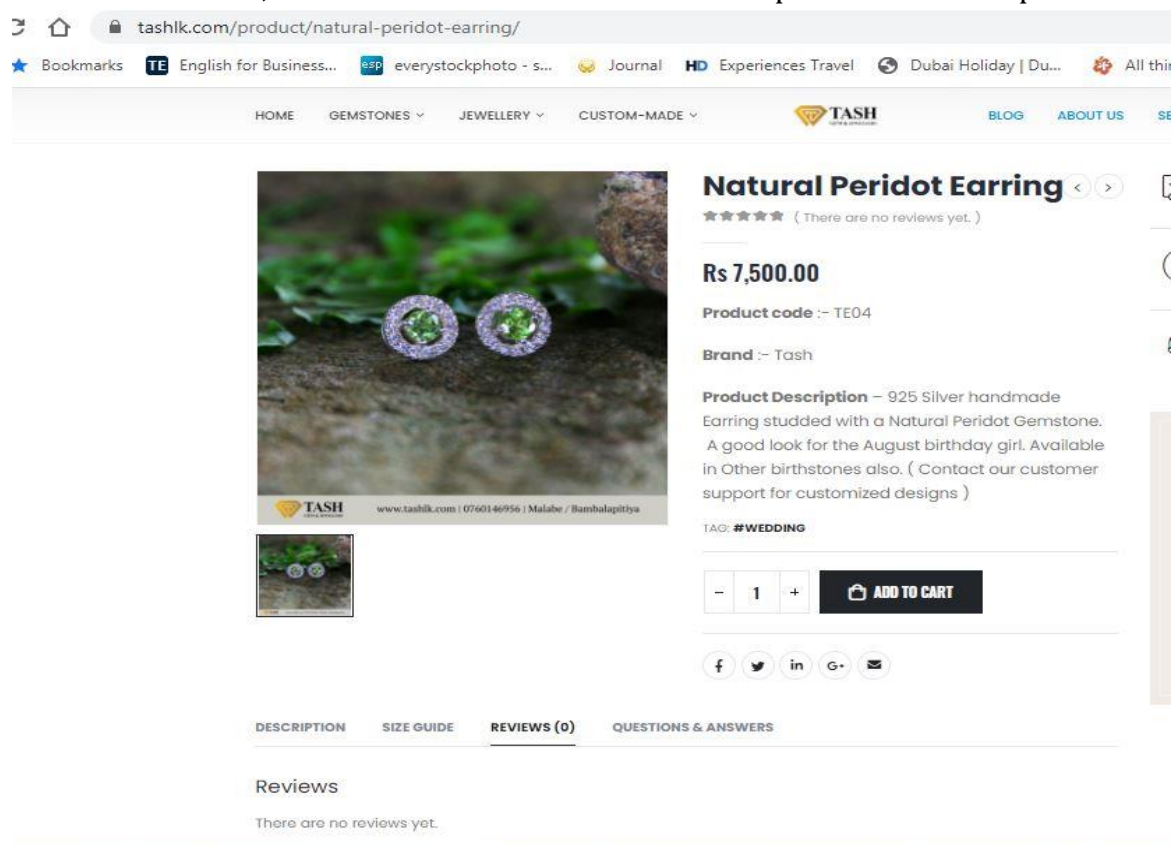


Figure 8.6. SLjeta product information (Tash, 2020)

product and an easy buying experience to their customers through Online Product Information (OPI). This is done by displaying in the top half of the OPI the following interactive strategies: the option to buy the product, the options for selecting requirements, purchase plan information, a sensory experience of the product evoked through switching through multiple photographs, and a star rating which hints at the

product's quality (along with a short non-interactive promotional statement). As far as the sellers are concerned, delving into the more detailed and concrete information, or even providing actual feedback or asking questions at the bottom half of the OPI are all secondary to making a purchase decision.

The bottom half of the OPI contains headings for detailed information which can be clicked to reveal content hidden from view (ingredients, how to use, detailed product information, reviews) or links prompting to read more. The entire bottom half or only the right side of the bottom half of the OPI can be utilized to display these interactive items. The placement of these interactive items in the bottom half of the OPI (which is not directly visible as we enter the page) implies that the OPI relegates the more labour-intensive tasks of getting to really know the product by reading further details such as ingredients and how to use, or giving feedback, into a secondary role. The average user who is not enthusiastic to engage with the finer print or who does not want to spend time reviewing the product is only given an ideal impression of the product, its quality, and given only the necessary options to facilitate a quick purchase.

Regarding the placement of content share options (e.g., drop a hint, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest) inside OPI (realising M9 – Transferring information), the share icons are usually given in close proximity to the purchase function ("Add to Cart"/ "Buy it now" buttons) in the top half of the OPI. In SL product information this happens 11 out of the 13 times the websites use the share options. In NZ product information, it happens six out of nine times the websites use share icons. Therefore, the purpose of dissemination of product information seems to figure highly in both countries, and more so in the SL product information.

#### 8.4.2. Textual function of interactive sites/signs on the paradigmatic plane

With regard to the textual analysis on the paradigmatic plane, I discuss the effects of acting on interactive items which cause page layout changes within the same page. I will therefore first discuss the effect of interacting with expandable/collapsible content or toggleable tabs and pins. Then I move on to discuss the effect of interacting with images

which also contributes to answering Research Question 5- *“What is the relationship between images and text in Online Product Information?”*.

#### *8.4.2.1. Effects of Interacting with expandable/ collapsible sections on the OPI layout*

The interactive options of expandable/collapsible sections - also known as accordions (W3 Schools, n.d.) - and toggleable tabs and pills (e.g., Figure 8.4, Figure 8.5, Figure 8.6) allow sellers to organize detailed information in an orderly manner, and reduce cluttering the page and overwhelming the viewers with information. This enables users to focus on particular parts of the OPI that they want to read/view. However, web designers also seem to prefer less use of tabs and to simply use information on the OPI that is essential, without hiding anything in tabs. NZ web designer Bernard states

“if you just wrote, if you just serve up your content better, maybe you could just have it all on one page, like why make people select again to see more? I think though, that when you do usability testing on some of that stuff, some people like them (accordions), because they feel like that allows him to focus on a particular part of material.”

Regardless of the informant’s personal opinion, this option of accordions/ tabs is used by the OPIs of 15 out of 32 websites. The placement of details on the bottom half of the page coupled with being hidden from direct view connotes that the customers may read the information that is hidden only if interested, and is therefore not essential to persuading customers to make a purchase. The kind of information that is usually in accordions includes all ingredients, instructions for use, sometimes the product description if it is a repetition of a shorter version of a promotional description found in the top half, reviews, packaging information, delivery and returns information and product composition.

Clicking on those tabs/accordion titles causes the written content within those sections to appear. This pushes down other menu titles or hides the content of another tab from view. In either case, only one panel can be seen at any one time. The reason for certain written content being hidden from view may also be due to the redundancy that can be observed in written information; for instance, the verbal promotional statement and key product details given in point form in the top right of the OPI are sometimes repeated in detail inside the expandable/collapsible content in the bottom half. This can also imply



that a full-on view or check of all product information is not necessary before product purchase, at least as far as the sellers are concerned.

#### *8.4.2.2. Effects of user interactivity with images on OPI layout*

This section contributes to answering Research Question 5 of this study – ‘*What is the relationship between images and texts in Online Product Information?*’ as regards the paradigmatic plane (Section 7.5 of Chapter 7 on Visual analysis addresses the same research question from a syntagmatic point of view).

In SL OPIs the visual mode dominates the top left of the OPI layout, and the textual mode generally dominates the top right and bottom half of the page (see Table 7.7). In contrast the NZ OPIs display a pattern of using the visual mode on the left with text on the right (see Figure 7.29). However, this layout applies to OPIs only when the items on the webpage are static and have not been activated through viewer interactivity. The following paragraphs discuss the patterns of interactivity that create significant changes to the OPI layout due to interactivity on product images, and their implications in terms of compositional meaning.

User actions such as hovering over or clicking an image creates a set of effects that cause a change in the general layout of the product information. OPIs only allow user interactivity with their main product photographs (generally found on the left of OPIs). None of the other images, which are less common and found in other parts of the product information, are imbued with interactivity. This is true for both SL and NZ OPIs. Interactivity with the main product image was observed for the 32 websites, and the following seven effects were observed:

- A. With mouse over image, a small area over which the cursor travels zooms in. Image does not expand beyond the original area of the image (Figure 8.7).
- B. With mouse over, slightly magnified product image moves a bit towards the opposite direction of the cursor movement (Figure 8.8).
- C. With mouse over, the name of the product appears with the image.
- D. With mouse over, a zoomed in product image appears to the right covering part of the written information.



- E. With a click, the image expands with a semi-transparent background, and covering most of or the entire page (Figure 8.10).
- F. With a click, the image expands, covering most of or the entire page (Figure 8.9).
- G. The main product image is non-interactive.

Figure 8.7 to Figure 8.9 illustrate some of the effects. Each figure presents the composition of the page layout before (left) and after(right) user interactivity with the product photograph.



Figure 8.7 Effect A - a small area over which the cursor travels zooms in. Image does not expand beyond the original area of the image (Tash, 2020)

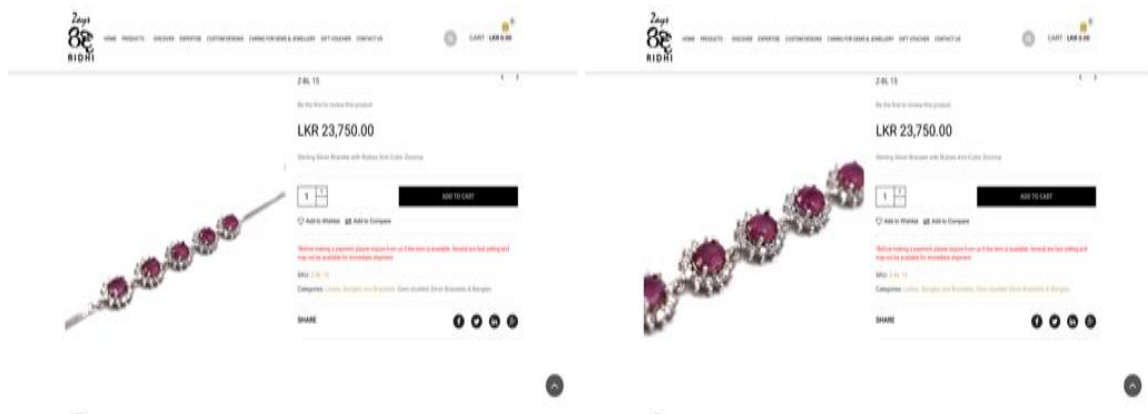


Figure 8.8 Effect B - slightly magnified product image (moves a bit towards the opposite direction of the cursor movement) (Ridhi Jewellery, 2020)

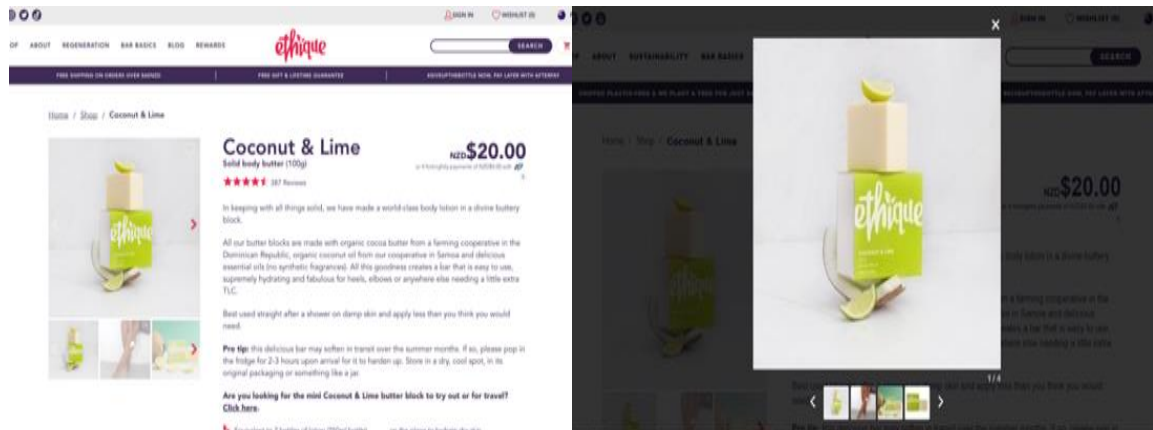


Figure 8.10 Effect E - image expands with a semi-transparent background, covering most of or the entire page. (Ethique, 2020)

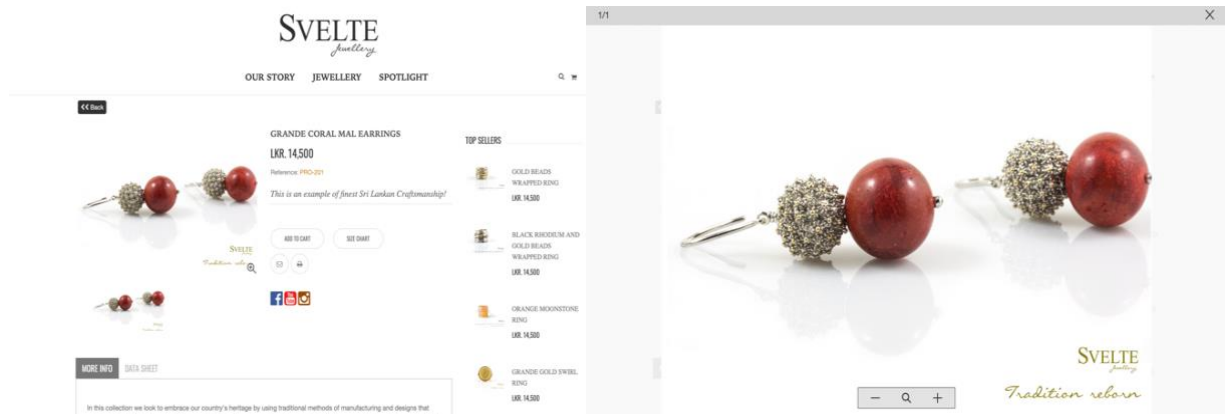


Figure 8.9 Effect F - image expands, covering most of or the entire page (Svelte, 2020)

A combination of these actions and effects can also occur. For instance, clicking on an image makes it expand to cover the OPI page layout with a semi-transparent background (effect E), and a mouse over action can make the name of the product appear close to the image (effect C) (see Figure 8.11).

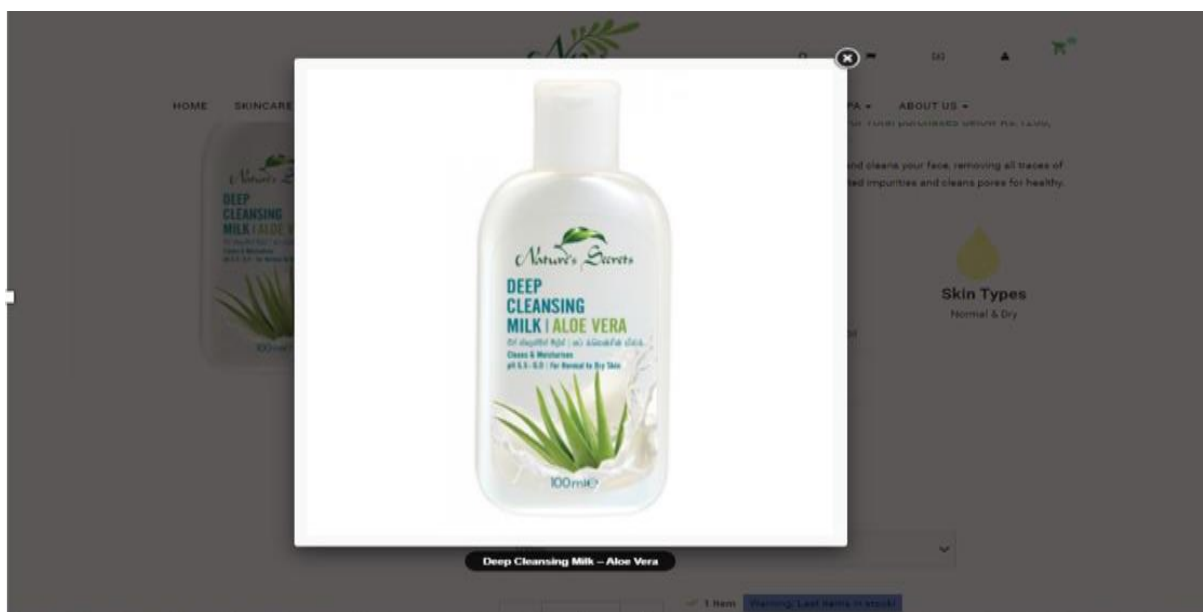


Figure 8.11 Effects C and E – image expands with a semi-transparent background covering the page (E), the name of the product appears with the image (C) (Nature's Secrets, 2020)

Table 8.2 lists the effect(s) that user interactivity with the main product image has on the OPI layouts of the 32 websites. Effects A, B, C and G do not create any change in the composition of the OPI layout. However, OPIs of 24 out of 32 websites undergo considerable changes to their layout when a user interacts with the main product image due to effects D, E and F. These three effects cause the image to be the single visible item or the most salient item on the product page at that particular time of user interactivity, covering everything else on the OPI, or pushing everything else into the background.

Eleven out of the 16 SL websites and 13 out of 16 NZ websites (altogether 24 out of 32) undergo dramatic changes in their composition (effects D, E, F). While five websites of SL OPIs still maintain the original layout composition after user interactivity or as a result of the image being non-interactive, OPIs of 11 SL websites allow the visual mode to overpower the other modes post interactivity when the online user interacts with the product photograph. This occurrence is even higher amongst NZ websites with 13 websites' OPI layout being dominated by an enlarged image after user interacts with the image.

