CHAPTER THREE
WEB-MEDIATED TOURISM ADVERTORIAL GENRE

3.0 Introduction

Based on the scope of the study, this chapter presents an overview of the concept of genre. It then proceeds to discuss genres in corporate communication or business announcements, specifically the promotional genre of advertorials. The chapter subsequently continues to discuss computer-mediated communication and web-mediated genres, before ending with a description on the homepage and online advertorial genres.

3.1 Genre

The concept of genre has been defined in many ways, and the term ‘genre’ has acquired a multiplicity of meanings. The term genre relevant to the present study is that given by an ethnographer, Saville-Troike (1982: 34). She identifies ‘genre’ from the ethnographic perspective to refer to the type of communicative event, such as jokes, stories, lectures, greetings and conversations. Studying the communications that are generically typed and the kinds of labels used in a community will reveal elements of verbal or written behaviour which the community considers sociolinguistically salient. In addition, ethnographers give considerable attention to appropriately interpret and utilise the elicited metalanguage.

In recent years, research in genre has been receiving much attention. Since its introduction in applied language studies in the 1980s, there has been a continuing and accelerating interest in the concept of genre in specialized language teaching and in the
development of professional communication skills. In Australia, systemic functional linguists have used the concept to complement the Hallidayan notion of registers (Martin, 1992; Eggins, 1994); in America, the influential works of Miller (1984, 1994), Bazerman (1984), Swales (1990), and Yates and Orlikowski (1992) have contributed to a wider understanding of the concept of ‘genre’ by defining the concept, introducing models suitable for performing genre analyses, and capturing the complexities of genre systems and its development. Bhatia (1993), formerly from Singapore and Hong Kong, has paved the way for the practical application of genre theory by suggesting a comprehensive framework for analysing ESP texts.

A definition which shows the different aspects of genre theory is Miller (1984) who defines genre as “typified rhetorical actions” that respond to recurring situations and become instantiated in the communities’ behaviour. Genres evolve as “a form of social knowledge – a mutual construing of objects, events, interests and purposes that not only links them but makes them what they are: an objectified social need”. She views genres not as static forms, but rather as “forms of life, ways of being ... frames for social action ... environments for learning ... locations within which meaning is constructed” (Bazerman, 1994), indicating that different communities use different means of communication to achieve their objectives.

One view of genre which has gained influence in recent years has been that of John Swales (1990). As a well-known proponent of genre analysis, he gives a lengthy definition of the term as follows:

“A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choices of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one
that operates to keep the scope of a genre here and conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community.”

Swales (1990: 58)

Swales’ definition comprises linguistic and sociological factors whereby members of a particular discourse community share some set of communicative purposes, with historical and cultural factors taken into account.

The above definition by Swales (1990) emphasises the purposive nature of genres and concerns the way genres look. The communicative purposes constitute the rationale for the genre, which means that the purpose of a genre constructs a particular text structure, and a host of conventionalised verbal and visual rhetorical strategies. The diagram below conceptualises the inter-dependency of the three constituents of Swales’ genre model, which captures the essence of what is called ‘genres’.

![Diagram](Image)

**Figure 3.1**

Swales’ three-level genre model
Bhatia (1993) concurs with Swales in that the most important aspect of genre is the recognisability and sufficient standardization, which is based on “a set of mutually accessible conventions” which most members of the professional or institutional organisation share, in that the members of the discourse or professional community may recognise the genre as a typical and valid example of the particular genre. He further observes that a genre may be complex as it “may reflect a specific form of mixing and/or embedding of two or more generic forms” or, with gradual development, be dynamic as a result of subtle changes in the rhetorical contexts that it responds to over a period of time (Bhatia, 2004).

However, Bhatia (1993) adds another aspect, the psychological factor, lacking in Swales’ definition as “the psycholinguistic aspect of genre analysis reveals the cognitive structuring, typical of particular areas of enquiry” (Bhatia, 1993: 19). He calls for a “thick description” and offers his definition of genre as:

“... a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structures and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s).”

Bhatia (1993: 13)

Most of the theorists mentioned above tend to focus on genres transmitted through speech or print. In recent years, however, there has been a steady increase in genre research which deals with genres transmitted through one of the most significant electronic media of today – the Internet. Some of these researches were conducted by Yates and Orlikowski (1992) who studied the production, reproduction and
modification of genres over time (e.g. the memo’s transfer to the electronic medium); Furuta and Marshall (1996) who examined genres used on the Internet to facilitate information; Crowston & Williams (1997) who analysed the reproduction and adaptation of genres on the web; Yates, Orlikowski & Okamura (1999) who researched on the transfer of genres into the computer conferencing medium; Roussinov et al. (2001) who looked at people’s recognition of genres on the web; Ryan et al. (2003) who researched the evolution of the US state government homepages; and finally Askehave and Nielsen (2005) propose the necessity of incorporating the notion of ‘medium’ in accounting the characteristics of genres mediated on the Internet.

A communicative genre should be distinguished from a medium – for instance a ‘fax’ or an ‘email’ are not representatives of communicative genres, but a ‘business letter’ or a ‘hotel reservation’ sent by fax or electronic mail are. However, media may play an important role in the form of a genre and the introduction of new media may occasionally change genres (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Changes in a genre may also emerge along with institutionalisation of organisational practices and with individual actions taken to change the norms and rules for using the genre in communication, either explicit or implicit (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992, Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995, Yates et al., 1999).

3.1.1 Genre Chains

In his book, Analysing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research, Fairclough (2003) defines ‘genre chains’ as different genres which are regularly linked together, involving systematic transformations from genre to genre, such as official documents, associated press releases or press conferences, reports in the press or on television. He
further adds that genre chains are an important factor in the enhanced capacity for “action at a distance” which has been taken as a feature of globalisation. A change in a genre chain is a significant part of social change.

3.1.2 Genre Sets

According to Devitt (1991), ‘genre set’ incorporates a class of typical professional genres that a particular professional engages in as part of his or her routine professional activity. An example of the generic texts of a genre set in a corporate company would include various kinds of letters, such as opinion letters to the clients, response letters to the clients, or a letter to the local authorities, all of which are distinct but at the same time intertextually linked to each other. The texts from a particular genre set display conventional patterns found in similarly texts produced by other professionals in the same field. Although a professional activity may involve a number of other participants from within or outside the profession, texts or other semiotic constructs, the concept of genre set only includes one side of the professional practice, as pointed out by Bazerman (1994: 98-99) who gives the following example:

The genre set represents ... only the work of one side of a multiple person interaction. That is, the tax accountants’ letters usually refer to the tax code, the rulings of the tax department in this case, the client’s information and interests, and these references are usually presented in highly anticipatable ways appropriate to the genre of the letter, but the genre set is only the tax accountant’s participations, as intertextually linked to the participations of the parties.

