

# The Rise of Conceptual Association and Linguistic Register as Advertiser Persuasive Instruments: An Australian study of press artefacts 1800s–1950s

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## Abstract

*Consumer advertising is remarkable in its propensity to socially recalibrate and adopt new technology, thus providing a spectacular range of information-dissemination methodology in multimodal formats. Unsurprisingly then, the sensory-input phenomena of advertising language attract interdisciplinary interest. Despite researcher diversity, conceptual association presents as a premier audience-sensitive instrument deployed in relay of advertiser-intended meanings: in this dynamic, socio-culturally appropriate messaging is attempted via linguistic register (word choices) tied in semantic interdependency with non-linguistic elements. Compositional meaning-maker favourites include abbreviations, symbols, presupposition and implicature as facilitators of ‘hidden’ meanings. Here, an under-researched area emerges on the historical plane—namely the origin story of conceptual association as an operative in consumer-oriented rhetoric and its pragmatic transit from early-seller composition toward the kaleidoscope of today’s advertising broadband. In this vein, the evolutionary path of promotional discourse is traced via an Australian 1800s–1950s press dataset. The data evidences abbreviations and symbols in consumer advertising by the late 1840s and pegs the rise of presupposition and implicature to the 1850s. This finding, as historical backdrop, complements inquiries that illuminate how compositional choices work to generate non-evidence-based benefits that induce positive appraisal and, further, raises the formative journey of English as today’s global lingua franca of consumer advertising.*

**Keywords:** advertising language; conceptual association; linguistic register; presupposition; implicature; persuasion

## **Introduction: State of the Art and Key Concepts**

The fluidity of advertiser reflexivity and compositional ingenuity afford seemingly limitless data for exploration of seller persuasive tactics. Conceptual association is raised as a singular influencer of compositional choices in message creation, well-documented in scholarly works (including Barthes, [1957] 1977; Bruthiaux, 1996; Cook, [1992] 2001, 2008; Ghadessy, 1988; Goffman, 1979; Hermerén, 1999; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Leech, 1966; Myers, 1994, 1998; O’Sullivan, 2019; Packard, 1957; Schmidt et al., 1986; Vestergard et al., 1985; Williamson, 1978). Similarly, linguistic register—that is, appropriate language choices depending on socio-cultural setting—surfaces as a core element in communication. In the canon of persuasive-language studies are those that illuminate form-and-function phenomena, such as Bhatia (1992) on English in advertising across cultures; Dafouz-Milne (2008) drawing on opinion pieces; Del Saz-Rubio (2018) on women’s toiletries in TV commercials; Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001) on advertiser slogans and headlines in magazines; Gardner and Luchtenberg (2000) on posters and billboards; Ruellot (2011) on bilingual creativity in French advertising; Simmank et al. (2020) on cognitive reasoning and information processing as complementary elements in slogan interpretation; Van Compernelle (2008) on virtual-dating networks; Webster (1988) on religious language and solidarity in group identity; and de Silva (2020) on discourse markers in cartoon-strip advertising. Collectively, these highlight aspects of reference at the heart of meaning conveyance. Conceptual association and register are significant co-operators in health and beauty marketing (Diez Arroyo, 2013; de Regt et al., 2020; Goddard, 2015; Hermans, 2021; Myers, 1994, 1998; de Silva, 2018) where consumer benefits are indeterminate. Frequently, the promise of wellbeing is the marketing pillar of consumables that lack benefit verification: these include cosmetics, household cleaners, over-the-counter (OTC) pharmaceuticals, toiletries and tea.

This paper, via an 1800s–1950s press dataset (de Silva, 2021), contributes to an under-explored area in advertising-language studies by profiling how conceptual association and linguistic register gained prominence as persuaders. By tracing the formative trajectory of promotional discourse, this report illustrates the proliferation of misleading impressions embedded in consumer advertising. Here, the decline of fact-focused, utilitarian and provable information and the attendant rise of non-evidence-based claims point to a gradual shift that streamlined into the present-day multimedia adscape (which banks on visual stimulation, such as the evocative meme in digital marketing).<sup>i</sup> In this scenario where factual information-giving is diminished, it is pertinent to note how the core concept of information is defined in information science:

*The understanding of the core concept of 'information' in information science is seen as:*

- *a proposition, a structure, a message or an event*
- *as requiring truth or indifferent to truth*
- *as socially embedded and under perpetual re-interpretation, or as measurable in bits*
- *as a worn-out idea deserving of dispatch, or as an exciting conception understandable in terms of evolutionary forces (Bates, 2009: 2359).*

This four-way description of what information is—from the science of how information is stored and processed—accounts for commonly held understandings as well as those held across diverse social groups (including intellectual, legal, scientific and technology cultures). As a broad definition at semantic baseline (Bates, 2009), information is a proposition, a structure, a message or an event. The what-is-information key words of interest to the advertising copywriter are likely to be 'proposition', 'message', 'requiring truth', 'indifferent to truth', 'socially embedded', 'under perpetual re-interpretation', 'worn-out idea' and 'an exciting conception'. Of this lexical set, two sit in apposition: 'requiring truth' (bobbing as an inconvenience in copywriter compositional labour) and 'indifferent to truth' (presenting as solution to sedate the problematic 'requiring truth' element). Two discomfiting phrases in the lexical set are 'under perpetual re-interpretation' and 'worn-out idea'; however, these (and other) advertiser concerns can be overcome by socially embedding 'an exciting conception' (via positive values) to entice markets (Barthes, 1957 [1977]; Packard, 1957).

An 'exciting conception' is the copywriter goal, inferentially attainable. Concept association is a cognitive memory-based phenomenon usefully engaged as an instrument to relay advertiser-intended meanings: in this dynamic, socio-culturally appropriate messaging is attempted via linguistic register (word choices) tied in semantic interdependency with non-linguistic elements (like pictures). Compositional meaning-maker favourites include abbreviations, symbols, presupposition and implicature as facilitators of 'hidden' meanings. Simply put, conceptual association may be defined as cognitive phenomena drawing on a network of socio-cultural meanings where semantic boundaries intersect. The idea of conceptual association is first seen in Plato's Republic (c. 375 BCE), and unfolds as a polemic in philosophy through time (Rapaport, 1938). Dutch philosopher Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza (1632–1677) aptly describes it as 'man in remembering one thing straightaway remembers another either like it or which is perceived simultaneously with it' (Ibid: 49). In this vein,

Schoenlein and Schloss (2022), in their empirical study of colour-concept associations, found participants were sensitive to colour-concept co-occurrences in learning tasks where using colour was not essential to task completion. This finding points to simultaneous involuntary recall (remembering) of related information and suggests that people ‘continually form and update associations between colours and concepts’ (Schoenlein et al., 2022: 473). Accordingly, it can be extrapolated that to link a consumable strategically with positive values may bear desirable effects of some permanence.

Historically, overt positive-concept association—via attention-getters, iteration, memorability and testimonials as advertiser favourites—is traceable over centuries (Sage, 1916; Sampson, 1874; Turner, 1922). But the exaggerated commendations that characterise the “‘magnificent promises’ of puffery’ (Burridge, 2018) have puffed out in favour of subtle messaging via devices like intertextuality and pictures (Goddard, 2015; Hermerén, 1999 *inter alios*). Copywriter retreat from hype and hyperbole is prompted largely by three catalysts:

- industry codes and legislative caveats (Crawford, 2008, 2021; Segraves, 2005; Petty, 2015)
- marketer interpretive reflexivity in decision-making to meet ever-changing socio-cultural dynamics and to address ‘jaded consumer’ scepticism (Myers, 1994: 25–27)
- *the push for corporate social responsibility and ethical practice* (Drumwright, 2007).