*Table 8.2 Effect of interactivity with image on product description layout – SL and NZ websites*

<b>SL Website code</b>	<b>Action and resultant effect on image</b>	<b>NZ Website code</b>	<b>Action and resultant effect on image</b>
SLskch	A	NZsktr	G
SLsksp	BF	NZskox	F
SLskci	A	NZsket	E
SLskgr	CE	NZskso	A
SLsksw	CE	NZsksk	E
SLskna	CE	NZskca	E.
SLsk4r	BE	NZskta	E
SLskre	BE	NZskkd	BE
SLjeri	BE	NZjeca	E
SLjech	A	NZjeme	G
SLjesv	F.	NZjeao	E
SLjeta	A	NZjesi	F
SLjeai	G	NZjepa	BE
SLjede	BF	NZjelo	E
SLjeni	D	NZjewi	E
SLjeaa	E	NZjela	E

*8.4.2.3. Conclusion drawn on the effects of user interactivity on OPI layout on the paradigmatic plane*

The OPI layout on the syntagmatic dimension (see Sections 7.5.1, 7.5.3) demonstrated how the visual and textual modes complement each other in achieving the communicative purposes of the OPI genre. The visuals on the left become the point of departure to less known written information on the right or visual and written information together (product photograph, product title, etc.) project more of an idealistic view of the product in the top part (above the fold view) of the OPI compared

to the more nitty gritty written details at the bottom half of the OPI. When regarding user interactivity on the OPI layout on the paradigmatic plane, it can be said that at different points in time, the user indicates an interest in the image or the written details by hovering over each interactive item or by clicking on it. Interactivity is used with both the written and visual modes. Interactivity enables each interactive item to which the user pays attention at a particular moment to be prioritised and transformed at that moment in time. So there is an evolving set of priorities, signalled by the attention paid by the user to different items at different moments in time, and the website responds to this changing user attention, through interactivity. For instance, product photographs get enlarged by clicking on them at one point, and next written information (e.g., deliveries and returns) of which only headings may be visible, can be unhidden by clicking on the accordion or tab headings. Therefore, interactivity on the OPI prioritises either the visual or written mode depending on the gradual shifting of user attention from one item to another. Connected to findings on the syntagmatic plane, this shift in attention can be said to move from left to right (given to new) at the top, and then from top to bottom (ideal to real).

## 8.5 Chapter summary

This chapter illustrated the necessity of adapting Adami's (2015) analytical framework to fit the kind of analysis being undertaken and the genre being analysed. Consequently, the three effects of sites/signs proposed by Adami (2015) in her framework to analyse website interactivity were replaced by eight interactive functions. The findings of the analysis reveal that both the SL and NZ online product information offer customers the basic necessities for viewing and selecting products (purchasing, selecting, facilitating reading/ viewing). Other interactive functions such as accessing additional information, inquiring or providing feedback are not used as frequently. The cumulative effect one gets when investigating SL OPIs is of a closed insular environment with limited access to additional information. SL storeowners also seem to be more interested in promoting their product via the customer. NZ online stores in comparison, seem to be less focused on getting their product promoted via customers. Their promotional strategy seems to be providing customers with extra information. They also allow customers more opportunities to provide feedback compared to SL OPIs. So, the SL and NZ OPIs emphasize

different functions in the process of interacting with, informing and persuading customers and in establishing product credibility through OPI. Also, analysing the interactivity of sites/signs demonstrated that interactivity in OPI prioritises either the visual or the written mode depending on the gradual shift of attention paid to different items of the OPI by the online user at different points of viewing.

## CHAPTER 9: LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses Research Question 3 (*‘What are the patterns of language behaviour characterising the Online Product Information and its moves?’*). It does so starting with an investigation of the grammatical features of the OPI genre as a whole, and then examining more closely the register of the moves. As was mentioned in the Literature Review chapter (Section 2.9.3), focusing on the way a move is linguistically realised, and not just the general language patterns of the genre, can offer up interesting insights into language use within the genre.

The research question consisted of two sub questions: RQ3.1- *‘What are the patterns of language use characterising the OPI genre?’* and RQ3.2 – *‘What are the lexico-grammatical features characterising the moves/steps of the OPI?’*. The next section of this chapter (9.2) looks at linguistic characteristics of the genre as a whole (RQ 3.1) by conducting a frequency analysis of the grammatical Parts of Speech (POS) categories of the genre. It also investigates whether there is any linguistic variation of the genre in different countries. The analysis is supplemented with participant data and concordances from the Online Product Information (OPI) corpus. The second section of the chapter (9.3) investigates the lexico-grammatical features at move level. However, due to word limitations of this thesis, I select one move – Move 3- ‘Promoting the product’ - to exemplify the distinctive usage of language exhibited within individual moves and steps. I use lexical- bundles as an analytical tool to explore the move register, and once again support my analysis with examples from the OPI corpus.

### 9.2 Grammatical characteristics of the Online Product Information (OPI) genre

The following section investigates the register of the OPI. It starts with an analysis of the grammatical characteristics of the OPI (OPI) genre. In the next few sections I investigate

how the different parts of speech have been used and how they vary across the different sub corpora.

### 9.2.1 Nouns

High usage of nouns is characteristic of genres with high informational density (Biber, 2012). As can be seen in Table 9.1, in this research, nouns occur at a very high relative frequency of 5198 nouns per 10,000 words in the SL sub corpus and 4598 words in the NZ sub corpus. This is a relatively higher frequency compared to the two reference corpora (the spoken business sub section and the written commerce and finance subsection of the BNC sampler corpus). Even the relative frequency of nouns in the BNC sampler written commerce and finance sub corpus which has been classified as an informative register (UCREL, 1998), is only 3212 per 10k words. This is an indication of the highly informational, descriptive nature of the OPI genre. Details such as product names, brand names, ingredients, metal, stones all contribute to the high frequency of proper nouns in the OPI sub corpora.

*Table 9.1 Relative frequency of nouns in the OPI sub corpora compared to BNC sampler sub corpora*

NOUNS	TAG	RELATIVE	RELATIVE	Frequency -	Frequency -
		FREQUENCY -SL OPI (PER 10,000)	FREQUENCY -NZ OPI (PER 10,000)	BNC sampler _spoken_ business (PER 10k)	BNC sampler _written_ commerce and finance (PER 10k)
Noun, plural	NNS	465.95	477.14	486.20	798.14
Noun, singular/mass	NN	1565.96	1843.39	1473.18	1857.75
Proper singular	noun, NP	3143.65	2270.78	487.91	549.59
Proper plural	noun, NPS	23.10	7.32	4.16	7.45
TOTAL		5198.55	4598.63	2451.45	3212.93



### 9.2.2 Adjectives

The frequency of occurrence of adjectives in the target corpora (SL and NZ) is much higher than those displayed in the reference spoken register. However, the OPI genre seems to share similarity with the written commerce and finance register by the latter also displaying a high frequency of use of adjectives.

A notable observation is that the NZ OPI sub corpus uses more adjectives than the target written reference corpus and the SL OPI sub corpus. The NZ sub corpus contains 1002 adjectives per 10k while the written reference corpus and SL sub corpus have a frequency of only 860 and 851 adjectives per 10k words respectively. As there are fewer nouns in the NZ corpus (4598) than in the SL corpus (5198) (see Table 9.1), but more adjectives in the NZ sub corpus than in the SL sub corpus, it is safe to assume that each noun is described/ evaluated more in the NZ sub corpus than is done in the SL sub corpus.

*Table 9.2 Relative frequency of adjectives in OPI sub corpora compared with BNC sampler sub corpora*

ADJECTIVES	TAG	RELATIVE FREQUENCY - SL OPI (PER 10,000)	RELATIVE FREQUENCY - NZ OPI (PER 10,000)	Frequency - BNC sampler _spoken_ business (PER 10k)	Frequency - BNC sampler _written_ commerce and finance (PER 10k)
Adjective	JJ	807.50	963.93	561.90	800.55
Adjective, comparative	JJR	29.14	25.60	29.64	43.24
Adjective, superlative	JJS	14.92	12.72	11.51	17.00
TOTAL		851.56	1002.25	603.05	860.79

Adjectives are one of the common grammatical devices used for appreciation – how things are evaluated (J. R. Martin & White, 2005, p. 56). Positive evaluation has also been identified in the present research as one of the promotional steps (see Chapter 6 on Move analysis). Higher frequencies of adjectives in NZ sub corpus compared to the SL OPI sub

corpus, therefore leads to the assumption that NZ OPIs may use more evaluative language than the SL OPIs. An excerpt from an OPI (stripped of the visual, layout and interactive features) taken from the NZ corpus is given below to illustrate the high use of adjectives and nouns in OPI.

Blue Chamomile Facial Wash Cream  
\$69.50

+Add to cart  
Buy it now

Blue Chamomile Facial Wash Cream  
Suited to: For normal to oily & trouble skin types  
Capacity: 100g

Product Info  
A pure plant facial cleansing wash. Contains the deep azure blue pure essential oil of German Chamomile selected for its high percentage of chamazulene which has excellent skincare properties. Contains additional beneficial herbal oils such as Roman Chamomile, Styrax Benzoin and Allantoin to assist problem skins. Gentle enough to remove eye makeup, normalises your pH skin and provides nutrients for healthy skin. This purifying cleanser brings the complexion of a sense of calm and nourishing purity.

Product Summary  
Hypoallergenic with no harsh detergents and chemicals  
Normalises skin pH balance  
Hydrates the skin and keeps it moisturised  
Soothes sensitive skin and reduces skin trouble  
Tightens pores without clogging and controls sebum production  
Provides nutrients for healthy skin  
Removes dirt and makeup without irritation

Ingredients  
Distilled Water (Aqua), Vitis Vinifera (Grape) Seed Oil, Cetearyl Olivat, Sorbitan Olivat, Glycerin, Dehydroacetic Acid, Benzyl Alcohol, Bisabolol, Chamomilla Recutita (Matricaria) Flower Oil, Tocopherol, Helianthus Annuus (Sunflower) Seed Oil, Styrax Benzoin Gum, Anthemis Nobilis Flower Oil

*Figure 9.1. Sample OPI – Nzskca1*

### 9.2.3 Verbs and adverbs

The overall use of verbs in the OPI sub corpora is low compared to both the written and spoken reference corpora. Combined with the findings of the previous sub sections, a low use of verbs points to the highly informationally dense nature of the OPI genre. However, there is a peculiarly high usage of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present verbs (VVZ) in SL and NZ OPI sub corpora compared to the reference corpora.

Table 9.3. Relative frequency of verbs in OPI sub corpora compared with BNC sampler sub corpora

VERBS	TAG	RELATIVE FREQUENCY - SL OPI (PER 10k)	RELATIVE FREQUENCY - NZ OPI (PER 10k)	Frequency -BNC sampler _spoken_ business (PER 10k)	Frequency - BNC sampler _written_ commerce and finance (PER 10k)
Verb 'to be', base form	VB	17.77	37.99	76.66	109.58
Verb 'to be', past tense	VBD	0.71	1.93	57.57	49.01
Verb 'to be', gerund or present participle	VBG	0.71	2.50	6.24	6.82
Verb 'to be', past participle	VCN	5.33	6.56	24.51	32.12
Verb 'to be', non-3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present	VBP	30.92	34.52	67.30	69.59
Verb 'to be', 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present	VBZ	91.34	116.88	136.46	124.70
<b>TOTAL</b>		146.78	200.38	232.28	391.82
Verb, base form	VV	358.97	337.70	393.71	269.34
Verb, past tense	VVD	35.90	59.79	91.59	112.00
Verb, gerund or present participle	VVG	164.20	186.69	206.07	178.12
Verb, past participle	VVN	126.88	168.95	204.06	336.51
Verb, non-3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present	VVP	82.10	92.19	233.63	75.78
<b>Verb, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present</b>	VVZ	<b>154.60</b>	<b>175.31</b>	76.96	87.43
<b>TOTAL</b>		922.65	1020.63	1206.02	1059.18
Verb 'to have', base form	VH	3.90	1.74	26.52	21.93
Verb 'to have', past tense	VHD	-	0.77	12.40	10.18
Verb 'to have', gerund or present participle	VHG	1.06	0.19	4.38	2.62
Verb 'to have', past participle	VHN	-	-	3.34	1.05
Verb 'to have', non-3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present	VHP	8.52	10.22	44.35	33.90
Verb 'to have', 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present	VHZ	9.24	12.15	20.65	42.41
<b>TOTAL</b>		22.72	25.07	111.64	112.09

This relatively high usage of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present verbs (VVZ) can be explained in the context of the OPI genre purposes of describing and evaluating a product as a general truth or fact. The high use of singular present verbs can be attributed to how the product

is projected as actively addressing a customer need through restorative, remedial or beautifying actions. Promoting the product through discussing its benefits is recognized as a persuasive strategy by copywriters (see Chapter 5 Section 5.3 - Gemma's comments – PI COMMENT 7). The following is an excerpt from a Sri Lankan skincare OPI illustrating the use of present tense verbs (underlined) to discuss the benefits of a product:

A Soothing Sensation

This cream enriched with the goodness of Cinnamon increases the collagen levels of the skin. This increases the elasticity of skin, reduces signs of aging & restores moisture in your skin. Cinnamon oil is known to have highly potent antioxidant properties. This softens rough skin & improves the complexion of the skin.

*Figure 9.2. Excerpt from OPI SLskci4*

The observations are reinforced by interview data from copywriters. The following information was revealed when copywriter Gemma was asked about language features of the product based copy that she writes for a beauty care brand:

“Gemma: Yeah, there's a lot of, there's a lot of really common words. It's like replenishing, nourishing, hydrating. There's always a description there of what it does. It's like a verb, right? Like it replenishes it. It nourishes, it hydrates. It treats it, it purifies, it like balances. Like there's a lot of there's always some kind of verb there.

Interviewer: A lot of action going on with the cream.

Gemma: Exactly. Yeah, you're buying it for a purpose. So if you wrote, if you wrote "a creamy cleanser", that's cool. That's that's what it is. It's a creamy cleanser. But what's the action? What's the verb? What's it doing?”

So in the copy writing practice of writing of the features and benefits of a particular product, adjectives that describe and evaluate nouns along with verbs that express the benefits of the product as actions seem to play a crucial role.

Added to the high use of singular present tense verbs, lower frequency of past forms (i.e., low frequencies for VBD, VBN, VHD, VHN tags) in the OPI than in the reference corpora

are further testimony to a foregrounding of the descriptive informational characteristics of this genre (as opposed to narrative characteristics).

There also seems to be relatively less use of auxiliary verb forms (e.g., VHD, VHG, VHN, VBG) in the OPI sub corpora compared to the reference corpora. This can be explained through a copy writing practice that seems to avoid writing full sentences when it comes to writing OPI:

Product Description ~ 925 Silver handmade Earring studded with a Natural Peridot Gemstone. A good look for the August birthday girl. Available in Other birthstones also. (Contact our customer support for customized designs)

*Figure 9.3 SLjeta5 product description*

As the copywriter Gemma again explains “You're not writing, you're not writing a story. It needs to be short and sharp because again, you're communicating with, ... communicating the most important information.”

A relatively low frequency of adverbs is observed in the SL and NZ OPIs (238.48 and 295.85 per 10k words respectively) compared to the spoken and written reference corpora (see Table 9.4). However, this frequency is closer to the frequency of adverbs used in the written commerce and finance reference corpus. There is a considerable difference between the OPI sub corpora and the spoken reference corpus, highlighting that the grammatical features of the OPI are closer to those of a written register than a spoken one.

*Table 9.4. Relative frequency of adverbs in OPI sub corpora and reference corpora*

<b>ADVERBS</b>	<b>TAG</b>	<b>RELATIVE FREQUENCY - SL OPI (PER 10K)</b>	<b>RELATIVE FREQUENCY - NZ OPI (PER 10K)</b>	<b>Frequency - BNC sampler _spoken_ business (PER 10K)</b>	<b>Frequency - BNC sampler _written_ commerce and finance (PER 10K)</b>
Adverb	RB	225.69	282.54	645.92	341.76
Adverb, comparative	RBR	4.62	7.33	20.65	19.31
Adverb, superlative	RBS	8.17	5.98	2.67	6.19
<b>TOTAL</b>		238.48	295.85	669.24	367.26

Overall, a preference for nouns and adjectives over verbs and adverbs seems to characterise the OPI genre as a whole. In addition, SL OPIs display a stronger preference for nominalization and use of fewer action verbs compared to NZ OPIs.

#### 9.2.4 Other Parts of Speech

A look at some other grammatical categories points to a few more characteristics of the OPI genre as a whole and a few differences between SL and NZ OPI (see Table 9.5).

*Table 9.5. Relative frequency of other Parts of Speech in OPI sub corpora and reference corpora*

<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Tag</b>	<b>RELATIVE FREQUENCY - SL OPI (PER 10K)</b>	<b>RELATIVE FREQUENCY - NZ OPI (PER 10K)</b>	<b>Frequency - BNC sampler _spoken_ business (PER 10k)</b>	<b>Frequency - BNC sampler _written_ commerce and finance (PER 10k)</b>
Preposition Subordinating conjunction	or IN	706.57	818.51	1036.74	1336.40
Determiner	DT	487.28	560.27	993.43	1111.04
Coordinating conjunction	CC	430.76	502.60	372.25	356.14
Cardinal number	CD	401.98	145.80	205.32	188.93
Possessive pronoun	PP\$	102.71	154.29	98.57	91.63
Personal pronoun	PP	89.92	176.86	647.92	148.52
Modal	MD	35.54	66.73	150.88	186.94

Coordinating conjunctions (CC) in the NZ OPI sub corpus stand out of the set by being relatively more frequently used than in the reference corpora. Glancing at the concordances reveals that this grammatical category (CC) is dominated by the conjunctions ‘and’, ‘or’ and ‘either...or’ as well as the use of the ampersand (&). This may be because words, phrases and clauses which are strung together to join ideas give rise to a sense of saturation – that the product is full of positive features and benefits. The example concordances below appear as part of the ‘Promoting the Product’ move (M3) and illustrates this quality of OPIs.