Hence, every disciplinary community has its own distinctive set of genres, which are used by most of its members in the accomplishment of their professional objectives. This notion of genre set can be extended to a genre network or system in order to account for the full set of genres, by analysing the “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings” (Bazerman, 1994: 97).
3.1.3 Genre Networks

This is sometimes termed as ‘genre systems’. It represents a complete set of discursive forms that are invoked by all the participants involved in a professional activity. Disciplinary genres extend such a system to include all those discursive forms that are used in all professional practices associated with a particular disciplinary or professional domain.

As mentioned above, a genre system consists of “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings” (Bazerman, 1994: 97) The sequence of genres such as the 'job advertisement', 'job letter', 'curriculum vitae' and 'job interview' is an example of a genre system. When there exists more than one separate genres used simultaneously for a communicative purpose, genres can also overlap (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994: 544). Both a sequence of genres and a set of overlapping genres are included in the concept of genre system constituting a wider communicative process shared within the community in question (Bazerman, 1994).

According to Swales (1990: 110), genres are living and continually evolving. Therefore, genres will undergo some changes dictated by the outer and wider context surrounding the discipline.

A genre repertoire of an organisation “indicates its established communicative practices” (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994: 546). Following changes in individual genres, a genre repertoire changes over time either implicitly or explicitly (Yates et al., 1999). Implicit development occurs along with everyday communicative actions taken by the members of the community in question, either supporting existing genres or somehow
contradicting their enacted use. Explicit development of a genre repertoire may include active adoption of new genres and genre systems or alteration of the existing ones. A development may take place through trial-and-error, by learning from other communities or actively creating alternative routines. Furthermore, explicit analysis and development of an organisation's genre repertoire have been considered useful in comprehending the introductions, uses and influences of new media in organisations (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994, an example in Yates et al., 1999).

The explicit development of a genre may also occur and change when texts belonging to a genre system enter into a new communication medium (Orlikowski & Yates, 1992). In short, when a genre enters into a new medium, such as the World Wide Web, the new environment affects the texts and the genre system as a whole. The present research thus, analyses the effects of the World Wide Web as a medium on the advertorial genre, and the ways in which tourism authorities communicate with the public via the World Wide Web.

3.1.4 Genre Mixing

The relationship between texts and genres is a potentially complex one. A text may not be “in a single genre”, as it may “mix” or “hybridize” different genres (Bhatia, 2004; Fairclough, 2003). Genre mixing is an aspect of the interdiscursivity of texts. A number of social researches and theorists have drawn attention to ways in which social boundaries are blurred in contemporary social life, and to the forms of ‘hybridity’ or mixing of social practices (Fairclough, 2003). One area of social life where hybridity has received particularly intense attention is media. The texts of mass media can be
seen as instantiating the blurring of boundaries of various sorts: fact and fiction, news and entertainment, drama and documentary, and so forth (Silverstone, 1999).

Thus, the analysis of this interdiscursive hybridity in texts allows linguists to locate texts within processes of social change and to identify the potentially creative and innovative work of social agents in texturing. It provides a potentially valuable resource for enhancing research based upon these perspectives, and offers a level of detailed analysis which is not achievable within other methods (Fairclough, 2003). The issue of hybrid genres will be discussed further in the next section in this chapter.

A promotional feature or an advertorial from the Tourism Malaysia, an online tourism website, is an example of genre mixing. As Fairclough (2003: 34) has mentioned, one aspect of the transformations associated with new capitalism is that individual towns and cities, as well as national governments now actively promote and “sell” themselves. The change in the relationship between countries and business corporations involves the changing of genres – a chain linking the genres of local governments to business genres. The change manifests itself partly in the emergence of a new genre within the genre chain, through the mixing of existing genres. In the case of online tourism advertorials, it is a mixture of a journalistic feature article, corporate advertising, and tourist brochure. This hybridity is evident in the layout and organisation of the webpage. Other features of the three genres combined in tourism advertorials include, alternation between report and quotation or direct representation of the words of significant sources; the predominance of self-promotion in positive self evaluations; and a description of the country and its places of interest in a report which is thematically organised according to the conventions of tourist literature (such as buildings of architectural or historical interest, geographical location, cultural life, local cuisine, etc.)
3.2 Hybrid Genres

These genres are evidently seen in discourses that have been published in the form of news articles or reports that tend to influence audiences for commercial benefit. There are elements of promotional practice within journalism, where discursive elements of promotion are overtly drawn upon within news discourse. Such discourses display a typical mix of information and promotion which makes them prime examples of what has been called “hybrid genres” by Bhatia (2004: 90) and Fairclough (1992: 207), who define them as:

genres which are the result of the blurring of boundaries between discourses, and which appear to be especially prominent in the domain of contemporary media.

(Fairclough, 2003: 35)

Such hybridisation is related to the general trend towards the “commodification” of discourses – a tendency of market discourses to colonise other types of discourse, a phenomenon extensively studied by Bhatia in his investigation of genre mixing, bending and embedding for the purposes of promotionalisation (Bhatia, 1999, 2000, 2004). This process of commodification or promotionalisation is the result of a colonisation of professional genres on the part of advertising.

Bhatia (2004, 2005) argues that among the genres that clearly stands out to be the most prominent instrument of colonisation is advertising. One of the ‘colonized’ advertising genres or a hybrid genre that combines the characteristics of editorial or new report, and advertisement or promotional material is the advertorial, which from its label suggests that the promotional elements of advertisements are integrated into editorials to increase the desire of the reader or audience to consume (Bhatia, 1997, 2002 & 2004).
In his explanation, Bhatia (2004) says that the lexico-grammar and rhetorical moves of this genre clearly indicates the hybrid nature to the text, which is partly informational and partly promotional. It clearly differentiates itself from a review, as it is unlikely to incorporate any negative evaluation of the product or service. He further explains that such advertorials from “corporations, ... institutions, travel industries and government departments are primarily informative, but it is rare not to find any promotional or persuasive overtones in them” (Bhatia, 2004: 94-95).

In the case of online tourism genres of advertorials, feature articles and press or media releases, the mixing of informative and promotional communicative purposes is constitutive of the genre. These genres are not solely informative, but have the elements of persuasion and advertisement. The salient feature of these hybrid genres is interdiscursivity, as in the combination of different discourse types, - e.g. advertorials consists of news discourse with its primarily informative focus, and promotional discourse characterised by a persuasive intent - within the same genre (Bhatia: 1997, 2002, 2004 & 2005). This suggests that there is a tension between overtly acknowledged and tacitly understood (implied) communicative purposes. Such a tension is the consequence of the hybrid nature of the genres, with the close combination of promotion and information – two linguistic functions which may not necessarily be in conflict from a rhetorical point of view, but may be so in a professional perspective.
3.3 Corporate Communication Genres

There are various types of corporate communication genres used by corporations for different business purposes. However, only promotional genres that are relevant to the tourism industry are discussed in the following sub-sections.