In transition from fact-focused information to covert promotional persuasion, two change phenomena are remarkable. First, images usurp words as principal conduit of meaning conveyance and brand identity. Second, facts relating to consumables are frequently omitted (such as ingredients, physical attributes, production sources) in favour of slogans and/or catchy phrases (linguistic fragment) that are fact-like. At this point, it is useful to define ‘fact’ in everyday use:

*That which is known (or firmly believed) to be real or true; what has actually happened or is the case; truth attested by direct observation or authentic testimony; reality. (Oxford English Dictionary).<sup>ii</sup>*

In the world of science, simply put, the idea of fact rests on the reality of a truth known from evidence-based records of actual observation. On the broader scientific, philosophical and sociological plane (Fleck, [1935] 1979), the concepts underpinning science result from an ongoing process of socio-scientific consolidations that continue to transform. These transformations are realised through language: a universal instrument of

communication in the hands of all, including the seller-advertiser. In this vein, the conceptual creations of consumer advertising, in social consolidation, can come to be accepted as fact—something known (or believed) to be real or true. In the words of Gardner and Luchtenberg (2000: 1808): ‘meaning is derived from the perceiver's knowledge of language as system and the pragmatic ability to make sense of an emerging text in the context of the situation and of the sociocultural world in which the text occurs’.

Copywriters appropriately employ concepts and registers to create ‘Selling Power’ (Leech, 1966); here, in retrospective reflection, the question arises of how copywriting formatively transitioned from the compact classified marked by its fact-focused information-delivery purpose (Ambler et al., 2007: 30–32; Bruthiaux, 1996) to the ideational sophistication seen today. In this light, this paper seeks to illustratively articulate the developmental progression. Questions that guided analysis of the dataset include:

- What can be said of advertiser language choices in transition from fact-focused to ideationally available benefits?
- At what point did symbolic and inferentially available non-verifiable meanings begin to characterise advertising language?

At this juncture, it is helpful to define three central concepts—namely the ideas of *information*, *persuasion* and *linguistic register*. In the following discussion, ‘information’ is defined simply<sup>iii</sup> as overtly or implicitly available ideas recoverable via discourse features. Given the historical association of printed matter with knowledge, science and the law (Hughes, 1988, 2000; Johns, 1998), it is reasonable to surmise that written information potentially carries the weight of credibility. Accordingly, advertiser-intended interpretations available in written composition are likely to escape consumer critical review in the everyday scenario. Today, words continue to be an advertiser tool, complementing the strategies of modern advertising (Crawford, 2008; Myers, 2009) that engage a semiotic chain of events relying on images as meaning-maker (Aitchison, 2012; Messaris, 1996). The semiotic operation of text–image relationships highlights the efficacy of an image to generate multiple ideas simultaneously (Bateman, 2014). Advertiser information may be verifiable (as fact or truth), or unverifiable (and thus may be false or misleading). It can be argued that elements of truth, at least thematically, underpin the presuppositions and implicatures of advertiser claims to mould impressions of real-world reliability (Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001; de Silva, 2018).

The idea of persuasion in advertising language is broadly defined here as linguistic and non-linguistic elements embedded to get attention, be

positively memorable, be readable, and thus create ‘Selling Power’ (Leech, 1966). Persuasive devices over time typically include: the historic woodcut as placeholder to attract the reader’s eye; pictures with power to connect with personal memory; logos holding brand values; natural-language pragmatics elements (like deictics, information structure, implicature, presupposition, thematic information, turn-taking); and linguistic register choices on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic planes (Bolinger et al., 1981: 12, 81–2). Linguistic register is identifiable primarily by way of three attributes (Börjars et al., 2019; Yule, 2020) within the baselines of Wardhaugh’s (2006) ‘occupational’ and ‘social’ descriptors:

- occupational register (profession– and workplace–related language)
- topic, which may be specialist subject matter (like banking and finance, bio-medical, real estate) or everyday social exchanges (like salutations)
- style of expression (such as level of formality or colloquialism) appropriate to social circumstance.

The first and second attributes (professional and workplace language and topic) are related in that occupations generate topics relevant to their activities, and thus occupation and topic share recognition value in specialist vocabulary. The third focuses on social situation (including class hierarchy) and linguistic features (like slang and phonology, salient in studies of spoken expression). Collectively, these are pragmatically critical to advertisement composition. Given the press dataset, the first and second attributes are the focus here; but notably copywriters effectively employ conversation formats in print advertising as device to attract addressee participation (Cook [1992] 2001; Goddard, 2015; Hermerén, 1999; Myers, 1994, 1998).

The linguistic range within each of the three register-identification attributes, logically, is a variable rising exponentially in relation to augmentation in the English language within its historical socio-economic and cultural situations. This expansion is a mosaic mirrored in the occupational diversification that emerged as a corollary of commercial, scientific and technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution— which progression coincides with the spread of colonialism (Russell, 1793), and inter-cultural mixing and population growth (see Hughes, 2000; Morgan, 2011).<sup>iv</sup> Eventually, into the 1900s, socio-economic progress resulted in definitive career and educational specialisations that created sets of discipline– and subject–specific registers and subsidiary varieties (sub-registers): the vocabularies of accountancy and book-keeping or stockbroking, for example, are sub-registers within banking and finance.

Occupational register as the ‘special language of the professions’ has been identified as formatively influential in the nationalistic and economic history of the United States (**Heath, 1979**). Workplace and specialist varieties are tools in market segmentation: register diversification as a strategy to access the pockets of the waged population is a premier advertiser instrument, expressly evident in linguistic adjustment from colonial settlement into the mid-1950s.

Consumer advertising today dually targets spending-stimulation and market retention, promoting items that often are indistinguishable in value. The ‘catchy syntax’ of advertising copy that ‘can lull us into staying vague about meaning’ (**Elbow, 2012: 255**) is the material of slogans. Typically, copywriters ingrain consumables with positive concepts that associate impressions of exclusive quality and/or sophistication that promise rewards. Perhaps curiously, the phenomenon of English fragments as glitter in today’s international adscape is firmly in place. English phrases are the global lingua franca in consumer advertising: they are active participants connotatively linking items with positive qualities via strategic cross-language blending (**Bhatia, 1992; Martin, 2007, 2008; Moody, 2020; Nickerson, 2020: 501–502; Piller, 2001; Ruellot, 2011**). This spotlights English as a language of prestige, with power to evoke ideas of excellence, technological sophistication and scientific integrity. This is evidenced even where the brand is exclusive to an economic power commensurate with England (and/or the United States). English fragments are an indispensable incentive embedded in localised French advertising, despite legal caveats that disallow English in French advertising (**Ruellot, 2011**).

## **Trove Digital Archive Dataset 1800s–1950s and Analytical Approach**

### *Dataset 1800s–1950s*

This paper draws on 1800s–1950s press data collected between 2015 and 2019 (**de Silva, 2021**). The data—sourced from the Trove Digital Archive<sup>v</sup>—comprises both consumer advertising and socio-cultural artefacts (including opinion pieces and trade– and finance–related reporting), which contextually inform the analysis. Practical examples illustrate the language-adjustment journey of promotional language as it morphed from fact-focused to putative benefits. In data analysis, observations were conceptually inter-related and stylistically matched across the dataset (**informed by Crystal et al., 1969 and Sebeok, 1960**), and interpreted within a language-in-use approach to reveal variation in usage patterns. As done by Bhatia (**1992**), each advertisement is treated as a single discourse unit, and visual devices (like capitalisation, bolding, pictures) were recorded, along with close reading of body copy to holistically glean

textual, interpersonal and ideationally available information (de Silva, 2018, 2020, 2021).