1,364 NZskso15.txt	it is suitable for the hands, face	<b>and</b>	body. It can also be used for
1,365 NZskso15.txt	clothing. An all-natural soap, it is biodegradable,	<b>and</b>	the laurel gives it anti-fungal and antibiotic
1,366 NZskso15.txt	biodegradable, and the laurel gives it anti-fungal	<b>and</b>	antibiotic properties. Packaging-free. Unscented. Biodegradable formula pH
1,367 NZskso15.txt	Made from 100% natural ingredients. No preservatives	<b>or</b>	other chemicals. Very economical, 1 bar of
1,368 NZskso2.docx	Bi-Phase Makeup Remover Benefits: Gently cleanse	<b>&amp;</b>	refresh your skin with the Bi-Phase Makeup
1,369 NZskso2.docx	ultra-hydrating two-phase makeup remover that combines oil	<b>and</b>	rose water to thoroughly erase makeup, soothe,

*Figure 9.4 Concordances illustrating the use of coordinating conjunctions in the OPI*

The conjunction ‘or’ is also visible in offering choices to customers:

28 NZjeao4.txt	a different length bracelet please message us	<b>or</b>	note at checkout. Stone sizes vary. Bracelets
29 NZjeao4.txt	sizes vary. Bracelets come in either Black	<b>or</b>	Tan coloured cord. Please note standard set
30 NZjeao5.txt	GEMSTONES NZ GEMSTONE BRACELETS **CUSTOM MADE** \$65	<b>or</b>	make 4 interest-free payments of \$16.25 NZD
31 NZjeao5.txt	\$16.25 NZD fortnightly with Afterpay (More info)	<b>or</b>	6 weekly interest-free payments from \$10.83 with

*Figure 9.5 Concordances illustrating the use of coordinating conjunction 'or'*

The genre as a whole uses relatively fewer determiners (DT) (mainly using ‘an, a, this, the, any, all, no’), and modals (MD). The use of attributive adjectives (adjectives before nouns), and the practice of only “communicating the most important information” as the copywriter stated, may be the reason for the comparatively low use of determiners. Modals (MD) are mainly restricted to the use of ‘can’, ‘may’ and ‘will’. Modals indicating conditionals (would, could) which form part of the other reference corpora, are significantly absent from the target OPI sub corpora. Concordances from the NZ OPI sub corpus provides an example of the characteristic modal usage:

3 NZskca1.txt	nourishing purity that the cream gives. You	<b>can</b>	remove your makeup by using the cream
4 NZskca10.txt	Its excellent diffusion and penetration powers	<b>will</b>	leave your skin soft and moisturised. remember
5 NZskca10.txt	colours. Therefore depending on seasonal variations, there	<b>may</b>	be slight differences in colour, texture and

*Figure 9.6 Concordances illustrating the use of modal auxiliaries ‘can’, ‘will’, ‘may’ in the OPI*

Modal verbs indicating obligation (‘must’) was found in a very specific and limited circumstance only - when customers are instructed about dispatch, delivery and returns in Move 5- “Advising, directing, warning”.

331 NZjesi9.txt	within 7 days of purchase. Your item	<b>must</b>	be unused and in the same condition
332 NZjesi9.txt	same condition that you received it. It	<b>must</b>	also be in the original packaging. TITLE

*Figure 9.7 Concordances illustrating the use of modal auxiliary ‘must’ in the OPI*

The frequency of personal pronouns of NZ and SL sub corpora is closer to the frequency of personal pronouns of the written commerce and finance reference corpus, and is considerably lower than the spoken reference corpus. The personal pronouns in the OPI sub corpora are restricted to mainly third person singular pronoun ‘it’ and plural pronouns ‘they’, ‘them’, ‘you’, ‘yourself’, ‘we’ and ‘us’.

The pronouns ‘it’, ‘they’, ‘them’ are used to refer to the product, ingredients/ materials and body. The second person pronouns ‘you’, ‘yourself’, ‘we’, ‘us’ reflect the customer



orientation, engagement and interaction projected by sellers through OPIs. At the same time, they seem to provide a sense of collective identity when discussing issues faced by customers (e.g., “Due to stress, we feel our bodies lose its magnesium level”).

62 SLskch9.txt	excess oil and revitalizes your skin making	<b>it</b>	soft and supple. Pack Sizes 50ML- LKR
63 SLskci10.txt	to moisturize your skin and relieve fatigue.	<b>It</b>	also removes odour causing bacteria to leave
64 SLskci13.txt	Grass act to remove harmful impurities leaving	<b>you</b>	rejuvenated. CATEGORIES: Bath Salt, Beauty Care DESCRIPTION
65 SLskci13.txt	and Epsom salt are numerous. Infused together	<b>they</b>	make a potent combination that provides many
66 SLskci13.txt	typical part of your daily routine? Are	<b>you</b>	experiencing irritability and mood swings? If so,
67 SLskci13.txt	the main reasons is the constant stress	<b>you</b>	undergo in the 21st century. Due to
68 SLskci13.txt	the 21st century. Due to the stress	<b>we</b>	feel, our bodies lose its magnesium level
69 SLskci13.txt	level and increase in adrenaline causing what	<b>we</b>	call stress and anxiety. Even though stress

*Figure 9.8 Concordances illustrating the use of pronouns in the OPI*

In contrast to this specific set of pronouns used in OPIs, the reference corpora use a variety of personal pronouns including the third person singular pronouns ‘he’, ‘she’ and the first person singular ‘I’ which were significantly absent from the OPIs.

What is interesting in the frequency of personal pronouns is that the NZ sub corpus uses twice as many personal pronouns (176.85 per 10k) as the SL sub corpus (89.92 per 10k) does. This implies a higher customer engagement and product reference on the part of NZ OPIs. This idea is reinforced by the fact that the relative frequency of possessive pronouns (e.g., your, our, its, my) in the NZ sub corpus (154.29 per 10k) exceeds the relative frequencies of the SL sub corpus (102.71) and even the two reference corpora (98.57 and 91.63). So the NZ OPIs seem to have a stronger customer orientation and customer address than the SL OPIs do. Figure 9.9 illustrates concordances of possessive pronouns taken from the New Zealand sub corpus.

410 NZskso6.docx	it damp on the skin before applying	<b>your</b>	serum. This way, the ingredients will penetrate
411 NZskso6.docx	of Serum. Use in the morning before	<b>your</b>	day cream or for around the eyes
412 NZskso6.docx	eyes for an anti-aging cure. Follow with	<b>our</b>	Rose + Rosehip Moisturiser. Use as CONDUCTIVE
413 NZskso6.docx	Rosehip Moisturiser. Use as CONDUCTIVE GEL with	<b>our</b>	5 in 1 LED Skin Tightening Device
414 NZskso7.txt	oils blend for oily/acne-prone/problematic skin due to	<b>its</b>	strong antibacterial, clarifying, anti-inflammatory and healing properties.
415 NZskso7.txt	oil production you just found it! Try	<b>our</b>	Balancing and Clarifying Face Treatment Oil with
416 NZskso7.txt	oils blend for oily/acne-prone/problematic skin due to	<b>its</b>	strong antibacterial, clarifying, anti-inflammatory and healing properties.

*Figure 9.9 Concordances illustrating the use of possessive pronouns in the NZ OPI*

Although not exactly a lexical feature, the very high frequency of cardinal numbers (CD) (see Table 9.5) in the SL sub corpus compared to the NZ sub corpus and the reference corpora is significant in the sense that numbers hint at a more objective, rather than subjective, style of description used in the SL OPIs.

In summary, high frequency of nouns, adjectives, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present verbs and coordinating conjunctions compared to the reference corpora, and a relatively low frequency of use of auxiliary verbs, adverbs, determiners and modal verbs seem to characterise the OPI genre. Personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, proper nouns, cardinal numbers and modals are also sites of cross-cultural differences by being much more frequent in one OPI sub corpus than the other.

### 9.3 Lexical bundles of ‘M3 - Promoting the product’ and its steps

Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’ of the OPI genre represented approximately 50% of the entire OPI corpus. It is also one of the obligatory moves of the OPI genre contributing to achieving the overall persuasive purpose of the genre. This lead to an in depth exploration

of how this move is realised linguistically. Table 9.6 reveals the lexical bundles generated for the steps operationalising Move 3- 'Promoting the product'. In Chapter 6 (Move analysis), the function of the move 'Promoting the product' was described as vaunting the product and boosting value of the product in the eyes of the customer. To achieve this purpose, different steps are used such as targeting the market, evaluating the product positively, making reassurances, establishing credentials, providing customer testimonials, justifying against alternatives (for beauty care) and pairing products (for jewellery). The lexical bundles given in Table 9.6 for each of these steps used to achieve the function of 'promoting the product', reveal how each step is linguistically performed. These lexical bundles commonly and frequently used to express each step can be a useful guide to novice writers or online businesses in writing their own OPI texts, to promote a beauty care product or jewellery item. The frequency of occurrence of bundles is given in front of each bundle.

The analysis revealed a total of 82 lexical bundles (50 bigrams, 20 trigrams, 12 four or five-word bundles) after following the criteria set for lexical bundle generation given in the Methodology chapter. The process of collapsing overlapping bundles (Wood & Appel, 2014) reduced this number to 53 distinct and more pedagogically useful bundles. Of these lexical bundles, a majority directly contribute to expressing the step and the move function (e.g., '100% vegetarian', 'certified natural', 'ideal for'). There are some other bundles that do not seem to express the step or purpose of the Move explicitly. This is regardless of whether they are grammatical bundles (consisting of only function words like auxiliary verbs, prepositions, articles, pronouns - e.g., 'is our', 'can be', 'one of the') or whether they are content bundles (including content words like nouns and verbs - e.g., 'and skin', 'we use'). These bundles nevertheless hint at the grammatical patterns characterising the move.

Table 9.6 Lexical bundles realising steps of M3 - Promoting the product

Steps of M3			Lexical bundles		
Name of step	No. of words per step	Frequency	Bundle	Frequency	Bundle
<b>M3S1 - Targeting the market</b>	2793	70	for all	8	for those (who want)
		55	suitable for		for everyday
		14	(makes) the perfect (gift)	7	is for (the)
		11	for daily (use)	7	ideal for
		10	perfect for	6	for any
<b>M3S2 - Evaluating the product positively</b>	31,942	57	skin and	8	the beauty of
		33	(is) (with) a natural	8	is known as
		30	(in)(of) new zealand	7	a beautiful and
		28	blend of	6	is comprised of
		23	with this	5	is one of (the)
		22	inspired by	5	is the perfect
		21	is our	5	will help you
		21	with natural	3	(and) adds a bit (of)
<b>M3S3 - Justifying against alternatives (in beauty care)</b>	1752	9	much more		
		7	unlike many		
<b>M3S5 - Making reassurances (in beauty care)</b>	3588	29	not tested (on animals)	11	and safe
				10	no synthetic
		27	paraben free	10	safe for
		23	cruelty free	9	skin and
		20	product is	8	100% natural
		16	100% vegetarian	8	and gentle
		15	sodium lauryl	7	with no
		14	natural vegan	6	free and
<b>M3S6 - Establishing credentials (in beauty care)</b>	455	9	tested and		
		7	certified natural		
<b>M3S8 - Pairing products (in jewellery)</b>	873	11	(worn) alone or		
		11	can be		
		8	(or stacked) with your (other favorite)		
		5	paired with		
		5	this piece		
		4	to create a		

As can be seen in Table 9.6, some steps such as ‘M3S3 – Justifying against alternatives’ do not contain many lexical bundles compared to other steps. One possible reason is that the sub corpora for these steps are smaller in size (e.g., ‘Justifying against alternatives’ has only 1752 words) than steps like ‘M3S2- Evaluating the product positively’ (31,942 words). Or it may be that the use of language in a step is very creative and varied that the incidence of common lexical bundles is limited regardless of the size of the sub corpus. The fact that the ‘M3S5 – Making reassurances’ step (3588 words) has almost the same number of lexical bundles as the ‘M3S2 – Evaluating the product positively’ step (31,942 words) supports this assumption.

## 9.4 Grammatical patterns of Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’

The lexical bundles also provide further insight into linguistic features guiding the ‘Promoting the product’ move (M3) and its steps. The next section is a qualitative discussion of these features of the move emerging from the lexical bundles and their concordances. The lexical bundles that were found as characterising each step (seen in Table 9.6) are underlined in each concordance.

### 9.4.1. Clause initial subject and (auxiliary) verb deletion

One main linguistic feature found in this move is clause initial subject and auxiliary verb deletion. The use of a grammatical subject and any auxiliary verb are only implicit. We can identify several types of such clauses which start with:

a. adjective: M3S1- Suitable for all skin types, Perfect for everyday wear, ideal for daily wear.  
M3S5- *Paraben Free, cruelty free, natural vegan*

b. noun phrase: M3S1- The perfect body scrub for all skin types

c. Simple present tense verb: M3S1- Makes the perfect gift or accessory for the groom and bestman for your bridal party

c. Clause initial past participle verb: M3S5- *(Not) Tested on Animals*. M3S6- *Tested and registered, certified natural by*

Avoiding the subject and finite 'be'/auxiliary verb helps to remove any repetition in a circumstance where the same product is the subject of discussion (the product is, it is), facilitating an economy of words. This strategy helps to highlight or focus attention on the message of the clause. This feature is seen to be used along with bullet points or in separate short lines. It helps to recapitulate important ideas that have already been given within an evaluative paragraph. By deleting clause initial subjects and finite 'be' verbs/auxiliary verbs, the message becomes clear and succinct and can be grasped quickly and easily by the reader. This is suited to attract customers who are only scanning the product page, and do not want to spend too much time reading long product descriptions.

#### 9.4.2. Adjectives, adjectival phrases and clauses

##### 9.4.2.1. *Using evaluative adjectives (M3S2 – Evaluating the product positively)*

The move is characterised by a high use of evaluative adjectives which are field specific. They positively evaluate the qualities of the product being sold and evoke a sense of safety and ethicality, thereby directly contributing to the persuasive function of the move. Some adjectives commonly used to evaluate both products or their constituents are 'natural', 'beautiful' and 'powerful' which have positive evaluation. Using multiple attributive adjectives through conjunctions such as 'and' is also commonly seen in the promotional descriptions, thereby increasing the effect created by these evaluations.

E.g., M3S2- ..mask *is a powerful blend of clays, which has a beautiful and ethereal translucency to it, pendant studded with a Natural Blue Sapphire Gemstone, is the perfect way to get your skincare started and..* M3S5- *No synthetic preservatives, natural vegan, and gentle, and safe for colour treated hair.* M3S6- *(COMPANY)'s certified natural Rosapene™*

The writers also use compound adjectives made from a noun + "free" to negate any adverse effects, in addition to making claims of safety and ethicality.

E.g., M3S5- *Our glycerine is palm free and comes from.., It is 100% soap free and skin friendly*

#### 9.4.2.2. *Comparative and superlative adjectives*

One lexical bundle (*much more*) points out the use of comparative adjectives when justifying against alternatives. This feature helps the product owners to compare between the ingredients they use and those of other companies to rationalise the choice of ingredients, the price tag or to prove why their product is better than another's. Comparatives can be combined with intensifying adverbs, as seen through 'much more' to highlight the differences between the compared product and ingredients.

E.g., M3S3- *which are much more environmentally friendly sources than palm, the palm free stuff is much more expensive*

Lexical bundles such as 'one of the', 'is one of' used together with attributive adjectives and their superlatives signal the rarity or superiority of the product or ingredients in evaluating the product positively in order to promote the product.

E.g., M3S2- *is one of the oldest and most important spices grown in Sri Lanka, is one of the most potent forms of natural antioxidants, is one of the few oils that can kill various strains of acne*

#### 9.4.2.3. *Adjectival clauses*

The 'Promoting the product' move is also characterised by the use of subordinate adjectival clauses. They usually appear as part of a prepositional phrase (e.g., "for those who..."), and further describe and evaluate the type of person for whom the product is targeted. That person is targeted using adjectival clauses in two ways: it appeals to the customer's positive judgement of himself/herself ('who want to make a personal statement'). Alternatively, it operates by evoking the feelings of the potential buyer towards a loved one (...who capture your heart).

E.g., M3S1- *for those who want to make a personal statement, ...is especially created for those who capture your heart*

#### 9.4.3. Simple present tense 'be' verb

OPIs use simple present tense of the 'be' verb in order to describe the state/ quality of a product. As the benefits and attributes are presented as general facts, using simple present tense of the 'be' verb is seen fairly commonly throughout the step.

E.g., M3S2- *It is a natural exfoliator, This is our handmade exfoliating facial soap, is one of the most potent forms of natural antioxidants.* M3S1- *Gold Dust is for the babes who want to take their skincare to the next level.*

#### 9.4.4. Non-finite clauses

The move is also characterised by non-finite (past participle and perfective) clauses. These clauses are mostly adverbial clauses.

E.g., M3S2- ... *inspired by the beauty of nature,* M3S8- *This ring looks stunning paired with our amethyst earrings, Beautiful worn alone or stacked with your other favorite...*

E.g., M3S8-... *up to three charms together to create a memento piece, to create a more statement look,* M3S2- *(our top-selling bar works a treat) to help calm and nourish touchy scalps.*

The non-finite clauses enable the writer to add more positive evaluation to the promotional product description. Also non-finite clauses are used not just to suggest how/with what clothes or other jewellery the product can be worn. They combine the product pairing suggestion with an evaluation (*looks stunning, beautiful*). I must also note here that the sellers turn this strategy into an opportunity to expose the customer to more pieces from their own product range.

#### 9.4.5. Co-ordinating conjunctions – additives and alternatives

Co-ordinating conjunctions are used to stack up evaluative ideas and create a sense of saturation, an effect of the product being replete of features and benefits. They are also



used by sellers to add to and extend the sense of reassurance about the product in customers.

E.g., M3S2- *Hydrates the skin and keeps it moisturised, it removes toxins ... and adds a bit of volume.* M3S5- *Our glycerine is palm free and comes from., it's biodegradable and gentle on skin and hair*

In pairing jewellery, the seller suggests alternative options of wearing by using the co-ordinating conjunction 'or'.