3.3.1 Press / Media Releases

A press release, news release, media release, or press statement (as they are interchangeably known) is a short text resembling news stories, which contain what is said to be newsworthy information (Catenaccio, 2008). They are generally sent to members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something claimed as having news value with the purpose of turning it into news stories, thus generating publicity. The intended primary readership is the general public.

It is important to note that Walters et al (1994), who studied the styles of sixty press releases, identify press releases in a wider sense to include editorials, announcements and reviews, and thus extend the meaning of press release category outside the range normally included in the categorisation. Hence, press releases include documents, such as company fact sheets, annual reports, corporate profile and mission statements that the press release very often draws on intertextually to form a hybrid genre (Lassen, 2006).

The use of a press release is common in the field of public relations, the aim of which is to attract favourable media attention in order to provide publicity for products or services marketed by those corporations. Press releases can announce a range of news items, such as upcoming events, personal promotions, awards, news products and services, sales and other financial data, accomplishments, etc. They are often used in generating a feature story.
Press releases have several traits of their structure. Some of these common structural elements include:

- **Headline** — A headline is used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news. The success or failure of press releases is based on their headline and opening paragraph.

- **Dateline** — A press release contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release.

- **Introduction** — The first paragraph in a press release generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.

- **Body** — This is where further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news are revealed.

- **Boilerplate** — Generally, this is a short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual.

- **Close** — Traditionally in the United States, the symbol "-30-" appears after the boilerplate or body and before the media contact information, indicating to media that the release is ending. A more modern equivalent has been the use of "###" symbol. In other countries, other means of indicating the end of the release may be used, such as the text "ends".

- **Media contact information** — The name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person in the press release.
3.3.2 Editorial

An editorial is a news article giving an objective and unbiased opinion on some topical issue. It is an opinion piece written by the senior editorial staff of a corporation or publisher of a newspaper or magazine. Editorials are supposed to reflect the opinion of the organisation or periodical. Additionally, most print publications feature an editorial, or open letter followed by a ‘Letters to the Editor’ section. In major periodicals, editorials may be classified under the heading "opinion".

3.3.3 Feature Articles

A feature article, also termed as feature story or simply feature, is a piece of journalistic writing that covers a selected issue in-depth. It is usually longer, and presents an opinionated view. A feature need not address an immediately topical subject as would be expected of an editorial or a news story. These articles are commonly seen in newspaper supplements and magazines.

While the distinction between published features and news is often clear, when approached conceptually there are few hard boundaries between the two. Thus, it is quite possible to write a feature in the style of a news story. Nevertheless features do tend to take a more narrative approach, perhaps using opening paragraphs as scene-setting, instead of the delivery of the most important facts. As the print media faces ever stiffer competition from other sources of news, feature stories are becoming more common as they can be more engaging to read. At many newspapers, news stories are sometimes written in ‘feature style’, adopting some of the conventions of feature writing while still covering public events.
3.4 Promotional Genres

Bhatia (1997) asserts that “the power to use, interpret, exploit and innovate novel generic forms is the function of generic knowledge which is accessible only to the members of the disciplinary communities”. This is because genres are invariably situated in the context of specific disciplinary cultures (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995) and are shaped by typical discursive processes embedded within the disciplinary activities of the profession. Thus, the ultimate generic product also displays a recognisable integrity of its own (Bhatia, 1997).

The pressure for the ‘democratisation’ of discourse is becoming increasingly strong, whereby an increasing “fragmentation of discursive norms and conventions” can be observed (Fairclough, 1992: 221). This often leads to “genre-mixing and embedding in institutionalised orders of discourse” and the creation of new genres (Bhatia, 1994). To a large extent, these changes in discursive practices are making professional genres increasingly dynamic and complex.

The dynamic complexity of professional communication is further increased by the role of multimedia, the explosion of information technology, the multi-disciplinary contexts of the world of work, the increasingly competitive professional environment, and above all, the tremendously compulsive nature of promotional and advertising activities. The result of this is that many of the institutionalised genres are seen as incorporating elements of promotion (Bhatia, 1997). Elements of promotion that are found in institutionalised genres include advertisements, sales promotion, company brochures, public campaigns, travel brochures and advertorials. These genres are some of the
primary members, secondary members and peripheral members of the colony of promotional genres (Bhatia, 2004:62).

The diagram below explains the generic description of the present study which examines the promotional genre of tourism advertorials in more detail.

![Figure 3.2 Generic Description of Online Tourism Advertorials](Adapted from: Bhatia, 2004)
3.4.1 Advertisements

Advertisements, as a form of promotion, have been regarded as the colonizers of other genres that are increasingly promotional. Bhatia (2004, 2005) claims that among the various genres, one that clearly stands out to be the most prominent instrument of colonization is advertising. Advertisements as a genre colony represents groupings of closely related genres that serve similar communicative purposes. One of the ‘colonized’ advertising genres is the advertorial, which from its label suggests that the promotional elements of advertisements are integrated into editorials to increase the desire of the audience or reader to consume. It is this focus that underlines the present research.

There are basically two distinguishable types of content in the press: advertisements and editorial content. However, in the last few years, media critics have expressed great concern about the blurring of the lines between these two types of content, and have noticed a new phenomenon – a hybrid between advertisement and editorial, a new genre commonly referred to as ‘advertorial’.

3.4.2 Advertorial

As mentioned above, a form of promotional genre is advertisements which include the sub-genre of advertorials. Advertorials are an emerging hybridised text type which represents the paralinguistic and linguistic features of three related genres – advertisements, news stories and editorials. The communicative purposes, rhetorical structure and micro-linguistic features at the three genres are interrelated and mixed in advertorials (Zhou, 2012: 337). It has been argued that a genre that imitates another
genre, such as advertorials, can be resisted as unacceptable. This is because readers will judge the credibility of the source by looking at whether it is an editorial or just an imitated one. However, advertorials reinforce the credibility of editorial, keeping the boundaries intact. Kong (2006) believes that it is more meaningful to examine mixed genres that are more “integrated with the voices of more than one genre” because they subtly integrate the two genres in question.