*Analytical approach*

The analytical approach deals with advertiser compositional diversity (namely linguistic, literary, image and typography devices) at the levels of discourse, clause and phrase.<sup>vi</sup> This diversity requires blending two or more approaches to uncover communicative functionality. Broadly, the approach here follows the discourse-analysis parameters of Gee (2011, 2014) within the language-in-use perspective (Austin, 1975; Crystal et al., 1969; Ghadessy, 1988; Halliday, 1985). Holistic and granular inspection of linguistic and non-linguistic elements is achieved by bringing together:

- the language communication model (Leech, [1974] 1981), which identifies the five social functions of Expressive, Informative, Directive, Phatic, Aesthetic
- the idea of cohesion in English (Halliday et al., 1976), which simply put is textual construction meaningful in socio-cultural communicative contexts.

In analysis, conceptual association and linguistic register rise as vehicles of persuasion, skilfully configured to encourage audience cooperation, gaining purposeful rhetorical sophistication. As precursor to the discussion here and its illustrative examples, a summary-in-brief of persuaders in developmental progression is shown in **Table 1**. The stages of this evolutionary path relate to language-adjustment (consumer) periods, from the simplicity of early-1800s promotions to the brand-identity emphasis of modern advertising (Myers, 1994; de Silva, 2021). In the discussion below, practical examples illustrate the operation of conceptual association and linguistic register as authenticators of advertiser claims. The pragmatic transit of promotional language is contextually elucidated as it morphed from a fact-focused delivery purpose toward socially constructed worlds accessible via symbolic values.

*Table 1: Key advertiser devices of persuasion, 1800s–1950s: progressive deployment (Source: de Silva, 2021)*

1800s–1950s	Key Advertiser Devices
<b>From the early 1800s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typography (font enlargement, bolding, capitalisation, italicisation, punctuation marks)</li> <li>• Repetition (iteration)</li> <li>• Testimonials (as markers of authenticity)</li> <li>• Woodcuts</li> </ul>
<b>From the 1850s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressive, narrative, descriptive, argumentative modes</li> </ul>



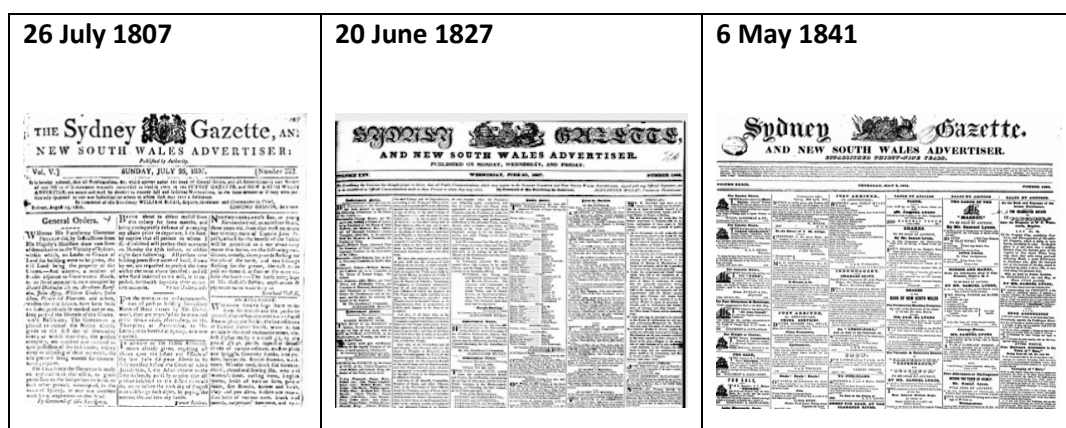
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register variation</li> <li>• Conceptual association with positive ideas</li> <li>• Presupposition, Implicature, Thematic Information</li> <li>• Aphorisms and slogans</li> <li>• Advertorials</li> </ul>
<b>From the 1880s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pronoun referencing, direct address</li> <li>• Grammatical mood</li> <li>• Pictures and elaborate portraiture, cartooning</li> <li>• Technical drawings</li> <li>• Metaphors, metonyms</li> <li>• Brand-building</li> <li>• Conversations (direct speech)</li> </ul>

### Transition from Fact-Focused Information to Putative Benefits

Two features deny early-1800s consumer advertising as distinctively persuasive:

- Newspaper layout was an uncategorised jumble where consumer-item availability is not distinguished (**Figure 1**).
- Advertisements were compositionally similar in register to other press language, marked by formality and respectful addressee social distancing (**Figure 2**).

Figure 1: Newspaper front pages (half-page extracts, including banner) from 1807, 1827, and 1841  
(Source: The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, NSW 1803–1842)



In the 1807–1827–1841 front-page sequence of Figure 1, three incipient principles of readability and improved layout are progressively apparent by 1841:

- narrower column width (and more columns)
- adoption of bolded headlines
- woodcuts that signalled consumer-relevant information.

The latter two (headlines and woodcuts) are eye-catcher devices serving the message 'Look at me!' Decorative woodcuts, however small, were an outstanding attraction as '[t]he advertisement carrying even a small illustration had an advantage which often amounted to dominance of the page' (Presbrey, 1929: 93).

The woodcut, an historic tool of the printmaking artisan,<sup>vii</sup> serves as the prototype of the semiotic in promotional texts, bringing to the reader a picture as meaningful symbol. The woodcut image meta-encoded availability of consumer-relevant information, repeatedly signalling marketplace opportunity; this visual re-occurrence operated in an emblem-like way, distinctively marking consumer information. It is worth noting this early-advertiser tactic in the light of today's digital marketing meme, recognised as capable of imitating and reiterating units of cultural information in brand promotion (McGrath, 2019; Murray et al., 2014). In this vein, advertising is a cultural medium and an imitative art, copying from artefacts in real life to innovate existing signifiers that then ideationally mint new meanings with intention to create attractive consumer worlds. In the longitudinal adscape, it is reasonable to equate in principle the woodcut with the advertiser meme (of commercials and digital platforms) as memorability devices that promote and consolidate marketer information. Advertiser practice of repetitive imitation is today the cultural norm, and it can be speculated that the centuries-old woodcut and the sophisticated meme are sibling psychological tools directly targeting consumers.