E.g., M3S8- *perfect alone or layered, Wear alone or layer with your favourite*

#### 9.4.6. Prepositional phrases

Another prevalent feature is the use of prepositional phrases with the headwords 'for' and 'with'.

##### 9.4.6.1. Prepositional phrases with 'for'

This feature is used quite pervasively to convey for what kind of purpose, person or occasion the product is targeted (M3S1 – Targeting the market). The prepositional phrases can stand on their own or inside other clauses. This is also one of the reasons why 'Targeting the market' step can be found embedded in other moves and steps.

*e.g.: M3S1- 'Perfect for all skin types', 'These pendants make great gifts for any age', 'for Everyday Use',*

The prepositional phrases can also be found as complements of sentences (subject complements):

*e.g.: M3S1- This collection is for the woman who is ..., Gold Dust is for the babes who want to take their skincare to the next level.*

#### 9.4.6.2. Postmodifying prepositional phrases - starting with 'with'

Postmodifying prepositional phrases, like discourse connectives, aid in creating a sense of saturation of positive features and benefits of the product.

E.g., M3S2- *Bold simplicity and glamour with a touch of edge, ...take pleasure in facing the world with a natural clear glow*

#### 9.4.7. Personal pronouns, possessive determiners

The writer also directly addresses and advises the user to enjoy the various product benefits, which is a strong persuasive strategy. Such customer engagement is done through the use of pronouns and possessive determiners such as 'you' and 'our'. Use of pronouns such as 'our' suggests how the product sellers claim ownership of the product, making things more personal for them as sellers. The pronouns 'we' and 'our' also assures the customer of the care and commitment the seller takes personally to make the product safe for the customer. It reflects a personal touch and a sense of accountability.

The interpersonal relationship built between the 'your' and 'our' imbue more of an informal conversational style into the writing. It is as if the seller is engaging in a face to face conversation with a customer.

E.g., M3S2- *will help you feel light & bright all day long, It will help you release old and unhealthy habits, The Perfector is our first solid face cream, This is our handmade exfoliating facial soap. M3S5- we use 100% natural ingredients, we use less than 0.4% in our bars. M3S8- Wear this necklace alone or style with your other Superfine favourites!*

#### 9.4.8. Passive constructions

Passive voice constructions are used alongside personal pronouns in the move to strike a balance between an objective (using passive voice to distance the seller from being associated with harmful practices) and subjective (ownership of and commitment to the product and good practices as seen through use of pronouns 'we', 'our') outlook of the product.

*E.g., M3S5- Product is not tested on animals*

They have also been used in the OPI to discuss the qualities of a product that the sellers cannot claim as a fact. By using these constructions, sellers can remove themselves from the claim but can nevertheless use it to increase the product appeal. Therefore, there is a form of hedging involved in the use of passive voice in this step.

*E.g., M3S2- Green Moss Agate is known as the stone of new beginnings*

Passive voice constructions are also used with the modal verb ‘can’. It is used to illustrate to a potential buyer that they have various possibilities of styling and pairing the jewellery.

*E.g., M3S8- It can be worn alone, and can be easily clipped into the spring clasp*

#### 9.4.9. Using adverbs

##### 9.4.9.1. *Adverbs of intensification*

One lexical bundle (*much more*) points out the use of adverbs of intensification along with comparative adjectives when justifying against alternatives. These features help the product owners to compare between the ingredients they use and those of other companies to rationalise the choice of ingredients, the price tag or to prove why their product is better than another’s. Equally, when using adjectives to evoke and assert a sense of safety and ethicality, the effect created is heightened by using intensifiers.

*E.g., M3S3- which are much more environmentally friendly sources than palm, the palm free stuff is much more expensive. M3S5- 100% Vegetarian , 100% natural amethyst*

##### 9.4.9.2. *Adverbials of negative polarity*

Adverbials of negative polarity are used to differentiate between the seller’s own product and other similar products in the market, and to point out what is special about their own product. Also, negatives are used to negate or counter any possible adverse effects of a product that the potential customer could anticipate.

E.g., M3S3- *Unlike many other natural toner, our Toner is alcohol-free, so it's palm free unlike many surfactants...* M3S5- *Not tested on animals*

#### 9.4.10. Modal verbs 'will' and 'can'

The product benefits of the move have been described in association with its definitive benefits in the future by using the modal auxiliary 'will'. This grammatical feature helps the sellers to project the benefits and attributes of the product as extending across time.

E.g., M3S2- *will help you feel light & bright all day long, It will help you release old and unhealthy habits*

Using modal auxiliary 'can' helps to express various possibilities of styling and pairing the jewellery (see Section 9.4.8).

E.g., M3S8- *This amulet can be clipped onto these chains*

### 9.5. Chapter summary

The OPI as a whole is characterized by high informational density. It is distinguished by the use of nouns, adjectives, co-ordinating conjunctions and third person singular present verbs. It is also characterized by a relatively low use of auxiliary verbs, adverbs, prepositions or subordinating conjunctions, determiners and modal verbs compared to reference corpora. In addition to these characteristics, in terms of cross-cultural differences, the SL OPI is characterized by a higher use of cardinal numbers and nouns than NZ OPIs or the reference corpora. NZ OPIs on the other hand use adjectives, co-ordinating conjunctions and possessive pronouns much more than the SL sub corpus and the reference corpora.

Not all the lexical bundles generated for Move 3 express the move function of promoting the product and persuading the customer to buy the product; some of them only point to the grammatical patterns of the step. The number of lexical bundles per step varies, with some steps having as many as 17 bundles, and other steps having as little as two bundles.

The move register of 'M3- Promoting the product' is characterized by the use of adjectives and adjectival phrases/clauses (comparatives, superlatives, compounds), clause initial subject and verb deletion, adverbs of intensity and negative polarity, simple present tense of 'be' verb, passive voice, personal pronouns and possessive determiners (you, we, your, our), coordinating conjunctions (or, and), non-finite clauses, prepositional phrases (using 'with', 'for'), and modals ('will', 'can').

Also, the analysis found that certain grammatical features found in individual moves may go undetected in an analysis of grammatical features characterising the genre as a whole. For instance, although the use of modal verbs (can, will) and adverbs of degree are used to communicate steps such as 'pairing jewellery', 'evaluating the product positively' and 'making reassurances', the genre as a whole uses these grammatical features significantly less than the reference spoken and written business registers.

## CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION

### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews significant results of the research and considers them in relation to current research. It also addresses two methodological issues that arose from the genre analysis. Section 10.2 of the chapter reflects on the commonalities and differences identified in the Online Product Information (OPI) genre moves/steps compared to other similar genres. It also presents the implications of conducting a move analysis of OPI for more than a single product category, and across different national cultural contexts. The section also points out how steps that operationalise moves become relevant when identifying product or country specific differences. Section 10.3 reviews the functional characteristics of the genre. Section 10.4. reflects on the role of visuals and multimodality in move-based genre analysis, drawing on the OPI genre from visual and textual perspectives as well as from a cross-cultural perspective. Section 10.5. considers findings of the interactivity analysis and their significance. It reflects on how the digital medium was incorporated into the move structure analysis, evaluates the degree of success of that method, and discusses culture specific differences in the use of interactivity. 10.6 discusses what the findings of the research suggest about the notion of discourse community. Section 10.7. considers what it means to break existing genre conventions. Sections 10.8 and 10.9. complete the chapter by discussing two methodological issues that emerged in move coding and the visual analysis.

### 10.2 OPI moves and steps across different product categories and countries

One of the important considerations of the current study is that the move analysis of the OPI genre displayed commonalities as well as differences across the two product categories and the two countries. OPIs of different product categories in different countries have the same moves. Differences emerge at the level of steps between product

categories and the selling countries. I illustrate these points and their implications in the next few sub sections.

#### 10.2.1. Identifying common moves for OPI applicable to multiple products and countries

A common set of moves have been identified across OPIs of different product categories, in this case jewellery and beauty care. This finding is significant in that no attempt had previously been made to identify common multimodal moves for product information. In other multimodal genre research such as Izquierdo and Pérez Blanco (2020) on herbal tea and Labrador and Ramón (2015) on cheese, OPI from different product categories was analysed separately to identify the moves (e.g., Processing, Nutrition & allergies, Describing the process, Describing smell and taste, Offering serving suggestions, Suggesting recipes). These analyses have been called an analysis of sub genres (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020), and many of these moves are product specific. In contrast, the use of two separate product categories in my research reduces the possibility of the identified moves being idiosyncratic to a single product category, and these moves could therefore be relevant to product information on other ecommerce sites as well. The moves identified in my research constitute what previous researchers have called the 'parent genre' guiding the other 'sub genres' (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020). This claim could be tested by future research analysing several other product categories.

My research identified a set of six non-interactive moves and eight interactive moves that are common to OPI in Sri Lanka and New Zealand in jewellery and beauty care. The six non-interactive moves are Identifying the product (M1), Describing the product (M2), Promoting the product (M3), Offering incentives and service options (M4), Advising directing and/or warning (M5), Using Pressure tactics (M6). The eight interactive moves are Selecting requirements (M7), Purchasing (M8), Transferring information (M19), Accessing additional information (M10), Using additional seller services (M11), Requesting information (M12), Facilitating reading/viewing (M13) and Providing feedback (M14). The finding of common moves across national boundaries are consistent with the research results of Kathpalia (1997) and Zarza and Tan (2016), supporting the view that professional genres across national cultures maintain a universal set of moves. That said, the results are not consistent with other cross-cultural research findings such

as Mezek and Swales (2016) and Onder (2013). They identified differences in the macro-structure of academic and professional genres across cultures. Therefore, at the moment, there seems to be mixed views about the extent to which culture affects genre moves.

#### 10.2.2. Different steps of OPI used by different product categories/ countries

One significant finding on the extent to which national culture affects genre emerging from the current research is that differences in the genre can be observed between countries at the level of steps. It is not the moves, but rather the use/lack of use of certain steps that constituted the major changes between OPI of the two countries. For example, the steps Justifying against alternatives (M3S3) and Providing customer testimonials and results (M3S7) were only observed in Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’ of NZ OPI. Although all moves/steps are by definition rhetorical, these steps are particularly persuasive in nature. One conclusion that can be drawn from the findings is that while there are common steps of persuasion applicable to both cultural contexts, how persuasion is achieved in a genre also depends on the national culture in which the genre is produced. This supports Hyland’s (2005) view that the achievement of persuasion depends on the specific institutional and cultural context in which the text appears, and that the rhetorical devices used as promotional devices in one context might not appeal as much to an audience in another. My findings concur with Bhatia (1993) that cultural differences do not have a significant effect on a genre’s macro-structure, but that they affect the genre at the level of steps. These findings also support the assumption that steps may indicate shared psychological realities better than moves (Moreno & Swales, 2018).

Focusing on the steps that OPI uses to operationalise the moves could also be particularly useful if a business involves selling multiple product categories. For instance, when it comes to realizing the move ‘Advising, directing and/or warning’ (M5), certain steps such as ‘Instructing how to use’ (M5S1), ‘Giving storage instructions’ (M5S4) and ‘Metal/jewellery care and size selection guidance’ (M5S9) are only used in either beauty care or jewellery product categories, not both. This means that the same move is operationalised differently when it comes to selling different products. To the best of my knowledge, no previous research has compared the move steps of genres in multiple products. Hence, it is difficult to draw comparisons between the current research and



research literature on this subject of product-based differences. Future research on commercial genres could consider analysing commercial and marketing genre steps across different products or services, due to the potential differences that exist in their steps.

### 10.3 Characterisation of the Online Product Information genre

The findings of this genre analysis clearly establish that the OPI genre shares functional characteristics with other promotional genres with a marketing intent (e.g. print advertisements and book blurbs). Two main characteristics of promotional genres identified in literature are describing and evaluating the product positively (Bhatia, 2005; Labrador et al., 2014). A known promotional genre - the print advertisement (Bhatia, 2005) - uses moves such as targeting the market, establishing credentials, offering incentives and detailing the service/product which display the above characteristics. Book blurbs also justify, appraise or describe, target the market, and promote books (Kathpalia, 1997; Onder, 2013). All of these moves, which relate to the two characteristics of describing and evaluating the product positively, are seen in the OPI as well, in Move 3 – ‘Promoting the product’ and Move 4 – ‘Offering incentives and service options’. Some of the steps operationalizing these OPI moves are evaluating the product positively, making reassurances, targeting the market, offering free items and services and offering discounts. Therefore, it could be concluded that the OPI is promotional by nature. The multimodality seen in the genre also adds to the variety of steps with which positive evaluation of the product is carried out. Regarding the characteristic of description, while it is a function performed by the OPI (e.g., M2 – ‘Describing the product’), it needs to be noted that description is a characteristic shared by other non-promotional genres as well (e.g., moves such as ‘Detailing work’, ‘Detailing cost’ in Builders’ Diaries (Parkinson et al., 2017)). Therefore, I see it as a feature which is embedded in many move functions including promoting a product and advising/warning.

The OPI genre distinguishes itself from other promotional genres with its advising, directing and warning functions, which give rise to its informative (as opposed to persuasive) characteristic. For instance, in Move 5 – ‘Advising, directing and/or warning’,

ten steps were identified as operationalizing the move functions (e.g., recommending measures to prevent possible adverse effects, instructing how to use, disclaiming). Such a move is not observed in other genres such as those mentioned above with an intent to sell. This characteristic sets the OPI genre apart from the other promotional genres, and makes one reconsider looking at the OPI purely as a persuasive genre. To support this point, the professional communities involved in creating the genre (e.g., web designers, copywriters) expect the OPI to be ‘accurate’ and ‘truthful’ (Participant Interview comment 6 of Chapter 5) and ‘to communicate to a potential customer, whether or not this is a product for them to purchase’ (PI comment 7 of Chapter 5) which can be done by giving customers advice, warnings and instructions. That being said, the move is not entirely neutral and not merely used for the benefit of the customer. It is designed to protect the interests of the sellers as well. While informing customers, Move 5 reduces the risk of legal action stemming from any customer complaints (the higher use of M5 in NZ OPIs compared to SL OPIs could also point to NZ having or following higher regulations surrounding product selling than SL). Also persuasion seems to take precedence over the informative function in OPIs when considering how ‘Advising, directing and/or warning’ is a typical move, with a frequency of 65%, not an obligatory move. Additionally, the steps of Move 5 – ‘Advising, directing, warning’ are sometimes couched in evaluative language. Still, the implication of the finding (that persuading and informing are both integral to the OPI) is that a copywriter or business owner should be cautious of and finely balance the amount of persuasion and information in the OPI if they are to gain success in really achieving the intended purposes of the genre.

That the OPI genre performs two main communicative purposes – persuading and informing – on the textual plane is consistent with research conducted into types of registers on the searchable web (Biber & Egbert, 2018; Biber & Zhang, 2018) in which a sub register called “Description with intent to sell” was identified. The sub register shares similar goals, intended outcomes and situational characteristics of author, venue and audience as the OPI genre. This sub register belongs to the “Informational persuasion” register which was later brought under the general register category of “Opinion/Advice/persuasion”. In their study, the researchers clearly recognize the mixture of informative and persuasive functions of the “Description with intent to sell” sub register. As they state, “These documents can be considered as a kind of hybrid

register, combining the communicative purposes of informing/describing/explaining with a persuasive goal” (Biber & Egbert, 2018, p. 36). So register research acknowledges the significance of both the informative and persuasive characteristics of text types which are based on a similar situational context as OPI. My research provides evidence for the use of two types of discourse in certain web texts with an intent to sell, from a genre perspective.

#### 10.4 Bringing the visual analysis into the move analysis and image-text relationship

This section discusses how visual meaning has been incorporated into genre analysis, particularly within the move analytical framework. It also discusses how the use of the visual mode varies across cultures and the how the connection between visuals and text contributes to achieving the rhetorical functions of the genre.

##### 10.4.1. Combining visual meaning with move analysis

The current research, by combining the visual mode and the textual mode in the move analysis, illustrated that visuals inform the move analysis just as much as the textual mode, and that both contribute to achieving the rhetorical functions of the OPI genre. So one important issue to discuss is how exactly the meanings expressed through two different semiotic modes were accounted for and incorporated into a single genre framework.

This research combines the social semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) with the ESP approach to genre analysis (Swales, 1990) to conduct a fruitful analysis of the multimodal genre. These approaches could be used together due to their underlying similarities. It is possible to draw connections between moves and Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) social semiotic visual analysis because at the heart of both these constructs lies the concept of meaning/function. A move is recognized as a discourse unit that performs a clear meaning or purpose, which contributes to the macro or overall purpose of the genre (Kanoksilapatham, 2007). There are different steps that realise the move. Likewise, the Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) also provides a framework for analysing images in terms of the meanings that are

connoted in a particular social/situational context. It attributes meanings to different visual resources (e.g., conceptual/narrative, information value, modality). The ideational, interpersonal and compositional metafunctions and their various operationalising features come together to convey the OPI genre's non-interactive move functions of identifying the product (M1), describing the product (M2), promoting the product (M3) and advising, directing and/or warning (M5).

A single image performs more than a single move function in the genre because of the combination of different visual resources of an image. Firstly for example, according to information value, the typical image-text relationship in OPI is an image(s) on the top left with text on the top right and bottom half. This means the image (along with details such as product title) provides the departure point for less known information on the OPI text. The placement at the top left of the web page and its large size and vibrant colours mean the default product photograph is the first thing that the customer sees (due to being highly salient). Due to the visual resources of information value and salience, the image is an important part of what buyers use to identify the product and what grabs the customer's attention (Move 1- Identifying the product). Therefore, the compositional metafunction of the OPI (the placement of the image on the OPI page layout) contributes to realising the function of identifying the product (Move 1) in the genre. Secondly, the same image being of conceptual analytical and offer type (under the ideational metafunction) allows customers to view the details of the product, and contributes to the move function of describing the product (M2). Thirdly, the OPI genre producers intend shoppers to evaluate the product positively and so use highly illuminated images with high colour saturation, colour differentiation and detail, thereby achieving the function of promoting the product (M3). These features are markers of modality, and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) recognize modality as being interpersonal (p. 151). So overall, how a product is represented (ideational metafunction) and how the represented participants engage with the interactive participants (interactive metafunction) together contribute to achieving the descriptive/informative and promotional purposes (M2, M3) of the genre through the same image. Furthermore, the same image, by virtue of its placement in relation to the rest of the text and salience (textual metafunction), helps customers to quickly identify the product (M1).