In the field of tourism, the main goal of tourism advertorials is to promote the country via tourist destinations, the local cuisine, events and activities; which Moyo Guijarro (2006) terms as “tourist possibilities of the areas being advertised”. Tourism advertorials aim to attract potential customers’ attention and influence them to visit the country being advertised. These purposeful promotional and persuasive intentions show the way how the field of tourism makes things happen by means of language and pictures. Using persuasive writing techniques and pictures, the writers try to convince the readers and potential tourists of the value of a particular place or country. Knowing how the persuasive function is achieved through investigating tourism advertorials would provide us with insights into the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

### 3.4.2.1 Description of Advertorial

The term ‘advertorial’ is an invented word that combines parts of two words and their meanings, which Bhatia (2004) categorises as a “hybrid of editorial and advertisement”. As mentioned earlier, an advertorial is a hybrid genre that combines the characteristics of editorial or new report, and advertisement or promotional material.
As early as 1961, the entry ‘advertorial’ made an inexplicable appearance in the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, providing its etymology as “a blend of *advertisement* and *editorial*”, and states that it is “an advertisement that imitates editorial format”. More recently, *Dictionary.com* defines an advertorial as “an extended newspaper or magazine text advertisement that promotes the advertiser’s products or services or special point of view but resembles an editorial in style and layout”. Cameron and Ju-Pak (2000: 66 - 67) synthesized conceptual definitions of other researchers in defining advertorials as:

“... blocks of paid-for, commercial message, featuring any object or objects that stimulates the editorial content of a publication in terms of design or structure, visual or verbal content, and/or context in which it appears”.

From the linguistics perspective, Bhatia (2004) who defines an advertorial as “a hybrid of editorial and advertisement”, categorises it as a mixed genre. He further describes that advertorials, which incorporate the bending and mixing of genres such as reviews, opinions and editorials, are becoming more popular nowadays because the masses are not easily influenced by traditional advertisements which do not provide much elaboration on the products and services that are being advertised.

A check with a journalist revealed that some publications term advertorials as feature stories, feature articles, or simply feature. These publications use the term ‘feature’ instead of ‘advertorial’ probably because the term ‘advertorial’ may not be well-received by readers and consumers, since they are of the opinion that the term ‘advertorial’ is overtly made up of the word ‘advertisement’, and that many people regard advertisements as biased and only telling the positive side of the product or service, irrespective of it being true or not.
Advertorials can be printed and presented as an entire newspaper section, or inserted the same way within a newspaper as store fliers, comics sections, and other non-editorial content. These sections are usually printed on a smaller or different type of font. Advertorials frequently feature information about a new product or technological advancements in existing services. An advertorial often contains “statistics on scientific research, consumer trends, or other authoritative pieces of information” (http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-an-advertorial.htm). Cook (1992) defines advertorials as:

“... lengthy entries in magazines and newspapers which attempt to combine article and advertisement, using the publication’s house style, and providing the reader with information or discussion which is more substantial and less single-minded than that in the majority of (traditional) advertisements.”

Cook (1992: 32)

Wikipedia, an online encyclopaedia defines an advertorial as an advertisement written in the form of an objective opinion editorial — usually designed to look like a legitimate and independent news story (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertorials). However, it is not strictly objective as it has a promotional intention behind it. The tone is usually similar to that of a press release than of an objective news story, because advertisers will not spend money to describe the flaws of their products.

Advertorials differ from publicity advertisements because the advertiser must pay a fee to the media company for the ad placement, whereas publicity is placed without payment to the media company and with no control over the copy. The differences may be subtle, and thus, the term — such as the word ‘advertorial’ — may or may not appear. Sometimes synonyms describing the advertorial as a “special promotional feature” or the like is used (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertorials).
Many newspapers and magazines will assign staff writers or freelancers to write advertorials, usually without the writer’s name. A major difference between regular editorial and advertorial is that the clients or advertisers usually have content approval of advertorials, a luxury usually not provided with regular editorial. A related practice is the creation of material that looks like traditional media (for instance, a newspaper or magazine) which is in fact created by a company to market its products. One familiar example is airline in-flight magazines which usually feature reports about travel destinations to which the airline flies. Some editors expect readers themselves to spot the commercial interests that lie behind a supposedly disinterested contributor, whilst a few are seeking signed declarations from deceitful journalists offering apparently skewed reportage (Adair, 2006).

Interviews with copywriters at advertising companies reveal that advertorials are becoming more popular nowadays because the public are not easily influenced by traditional advertisements. As people are getting more and more resistant to traditional advertisements (Appendix A), it is hoped that the reader will mistake advertorials (Appendix B) for an article and read on. Advertorials are also created when the product advertised needs more detailed explanation, like in the case of technology. An advertorial can also be written similarly to a press release and often contains statistics on scientific research, consumer trends, or other authoritative pieces of information.

Advertorials have become popular because advertisers are convinced that an editorial format can be more effective than a traditional advertising format in influencing audiences for commercial benefit. They are actually a form of advertisement designed to simulate editorial content, while at the same time offering more information to prospective clients. It is widely known that people give more credibility to editorial
content than to paid advertisements. Anyone can claim that their own product is the best, but editorial content suggests the implicit approval of the medium in which the information is presented and that the message is legitimised by third-party credibility as someone else has endorsed the product or service.

Advertorials are a form of advertising, leveraging personal reputation to give creditability to product promotion (Spalding, 2008). It has always been more effective to have a “real person” promote a product than to do so through traditional advertisements. The way this advertising strategy works is to use cults of personality to add creditability to claims made about a product or brand. This can be done through a clear endorsement, and “discussing” a topic of the sponsors’/advertisers’ choosing, linking ideas of trust and creditability back to the advertiser who devised it. Of course, this is most effective when this topic is a registered trademark of the company doing the sponsorship. That is why sponsorship contracts are so lucrative.

3.4.2.2 Advertorial: An Emerging Advertising Strategy in the Malaysian Mass Media

In the context of advertising in Malaysia, there is an increase in the usage of advertorials in recent years. These advertorials are especially encountered in the Malaysian print media, such as newspapers and magazines where such a genre was not common prior to five years ago. This advertising strategy is emerging in Malaysia because consumers today are now more literate and educated. These consumers are more cognisant of their needs and what they hope to obtain in return for their purchases. Furthermore, they are interested to know what other or past consumers think of a product or service in order to make a more informed decision to purchase the product or service, or vice versa.
Advertorials are generally found in the print media, especially in the English language dailies and magazines. Although research has been carried out on advertisements and editorials, not much research was done on advertorials from a linguistic point of view. Few or perhaps no studies have examined advertorials found in Malaysian newspapers or the Internet. Therefore, the researcher feels that it is pertinent to survey the trend of using advertorials as a promotional and advertising strategy, and the initial source that is found to provide such data is from the print media.