*Early-1800s advertiser writing style: 'James-Squires-1807'*

With respect to register in narrative tracts, early-1800s writing style is fact-oriented and august, as seen in 'James-Squires-1807' (Figure 2) for sale of 'the Hop'. James Squires offered bulk purchase of hops seedlings to the agriculturist. Identified in the headline is (1) the vendor in grammatical third person:

*(1) J. SQUIRES Settler at Kissing Point*

As 'settler', James Squires presents himself as a local, and Kissing Point is the point-of-sale utilitarian information. By employing the third person, Squires distances himself from the vendor (who he likely is). In the next two lines he:

*(2) begs leave to acquaint those who*

*(3) are desirous of cultivating the Hop*

Squires (2) appeals in respectful language to (3) the aspiring agriculturalist. Squires then provides contextual facts in advising:

*(4) he has now from 12 to 1500 Plants*

*(5) to spare, the whole in a healthy state*

Thus, he identifies (4) quantity available; followed by (5) the words ‘to spare’—suggesting supply is limited—and attests condition of the living plants as ‘in a healthy state’. These first five lines contain the most relevant buyer information in gentle persuasion. In the following five lines, he states (6) the seedling price as ‘6d’ each, (7) (8) his willingness to satisfy buyer needs at ‘any number’ required, and finally in (9) (10) advises the present time as the ideal season to bed the seedlings:

*(6) And to be disposed of at the rate of 6d*

*(7) Each, for any number that may be re-*

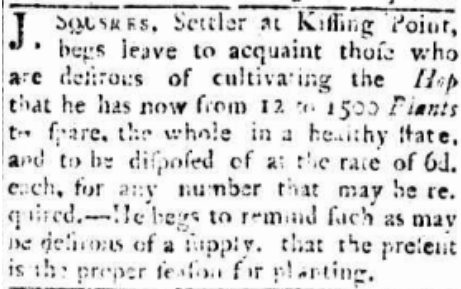
*(8) quired – He begs to remind such that may*

*(9) be desirous of a supply that the present*

*(10) is the proper season for planting.*

By declaring ‘the present is the proper season for planting’, he coaxes addressees to take immediate action to buy and plant.

Figure 2: : James-Squires-1807 sale of hops plants newspaper advertisement and transcription  
(Source: The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 27 July 1807: 1)

Original	Transcription <sup>viii</sup>
 <p><b>J.</b> SQUIRES, Settler at Kissing Point, begs leave to acquaint those who are desirous of cultivating the <i>Hop</i> that he has now from 12 to 1500 <i>Plants</i> to spare, the whole in a healthy state, and to be disposed of at the rate of 6d. each, for any number that may be required.—He begs to remind such as may be desirous of a supply, that the present is the proper season for planting.</p>	<p><b>J. SQUIRES</b> Settler at Kissing Point, begs leave to acquaint those who are desirous of cultivating the <i>Hop</i> that he has now from 12 to 1500 <i>Plants</i> to spare, the whole in a healthy state, and to be disposed of at the rate of 6d. each, for any number that may be required. — He begs to remind such as may be desirous of a supply, that the present is the proper season for planting.</p>





‘James-Squires-1807’ is high in factual utilitarian content, raising positive benefits of the sale item. A visual scan of newspapers through the decades reveals that products-and-services advertisements into the 1870s occupy a position identifiable as close to the information-delivery type on the

'continuum of text functions' (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001: 1290). At discourse level, early seller compositions tend to:

- provide fact-focused information
- lack headings that identify the sale item by name or category
- project personalisation (expressed by way of using names of people associated with sale, place, provision or manufacture of the sale item).

Market competition burgeoned over the decades with rapid growth in small trader numbers, expanding inland and regionally. By the 1820s, press devices to attract the eye are discernible, with readability improving into the 1830s. Narrative elements identifiable as persuasive are effected largely via attestations of trustworthiness. But by the 1840s, seller efforts to draw buyers are heightened, evident linguistically at sentence and word levels and in skilful typography and layout. Eye-catcher elements include use of italics, centred headings and subheads, capitalisation, innovative woodcuts, iteration, the exclamation mark, superlatives to suggest excellence, and commendatory adjectives to emphasise item attractiveness, affordability and accessibility. Two advertisements from 1848 by the small traders Henry O'Hara (**Figure 3**) and William Percivall (**Figure 4**) are representative of heightened persuasive effort.


Figure 3: Henry-O'Hara-1848 newspaper advertisement and transcription  
(Source: The Argus, 24 November 1848: 3)

Original	Transcription
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tasmanian Store,</b> SEYMOUR, GOULBURN RIVER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HENRY O'HARA</p> <p>INVITES the attention of the Squatting interest and others, to the <u>EXTENSIVE, CHOICE,</u> and carefully selected assortment of goods now on sale at the</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TASMANIAN STORE,</b></p> <p>adjoining the 'Seymour Hotel,' Goulburn River, which upon inspection will be found to consist of every article essential to the</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMFORTS, CONVENIENCE, AND NECESSITIES OF A BUSH LIFE,</b></p> <p>and upon such terms as to obviate the necessity of sending to Melbourne for supplies.</p> <p>Amongst other articles may be enumerated:— Flour, groceries, slops, prints, cottons, worsted goods, haberdashery, tin and ironware, cutlery, Sorby's and Wilkinson's shears, Turkey stone, sweet oil, crockery, tether ropes and halters, silk pocket and neck hand kerchiefs, stationery, hobbles, blankets, gunpowder, shot and percussion caps, boots and shoes, copy and reading books for children, pickles, mustard, buckets and washing tubs, nails, slippers (Kilmarnock,) bazils, hemp and flax, straw hats, bacon, butter, pocket-books and slates, lead and slate pencils, pen and pocket-knives, hair and tooth brushes, glassware, wool-packs, twine and needles, perfumery, combs, shaving brushes and boxes, carpenter's rules, hand-saws, vials, Champion's best vinegar, oilmen's stores, loaf sugar, blacking, brooms, rope, bushmen's belts, saddle straps, girths, spurs, candle moulds, dog chains, bottled fruits, with a vast variety of other goods too numerous to particularise.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.</b></p> <p> A first-rate Medicine Chest, fitted up by an eminent practitioner, from which the profession and others can be supplied.</p> <p>N.B.—Carriers and others supplied with provisions on most reasonable terms.</p> <p>•• Colonial produce bought or taken in exchange.</p> <p>Gentlemen and others can be supplied with cloth clothing, boots, shoes, &amp;c., to measure; experienced workmen having been expressly engaged for that purpose.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Seymour, 10th October, 1848.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tasmanian Store,</b> SEYMOUR, GOULBURN RIVER.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HENRY O'HARA</p> <p>INVITES the attention of the Squatting interest and others, to the <u>EXTENSIVE, CHOICE,</u> and carefully selected assortment of goods now on sale at the</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TASMANIAN STORE,</b></p> <p>adjoining the 'Seymour Hotel,' Goulburn River, which upon inspection will be found to consist of every article essential to the</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMFORTS, CONVENIENCE, AND NECESSITIES OF A BUSH LIFE,</b></p> <p>and upon such terms as to obviate the necessity of sending to Melbourne for Supplies.</p> <p>Amongst other articles may be enumerated: Flour, groceries, slops, prints, cottons, worsted goods, haberdashery, tin and ironware, cutlery, Sorby's and Wilkinson's shears, Turkey stone, sweet oil, crockery, tether ropes and halters, silk pocket and neck hand kerchiefs, stationery, hobbles, blankets, gunpowder, shot and percussion caps, boots and shoes, copy and reading books for children, pickles, mustard, buckets and washing tubs, nails, slippers (Kilmarnock,) <u>bazils</u>, hemp and flax, straw hats, bacon, butter, <u>pocket-books</u> and slates, lead and slate pencils, <u>pen</u> and pocket knives, hair and <u>tooth brushes</u>, glassware, wool packs, twine and needles, perfumery, combs shaving brushes and boxes, carpenter's rules <u>hand-saws</u>, vials, Champion's best vinegar, oil men's stores, loaf sugar, blacking, brooms, rope, bushmen's belts, saddle straps, girths, spurs, candle moulds, dog chains, bottled fruits, with a vast variety of other goods too numerous to particularize.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.</b></p> <p> A first-rate Medicine Chest, fitted up by an eminent practitioner, from which the profession and others can be supplied.</p> <p>N.B.—Carriers and others supplied with provisions on most reasonable terms.</p> <p>•• Colonial produce bought or taken in exchange.</p> <p>Gentlemen and others can be supplied with cloth clothing, boots, shoes, &amp;c, to <u>measure</u>; experienced workmen having been expressly engaged for that purpose.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Seymour, 10th <u>October</u>, 1848.</p>

**Advertiser writing style 1840s: Henry-O’Hara-1848 and William-Percivall-1848**

Henry O’Hara, proprietor of the ‘Tasmanian Store’ in Seymour, north of Melbourne, advertised using woodcuts, symbols and some 360 words (visually divisible into five blocks) (**Figure 3**). The copy is broken by centred headings and line spacing. Repetition, bolding, capitalisation and italics function to highlight key information.