Earlier research has not been able to satisfactorily account for the images and their functions in their move analyses. They have relegated the image to be performing a single step (Izquierdo & Pérez Blanco, 2020; Parkinson et al., 2017), or considered an image as a single move, thereby ignoring the other equally relevant possible functions performed by that same image (Labrador & Ramón, 2015; Suen, 2013). Some studies have analysed the image separately from the move structure (Leelertphan, 2017). Labrador and Ramón (2015) included a move called 'Showing a picture' which does not clarify how exactly an image contributes to furthering the communicative functions of that genre. In my own research, the process of identifying the meanings of the image through move functions connected to underlying visual metafunctions and their resources, as illustrated at length in Chapter 7, provides a systematic way of manoeuvring the polysemous nature of visuals (Barthes, 1977). This analysis introduces more reliability to integrating analysis of visual meaning with genre analysis. Raising awareness of the ways in which visual meaning contributes to the meanings expressed in text in diverse moves may also give us means to usefully incorporate visual meaning into move analysis, something which previous research has pointed out to be a difficult task (Parkinson, 2019).

#### 10.4.2. Visual meaning in genres across cultures

This cross-cultural study illustrates that some cultures use the visual mode more to achieve rhetorical functions than others. My study affirms Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) and Kress' (2013) social semiotic view that the social conditions (i.e., social location of the text designer and the characteristics of the intended audience) affect the purpose and form of a text and the selection of multimodal resources to create the meaning of that text. As a result, it is particularly valuable to study the use of visual meaning in move analysis if businesses on which research is conducted are targeting an international customer base, and not just a local market. To illustrate the point, although OPIs of both countries use visuals for promotion, SL OPIs employ the visual mode less for this purpose than NZ OPIs. As it was shown in Chapter 7, NZ OPIs use nearly three times as many images (153 images) as SL OPIs do (59 images). Also while there is a significantly low use of demand and narrative type images in OPIs as a whole, which results in an overall low dynamicity and customer engagement in the OPI genre, the NZ OPIs do contain some such narrative and demand type images which they make good use of. SL OPIs have none (SL OPIs only use conceptual analytical and offer type images). The

images in NZ OPIs include images of models wearing jewellery along with matching jewellery (M3S8 – pairing jewellery, see Figure 7.18), and side by side shots of people's faces before and after using products (M3S7 – Showing customer testimonials and results, see Figure 7.19). These images include using demand type images where a human participant gazes at the camera. NZ beauty care OPIs also contain photographs of someone using the product (M3S4, see Figure 7.11) which are narrative type images. All these promotional steps are visually performed only in NZ OPIs, and not in SL OPIs. Therefore, by using narrative and demand type images, the NZ OPIs convey more promotion of the product (Move 3) than SL OPIs.

Although online shoppers of both countries do not show any noticeable difference in their preferences for the visual mode, there were practical constraints of using the visual mode that came into light which are linked to the geographical location of website development. One SL web designer pointed out the cost of uploading multiple extra photos for an online business, and the need to keep the usage of data low for customers when they access/load a web page on their devices (laptops, mobile phones) as factors to be considered when developing ecommerce sites in Sri Lanka. These constraints are imposed on genre production based on the socio economic condition of Sri Lanka, and affect how the functions of the genre are achieved. Two other concerns that apply to SL as well as NZ businesses when it comes to reduced use of visuals with a human element is the requirements of paying royalty fees to models and concerns over targeting the right customers.

#### 10.4.3. Combined effects of visual and textual meaning

My research findings also support current literature on multimodality that affordances of different modes when combined, make a richer and fuller meaning than a single mode can achieve by itself (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Kress, 2012 February 16). From a genre perspective, the research points to the fact that while the visual mode combines with the textual mode in realizing certain move steps, it also introduces new steps to the genre with which to realise genre functions. My study confirms that when a multimodal genre is described, all its modes need to be analysed together in order to get a full picture of the functions performed by the genre. In addition, the way in which the same photograph is used to convey different moves (e.g., same photograph expressing M1- Identifying the

product, M2- Describing the product and M3- Promoting the product) while the written text in those moves changes, confirms and extends Taboada and Habel's (2013, p. 81) finding that visual material (including graphical material) "stand in multiple relationships to the text in the document".

## 10.5 Incorporating the digital medium into genre analysis

This section compares how and why the digital medium was incorporated into the OPI move structure with existing research literature on interactivity, and discusses the role of the digital medium in genre studies. Looking at the findings of the study, this section also discusses how the use of genre interactivity could change according to the national cultural context.

### 10.5.1 Digital medium and social purposes of the genre

The social purposes of the OPI genre are to inform, persuade and interactively assist online users in order to purchase, recommend, find out more about or communicate with the seller about a product, and to establish product credibility. The social purpose of assisting online users which was identified in interview data and reported in Chapter 5 clearly reflects the influence of digitality on the OPI genre. The current research therefore affirms Jones and Hafner's (2012) and Xia's (2020) notion that affordances of the digital medium affect the communicated meaning or communicative purposes of a genre. This research identified eight different types of interactive functions which constitute eight out of the fourteen moves of the OPI genre. Considering different types of interactivity as moves is validated by the social purposes of the OPI genre.

### 10.5.2 Incorporating the digital medium into move analysis

While conducting a separate analysis of digital interactivity, I adapted Swales' (1990) move analysis of monomodal written academic genres to incorporate interactivity into the OPI genre description together with its other written and visual aspects. This adaptation allows for move analysis to be applied as a viable analytical framework to analyse digital genres.

Following the precedent set by Askehave and Nielsen (2005a, 2005b), I considered digitality as a function of the OPI genre. However, there were several important differences between their approach to digitality and mine. First, in my analysis, different types of interactivity, and not one type of interactive item like hypertext, became move functions (e.g., Move 7- Selecting requirements, Move 8 - Purchasing) in the genre. I identified eight interactive moves (e.g., Selecting requirements, Purchasing, Requesting information, Providing feedback). The strategies of these moves were explored in the Interactivity Analysis chapter (Chapter 8). By categorizing different types of interactivity for their underlying functions, I was able to investigate different ways through which interactivity is achieved in OPI which included but was not limited to hyperlinks. My analysis accounted for all forms of interactivity (Voorveld et al. 2011; Adami 2015) that is present in the genre, and not only that afforded by hypertextuality. As a result, any icons, buttons or visuals that responded to user actions were included in the analysis. I was thus able to illustrate how the digital dimension affected and reformulated a digital genre's functions, content, structure, style and lexis. Secondly, the combination of the eight moves constituting interactivity makes it specific to the OPI genre, meaning I was able to achieve a certain level of specificity that was not afforded by Askehave and Nielsen (2005a, 2005b) to the 'navigating mode'. The navigating mode is very general, and exists in any digital genre, not just the home page that from Askehave and Nielsen's research. Thirdly, analysing the frequency of the different moves and the signs/sites operationalizing them also contributed to identifying cross-cultural differences in the use of interactivity of the genre.

As far as I know, only two studies so far have incorporated interactive items as part of a move analysis. T. H. Andersen and van Leeuwen (2017) described a single shopping website, which makes their findings difficult to generalize. This leaves only Lam's (2013) study, which was based on describing 100 group buying deals as a possible comparative study to mine. However her study, unlike mine, is based only on one geographical location (Hong Kong). My study is the only move-based study that explores interactivity across cultures (see Sections 10.5.4 and 10.5.5).



### 10.5.3 Interactivity across digital commercial genres

The findings of this research point out that digital genres with a marketing intent share similarities in their interactivity, just as there are similarities between promotional genres with a marketing intent on the non-interactive plane (Section 10.3). Since the OPI genre has a commercial and marketing intent, it may be worthwhile to investigate and compare how interactivity functions and is utilised in similar genres. Identifying the eight interactive moves that constitute the interactivity of the OPI genre allows for such comparisons. One of the moves of my research – Purchasing (M8 – with call to action buttons such as ‘Add to cart’) – is similar to a move called ‘Selection’ identified by T. H. Andersen and van Leeuwen (2017) in their online clothing product information genre, and to a move called ‘Committing to the deal’ in Lam (2013) in the group buying deals genre. So, an interactive function which pushes customers to make a purchase seems to be an integral part of a digital commercial genre with a selling intention. Another interactive move Transferring information (M9) in my study is also similar to one of P. Lam’s (2013) moves which she calls ‘Establishing linkage to social media’. So getting customers to spread information about the product through their own contacts (information propagation) seems to be just as important to commercial genres on the web as simply displaying that information. So the digital commercial genre targets a wider audience that extends beyond the direct readers/viewers of that commercial genre. The inclusion of these two moves (performing the functions of purchasing and connecting to social media) can therefore be regarded as playing an important role integral to digital genres with a marketing intention.

### 10.5.4 Cross-cultural differences in the use of interactivity

The interactivity analysis of Chapter 8 pointed out cross-cultural differences in the use of interactivity between Sri Lankan and New Zealand shopping website OPIs. Therefore, my research findings support previous research on cross-cultural differences in the web medium (Cho & Cheon, 2005; Pauwels, 2012). Pauwels presents a multimodal framework for addressing the cultural aspects of websites, arguing that “few choices and options in websites and the broader infrastructure of the internet are culturally neutral” (2012, p. 251). The infrastructure of a website that Pauwels refers to includes a website’s interactive signs. Cho and Cheon (2005) found that the web sites in Japan and South

Korea offered fewer means for customers to communicate through different channels of communication or to communicate with marketers than in United States and the United Kingdom. Similarly, although my study is not on an entire website, I found that option to provide feedback to sellers on the OPI space is more controlled in SL shopping sites than in NZ sites (see Section 8.3), and that the array of interactive options offered to customers by sellers is more limited in SL shopping sites compared to NZ shopping sites. The fact that such differences were found in the interactivity of these shopping websites is contrary to views proposed by one of the Web designers of my research who was of the view that the creation of ecommerce websites has become standardised because of practices such as using web templates for ecommerce sites. A possible reason for this contradiction may be the web designer having gained their experience of web design in New Zealand, Australia and the U.S, and not in a South Asian professional context.

#### 10.5.5. Perceived interactivity of OPIs in SL and NZ shopping sites

Relating the findings of research literature to my own indicates that in order for OPI to be perceived as truly interactive, the Sri Lankan and New Zealand online shopping websites would have to further increase and improve the use of three interactive functions and strategies - recommending product to a friend, providing feedback, and customizing the product. Voorveld et al. (2011) investigated perceived interactivity of different brand websites. They found that customers perceived a website as being truly interactive if they had six interactive functions out of which the three functions of recommending the website to a friend, a form to provide feedback, and the option for customers to customize their products are directly relevant to the OPI genre.

Interactive signs/sites of OPI primarily serve the basic necessities of online shopping through functions such as selecting product requirements via quantity selection (M7), carrying out the product purchase (M8), and facilitating better viewing and reading (M13). The other interactive functions (including those allowing customers to provide feedback) are used much less and their frequency of use varies according to the country of the website. The function of transferring information (where customers can recommend the product) is used in OPIs of 13 out of 16 (81%) SL shopping sites and nine out of 16 (56%) NZ shopping sites. The function of providing feedback is used in OPIs of eight out of 16 (50%) SL websites, and in 10 out of 16 (62.5%) NZ websites. Therefore,

transferring information and providing feedback could be considered as functions to be used more frequently to increase perceived interactivity in NZ OPIs. SL sellers could focus on the providing feedback function to enhance perceived interactivity. In terms of customising the product, both SL and NZ shopping sites (28 out of 32 websites) allow customers to select the number of products that they need to buy (in Selecting requirements (M7) move). However, the other interactive strategies under this function (e.g., size selection, metal type/colour selection, jewellery length/style selection, different purchase plan options, text input for customised message on jewellery) are made scant use of in both SL and NZ OPIs, thereby greatly reducing the customers' chance of product customisation. Because product customisation is considered as a factor that increases perceived interactivity, these other strategies could be equally valuable.

#### 10.6. Genre as a product of multiple overlapping communities

The OPI genre is not the product of a single discourse community. In fact, the OPI genre can be considered as the result of several professional communities collaborating with each other to produce the final genre output. A non-professional community of online shoppers also contributes to the creation of the genre. The participant interviews conducted as part of the research and reported in Chapter 5 bear out the above fact.

In Chapter 5 Section 4, we saw how online shop owners, web designers, copywriters all do their part to shape the OPI. The shop owners provide the copywriters with the content that they need to be included in the OPI, and make clear to the copywriters the business's target market, their own wish of how the product should be identified, and how the copy describing the product should reflect their brand ethos. The copywriters write the product-based copy using a style of writing that fits the business' vision for the product, brand ethos and the target customers. With their expertise, they decide which of the written content provided by the shop owners is essential to achieve the communicative functions of the genre. The copywriters are also conscious of how much content would fit into a web page, and regulate the structure and length of their writing (e.g., writing the product description) accordingly. They also consider the time spent by the average web user on a web page when structuring and prioritizing product copy. The web designers

are another group of professionals who control the presentation of both textual and visual content on the product page. They select the number of visuals and written content that is included on the product page, and the interactive options that are required for online users to interact with information and purchase a product. They advise online shop owners on which visual/textual content needs to be used, highlighted, discarded in order to maximize the effect of the OPI on online shoppers. They are aware of the conventions that apply to online retail websites, and generally persevere to uphold those conventions. At the same time, they are conscious of the possible positive or negative effects of any deviations from conventions, which the web designers can use if an online business wishes to be different from others. However, the final web design needs to be approved by the Online business owners.

Digital marketers also seem to play a role in shaping the OPI genre due to their involvement in marketing a brand or business using digital platforms. Although this group was not amongst those interviewed, digital marketers emerged from interview data as being pertinent to the creation of an online genre with a commercial intent. As was demonstrated in Chapter 5 Section 5.6, digital marketing techniques such as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) dictate the content and style of writing of OPI. For instance, the copywriters who were interviewed mention how they are required to have a certain length for the product title or use certain key words due to SEO requirements.

Online shoppers play a part in the creation of the OPI as well. The reviews written by online shoppers are part of the product information that is used by shop owners and web designers to persuade and earn customer trust (see PI comments 19 and 20 in Chapter 5). This finding suggests that this multimodal digital genre is not the product of or established within a single (discourse) community, as genre is often perceived as being in literature (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994; Swales, 1990). Rather, the present research leads us to view a digital genre with a marketing intent as the product of multiple overlapping professional and non-professional communities, that meets the need of the recurrent rhetorical situation of online selling.

## 10.7. Effects of deviating from genre conventions

A final point made by a web designer about how deviating from typical genre conventions could have potential positive as well as negative effects (Chapter 5, PI Comment 23) is important to discuss. It carries the seeds of evidence for how genres are dynamic, can be manipulated and can evolve (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993; Bhatia, 2012; Koester & Handford, 2012). The aspiration by an online shop owner to move beyond using ecommerce website templates, and make one's own custom-built e-commerce site (Chapter 5, PI comment 24), also suggests the dynamicity of genres. According that shop owner, using ecommerce web templates imposes 'restrictions' on what they can do within the website. Therefore, it needs to be borne in mind that the typical features of OPI given in this research can change and evolve over time.

## 10.8. Move analysis and double coding

In this section, I explain the methodological need to double code certain text chunks for moves/steps in the move analysis that I conducted. The discussion is pertinent because of the implications this research method carries for other research on multimodal move analysis.

Wherever possible, the same text chunk was not coded for multiple move functions, but only for the most salient function that was expressed through a stretch of text. This method of coding is in keeping with coding traditions (Moreno & Swales, 2018; Parkinson, 2019), and reduces duplication of the same text chunk in different moves. However, I believe that such a process does not entirely capture the full meaning potential expressed through a discourse unit especially when there are multiple modes involved in it. The additional consideration of the genre being digital also creates the need to revise the practice of coding one visual/textual unit under one function only. Considering the objective of the research which is to give a multimodal description of a digital genre, I decided to double code text chunks for some moves. In the following paragraphs, I explain the necessity for double coding.

First of all, genres of shorter word length attempt to pack in as much meaning as possible within a single textual or visual proposition. This point was made in the interview data (Chapter 5, PI COMMENT 21). Compared to other genres such as business proposals, academic research articles, audit reports or reviews, the producers of OPI do not have the luxury of achieving distinct communicative functions through elaborated multiple clauses and sentences. The shorter the length of the genre, and shorter the attention span of a reader/viewer, the more frequently multiple meanings are likely to be expressed within a single text chunk. Therefore, I coded a limited number of instances in the OPI (see Figure 6.8a and Example 3.3. in Chapter 6) under two moves, or two steps of the same move. Double coding, though rare, is also noted in a study by Holmes (1997, p. 325) who conducted a monomodal move analysis of the social sciences research article discussion section. Although that genre is lengthier and has a different kind of readership consisting of academics interested in the article, the researcher states “In the very few cases where it was impossible to decide which of the two moves within a sentence was more salient, it was coded as containing two moves”.

Another reason why double coding is required is that each product photograph clearly carried multiple important meanings, and achieved these functions concurrently. To not code images for multiple functions would be to question that images are essentially polysemous, something that is inherently accepted in the literature through debates of whether images are “too polysemous” or not (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 18). The default product image of the OPI serving at one and the same time the functions of identifying the product (Move 1 – by displaying product brand and product name), describing the product (Move 2 – by displaying product characteristics or disclosing ingredients) and promoting the product (Move 3 – by showing some one wearing/using the product, providing customer testimonials and results) is testimony to this polysemy. It was not even a matter of certain functions being identified as main, and others as secondary. ‘Identifying the product’ move relates to a quick viewing of the product when the product is seen at first glance on the top half of the page (related to the textual metafunction of visual analysis). Then at a closer look, the product image describes the product- it gives details of characteristics such as colour or length or shape (related to the ideational metafunction). In the instances where the image is used to promote the product to the customer or advise, direct or warn the customer, an interpersonal

relationship between the sellers and customers is evoked. In this way, these multiple move functions seem to coincide with Halliday's three ideational, interpersonal and textual meta functions of language that were used by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to analyse images. And these functions are expressed from the same image, meaning the same image can embody multiple move functions in my study. Coding images for their multiple meanings was therefore crucial for my study.