The researcher began by conducting a study which employed a qualitative approach of analysing advertorials collected within a period of nine months from a local Malaysian newspaper. The survey (Cheong, 2008), which will be reported below, identified the types of businesses, companies and organisations that employ this popular present-day culture of advertising. It also identified the text-internal indicators of advertising genres found in advertorials in an attempt to establish what constitutes an advertorial and how they have evolved.

An analysis of the advertorials based on a multimodal perspective was also carried out in the survey by the present researcher. Modality analysis concerns the way in which the use of such means as visual representation as colour, representational detail and texture contributes to our judgements of the reality value of visual representations. O’Halloran (2006) defines multimodality as the study of transitions and phase, camera and gestures, typography, layout and the use of colour, and how such choices orientate the viewer to particular readings of the text and context.
3.4.2.3 A Survey

A survey was first of all conducted by the researcher (Cheong, 2008) to establish the definition of advertorial as a genre and its features. The survey also aimed to get an overview of the communicative purposes and its discourse community. This survey was carried out as there is a lack of literature on this particular genre. It analyzed a total of 86 print advertorials collected in a period of nine months, between 23 February 2007 and 19 November 2007, which appeared in a local English language newspaper, The Star. The corpus for this survey was collected from this newspaper publication because it is the most widely-read local English language newspaper in Malaysia with a readership for The Star (daily) and Sunday Star at 1,082,000 and 1,022,000 respectively, for the duration of July 2008 to December 2008. These figures were obtained from the Nielsen Media Research Q4 2008, conducted by the Nielsen Company\(^3\), which is a leading information provider on audience measurement, print readership, customised media research and competitive advertising intelligence information. Based on their latest data from the Nielsen Media Index in 2011, The Star has also maintained its position as Malaysia’s most read English daily for the years 2009 and 2010. An analysis of the advertorials based on a multimodal perspective was also carried out.

3.4.2.3.1 Findings and Analysis of the Data from the Survey

This sub-section presents the findings from the survey which attempted to obtain an overview of the communicative purposes of advertorials and its discourse community.

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\(^3\) The Nielsen Company (NYSE: NLSN) is a global information and measurement company with leading market positions in marketing and consumer information, television and other media measurement, online intelligence, mobile measurement, trade shows and related assets. The company has a presence in approximately 100 countries, with headquarters in New York, USA.
It also reports on the contents and strategies used in advertorials, as well as the utilisation of multimodality in those advertorials.

a. Products and Companies

Products and services frequently featured in advertorial form include nutritional supplements, cosmetic procedures, ICT goods, educational training programs, and travel agencies. The advertorials analysed in the pilot study could be categorised into 36 types.

The findings of the survey (Appendix C) reveal that most companies or organisations that publish advertorials of their products or services in the daily are mainly from the first six companies and services (in bold) that are listed in Table 3.1 on the following pages. Perhaps, these companies, which are large companies, are able to allocate more funds on advertising or that they see this form of advertising as able to churn more sales for them. Moreover, the products and services from these companies are considered very expensive and not basic necessities. Therefore, they will have to persuade potential customers or clients to buy their products and services. One way of doing so is to provide more information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products/Services</th>
<th>Companies/Organisations</th>
<th>Content/Contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property Development, Land Investments &amp; Vacation Condominium</td>
<td>Property Developers</td>
<td>Sale of properties – residential properties, shop offices, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars / Automobiles</td>
<td>Car companies</td>
<td><em>Honda Dreams Fund</em> (A community project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin care / Cosmetics &amp; Beauty</td>
<td>Departmental store, Cosmetic companies, Societies/Associations</td>
<td>Intertextuality - different advertorials on the same product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care / Supplements / Therapy</td>
<td>Health care and Pharmaceutical companies, Companies offering therapy services</td>
<td>Health supplements, Medical conditions Traditional Thai Massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
<td>Computer-related companies</td>
<td>Computing solution, Servers, Mobile computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Colleges and universities</td>
<td>Programmes, courses, awards, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Tourism Boards, Tour companies, Alcohol company Petroleum company</td>
<td>Tourist sites Tour packages Sports tour/holiday Contest &amp; Tour holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>Beverage companies</td>
<td>Rewards promotion, contests,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service Announcements:</td>
<td>Government; Ministries of: Transport; Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs; Natural Resources &amp; Environment</td>
<td>Messages by Minister of Transport Special Message by the Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Safety; Smart Consumerism; Recycling; Electronic Waste</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunication / Power and telecom cable</td>
<td>Telecommunication and cable companies</td>
<td>Ericsson International Assignment Programme – reviews/testimonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anniversaries, Promotions &amp; Contests</td>
<td>Car company <em>(MOFAZ)</em>, Private Companies, Associations, Hotels, Beverage company, Alcohol &amp; Petroleum companies</td>
<td>Anniversary celebrations, Reward promotions, Winner of contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnivals</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism, Credit card company</td>
<td>Malaysian Consumer Day Carnival 2007, Malaysian Mega Sale Carnival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigns</td>
<td>Software Alliance, Government and Ministries</td>
<td>Smart Consumerism, Software Privacy (Opstulen) / <em>‘Sikap Tulen Campaign’</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Car company, Petroleum company</th>
<th>Honda Malaysia racing team, Formula One Grand Prix holiday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition for Children/Milk</td>
<td>Milk product companies</td>
<td>Promoting company product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management System</td>
<td>Metronic Global Bhd.</td>
<td>Promoting company product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic</td>
<td>Private company dealing in plastic</td>
<td>Promoting company product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle navigation &amp; tracking products</td>
<td>Heavy vehicle company</td>
<td>Promoting company product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranes manufacturer</td>
<td>Heavy vehicle / machinery companies</td>
<td>Promoting company product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks</td>
<td>Corporations &amp; Associations</td>
<td>Business Technology Programme Business and Technology Talk on “Securing Capital Funding”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and development of knowledge-based industries</td>
<td>Technology Park Malaysia Corporation</td>
<td>Promoting centre’s services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Banks and Financial Institutions, Telecommunication company</td>
<td>Apprentice Programmes, International Assignment Programme – employee reviews/ testimonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Management</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre</td>
<td>Promoting centre’s services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel pipes</td>
<td>Private corporation and Industry</td>
<td>Messages from Chairman &amp; Chief Minister of Penang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Social Security Organisation (SOCSO/PERKESO)</td>
<td>Education Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>Printing Press</td>
<td>Promoting company services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business partnership</td>
<td>Taiwan/Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Malaysia</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews / Testimonies</td>
<td>Petrol Companies</td>
<td>Employee reviews/ testimonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic status/promotion</td>
<td>State governments</td>
<td>East Coast Economic Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products storage and materials handling business</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>Promoting company services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expositions &amp; Forums</td>
<td>Broadcasting Industry, Home decoration companies</td>
<td>Announcements of exhibitions &amp; shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small &amp; Medium Enterprises (SMEs)</td>
<td>Telecommunication company</td>
<td>Promoting company services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Protection System</td>
<td>Intellectual Property Organisation</td>
<td>Promoting organisation’s products and services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Contents and Strategies