At headline (1A) a sizable woodcut in the shape of a hand points down to (1B) the store name and (1C) location SEYMOUR, GOULBURN RIVER:

(1A)	
(1B)	<b>Tasmanian Store</b>
(1C)	SEYMOUR, GOULBURN RIVER

In ‘Henry-O’Hara-1848’, the woodcut as standalone visual (1A) functions as a wordless imperative that beckons with the message ‘Look!’ Communication relay operates here via ‘visual syntax’, a cognitive process:<sup>ix</sup> visual syntax is the neurological concept of the ability to generalise symbols in the absence of natural language (**Weinrich, 1989**).<sup>x</sup>

In the second block, a capitalised heading announces (2A) the proprietor name HENRY O’HARA, followed by a paragraph that ‘INVITES the attention of the Squatting’ to the ‘carefully selected assortment of goods’ available:

(2A) *‘HENRY O’HARA*

(2B) *INVITES the attention of the Squatting in-*

*terest and others, to the EXTENSIVE, CHOICE,*

*and carefully selected assortment of goods now on*

*sale at the*

The third block repeats (3A) the store name as primary information; followed by (3B) which emphasises choice in stock range as satisfying every need OF A BUSH LIFE; and (3C) draws attention to easy access and immediate availability of goods:

(3A) *TASMANIAN STORE*

(3B) *every article essential to the*

*COMFORTS, CONVENIENCE, AND NE-*

*CESSITIES OF A BUSH LIFE*

*(3C) and upon such terms as to obviate the necessity of sending to Melbourne for Supplies.*

The advantage of (3C) consumer accessibility and convenience is highlighted by declaring that the Tasmanian Store will ‘obviate the necessity of sending to Melbourne for Supplies’. Then, the fourth lengthy block, introduced by the words:


*(4) Amongst other articles...*

names some 60 items among a ‘vast variety of other goods too numerous to particularize’.


In the final part of the ‘Henry-O’Hara-1848’ advertisement, the proprietor identifies himself as wholesaler and retailer by way of a subhead (5A):

*(5A) WHOLESALE AND RETAIL*

Under (5A) are three separate eye-catchers: first (5B) a woodcut, then (5C) an abbreviation from Latin, and finally (5D) a mathematical symbol:

*(5B)  a woodcut in the shape of a hand points to the words ‘A first-rate medicine chest, fitted up by an eminent practitioner’*

*(5C) N.B. the abbreviation for ‘nota bene’ (meaning ‘note well’) raises matters of import, notifying reasonable seller terms*

*(5D)  the three-dot symbol (from algebra) meaning ‘under the condition that’ signals colonial produce (commodity exchange) as acceptable payment.*

These compact visual-syntax eye-catchers (a unique seller shorthand) economically relay meanings: they flag marketeer awareness of pictures as power to beckon and communicate. The innovative composition of ‘Henry-O’Hara-1848’ evidences that into the 1840s sellers deployed symbols to attract addressees in concert with natural language. This raises psychological strategy as a reflexive seller instrument emergent at mid-century when competitive demand-supply chains were evolving in nation-building and economic advancement.

‘William-Percivall-1848’ (**Figure 4**) —advertising from the town of Kilmore, north of Melbourne—shares the layout, typographical and linguistic features of ‘Henry-O’Hara-1848’. Place and proprietor identity are highlighted, as is merchandise variety, attractiveness, affordability and accessibility.

Figure 4: William-Percivall-1848 newspaper advertisement and transcription  
(Source: The Argus, 24 November 1848: 3)

Original	Transcription
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KILMORE.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE LARGEST! BEST! AND CHEAPEST STOCK OF GOODS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">IN THE TOWNSHIP WILL BE FOUND IN <b>WILLIAM PERCIVALL'S</b> NEW STORE,</p> <p><i>Just completed, situated near Mr. Wheeler's Inn,</i></p> <p><b>W</b>HERE Settlers, Families, Bushmen, and others, will find the largest Stock of Goods ever shown in a Bush Store, comprising nearly every article in Linen and Woollen Drapery, Haberdashery, Hosiery, Clothing of all kinds, Hats, Bonnets, &amp;c., &amp;c.</p> <p>Groceries of all kinds, furnishing and other ironmongery; together with a vast variety of articles too numerous to particularise in an advertisement.</p> <p>The whole of which having been purchased on the most advantageous terms, are offered with the smallest possible profit attached, and will be found equally as cheap as goods purchased in Melbourne.</p> <p>Purchasers may save 20 per cent by buying at <b>THIS STORE.</b></p> <p>Settlers and others taking quantities, supplied on the most liberal terms.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>KILMORE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE LARGEST! BEST! AND CHEAPEST STOCK OF GOODS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IN THE TOWNSHIP WILL BE FOUND IN <b>WILLIAM PERCIVALL'S</b> NEW STORE,</p> <p><i>Just completed, situated near Mr. Wheeler's Inn,</i></p> <p><b>W</b>HERE Settlers, Families, Bushmen, and others, will find the largest Stock of Goods ever shown in a Bush Store, comprising nearly every article in Linen and Woollen Drapery, Haberdashery, Hosiery, Clothing of all kinds, Hats, Bonnets, &amp;c., &amp;c.</p> <p>Groceries of all kinds, furnishing and other ironmongery; together with a vast variety of articles too numerous to particularise in an advertisement.</p> <p>The whole of which having been purchased on the most advantageous terms, are offered with the smallest possible profit attached, and will be found equally as cheap as goods purchased in Melbourne.</p> <p>Purchasers may save 20 per cent by buying at <b>THIS STORE.</b></p> <p>Settlers and others taking quantities, supplied on the most liberal terms.</p>

In the headline the township name appears:

(1) *KILMORE*

Six phrases follow. First, (2A) and (2B) raise positive attributes, assisted by the superlative, the exclamation mark and capital letters:

(2A) *THE LARGEST! BEST! AND CHEAPEST*

(2B) *STOCK OF GOODS*

The next four highlight place and proprietor:

(2C) *IN THE TOWNSHIP Will DE FOUND IN*

(2D) *WILLIAM PERCIVALL'S*

(2E) *NEW STORE,*

(2F) *Just completed, situated near Mr. Wheeler's Inn*



Following these phrases are three paragraphs that (3) begin with words declaring the store as ‘the largest Stock of Goods’:

(3) *WHERE Settlers, Families, Bushmen, and others, will find the largest Stock of Goods*