Thirdly, working with digital affordances and multiple semiotic resources when analysing this digital genre complicates assigning communicative functions to propositions. To illustrate, the utterance "Buy it now" was coded as the Purchasing move (M8) because it primarily allows the customer to proceed to purchase the item. The second coder identified this as a pressure tactic (M6) too because it pushes and prompts the customer through the use of grammatical imperative form and colour. While this to a certain extent was settled by the explanations given by the Web designer and input from online shoppers, two out of ten online shoppers (one in Sri Lanka and one in New Zealand) acknowledged that they could feel pressurised by seeing a phrase like "Buy it now". One participant went to the extent of pointing out that if a button like 'Buy it now' was displayed using a bright colour, then she would feel pressure to buy. I decided to double code the item 'Buy it now' as a pressure tactic (M6) only when there is no 'Add to cart' item alongside it because both used together provide the customer with purchase options (see Section 6.6), therefore lessening any pressurizing effect. But the example above shows how multi semiotic and digital texts employ and combine their different resources to convey meaning. The examples in Sections 6.5 and 6.6 illustrate and support this point. Coding a text using the same traditional methodology adapted to code monomodal printed genres does not completely suit the description of multimodal digital genres. This discussion points to the necessity of accounting for the multifunctionality of discourse without which the analysis loses a certain degree of richness and truthfulness. Therefore, double coding, although kept to a minimum, becomes a necessity in move analysis of digital multimodal genres.

### 10.9. Issue of identifying between conceptual analytical and narrative images under the ideational metafunction

This section discusses a problem that I encountered in my visual analysis when it came to distinguishing between conceptual analytical and narrative images under the ideational metafunction. In my visual analysis, I found that photographs with a human participant as the carrier of jewellery/cream (e.g., Figure 10.2, Figure 10.3) and photographs of the products by themselves (e.g., Figure 10.1) fell within the same group under the ideational metafunction: conceptual analytical. However, I feel that these two images bring two very different flavours to the OPI genre, and therefore represent two distinct ideational processes.



*Figure 10.1. Conceptual analytical offer image without human element (Silk & Steel, 2020)*

For example, amongst the photographs collected from the 64 OPIs for visual analysis, there are 22 NZ images and one SL image of jewellery worn by a model/human participant. In the SL image with a human participant, the model has her eyes closed with her face tilting upwards (Figure 10.3). Her hand seems to form a vector directing our attention towards the jewellery on her ear. In five out of the 22 NZ images with human participants, the participants directly gaze at the viewer. In five more, the participants gaze at some far away space (see Figure 10.2). I found it hard to classify the 11 images (one SL image of jewellery worn by a participant, five NZ images of participants directly gazing at the viewer, five NZ images of participants gazing at some far away space) when it came to their ideational metafunction.



Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), I categorised the 11 images as conceptual analytical images, but I do not find my classification entirely satisfying. To start with, I followed the basic criterion of whether a participant essentially performs a narrative function or not in deciding whether an image is predominantly narrative or conceptual.



*Figure 10.2 Conceptual analytical offer image with human element (Silk & Steel, 2020)*

In the 11 photographs, the models are merely posing in the best possible way to display the jewellery. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 68) clarifies that narrative processes are those charting “the principal ways in which images can represent the world ‘narratively’ – that is in terms of ‘doing’ and ‘happening’” – as something dynamic. In these images, the predominant intention is not for the model to perform some kind of action, but to be the container or carrier of the jewellery. I hesitate to categorise these images as narrative representations of reality with an embedded analytical structure precisely because the models are not actually doing anything. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) provide several examples of instances where images similar to those found in product information under study are classified as analytical structures. One instance is the photograph of a model in a fashion shoot (p. 88) being classified as an analytical image since she is the carrier of attributes (clothes). Another example shows how an advertised product becomes an analytical structure due to “the overall impression of an abundance of parts (or ingredients, or varieties of the product), or the alluring sensory quality of the advertised product as a whole (the streamlined sheen of the car, the vivid colour and texture of the ingredients of a canned soup” (p. 89). On the basis of this literature, I categorised the 11 images as conceptual analytical representations of reality.

As already mentioned, I feel that such a classification does not do justice to truly expressing the ideational function of those images. The 10 NZ images concurrently seem to fall within the category of conceptual analytical and also narrative non-transactional reactional processes where a vector is formed by the gaze of a human participant, without a phenomenon (recipient of the gaze) being seen. The SL image seems to fall in the category of narrative non-



*Figure 10.3. Image classified as analytical (Aadna, 2020)*

transactional action because of the vector formed by the hand with the earring. This element of the narrative introduces a touch of dynamicity to the product information. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 89) themselves at one point recognise that images of models, especially ones gazing at or away from the interactive participants, can be interpreted as supplying a necessary ‘interactional and emotive’ quality to the representation, which is especially useful in interpreting how a product is promoted. These images complement the images that display only the product and that provide a more objective and detailed examination of the product. We can say that the use of both kinds of analytical images (of the product alone, and of the product with a model) together helps to maintain a balance between informing and persuading functions performed by the OPI genre. Again, the SL OPIs do not seem to use both kinds of images together as much as NZ genre producers.

Kress and van Leeuwen point out that the difference between these different images emerge not at an ideational level, but at the interpersonal level. However, in my study, there are still images of human participants looking away from the viewer or camera (3 NZ beauty care, 7 NZ jewellery), which at an interpersonal level, are still categorized as offer images, thus leaving the images again within the same category as images of only the product. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2021) do not specifically distinguish between analytical images with a more narrative dynamic quality (where the human gaze or gesture is involved) and analytical images which simply display objects. The purpose of their framework is much broader, and their framework provides the means of interpreting many different types of visuals and their meanings. Nevertheless, they seem to suggest that the two kinds of analytical images can perform rather different functions. For instance, Kress and van Leeuwen in *Reading Images* (2021) compare a drawing of parts of a garment and a photograph of a model wearing the garment. They compare the drawing of an Antarctic explorer wearing a suit with the real close-up photograph of the same. Their distinction seems to be between the objective, descriptive representation of the carrier vs. the ‘sensual allure’ (2021, p. 87) or a projected ‘interpersonal... emotive’ (2021, p. 84) quality introduced to the photograph by the human. The same distinction is applicable to the analytical images used in the OPI. The range of product photographs that the seller offers to the viewer combines photographs of the product only, with photographs of the product with models.

The impact of my decision to categorise the 11 images (one SL, 10 NZ) as conceptual analytical was that images of the NZ jewellery OPIs seem as if they do not have any narrative elements in them (therefore reduced dynamicity). Seven out of the 10 NZ OPI images under question belonged to four NZ jewellery shopping sites. Categorising those seven images as narrative types would have given a true reflection of the dynamicity of visuals in the NZ OPIs, where 50% (eight out of 16) of all NZ shopping sites use such narrative style.

Due to above explained reasons, although I classify images such as Figure 10.2 and Figure 10.3 as (inclusive) conceptual analytical structures (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021), I feel that it would have been better if I had defined perhaps another ideational category of meaning such as ‘conceptual narrative’ in order to fully capture the essence of these naturalistic posed images, with models as represented participants in them. It would have better explained what some of these images (10 NZ and one SL) represented, a point which future research could consider.

#### 10.10. Chapter summary

This chapter discussed several key findings of the current research in the context of relevant research literature. It discussed how the moves of the OPI maintain stability while the strategies realizing the moves vary across different product categories and countries. Then it looked at how the two types of discourse – persuasive and informative – are used in a balanced way to carry out the social purposes of the OPI, and how the OPI is similar and differs from other similar genres. The next few sections explored how visuals and digitality were analysed and incorporated within a move analysis framework, and explained what the findings of the visual and digital interactivity analyses meant about the use of visuals and interactivity in Sri Lankan and New Zealand contexts, and what it meant about digital commercial genres. The chapter also explored how digital genres are collaborative products and how breaking genre conventions can be a steppingstone to genre evolution. Finally, the chapter also identified and investigated two methodological issues that could be of relevance to future studies on multimodal move analysis and visual analysis. The next chapter, the Conclusion, will present the implications, contributions, and limitations of the research.

## CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

### 11.1 Introduction

This thesis adapted and applied available techniques of textual, visual and interactivity analysis to analyse the digital multimodal genre of Online Product Information (OPI) for pedagogical purposes. The study combines these three elements within a single framework to analyse the genre. This final chapter presents contributions of this research to genre analysis methodology and theory (Sections 11.2 and 11.3) and then presents implications for English for Specific Purposes teaching and Business to Consumer (B2C) online business (Sections 11.4 and 11.5). The chapter ends with limitations of the study (Section 11.6) and reflections on my research journey (Section 11.7).

### 11.2 Methodological contributions

This study contributes methodologically to move analysis research in three ways. Firstly, by combining interactive, textual and visual aspects together to describe multimodal digital genres based on their underlying (meta) functions, I accounted for all the facets of mode and medium that had an impact on the genre within a single framework. This innovation means that the adaptation and integration of analytical frameworks seen in this research can be applied to other digital multimodal genre research that use move analysis to analyse genres constituting visual and textual modes and affordances of the medium.

Secondly, my study also demonstrated the need to double code textual/visual items in genre texts when different modes and interactivity are involved. Considering the demands of describing online multimodal genres, such instances of double coding may be found more frequently than in monomodal print genres. This research shows that the way in which move analysis is conducted needs to evolve as genres also evolve into multimodal and digital constructs.

Another methodological contribution of my research is the use of both interviews and corpus-based text analysis for the purpose of genre analysis. Conducting interviews with expert and non-expert informants connected to online shopping not only validated my analysis, but also enabled me to identify the social purposes of the genre. Data from participant interviews clarified certain terminological ambiguities and provided a much-needed awareness of how different professional communities come together to create a genre. The considerable advantages of this methodology strongly suggest that any future studies on genre make use of this valuable source of data when conducting genre research.

### 11.3 Theoretical contributions

One of the main theoretical contributions of this research is that it provides evidence for how interactivity affects genre purposes. Through participant data analysis, it became clear that OPI is used to inform and persuade customers to perform several actions (e.g., buy, recommend). The OPI genre also interactively helps customers to buy, recommend, find out more about the product, or communicate with the seller. In addition, interactive items such as product ratings and reviews help establish product credibility. This research therefore shows that affordances of the digital medium should not be overlooked when analysing a digital genre.

Another contribution to digital genre analysis is that my analysis accounted for all forms of digitality such as interactivity (Voorveld et al. 2011; Adami 2015) that are present in the genre, not only that afforded by hypertextuality. As a result, any icons, buttons or visuals that responded to user actions were included in the analysis. I was therefore able to illustrate how the digital dimension affected and reformulated the functions, content, structure, style and lexis of a digital genre. To the best of my knowledge, this study is unique as the only move-based analysis that explores interactivity across cultures. Further research into how interactivity operates within different related genres could raise more awareness of whether or how interactivity affects digital commercial genres.

Another theoretical contribution of this study is its evidence supporting that commercial genres ought to be considered as the product of multiple communities. We cannot speak

of a single discourse community when referring to commercial genres on the digital platform. OPI is the result of coordinated action of multiple professional groups including web designers, copywriters and online shop owners who work together to address a rhetorical exigency in online shopping. It also involves the online shopper as a creator of the genre, rather than a genre recipient in traditional genre analysis. Any attempts to conduct genre-based research needs to include all communities involved in its creation and reception. The next section presents implications of the study to ESP and online business.

#### 11.4 Implications for Business to Consumer (B2C) businesses

This study has a range of implications for online B2C businesses. These implications are discussed in relation to first the multimodality (using text and visuals in OPI) and then the interactivity of OPI.

The first implication is based on the finding that the OPI genre has both informative and promotional purposes, and makes use of two types of discourse – persuasive and informative. A copywriter or business owner should therefore attempt to balance the amount of persuasion and information in the OPI if they are to gain success in achieving the intended purposes of the genre. Businesses, particularly SL online businesses, could use moves such as M5 – ‘Advising, directing, warning’ more (current overall move prominence is 65%, and 55% for SL - see Table 6.2), if they do not use that function already, along with moves such as M3 – ‘Promoting the product’ in order to achieve this discursive balance.

There is the added possibility to improve the multimodal experience of SL shoppers if the use of images involved more narrative and demand type images along with conceptual analytical, offer images. This will increase the dynamic feeling of the product regardless of the type of product being sold. Increasing the human element also increases the number of steps to promote and advise customers (e.g., by showing how products are paired with other products, to show how to use products). However, the practical limitations of producing product photographs (see Section 10.4.2) also need to be heeded. If Online Product Information can use at least 2 product photographs, the

suggestion is for the second photograph to have a human element. The photograph does not need to contain the face of a model (due to concerns over targeting the right customers), but could still show how the product is used/ worn (see Figure 7.11 and Figure 7.12 for examples). The inclusion may carry practical benefits, if online businesses are targeting international customers.

The findings of the interactivity analysis have important implications for improving and increasing customers' online shopping experience. One of the findings was that the use of both 'Add to cart' and 'Buy it now' purchasing options inside OPI (instead of just one button), reduces the pressure of having to purchase instantly, and also offers more choice for customers when purchasing, making for a happier customer. Therefore, online businesses could consider having both purchase options, instead of just one, when developing their own ecommerce site. In Sri Lankan shopping websites, links to information on purchase plans could also be located in close proximity to these purchase options to help customers with the buying process.

Secondly, both SL and NZ shopping sites only mostly provide customers the option of selecting the number of products that they need to buy (under Selecting requirements (M7) move). An increased use of the other less used interactive steps of the move such as size selection, metal type/colour selection, jewellery length/style selection, different purchase plan options, options for customised messages on jewellery would allow customers to have a more immersive, interactive and customised shopping experience.

One suggestion of the interactivity analysis for the SL business community in particular is to improve/increase access for customers to additional information (through the product page) such as type of packaging used (compostable or not), mini/trial versions of the product, size/chart guides, metal/jewellery care instructions, matching products. Additional information could include explanations of any terms unique to a particular language (e.g., 'koru', 'kawa kawa' in NZ Māori, 'mugappu', 'dosha' in SL – Tamil, Sinhala languages) if businesses target an international market. SL websites as well as NZ websites could also make use of interactive options such as 'Drop a hint' more where customers can get their loved ones to buy a product for them, which would be a good way to both increase sales and market their product more widely.

### 11.5 Implications for ESP pedagogy

Genre analysis has been used in many L1, L2 and Language for Specific Purposes teaching contexts (Bhatia et al., 2008; Hyland, 2012; Hyon, 1996) due to its usefulness in raising learners' awareness of a target genre. As Hyland (2012, p. 5) pointed out,

“LSP practitioners employ genre pedagogies as a means of emphasizing what is to be learned, organizing instruction around the genres that learners need and the social contexts in which they will operate”.

This quotation impresses on us the significance of raising learners' genre awareness as well as their awareness of the context in which a genre is used. My research demonstrates how a genre that is both multimodal and digital needs to be analysed by considering the textual, visual as well as the interactive aspects of that genre in different cultural contexts. By extension, there is a need for teachers to address these aspects when teaching students how to compose digital multimodal genres. The implications of this research, while applicable to Business Management and Marketing students, also apply to novice copywriters and online store owners. Therefore, in this section I focus on what ESP students, novice copywriters and online business owners need to understand and do when writing/compiling OPI (see Table 11.1). Concrete suggestions on what ESP teachers can do to improve students' multimodal genre knowledge are also listed in the last column of the table. The suggestions are applicable to raising awareness of other digital multimodal genres as well.



*Table 11.1 Improving learner awareness of a multimodal digital genre – the OPI - what learners need to know and do*

<b>Area of analysis</b>	<b>Specific category</b>	<b>Students of Business Management and Marketing/novice writers/online business owners need to</b>	<b>Practical ideas for teaching</b>
Moves - overall	Communicative purpose	<p>Be aware that typical OPI performs three main purposes (inform, persuade, and interactively assist customers), and a secondary purpose (establish product credibility). Therefore, all these purposes need to be performed in the OPI they create.</p> <p>Understand that both words (phrases/sentences) and images can be used together to convey a function.</p> <p>Be aware of which functions can be conveyed using words and which can be conveyed using images.</p>	<p>Conduct a brainstorming session with students on how to achieve the four genre purposes in OPI.</p> <p>Give student groups cut ups of move steps (e.g., evaluating the product positively, making reassurances, disclaiming), and ask them to categorise the steps under a list of move functions that the teacher gives them (Promoting the product, Advising/Directing/Warning).</p> <p>Provide students with authentic OPI texts (show them online) and ask them to identify the moves/ steps that they just categorised.</p> <p>Have a discussion with students on which moves and their steps can help to achieve the four communicative purposes according to the functions they perform.</p> <p>Ask the students to identify which steps can be performed using visuals only, using written mode only or using both modes.</p>
Textual	Lexico-grammar/	Learn and use appropriate expressions to convey move strategies. This is especially pertinent for	Give students a gap filling exercise using an authentic OPI text (its written mode) where students need to fill the gaps with appropriate

grammar		those who come from English as a Second or Foreign Language background.	answers (e.g., correct use of modals, coordinating conjunctions, tense) which are given in a separate space, and which the students can choose from.
		Recognise the importance of adjectives and nouns/nominalisations in evaluating the product positively.	Give students authentic examples of each move, and ask them whether they can notice any salient language features that have been used to express each move.
		Learn to use second person singular present to talk of product benefits and describe the product.	Prepare an activity whereby the class is divided into teams and each team needs to come up with as many adjectives or action verbs as possible to describe the benefits of a selected product within ten minutes. The group that thinks up the highest number of appropriate words wins the game.
		Use features such as 'sentence initial subject + auxiliary verb deletion' to convey information concisely/to give overviews of the product in point form.	Give students some information about a product that has no customer engagement (e.g., the product replenishes the skin, the product has antibacterial properties, the product looks good with other jewellery), and ask them to reformulate it so that the content addresses a customer.
		Be able to use modal verbs 'can'/'may'/'must' to express move strategies (target the market, disclaim, advise)	Prepare a list of lexical bundles for each move. Have students write their own product information using the phrases from the list.
		Understand the importance of correct grammar/punctuation to boost product credibility.	
Visual	Typical product image characteristics	Be aware of which type of images (e.g., with humans/without humans looking at or not looking at viewer, close up/medium shot, high angle/low	Ask students what a photograph used in Online Product images should look like.