Many advertorials contain statistics on scientific research, consumer trends, or other authoritative pieces of information. The contents and/or strategies employed by the advertorials in the pilot study are as follows:

1. Reviews/Testimonies/Relating of experiences by satisfied customers or clients
2. Write-up about the state/company/activities/facilities/amenities/achievements/contest & winners/future aims & relevant information
3. Offers/Promotions
4. Quote by the Manager/celebrity/award winners
5. Speech/Message/Open letter by Managing Director/Chairman/Minister/CEO
6. Research on the product
7. Benefits/free gifts/privileges
8. History
9. Story
10. Public service announcements
11. Awards obtained
12. Interview with a celebrity/client

The above strategies were employed in the advertorials surveyed because these strategies attract readers’ attention to the advertorials and try to invest them with some of the authorities of the accompanying discourses (Cook, 1992).

c. Length

Out of the eighty-six advertorials that were analysed in the survey, it was found that the length of the advertorials ranges from one fifth of a page to four pages long. As
tabulated in Table 3.2 below, 72.1% of the advertorials were published in at least one or more pages. It is interesting to note that the four of the companies that used a three- or four-page long advertorial are property and car; and property and event management companies respectively. This again substantiates the researcher’s point about how large and successful companies are able to pay extra for the creation of advertorials. Out of these sixty-two advertorials, ten of them (16.1%) also have one to three pages of congratulatory advertisements published after the advertorial. These congratulatory advertisements are part of the companies’ anniversary celebrations.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Advertorials</th>
<th>No. of Pages</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. Multimodality

Multimodality plays a significant role in advertorials, as illustrated in Table 3.3 on the next page. It appears in 96.5% of those advertorials analysed in the survey. It is found from the survey that 94.2% (81) of the eighty-six advertorials contain some form of pictures or photographs to illustrate their products or services. The advertorials used photographs of the managers, customers, public figures or celebrities, or award winners to give a sense of validity and reliability of the information contained in the advertorials, and also to give some kind of endorsement or approval by the people shown in the photographs. The pictures and photographs of the products or events would also attract the readers’ attention and also allows them to view the product.
Table 3.3

Multimodal Content of Advertorials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pictures only</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures and table</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table/chart</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The types of pictures or illustrations that are used in the advertorials are very important. They must be selected based on how best the illustrations compliment the concept and message that the advertiser wants to put across. Take for example the illustration used in the advertorial by a credit card company, *MasterCard*, as shown in Appendix B. The illustration shows a family, consisting of the husband, wife and a young son, shopping for some dresses for the wife at an expensive boutique. All of the characters in the photo are seen smiling and feeling happy. This denotes that by using the credit card, the wife is able to buy expensive clothes from the boutique; the husband is probably happy that he does not have to withdraw money to pay for the clothes yet because the payment can be done on credit; and the young boy is also happy because he may be able to buy some expensive toys later, also with the use of the credit card. All these purchases may be possible with the use of that particular credit card that gives a higher credit amount, thus in line with the tagline, “*MasterCard, it’s priceless!*” With all the benefits of the credit card given by the company, the family is portrayed as a very happy family, which is everyone’s aspiration.

Another important element that is considered when creating an advertorial is the use of colour. The use of colours will further attract the readers’ attention and interest to the
product or service. In advertising, the selection of colours to be used should represent the advertiser, such as their logo colour; and their overall brand image. The selection of appropriate colours is very important because a serious business like say, banking, cannot look too playful.

Based on the findings of the study, many companies have adopted the colour factor as part of their corporate image or identity. Out of the eighty-one advertorials that contain pictures/photos, 40.7% (33) are in colour. This will further attract the readers’ attention and interest to the product or service. Many companies have adopted the colour factor as part of their corporate image or identity. The choice of colour is also an important factor for potential customers to remember their products, and also be associated to some form of allusion which may be dependent on the customers’ culture and outlook. For example, the homepage of Digi Telecommunications Sdn. Bhd., a Malaysian mobile telecommunications company, has adopted yellow as their company colour (Appendix D). The company probably believes that as Malaysia is made up of a multicultural society who associates the colour yellow to a positive presumption, this choice of colour has a profound impact for their corporate image. In Malaysia, yellow is associated with royalty. According to Kate Smith (2009), a colour expert, founder and editor of Sensational Color, yellow carries the meaning of wisdom, optimism, happiness, intellectual energy and creativity. In addition, the Chinese pronunciation of this colour is equivalent to the word ‘prosperity’. Thus, at any promotional event or any advertising strategy that they employ, the colour yellow would be portrayed and projected.

Some companies would also just use colour to portray a concept, as in the use of the colour green to suggest that a product takes into consideration the environmental aspect.
And when this product is being used, it does not adversely affect the environment. An example that can be quoted from the data is a company that deals with computer servers, which suggests that their servers are created to consume less electricity and thus conserve the environment. That is why some companies only use a single colour in their advertorials for the font as well as the pictures and photos, or as the background colour (Appendix E). Based on the thirty-three advertorials that contained pictures or photos, 21.2% (7) of them use this strategy.

There were four advertorials (4.6%) that contain charts and tables. Charts and tables are also features of multimodality. The use of charts and/or tables is to provide some form of statistical data to its product. This would show more reliability to the product.

### 3.5 Computer-Mediated Communication

Mass media now have a pervasive influence on what we know and how we perceive the world today. They shape our view of the world through words and visual representations. We understand, learn and are tantalised by the information we get from these mass media. We even buy because of the symbols we view in the words and pictures we find in the media. The mass media include magazines, newspapers television and the Internet. As this research focuses on the type of communication conveyed via the computer media, a brief discussion on computer-mediated communication is deemed necessary.

John December (2009), an experienced Web developer, teacher, software creator, and freelance writer, defines computer-mediated communication (CMC) as the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked
telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages. Other definitions of CMC include, “any communicative transaction which occurs through the use of two or more networked computers” (McQuail, 2005). Popular forms of CMC include communications that occur via computer-mediated formats, such as instant messages, e-mails, chat rooms, bulletin boards, list-servs and weblogs (blogs); and text-based interaction, such as text messaging (Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic, 2004; Herring, 2004).