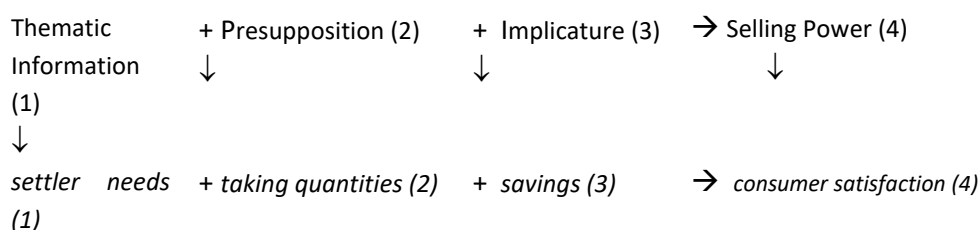
The narrative emphasises variety, convenience, accessibility and value for money. In the closing lines, ‘William-Percivall-1848’ introduces not only the notion of savings but also (4A) estimates ‘20 per cent’ gain for the buyer, and (4B) offers seller flexibility to supply ‘on the most liberal of terms’:

The seller appeals to addressees on the theme of ‘settler needs’. Two features are notable:

- the idea of financial gain is covert, moderated by the (cagey) modal of possibility ‘may’, rendering it less than a promise
- the implicature of consumer benefit (savings) is attempted by deployment of the present continuous ‘taking quantities’, presupposing buyer action as already under way and a reality (always true)—reinforced by the persuasive ‘the most liberal terms’.

Putatively, the settler has practical needs that can be satisfied at THIS STORE, with the additional (subjective) benefit of significant savings.

‘William-Percivall-1848’ compositionally incorporates the social functions and cohesive devices of natural language—primarily Thematic Information (1), Presupposition (2) and Implicature (3)—to create Selling Power (4):



Here, conceptual association is an adept instrument to bundle advertiser-intended meanings (de Silva, 2018). With respect to textual and interpersonal aspects of Implicature in social context, language makes fuzzy category distinctions; and the realities to which these categories conceptually apply are ‘often scalar or indeterminate’ (Leech, 1983: 225). Thus, while rules account for logical relations at the syntactic level, pragmatic applications determine how linguistic forms correspond to communicative function (Ibid: 171). This elasticity permits substantial freedom in advertisement composition, allowing embedded meanings that may not be verifiable.

By the 1840s advertiser ingenuity incorporated meaningful symbols (visual syntax), as seen in ‘Henry-O’Hara-1848’, and inferentially available meanings, as seen in ‘William-Percivall-1848’, raising covert messaging as device to conceptually connect with positive values. This pegs the mid-nineteenth century as a milestone in marketer consciousness, signalling expansion of language choices in copywriting. Here, a new mindset emerged that embarked on gradual departure from factual information toward a ‘poetic licence’ that embraced subjective consumer gain as a core marketing ingredient.

### **Conceptual Association and Linguistic Register as Authenticators of Advertiser Claims**

Conceptual association relies on semantic ties. This associative principle underpins organisational labelling, which is effected by identification of shared characteristics for the purpose of classification. The now-common idea of categorisation originates from the specialist taxonomic hierarchy that arranged biological organisms by rank:

- ‘classification’ is recorded as entering the English language from the language of natural science in 1767 and
- ‘taxonomy’ from botany in 1819.<sup>xi</sup>


These dates coincide with geographical exploration and scientific postulations reported in the press and antecede the advent of newspaper editorial categorisation in the wake of reportage variety. The classification process untangled the jumble of early content. By 1823 formal separation of consumer advertising is seen under the editorial heading ADVERTISEMENTS,<sup>xii</sup> pegging the 1820s at the cusp of high systemisation normalised later that century.

By 1841 an increased variety of headings flagged socio-economic expansion, and conceptually isolated categories of human engagement (**Figure 1**). In semantic acts of categorisation, a superordinate wins its position only when (as principal of its group) it fulfils the function of introducing a family: here siblings associate by at least one shared characteristic. Shared characteristics are accepted traits and/or known facts and thus need not be articulated. If not articulated but known, then shared meanings qualify as covert. Associated meanings can be inferred only where already salient in the minds of addressees. With increased usage, the likelihood of an increased salient lexicon is probable. In this way, headings and headlines are semantic buckets: they are ‘economy registers’ (**Bruthiaux, 1996**) that—like nominalisation—increase noun density but reduce subordination and sentence length.

Headings impart their subordinate content, diminish information volume and facilitate a language that operates by association. For example, ‘REAL ESTATE’ signals land or dwelling for purchase, rendering redundant the words ‘for sale’, and raises the expectation of the seller as lawfully permitted to enter into commercial transaction. Similarly, ‘MEDICAL’ suggests ‘healing is at hand’, rendering benefits of wellness and recovery as presupposed, and suggests accreditation in the fields of diagnosis and pharmaceuticals manufacture. Semantically, a standalone ‘MEDICAL’ heading evokes the socio-professional prestige of medical doctors, linking concepts of trustworthiness, specialist knowledge and authority.

By the 1850s, press content reflected socio-economic, industrial and intellectual progress: this benefitted the seller-advertiser ambitious to emulate workplace-specific registers as a conduit to reach skilled earners. The copywriter pocketbook of writing styles included registers that permitted avoidant undermining of regulatory statutes, unendorsed association with the sciences in patent-medicine advertising and slogan-like aphorisms. This linguistic expertise is seen in the Holloway’s line of patent medicines (**Figures 5, 6 and 7**).

*Figure 5: Holloway’s Pills, c. 1870: object name ‘OTC preparation’ (Source: Smithsonian Institute)*

Holloway’s Pills, c. 1870	
	<p><b>SUBJECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood &amp; Liver Drugs</li> <li>Kidney &amp; Urinary Drugs</li> <li>Infant &amp; Children's Products - Pediatrics</li> <li>Nerve &amp; Brain Drugs</li> <li>G.E. Damon Collection</li> </ul>

Holloway’s Pills and Ointment in promotion of its ‘valuable medicaments’ were impressively packaged, watermarked and authoritatively stamped. The claimed benefits of the pills are catalogued by the Smithsonian Institute as a putative treatment drug for multiple organs and systems of adult humans, infants and children (**Figure 5**). The ingestible pills are now disclosed to be a compound of aloes, ginger and soap and the ointment primarily beeswax and lanolin: thus, Holloway’s ‘medicaments’ are not therapeutically appropriate for healing nor disease prevention.

The Holloway’s Pills and Ointment 1850 advertorial (**Figure 6**) mimics objective journalism or investigative reporting, drawing on legal register: it suggests lawful product manufacture, market prestige and efficacious

reliability. The product name 'Holloway's Pills and Ointment' is the main heading, followed by the sub-heading '*PREVENTION OF FRAUD*'. In its linguistic construction, the first paragraphs are running text (in complete sentences)—but, in layout, broken into blocks to isolate three capitalised phrases: 'BRITISH STAMPS BILL', 'A FELONY' and 'A WATERMARK'. The subsequent blocks highlight:

- the name of the distributing agent 'CHEGIN & MOORE', and their address 'Stationers, Collins street'
- a testimonial dated 'August 7, 1850', where the writer is identified as 'MARGARET JONES from 'Bacchus March' (a country township)
- 34 ailments that Holloway's 'medicaments' will purportedly remedy.