	<p>angle) would be most suitable and effective as the main product photograph and other photographs.</p> <p>Be aware of which kind of meanings could be conveyed by using different types of images.</p> <p>Understand that a single image can carry multiple meanings, therefore performing multiple functions.</p> <p>Understand the changing value of an image considering the type of product being sold, for instance, the higher significance of images in sensory products such as jewellery with a higher visual aspect.</p>	<p>Give students sample product photographs which include photographs of the product and the product with models, of different shot distances, angle, colour saturation/ differentiation/illumination. Get students to assess which photographs would be suitable to be included in OPIs and give reasons for their choice.</p> <p>Using the steps that were introduced in the move analysis section, ask students to identify which steps can be performed visually.</p> <p>By showing students a few OPI layouts with product photographs in them, ask students what kind of functions each product photograph performs.</p> <p>Give students a list of products, and ask them to consider whether the visual mode or the written text will need to be more prominent in achieving the genre purposes.</p>
Image – text relationship	<p>Recognise the typical placement of an image and written text on the product information layout.</p> <p>Be aware that OPI of different products will benefit from varying the placement of images on the OPI layout. Understand that customers prefer more visual products such as jewellery to be given more</p>	<p>Ask students to do an online search of Online Product Information on some online stores (the teacher can name the stores). Ask student to identify where images, text and other interactive elements of the OPI appear for online stores of each product type.</p> <p>Discuss which steps can be expressed using both images and text.</p>

		space than written text in the product information layout.	
		Be aware that some functions are best achieved by using both images and text together (e.g., Identifying the product).	Have the students create a multimodal OPI for a product of their preference (of an imaginary brand) and by using photos that they capture using their digital devices (mobile phones/ digital cameras).
Interactive	Different types of interactivity	Know the different types of interactivity that are used in OPI to enable customers to interact with the information and take action.	Ask students to conduct a class/online survey of students' experience as online shoppers and the interactive strategies that they have seen on OPIs and strategies that they perceive as being useful in OPIs (useful for online shoppers vs. useful for business owners to achieve genre purposes). Students report their findings to class.
		Recognise which types of interactivity (e.g., sharing information/providing feedback.) are commonly found and missing in SL or NZ websites.	
		Know how interactivity can be enhanced to give customers a better interactive experience.	Give students a list of ecommerce websites from their own country, and from a different country. Ask them to compare the use of interactive features between the two countries.
	Signs dedicated to interactivity/ signs	Learn how different interactive signs can be placed inside OPI to achieve the maximum interactive outcome.	Ask students to propose suggestions to increase the interactivity of OPIs of their own country.
	performing non-interactive functions	Know how hyperlinks/hypertext can be used in combination with written text to optimize functions performed by OPI and to increase sales (e.g., The strategy of how customers can pair the target	Ask students to propose suggestions on novel ways through which interactive options can be mixed with written text and images to increase the interactivity.

		jewellery item with another item can embed a hyperlink to other product information of products on the same website)	
Contextual	Professional communities and their practices	<p>Recognise the importance of coordinating with other professionals in the digital marketing/web designing field to create effective OPI.</p> <p>Be aware of the requirements of various digital marketing practices impacting genres of online shopping sites.</p>	<p>Ask groups of students to interview a web designer, digital marketer, copywriter or an online business owner to get to know their involvement and role in the creation of an ecommerce site and in OPIs. Adequate time needs to be given for students to find a resource person and decisions need to be taken to identify which groups will be interviewing who. If interviews cannot be implemented, students could search for information online on web development companies and report their findings. Student groups conduct short presentations on interview findings to the whole class.</p> <p>Ask students to conduct a market survey (e.g., among fellow undergraduates of that academic year, lecturers) for a target product in order to understand and identify customers' needs for that product. Ask students to analyse how needs could vary according to demographic factors such as age/gender/profession.</p> <p>Ask students to do a search on available ecommerce platforms, and include these findings in the presentation. Students can be encouraged to include questions related to ecommerce platforms as well as other visual/textual features from their interview participant.</p>
	Virtual	Have exposure to any existing web-based genre templates available for creating the genre, and be able to evaluate their effectiveness for different types of brands/products being sold.	

## 11.6 Limitations of the research

There are three main limitations of the research which may have an impact on the findings of this study. The first limitation is that the linguistic data pertaining to reviewer comments in Ratings and Reviews were not included in the OPI corpus, and Ratings and Reviews was only analysed at the level of digital interactivity as part of the interactive move 'Providing feedback'(M14). Such a method of data collection and analysis is problematic due to two reasons. Firstly, Ratings and Reviews was recognized in participant interviews as a means of persuasion and information for customers in addition to being an interactive option. However, customer reviews, because they were not collected as part of the corpus, could not be coded under 'Promoting the product'(M3), nor under 'Describing the product'(M2) or 'Advising, directing and/or warning'(M5). Secondly, the OPI can be considered as an instance of the online shopping process where sellers and customers interact over a product and co create some of the OPI content. In my analysis of the OPI genre, the research does not properly reflect the different voices (Bakhtin, 1986; Hasan, 1989) of seller and customer involved in this online genre. As a result of not collecting the linguistic data pertaining to customer reviews, my method of studying this genre mainly depicts the one-sided content and options offered by the sellers to their potential customers (in Ratings and Reviews, it was seller's linguistic data such as "Write your review" as well as the star ratings symbol which was incorporated into the corpus). The intentionality of the genre is approached from the perspective of the online shop owners, copywriters and web designers.

One of the reasons for the decision not to collect and include reviewer comments was the difficulty of obtaining consent from all online users who have entered reviews about the products advertised in the 480 online product pages. This decision also falls in line with the pedagogical purposes of the research which are to raise genre awareness of Business and Marketing students, copywriters and online sellers, and to provide them with the means to describe and promote products online. It was assumed that the content of user reviews would not be useful in meeting the above goals. This means that reviews were considered as part of interactivity analysis, but not as part of the persuasive 'Promoting

the product' move or 'Describing the product' move. This was done despite the reviews' apparent persuasive and informative functions, as well as its value in depicting the genre as a heteroglossic artefact (Bazerman, 1994). In future research, it would be worth looking at how genres with multiple contributors can be more effectively analysed so that the voices of all participants contributing to the creation of the genre are better represented in the analysis.

The second research limitation is related to linguistic representativeness which refers to how well the linguistic distribution of a text type is covered in the sample corpus. It was difficult to achieve linguistic representativeness in the OPI corpus with the practical considerations of a multimodal qualitative analysis weighing upon corpus compilation (see Section 4.5.2.1 for more details). The corpus could not be so large that it risked becoming too cumbersome to analyse for visual mode, moves, and interactivity. The impact of this limitation is that the reliability of findings of the lexico-grammatical analysis is affected.

The third limitation is that the data collection was limited to two broad product categories – jewellery and skin care. This limitation may have a considerable impact on the research findings due to two reasons. Firstly, during the analysis stage, it became apparent that the steps operationalizing the moves could vary according to the product category, meaning there could be a variety of other steps realizing the OPI moves of other product categories. Secondly, the two products that were selected for this analysis are both non-utilitarian, hedonic products, meaning they are both consumed for pleasure or to fulfil affective needs. Research found that online information is more important for purchase decisions of utilitarian products than for hedonic products (Cheema & Papatla, 2010). Therefore, the current study cannot ensure that the findings of this research will apply in the same way to Online Product Information selling utilitarian products (e.g., medicine, crockery).

The decision to include only jewellery and skin care product categories in my analysis was made because the study is cross-cultural. Selected products needed to be manufactured and sold by Business to Consumer (B2C) online shopping websites of both Sri Lankan and New Zealand companies. When I started this research in early 2019, a pre-covid world, there were fewer online stores in Sri Lanka than there are in 2022. These

two reasons limited the number of products and online shopping websites that were available for inclusion in the corpus, therefore potentially limiting the extent to which the results of this study could be generalized. That said, the results of the current research are now all the more pertinent during/after the Covid-19 pandemic where more interaction and transaction take place online.

### 11.7 Final remarks on the study

This research combined different approaches to genre analysis to give a full description of the Online Product Information genre for pedagogical purposes. From the ESP approach, I adopted the analytical framework of function-based move analysis and analysis of lexico-grammatical patterns. From the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach and Social Semiotics stemming from SFL, I adopted the means to analyse visuals and interactivity. From Rhetorical Genre Studies, an exploration of the wider text-external context – of professional culture and practices, audience, situational context as well as virtual context - was introduced to the analysis through multiple participant interviews. The culmination of these collective approaches was the comprehensive analysis of a digital multimodal genre across two different national cultures, that bears significant methodological implications for multimodal and digital genre analysis, and useful insights into improving the multimodal literacy of ESP learners and business and marketing professionals.

From a personal perspective, this research is my ‘Call-to-Action’ button to all fellow ESP teachers, to start considering and providing our students genre-specific knowledge as it actually is (which may be multimodal, may be digital, or may be both), so that ESP students can gain the maximum benefit from our teaching when creating or dealing with multimodal and digital genres of their own.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Composition of the beauty care and jewellery sub corpora

#### A1. Online herbal beauty care Product Information sub corpus.

Herbal beauty care product type	SLskch	SLsksp	SLskci	SLskgr	SLsksw	SLskna	SLsk4r	SLskre	NZsktr	NZskox	NZsket	NZskso	NZsksk	NZskca	NZskta	NZskkd	TOTAL
Eye Serum/gel/cream		1					1		1	1			1	1		1	7
Face Serum/gel		1		1						1	1	1		1	1	1	8
Facial Masque/pack	1	1		2		1	3		1	2		2	1	1		1	16
Sleeping Masque/ Night Cream										1				1			2
Eye/ under eye treatment/ masque		1															1
Facial wash	2	1	2			1	1					1		1			9
Hand and body wash/ Body wash/shower cream/gel			1	1	3	1	1		1		1			1			10
Kids shower gel					1												1
Face cream/lotion	1			1			1		1		1			1			6
Fairness cream / lightening gel/whitening cream	2						1									1	4
Hand cream/ gel/lotion			2			1							1	1			5
Moisturiser/ Day Cream/body lotion/body cream/moisturising cream/body butter	2		4	1		2			1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	19
Baby moisturising lotion/ cream					1						1						2
Anti-aging cream/treatment/ firming serum		1							2				1		1		5
Cleanser/ cream cleanser/ cleansing cream/ facial cleanser				1		1	1		1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	14
Nourishing (face) Oil									1			1	1				3
Massage oil/ body oil				1													1
Hair mist/oil*	2	2				1	1										6
Baby hair oil					1												1
Shampoo/ hair cleanser/hair butter	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	2		1			12
Baby shampoo					1						1		1				3
Hair conditioner		1	1	1		1					1	1		1			7
Baby hair conditioner											1						1
Foot scrub	1																1
Face scrub/exfoliator	1	1		1		1				1	1	1		1	1		9

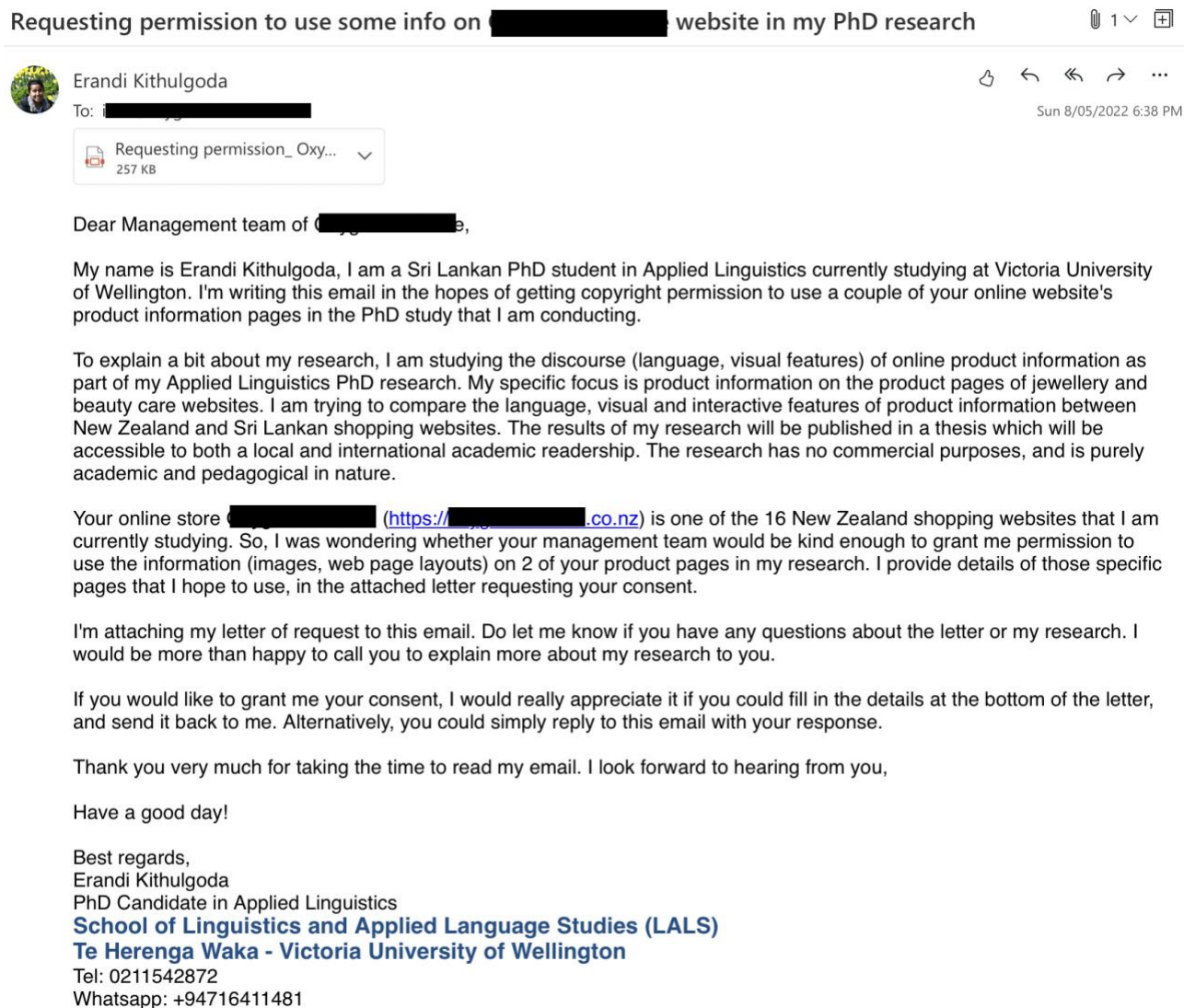
Body scrub/exfoliating body balm			1						1		1		1			1	5
Lip scrub								1									1
Sun Care/protection/sun screen		1				1	1									1	4
Toner				1			1		1	1		1	1	1		1	8
Lip Balm		1						1					1		1		4
Foot balm/ cream			1				1									1	3
Everything balm (lip/skin on face and body)																	0
Soap/ body bar/ gel bar	2			1	3	2		3				2	1			1	15
Baby soap					1			1									2
Face soap								1									1
Manicure/pedicure bomb								1									1
Bath bomb/melt								5			1						6
Bath salt			1	1													2
Nail art		1															1
Eau de cologne		1															1
Kids cologne					1												1
Baby cologne					1	1											2
Gift pack/set/collection/ kit				1	1			1	1	2	1		1		3		11
Polishing powder/radiance / brightening/ brightness									2				1				3
Booster treatment									1								1
Deodorant											1					1	2
acne gel/ serum/ treatment							1			1					2		4
Gold dust															2		2
Massage wax														1			1
Compostable refills															1		1
Glow stick															1		1
Baby powder																1	1
Cuticle oil																1	1
Foot soak			1														1
Shaving gel/cream																1	1
	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	240

## A2. Online jewellery Product Information sub corpus

Jewellery type	Sljeri	Sljech	Sljesv	Sljeta	Sljeai	Sljede	Sljeni	Sljeaa	Nzjeca	Nzjeme	Nzjeao	Nzjesi	Nzjepa	Nzjelo	Nzjewi	Nzjewi	Nzjela
Bangles	1	2	3		4	2	2	3		2				3			22
Bracelets	2	2		3		2	1			2	3	3	2		3	3	26
Rings	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	47
Earrings	2	2	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	48
Pendants	3	1	3	3		2	2	3	3		3		3			2	28
Necklaces	3	2	3		4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	43
Cufflinks	1					0							2		2		5
Brooches						0											0
Tie pins		1				0											1
Collection s (sets)		2		2		0											4
Savadi						1											1
Mugappu							1										1
Nose stud							2										2
Amulet									3								3
Anklet										2		1					3
Body harness																	0
Hair pin/clip														2	2		4
Enhancer																	0
Charm																1	1
Locket																1	1
	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	240

## Appendix B – Email and Letter requesting copyright permission

### B1. Email:



## **B2. Letter of requesting copyright permission:**

Erandi Kithulgoda

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

29.03.2020

Ms. Femida Anwaraly

Zays Ridhi,

Sri Lanka

Dear Ms. Anwaraly,

My name is Erandi Kithulgoda. I am a Doctoral student at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and I am writing a thesis on the language of online product descriptions for a PhD in Applied Linguistics. A print copy of this thesis when completed will be deposited in the University Library, and a digital copy will also be made available online via the University's digital repository *Te Waharoa*. This is a not-for-profit research repository for scholarly work which is intended to make research undertaken in the University available to as wide an audience as possible.