There is no doubt that the World Wide Web (WWW) has opened doors to information in a way that we have never experienced before. It is a potential resource of up-to-date, specialist and generalist content on a range of topics. Not only is this resource growing daily, at a rate which bypasses the timelines of traditional publishing procedures, it is also a resource that is deliverable, by virtue of the spread of the personal computer, to the home as well as to the place of work and study (Slaouti, 2002).

Electronic scenes entice audiences. Reading and responding to the distinctive aesthetics on the computer screen places the texts in context. In consuming web content, we negotiate the ‘internal architecture’ of cyberspace. Internet users’ consumption of mediated meaningful content is informed by their comprehension and knowledge of a wiser world. Drawing upon the cultural frameworks of understanding within which they interpret experience, viewer communities playfully produce readings of visual texts (Schroder, 1988). The Internet is seen as a form of ‘infotainment’, with users being motivated both by its intrinsic and extrinsic functionality, its provision of pleasure and satisfaction of instrumental purpose (Wilson, Hamzah and Khattab, 2007). The Internet viewer-user is thus, “a choice-making quester”, “playful and goal-directed”, with a
varying intensity and range of purpose, creating self identity beyond screens with online
content (Gillard, 2000: 117, 122-123).

Huizinga (1970) argues that reading websites is to a regulated release from the
mundane, the disciplined distraction of sometimes materially productive ‘serious fun’.
Always teleological or goal-directed, going online is shown to be ludic. Interpreting the
Internet involves the communal construction of meaning, and the public formation of
identity (Marschall, 2002).

New developments in the Internet have made it an effective source and media in
advertising that can reach the global market quickly. This is because there is a growing
number of Internet users. By mid-1992, the Internet linked millions of people through
more than 750,000 ‘host’ connects. By the end of 1992, Cukier (1993) reported that the
number of computers connected to the Internet had increased from 30,000 in 1987 to
1.3 million in 170 countries. As of February 1996, the most frequently-cited estimates
of number of Internet users were in the 20 to 30 million range according to the *Globe
and Mail*, with some estimating as many as 100 million users (Collot and Belmore,
1996). Thus, it is undeniable that the number of Internet users increases every day.

The Internet was introduced into Malaysia in the mid 1990’s. The number of Internet
subscribers in the country increased from less than 100,000 in 1996 to 200,000 in 1997,
and to 470,000 by 1998. Internet access continued to develop substantially by 64% in
independent, privately operated website based in Montreal, Canada which provides a
comprehensive source of continental and world rankings in an increasing number of
categories, Malaysia ranks as the sixteenth country with the most Internet users
Information and communication technology (ICT) and the Internet, undeniably have opened many new avenues. They are especially important in areas and activities that rely on the provision and dissemination of data and information, particularly in the service sector. Thus, they are recognised as vital support services and platforms in driving all sectors in social and economic growth of nations. Many aspects of producing, delivering, consuming, coordinating and organising now takes place over the Internet or broadband communications networks. This is because broadband makes it more feasible for producers and consumers of goods and services to be in different geographical locations. The ability of businesses to interact with the international business community is a fundamental requirement of modern businesses, and this contributes to productivity growth by expanding markets and increasing business efficiency.

### 3.6 Web-mediated Genres

As mentioned earlier, a genre is a conventionalised way of using language in a particular recurrent social situation. New genres appear to meet new rhetorical needs of a discourse community, whereby the form and function are determined by those needs. The introduction of the Internet as a new communications medium has given rise to the appearance of an abundance of digital genres or ‘cybergenres’, a term introduced by
Yates and Orlikowski (1992 in Ryan, Field & Olfman, 2002) to refer to genres of electronic communication such as those via the Internet. Genres change over time as a result of ongoing usage. It can also change as media capabilities change and communicators adopt innovative techniques for media use. In the context of the Internet, genres can change due to the migration of existing genres from other media (Yates et al., 1999). Genres may even disappear through a process of selection, as other new genres become preferred.

Askehave and Nielsen (2005) who examined electronic genres, specifically genres mediated on the Internet, extended the Swalesian genre model to add Finnemann’s (1999) concept of the navigating mode, and propose the necessity of incorporating the notion of ‘medium’ into the notion of ‘genre’ in order to account for the characteristics of digital genres or web-mediated texts. Their contention is that the characteristics of the genre mediated, for example a corporate profile, on the Internet cannot be accounted if we simply analyse ‘print-outs’ of the web text and treat it as a static product and neglect the fact that the Internet as a medium has characteristics that significantly influence and contribute to the way web-mediated genres are presented and viewed. By explicitly adding the aspect of movement and navigation, they thereby produced a two-dimensional genre model that does not isolate any given genre from its medium. Hence, in addition to Swales’ (1992) genre model, the notion of ‘medium’ should be incorporated into the notion of ‘genre’ when accounting for genres mediated on the Internet.

The extension of the functional genre analysis model to account for the genre characteristics of non-linear, multimodal, web-mediated documents involves a two-dimensional view on genres and acknowledges the fact that digital genres not only act
as text but also as medium. With this extension, the genre concepts such as ‘communicative purposes’, ‘moves’ and ‘rhetorical structures’ (Figure 3.1) are being adapted to accommodate the multimodal, non-linear characteristics of web texts, as illustrated in Figure 3.3 below.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 3.3**

The two-dimensional genre model

(Source: Askehave and Nielsen, 2005: 3)

In relation to this study which looks at online or web-mediated promotional texts, it is thus important to first understand the significance of web-genre as an organisational principle. Just as genres regulate and mediate the ways we interact with each other in society, websites and web pages are no exceptions. The website as a whole has generic features as well as comprises many more specific genres. In order to study the macro structure of web-mediated genres, the homepages or main pages of websites can be analysed. This is because the homepage is a functional component within the larger-scale structure of the website. Moreover, it is the “top-level document of a website”
(Askehave & Nielsen, 2005) and the most important page of any website, which gets more views than any other web page (Nielson & Tahir, 2002). Homepages also have “the characteristics of a superordinate genre in its own right at the same time that many of its component parts are themselves distinctive mini-genres”, such as linguistic, visual, musical and so on (Baldry and Thibault, 2005: 113).

The use of the term ‘homepage’ in this study should not be confused with personal homepages. The term ‘homepage’ as used in this study refers to the first, introductory or reception page or main page of a corporate or governmental organisation website (Crowston & Williams, 1997; Askehave & Nielsen, 2005). A homepage or main page of a website performs two functions:

1. It introduces the general content of the website by presenting informative tables of content and providing enticing text bits.

2. It functions as the official gateway to the website, as it enables the reader to access and navigate the site by providing navigational tools or links that branch off into the website as a whole.