To summarise the lengthy Holloway's message (**Figure 6**): it relays product authenticity and warns imitation racketeers of severe retribution. The advertiser claims that 'the Right Honorable Earl Grey, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies' has instructed the 'Local Government' to protect locals from 'counterfeiting of Holloway's Medicines'. Accordingly, to fulfil this lofty instruction, 'his Excellency the Governor has caused the BRITISH STAMPS BILL to be introduced into the Legislative Council'.<sup>xiii</sup> Subsequently, the 'valuable medicaments' purportedly now bear the authoritative stamp of the British Crown. Seemingly, the 'medicaments' are protected by the highest authority, and it shall be a 'FELONY' to produce an imitation. Addressees are alerted to other precautions undertaken by 'Professor Holloway' to distinguish his Pills and Ointment: the wrappings and pamphlet are uniquely watermarked with the words 'HOLLOWAY'S PILLS AND OINTMENT' on every page (like a trademark).<sup>xiv</sup>

A device of grandiose authenticity is located in the professed link between the 'medicaments' and the British Crown—and, contextually, its stamp duty law. The tie to the 'Stamp Act' is misleadingly implied via naming the British Stamps Bill that preceded it: consumers at large are unlikely to be aware that the legislation is for statutory revenue collection (unconnected with 'Professor Holloway'). The claim of a 'felony' prosecution against counterfeiters equates a 'medicaments' counterfeit event with serious crime (such as murder, rape or robbery). This threat is aimed at aspiring fraudsters to thwart their product-imitation schemes; additionally, the warning (allegedly backed by the legal system) suggests extraordinary product worthiness. The proposition put forward by 'Holloway's-Pills-1850' is 'Holloway's Pills and Ointment are so eminent among medicines as to be approved and protected by the British Crown and its legislative framework'.

Figure 6: Holloway's-Pills-Ointment-1850 newspaper advertisement and transcription  
 (Source: The Argus, 26 September 1850: 1)

Holloway's Pills & Ointment, 1850	cont.	cont.	cont.
<p><b>HOLLOWAY'S PILLS &amp; OINTMENT. PREVENTION OF FRAUD.</b></p> <p>THE Undersigned have the sincerest pleasure in being able to apprise the public of Victoria, that the Right Honourable Earl Grey, His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies has been pleased, at the instance of Professor Holloway, to instruct the Local Government of this colony to take measures for protecting the inhabitants of the territory against the counterfeiting of Holloway's Medicines: that in conformity with such the directions, His Excellency your Governor has caused the</p> <p><b>BRITISH STAMPS BILL</b></p> <p>to be introduced into the Legislative Council, and that measures without a single dissentient voice, have adopted the views of the Imperial Government.</p> <p>Under the provisions of this law it will in future be</p> <p><b>A FELONY</b></p> <p>but in order to make "assuredly sure,"</p>	<p><b>A FELONY</b></p> <p>but in order to make "assuredly sure,"</p> <p><b>A WATER MARK</b></p> <p>on every leaf, the words "Holloway's Pills and Ointment" appear in such, it is believed, cannot possibly be imitated in this colony, in conformity with the Stamp Act of the valuable Medicines prepared by Professor Holloway.</p> <p>Of those Medicines that get up, the undersigned have just to send along engagements and they beg to announce that they are in course of supplying all their sub agents with parcels of the new mark: they therefore take this opportunity of expressing their hopes that the people of Victoria will appreciate the efforts of the Imperial and Local Governments, to preserve them from the deleterious effects of Counterfeit Treatments that they will regard the endeavours of Professor Holloway to give them the genuine Medicines, by</p> <p>Purchasing only of the Agents,  <b>CHURCH &amp; MOORE,</b>          Stationers, Collins street,</p>	<p><b>REMARKABLE CURES.</b></p> <p>Time should not be lost in taking this remedy for any of the following Diseases—</p>	<p><b>REMARKABLE CURES.</b></p> <p>Time should not be lost in taking this remedy for any of the following Diseases—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ague</li> <li>Asthma</li> <li>Bilious Complaints</li> <li>Blow-b on the Skin</li> <li>Bowel Complaints</li> <li>Colic</li> <li>Constipation of Bowels</li> <li>Consumption</li> <li>Debility</li> <li>Dropsy</li> <li>Dysentery</li> <li>Erysipelas</li> <li>Female Inflammation</li> <li>Fever of all kinds</li> <li>Flu</li> <li>Gout</li> <li>Head-aches</li> <li>Indigestion</li> <li>Inflammation</li> <li>Junction</li> <li>Liver Complaints</li> <li>Lumbago</li> <li>Pile</li> <li>Rheumatism</li> <li>Retention of Urine</li> <li>Rue Throat</li> <li>Soreful, or King's Evil</li> <li>Stomach and General</li> <li>Secondary Symptoms</li> <li>The Cholera</li> <li>Tumors</li> <li>Ulcers</li> <li>Veneral Affections</li> <li>Worms of all kinds</li> <li>Weakness, from what ever cause, &amp;c. &amp;c.</li> </ul>

Another 1800s authenticity device is the patent-medicine manufacturer as celebrated personality, esteemed by name: this is seen in the proprietor of Holloway's Pills and Ointment's 'Professor Holloway'. The 'Hollowayan-System-of-Medicine-1856' artefact (Figure 7) is an advertiser testimonial mimicking the investigative style of medical reporting: here, the Holloway's product line is not mentioned. Instead, the brand name is attributively used to create 'the Hollowayan system' as the centrepiece of an 'Extraordinary case', namely that of the gravely ill 'Mrs Morgan, of Ermington, near Sydney' who reportedly was saved by intervention of the 'Hollowayan system'. The patient was stricken with 'Dropsical Swellings' and her life further 'endangered owing to a wrong treatment' by a health professional. Her husband 'therefore dismissed his medical attendant' (ostensibly a doctor) and adopted 'the Hollowayan system' of 'infallible remedies' which 'quickly produced' the desired 'Turn of life' and 'restored the blessings of health' to the once near-dead Mrs Morgan.

Figure 7: Hollowayian-System-of-Medicine-1856 newspaper advertisement and transcription  
(Source: The Argus, 26 September 1856: 6)

Original	Transcription
<p><b>P</b>REVENTATIVE is Better than a Cure.— Extraordinary case.—Dropsical Swellings—Turn of life. Mrs. Morgan, of Ermington, near Sydney, aged forty-five, was suddenly thrown on a bed of sickness; her feet, legs, and ankles, began to swell, strongly indicating dropsy; weeks passed away and she became worse instead of better; medical aid was called in and her life was endangered owing to a wrong treatment being adopted. Mr. Morgan, therefore, dismissed his medical attendant, and resolved to commence the Hollowayian system of medicine. This quickly produced a beneficial effect, and by a continuance with these infallible remedies, the husband had the satisfaction of again seeing his wife restored to the blessings of health. F. COOPER, agent, Collins-street, Melbourne. 3567</p>	<p>PREVENTATIVE is Better than a Cure. Extraordinary case.— Dropsical Swellings – Turn of life. Mrs. Morgan, of Ermington, near Sydney, aged forty-five, was suddenly thrown on a bed of sickness; her feet, legs, and ankles, began to swell, strongly indicating dropsy; weeks passed away and she became worse instead of better; medical aid was called in and her life was endangered owing to a wrong treatment being adopted. Mr. Morgan, therefore, dismissed his medical attendant, and resolved to commence the Hollowayian system of medicine. This quickly produced a beneficial effect, and by a continuance with these infallible remedies, the husband had the satisfaction of again seeing his is wife restored to the blessings of health. F. COOPER, agent, Collins-street, Melbourne.</p>

The attributive use of the product name to create the ‘Hollowayian system’ compound positions the remedy as orderly in operation, principled and progressive (where, allegedly, efforts by the ‘medical attendant’ had failed). Further, the adjective-making ‘-ian’ suffix functions to imbue the putative efficacious powers of Holloway’s ‘infallible remedies’ with the esteem of knowledge-based scientific discoveries that have advanced humanity. The noun compound:

Holloway [proper noun] + -ian [suffix] + system [noun]

implies a recognised significant contribution made to human knowledge by the patent-medicine seller (‘Professor Holloway’). The allusion is attempted by aligning ‘Hollowayian system of medicine’ with the prestige of knowledge-makers known in that time—possibly ‘the Copernican system’ in astronomy (dated to the 1500s) or even ‘Newtonian physics’ (pertaining to Newton’s Laws of Motion), which underpinned the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. In alignment, ‘the Hollowayian system’ thus offers supremely efficacious treatment and slips into conceptual association with the most remarkable of scientific

achievements. Further, the opening words ‘PREVENTATIVE is Better than a Cure’, a slogan-like aphorism, implies ‘the Hollowayian system’ is additionally a preventative measure to ward off ‘Dropsical Swellings’ (and presumably death).