I am writing to request permission for the following images and web page layouts, for which I believe you hold the copyright, to be included in my thesis, research presentations/ articles:

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My thesis examines the language (visual and textual) and other characteristics of product descriptions as they are used on the product pages of online shopping sites.



I am seeking from you a non-exclusive licence for an indefinite period to include these materials in the print and electronic copies of my thesis, research presentations and research articles. The materials will be fully and correctly referenced.

If you agree, I should be very grateful if you would sign the form below and return a copy to me. If you do not agree, or if you do not hold the copyright in this work, would you please notify me of this. I can most quickly be reached by email at [erandi.kithulgoda@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:erandi.kithulgoda@vuw.ac.nz).

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Erandi Kithulgoda

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C : Information sheet for interview participants**



### *Analysing the Characteristics of Online Product Descriptions*

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS – COPYWRITER NEW ZEALAND WEBSITE**

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Erandi Kithulgoda and I am a Doctoral student in Applied Linguistics at Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my doctoral dissertation.

#### **What is the aim of the project?**

I am interested in analysing the language and other characteristics of product descriptions as they are used in online shopping sites. Your participation will support this research by helping me better understand product descriptions from the point of view of a copywriter. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (0000028205).

#### **How can you help?**

You have been invited to participate because you are a product copywriter whose insight as a specialist informant is valuable for me to understand the language of online shopping as used in online product descriptions. If you agree to take part, I will conduct a one to one interview with you and ensure confidentiality of information. The venue can be your work place or any other public place of your preference. If conditions do not permit us to have a face to face interview, I will conduct an online interview with you via video

conference using either Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp or another video conference mode of your preference. I will ask you questions about how you write the product copy and factors that affect product copy writing. The interview will take about forty five minutes. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later. You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. If you believe that any of my questions require you to divulge commercially sensitive data, you can choose not to answer such questions. You will receive a gift (or online gift payment if interviews are conducted online) worth 15 NZD as a token of appreciation for your participation in my research. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time before 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

**What will happen to the information you give?**

Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

**What will the project produce?**

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation and academic publications and conferences.

**If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?**

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study before 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview recording;
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview
- be able to read a summary of the findings of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

**If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

**Student:**

Erandi Kithulgoda

erandi.kithulgoda@vuw.ac.nz

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Jean Parkinson

PhD Supervisor

School of Linguistics and Applied Language  
Studies

+644 463 8009

[jean.parkinson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:jean.parkinson@vuw.ac.nz)

**Human Ethics Committee information**

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the  
Victoria University of Wellington HEC Convenor: Associate Professor Judith Loveridge.  
Email [hec@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hec@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

## Appendix D: Consent form for interview participants



### *Analysing the Characteristics of Online Product Descriptions*

#### **CONSENT TO INTERVIEW – PARTICIPANT RELATED TO NEW ZEALAND WEBSITES**

This consent form will be held for five years.

Researcher: Erandi Kithulgoda, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 30th November 2021, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed on 31st March 2025.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- I understand that the findings may be used for a PhD dissertation and academic publications and presented to conferences.
- I understand that the recordings will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- My name will not be used in reports and utmost care will be taken not to disclose any information that would identify me.

- I would like a copy of the recording of my interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a summary of my interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this research and have added my email address below. Yes ☐ No ☐
- If interviews are conducted online, I would like to be interviewed via: Skype ☐ Zoom ☐ Whatsapp ☐ Other ☐
- If my answer for the above statement is 'other', the preferred video conference mode is: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

(If interviews are conducted online, please e-mail a completed copy of this consent form to: [erandi.kithulgoda@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:erandi.kithulgoda@vuw.ac.nz). If you are emailing the consent form, it is not required to place your signature on the form.)

## **Appendix E: Pre-designed interview questions for conducting semi-structured interviews**

### **Interview Questions – Copywriters**

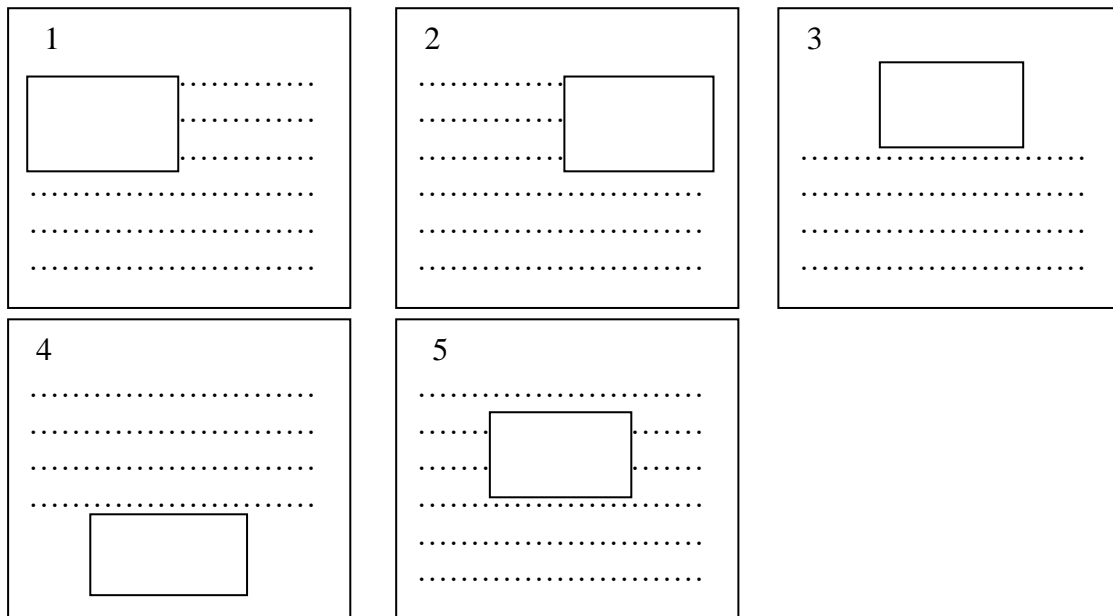
1. Can you explain to me a bit about what you do as a product copywriter?
2. And what is it like, the process of interacting with a business owner who's requested your service to write the product copy? How do you start writing for them?
3. What kinds of specifications do online store owners give you when you write for them?
4. For you is there a difference between the words 'product copy' and 'product description'?
5. What do you think is the purpose or purposes of the product description that you write for online shopping sites?
6. How is writing product copy for the online environment different from writing product copy for other print media?
7. What kinds of details do you normally include when writing product copy for jewellery/herbal skincare?
8. When I was researching about product descriptions, I read something about Search Engine Optimisation through product copy? Do you do anything with the product copy to help with search engine optimization?
9. Is there any order in which you normally go about describing the product?
10. If you take a look at this example, what are the sections in it that you are asked to write, and can you comment on the language that has been used?
11. In your opinion, which sections of a product copy are the most important to persuade customers to buy the product? Which sections of a product copy can you not do without? Which sections are optional?
12. What kind of language do you normally use in your writing to persuade potential customers to buy the product?
13. If you are asked to select details of product copy that would be hidden due to the nature of online pages and only visible by clicking on some titles, which parts of your written copy would you prefer to be directly visible to shoppers? What is the reason for your choice?
14. Do you think written product copy performs the same function as product photographs in product descriptions? Or do they perform different functions?

### **Interview Questions –Online store owners**

1. Do jewellery/ beauty care companies (like yours) need to be registered under a certain government body in New Zealand?
2. What is the experience like, having an online store compared to having a physical store?
3. Who do you work together with in order to create and maintain an ecommerce site?
4. What are the items that you include on a product page?
5. Who decides on the content that goes on the product page? You? Web designers? The Copywriter? Can you explain the process a bit – the way in which you work together with the designers and the copywriters to bring the content on to the page?
6. What do you recognize as a product description? (show different sections on the product page)
7. What do you think is the product copy? What do you ask the copywriters or content creators to make?
8. What do you think is the purpose of a product description? Why do you want to have product descriptions in your shopping site?
9. What is the target group of online shoppers that you have in mind when you include the product descriptions on your shopping site?
10. In your experience, what do you think customers expect from a good product description?
11. What kinds of details about the product do you want to be included in the written description (product copy) of a product in your website? And Which details included in an online product description do you consider to be more important than others to sell the product/persuade customers?
12. What matters more in product descriptions? Photographs or the written description? Why?
13. Why do you include a photograph in your product page?
14. Who selects the photographs that are included in these product descriptions? Is it you as the business owner or the web designer or someone else?
15. When you display the information on your web page, how would you like the photographs and the written description to be placed on the web page?



16. What kind of a web page layout do you find works best out of the given examples?



17. I have observed that most photographs of products that you sell do not use any human models. Is there a reason for that?

18. How many photographs are normally included per product description? Is there any reason for that number?

19. Do you have any specifications about the type of photograph that is selected to be included in the product description?

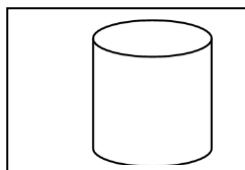
20. What sort of background do you prefer the photographs to have?

21. What kind of a shot of the product would be better suited for the product description photographs?

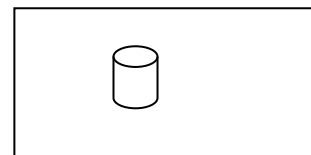
Close up?



Medium shot?



Long shot?



22. Do you think the written description (product copies) performs the same function as photographs in product descriptions? Or do they perform different functions?

23. Do you ask copywriters to include any specific details in the product descriptions/copy they write?

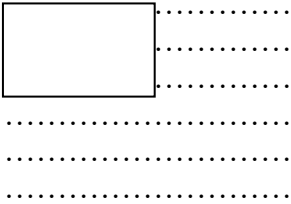
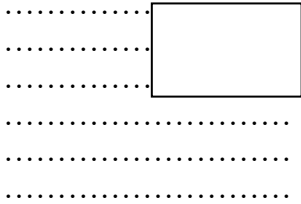
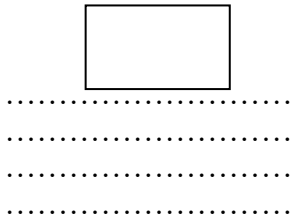
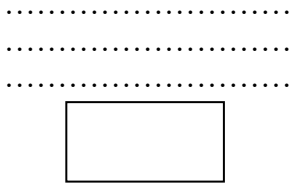
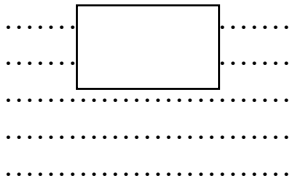
24. Do you specify any requirements to the web designers when they develop your web page/ product description in particular?

25. How do you think the online medium helps customers interact with your products in a situation where they cannot touch or feel the product?

26. Speaking of items like payment options or buy it now, add to wishlist buttons or share icons, do you ask web designers to have them in your product page, or is it decided by the web designer?

### Interview Questions -Online shoppers

1. How do product descriptions (images+ written description) help you when shopping online? Or do they help at all?
2. Which details of the product description do you normally pay particular attention to?
3. What is more important for you –product photographs or the written description- when doing online shopping? Why?
4. How would a written description (product copy) help you in making a buying decision? Or does it help you?
5. Apart from the details you pay particular attention to in a product description, What kind of details do you think should be essentially included in an acceptable jewellery/ herbal skincare product description?
6. Which particular sections of the written product copy would persuade you more in buying the product?
7. If you consider photographs used in jewellery/ herbal skincare product descriptions, what kind of photographs of the product would you like to see?
8. How would photographs influence you in making a buying decision?
9. In your opinion, which features of interactivity (clicking on, zooming, and hovering over items) that you find in online product descriptions are useful when going through the product description?
10. Do you prefer a web page layout where photographs take up a larger space than the written description or vice versa?
11. What kind of a web page layout do you prefer? 1) Where photographs are to the left of the written description or 2) to the right? 3) Or where photographs are at the top and written description is at the bottom or 4) vice versa? 5) Or where photographs are in the middle and the written description surrounds it?

<p>1</p> 	<p>2</p> 	<p>3</p> 
<p>4</p> 	<p>5</p> 	

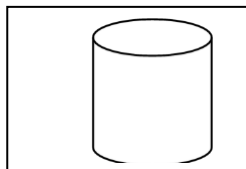
## Interview Questions -Web designers

1. Can you explain to me a bit about your role as a web designer/ content designer/ content design lead and what it entails?
2. Is web designer/ UX UI designer and content designer the same thing, or how does it change?
3. In your opinion, what is the purpose of displaying product descriptions (photograph +written description of the product) on a shopping site?
4. What is the relationship between the product description and other elements on the product page?
5. What matters more in product descriptions? photographs or the written description? Why?
6. What is the layout that you use for a product description in terms of the placement of photographs and written details? Is there any reason for the preference?
7. How do you normally organize the layout of the product description in terms of the placement of photographs and written text?
8. What happens to the layout of the product page and product description when you design the page for mobile applications?
9. Do you think placing the photograph in a particular place on the page would give product descriptions more persuasive advantage?
10. Which is given more space in the product description? Photographs or written description?
11. Which viewing angle of a product is generally used in the product description images? Low angle? Eye level? High angle?
12. What kind of a shot of a product is generally used in the product description photographs?

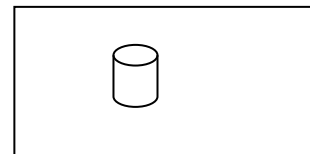
Close up?



Medium shot?



Long shot?



13. How many photographs are normally included per product description? Is there any reason for that?
14. How do you use the online medium to help customers interact with products in a situation where they cannot touch or feel the product?
15. What kind of interactive elements are included in the product description (where shoppers can click or hover over to get a reaction)? What is the function of making those areas interactive?
16. Would you prefer all the details of the written description to be visible to shoppers at a glance, or would you prefer to have only certain sections visible with others only visible upon clicking links?
17. How do you select which sections of the written product copy need to be made visible and which can afford to be hidden?
18. Do you think product copies perform the same function in product descriptions as photographs? Or do they perform different functions?

19. In your experience, how would designing the product description section of a product like jewellery be different from designing the product description section for skincare products?
20. Why are certain items like “Write a review” or ‘product size’ repeated in different places of the same product description? What’s the reason for such a repetition?
21. Do you think a button like “Buy it now” (As opposed to a button like “Add to cart”) pressurizes the customer into buying the product?
22. In your opinion, why do designers use icons in product descriptions in addition to written text and images? (interviewer shows some pictograms connected to ‘Made in NZ’, ‘Not tested on animals’, ‘Paraben/Paraffin free’ ).
23. Can you identify the sections on a product page? (Show a product page) What would you call a product description? What are the others then?

## **Appendix F: Theme codes used for participant interview data analysis in NVivo:**

- i. Connection with other genres (product listings)
- ii. Cross-cultural difference
- iii. Difference between print vs online copy
- iv. Difference in OPI due to product category
- v. Icons in OPI
- vi. Interaction with other genre co -producers of the genre – working with them
- vii. Interactivity and pressure tactics
- viii. Interactivity in OPI
- ix. Layout change From Web to Mobile screen
- x. Naming\_identifying OPI sections
- xi. Online stores
- xii. Organisational\_government\_context
- xiii. Page layout – displaying information on web page – placement of info and photographs
- xiv. Perceived user behaviour
- xv. Persuasive discourse
- xvi. Photographs – typical features (participants, angle, distance, background) and functions
- xvii. Professional practice\_Role as a Web designer\_copywriter\_shop owner
- xviii. Repetitive content on OPIs
- xix. Reviews
- xx. Search Engine Optimisation
- xxi. Structure\_obligatory or optional features\_language of OPI
- xxii. Target group\_intended audience and their expectations from OPI
- xxiii. Textual vs visual modes - comparative importance
- xxiv. The purpose\_nature of OPI on a shopping site
- xxv. Written description – functions

**Appendix G: Log-likelihood scores calculated to select lexical bundles that are statistically more frequent in the target corpus (M3S3 - Making reassurances) than in the reference corpus**

Frequency of BNC Written Sampler	Frequency in OPI M3S2	Log-likelihood	+ over-use in OPI/ - under-use in OPI relative to BNC sampler	Size of the bundle	Lexical bundle	Selection
0	29	200.21	+	5	not tested	Yes
0	29	200.21	+	5	not tested on	Yes
2	29	185.51	+	5	tested on	Yes
0	27	186.4	+	3	paraben free	Yes
0	23	158.79	+	2	cruelty free	Yes
0	21	237.02	+	4	not tested on animals	Yes
2	21	131.52	+	4	on animals	Yes
2	21	223.44	+	4	tested on animals	Yes
4	20	116.71	+	2	product is	Yes
739	17	2.31	-	2	is a	No
0	16	110.46	+	2	100% vegetarian	Yes
1511	16	30.06	-	3	it is	No
0	15	103.56	+	2	sodium lauryl	Yes
0	14	96.65	+	2	natural vegan	Yes
8	13	62.35	+	2	we use	Yes
2	11	64.91	+	2	and safe	Yes
0	10	69.04	+	2	no synthetic	Yes
1	10	62.4	+	2	safe for	Yes
160	9	2.14	+	2	and is	No
5	9	44.21	+	2	skin and	Yes
0	8	55.23	+	3	100% natural	Yes
5	8	38.23	+	2	and gentle	Yes
286	7	0.63	-	2	which is	No
38	7	11.87	+	3	with no	Yes
22	6	13.74	+	2	free and	Yes

Bundles with a log-likelihood value above 3.84 indicate that there is a difference between the use of the lexical bundle in the target OPI corpus compared to the use of the same bundle in the BNC Written Sampler reference corpus.

A plus value (+) indicates a higher use in the target OPI corpus in comparison to the reference corpus.