Into the 1850s, persuasive hidden-meanings association and specialist register are new phenomena expressed in wordy elaborations. These Holloway’s specimens point to a semantic fault line that divides the linguistic landscape of advertising, juxtaposing two kinds of seller language: a pre-1850s and a post-1850s. The latter is marked by overt persuasion, embracing occupational register and conceptual association, heightening over time. While the research dataset gives credence to a swill of covert devices making their debut from the 1850s, evidence is patchy for some thirty years and can be determined only as emerging (**de Silva, 2021**). Nevertheless, vestiges of nearly all persuasive devices seen today are in deployment after the 1870s, and by the 1880s a default system of hypernym-like headings (such as ‘ACCOMMODATION’, ‘MEDICAL’ and ‘REAL ESTATE’) behave like lexical super-ordinates to distinguish types of products and services (grouped according to shared characteristics). This reduced word count and advertising cost, and increased advertiser freedom to exploit the suggestive powers of linguistic fragments in collaboration with pictures and intertextuality toward conceptual association. Into the 1900s and for some sixty years, global events catalysed advertiser copywriting, rendering innovative formats such as cartooning that relied exclusively on visual stimuli and inferentially available positive appraisals (**de Silva, 2020, 2021**).

### **Data Analysis 1800s–1950s: Summary and Conclusion**

This study, drawing on Australian press data (**de Silva, 2021**), profiles the developmental path of consumer-advertising language as it morphed from fact-focused to inferentially available meanings that may be ‘indifferent to truth’ (**Bates, 2009: 2359**). To this end, practical examples from the 1800s (‘James-Squires-1807’, ‘Henry-O’Hara-1848’, ‘William-Percival-1848’, and Holloway’s 1850s patent-medicine promotions) evidence departure from fact-focused to ideational seller meanings. In summary, the following can be said of advertiser messaging over time:

1. The austere social-distancing formality of early-1800s promotions is fact-focused and not characterised by unverifiable, socially embedded meanings.
2. Two new devices of propositional messaging appear by the 1840s: abbreviation (short form) and ‘visual syntax’ via symbols.

By the 1850s legal and medical registers are seen in health-related promotions. Here, occupational register operates as an authenticator of trustworthiness and knowledge-based attestations. At this time, British imperialism is marked by economic power, technological and scientific advancements and intercontinental reach. These markers of prestige, achievement and quality are evidenced today in the English phraseology of global marketing strategy: here, the critical substance of advertiser messaging is the inferential element with diminished regard for truth verification.

This paper makes a contribution to advertising-language studies by providing an evidence-based historical rear guard to complement research in the field. The deployment of conceptual association and linguistic register in progression over some fifteen decades and more points to skilful compositional refinement and suggests a long and incremental process that may robustly resist language reform efforts to curb and eliminate false and/or unverifiable claims of benefits available via consumption.

Constance de Silva completed her PhD (Linguistics) in 2020. Her dissertation, drawing on an Australian press dataset (1800s–1950s), documented the evolutionary journey of promotional rhetoric within the socio-cultural and economic settings of colonial nation-building. Primarily, her research centres on the developmental stages evident in the marketing and labelling of OTC (patent) medicines, nutritional supplements and mental health remedies. Her research interests include the pragmatic reflexivity of consumer advertising, the construction of social identity, the historical medicalisation of women, and the concept of the body perfect as a presupposition of wellbeing.



## List of Illustrations & Tables

Table 1: *Key advertiser devices of persuasion, 1800s–1950s: progressive deployment (Source: de Silva, 2021)*

Figure 1: *Newspaper front pages (half-page extracts, including banner) from 1807, 1827, and 1841 (Source: The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, NSW 1803–1842)*



Figure 2: *James-Squires-1807 sale of hops plants newspaper advertisement and transcription* (Source: The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 27 July 1807: 1)

Figure 3: *Henry-O'Hara-1848 newspaper advertisement and transcription* (Source: The Argus, 24 November 1848: 3)

Figure 4: *William-Percivall-1848 newspaper advertisement and transcription* (Source: The Argus, 24 November 1848: 3)

Figure 5: *Holloway's Pills, c. 1870: object name 'OTC preparation'* (Source: Smithsonian Institute)

Figure 6: *Holloway's Pills & Ointment, 1850 newspaper advertisement and transcription* (Source: The Argus, 26 September 1850: 1)

Figure 7: *Hollowayan-System-of-Medicine-1856 newspaper advertisement and transcription* (Source: The Argus, 26 September 1856: 6)

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<sup>i</sup> The advertiser meme is defined here as a visually accessible unit of imitation containing cultural information that functions as a persuasive tool (McGrath, 2017: 507–508; Murray, Manrai et al., 2014: 334).

<sup>ii</sup> Source: *Oxford English Dictionary*, online.

- <sup>iii</sup> While acknowledging the relevant scholarly literature in semiotics, psychology, philosophy, and information sciences (see **Bates, 2009**).
- <sup>iv</sup> This opened the door to English as a global lingua franca and a language of power and prestige. Channell (**2018**) points to 18th– and 19th–century British discoveries and inventions as the catalyst of socio-economic improvement that laid the foundation stones of engineering science.
- <sup>v</sup> See <http://trove.nla.com.au>.
- <sup>vi</sup> In definition, ‘discourse level’ analysis involves investigation of language as a narrative in socio-cultural context including non-linguistic items (like colours, images, layout, typography), as opposed to analysing only linguistic features at sentence level (such as word choices, phrases, and clauses).
- <sup>vii</sup> The woodcut in its antiquity started as a tool to print images on textiles.
- <sup>viii</sup> The J (long s) is reproduced per the typesetting of the 1807 original.
- <sup>ix</sup> The term ‘visual syntax’ may have been coined in the 1980s by neurologist Michael Weinrich, appearing in several of his works.
- <sup>x</sup> The idea of visually accessible meanings is evident at least from the early 1900s onward in neurological (aphasia) studies concerning language and the brain (**Connor et al., 2007; Weinrich, 1989**).
- <sup>xi</sup> Source: Oxford English Dictionary, online.
- <sup>xii</sup> Source: The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 6 November 1823, 3.
- <sup>xiii</sup> The Stamp Act 1675 was introduced to collect revenue from the colonies (not in protection of patent medicines). A physical stamp (being a sign that duty had been paid) on a product suggested royal approval—and was exploited as such by manufacturers (**Porter, 1986**).
- <sup>xiv</sup> Trademark recognition and protection in the modern world is traceable to 1783 in England, and the first American trademark case reported was decided in the year 1837 (**Rogers, 1910: 40–42**).