3.6.1 Intertextuality of Web-mediated Genre

The notion of intertextuality is the relations between genres. This term was first used by Julia Kristeva (1980) although the notion was developed by Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) in that the meanings created through texts and their linguistic formulations depend on the meanings of other texts. Kristeva (1980: 69) referred to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the writer and reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts.
Devitt (1991) who examined the role and interaction of texts within a discourse community and revealed how essential texts are to the constitution and accomplishment of the discourse community, proposes a three-dimensional concept of intertextuality – referential, functional and generic (the first two which is similar to Kristeva’s vertical axis) – which collectively account for the interaction between texts which the community needs in order to carry out its work. In essence, referential intertextuality refers to the use of references within one text to another; functional intertextuality refers to a particular text as being part of a larger macro-text; and generic intertextuality refers to drawing on previous texts written in response to similar situations. In short, intertextuality manifests “a plurality of text sources”; and involves the absorption and transformation of elements in the new textual contexts (Candlin and Maley, 1997).

According to Fairclough (1992), intertextuality in an analytical construct applied to the investigation of the relationship between genres. It is “the constitution of a text from diverse discourses” (Fairclough, 1992). A genre is a manifestation of intertextuality in so far as it follows the conventions of previous examples of this particular type of text. Thus, any stretch of text will bear the imprint of previous texts. Fairclough (1992) defines this “horizontal or sequential intertextuality” as a case in which specific other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text, such as the use of reported speech and direct speech in news reports.

Intertextuality can also occur on the part of the reader/audience in the shaping of a text’s meanings by other texts. Therefore, it can refer not only to an author’s borrowing and transformation of a prior text, but also to a reader’s referencing of one text in reading another.
3.6.2 Interdiscursivity of Web-mediated Genre

Interdiscursivity is a form of intertextuality that describes how a discourse type is constituted through a combination of elements of orders of discourse. Fairclough (1992) refers to interdiscursivity as embedded or constitutive intertextuality, in which one genre is embedded in another. The concept of interdiscursivity focuses on discourse conventions, such as in “mixed genres” which combine elements of two or more genres, such as advertorials.

In addition to this, is the concept of interpractice (Erjavec, 2004) where specific other practices in the process of text production and interpretation are overtly drawn upon within a practice. For example, if an advertiser, who orders and pays for the news, makes a decision in the news producer’s (which is supposed to be the journalist or editor) place, interpractice has occurred - a hybrid practice consisting of journalistic or editorial and advertising practice. In the process of interpretation, inter-practice occurs when the reader believes that he/she is reading the news, whereas in reality he/she is reading advertisements.

3.6.3 Homepage Genre

The forms and functions of the web genre appear to answer the rhetorical needs of the tourism discourse community. The Internet as a new communications medium has added unique properties to the digital genre in terms of production, function and reception that cannot be ignored in characterising the genre. The new media consist of multimedia content, interactivity, instantaneous and other media characteristics which constitute a specific digital genre such as online advertorials. As such, it is vital to
research on the information conveyed on websites, and in the context of this research are tourism websites, which have features deriving from the capabilities afforded by this new medium.

Specific genre characteristics are recognised in the process of communication. In the context of the present study, the structural information of the webpage can help identify its genre. The common layout of webpages can be determined by their contents which include the textual and visual features. Several ways of structuring these characteristics have been suggested in the literature of genre analysis. Due to the advent of the Internet and the popularity of online materials, the concept of genre was also introduced into the information science field as a way of identifying types of organisational communication via the Internet.

There are different views of characterising a genre. A genre can, for example, be characterised by having similarities in substance and form (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992), where substance (or purpose) refers to the social motives, themes and topics; and form refers to observable aspects such as a) structural features, b) communication medium (e.g., pen and paper, telephone, or CMC), and c) language or symbol system. Others have characterised genre by its purpose and form (e.g. Swales, 1990; Orlikowski and Yates, 1994; Crowston and Williams, 1997). Although often implicit in the use of genre (e.g. Yates and Orlikowski, 1992), all genres reflect a communicative purpose, a rationale or reason for enacting the communication. Shepherd and Watters (1998) who are from the field of computer science, argue that while non-digital genres can be characterised by the “tuple” or the sequence of two elements - content and form, digital genres are characterised by the triple - content, form, functionality - as the medium has functional capabilities. Functionality refers to the capabilities available through the new
media, the Internet (Shepherd and Watters, 1998). Ihlstrom and Akesson (2004) included another genre characteristic, *positioning* for communicating design, resulting in a quadruple characterisation - content, form, functionality, positioning.

Some of the researches on the different combinations of genre characteristics used in literature can be summarized in the following table.

**Table 3.4**

**Researches in Genre Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre Characteristics</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form and purpose</td>
<td>Swales (1990); Orlikowski and Yates (1994); Crowston and Williams (1997); Yates et al (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form, purpose and functionality</td>
<td>Toms and Campbell (1999); Schmid-Isler (2000); Roussinov et al (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and form</td>
<td>Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content, form and functionality</td>
<td>Shepherd and Watters (1998); Ryan et al (2002); Crowston and Kwasnik (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content, form, functionality and positioning</td>
<td>Ihlstrom and Akesson (2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The genre characteristics of *content, form, functionality, positioning* and *purpose* are explained as:

- **Content** refers to the substance, such as themes and topics (cf. Yates and Orlikowski, 1992), e.g. articles, news streams, video items, etc.
- **Form** refers to “observable physical and linguistic features” (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992), as in the presentation format of the content, e.g. as textbox, links, tables, or graphics (i.e. icon).
- **Functionality** refers to capabilities available through the new media (Shepherd and Watters, 1998), e.g. searching, broadcasting, downloading, interactivity, etc.
- **Positioning** refers to the place where the contents are located on the page.
- **Purpose** refers to a shared communicative purpose(s) that the genre is intended to fulfil (Swales, 1990; Askehave & Nielsen, 2005).
It can be concluded that genre is an important aspect for understanding how contents, forms and functions structure communication and interaction, in the current case is digital media. However, genres are not stable as they may emerge, change and shift. There is new tendency in linguistics to re-define genre by including content, situation and context to the concept. Changes occur when genres are communicated and shared among people especially from diverse disciplines, giving rise to new sub-genres or completely new genres. It is also important to be aware that technical, other than social, factors (Erickson, 1997; 1999) contribute to such changes. This has become apparent as new Internet-based digital genres have evolved and gained importance, both for understanding how communication is socially organised and as new genres are actively developed by designing technology use. Among the new genres emerging in the Internet, publicity is one of the most important discursive emergences of this process of continuous generic change taking place in the international computing era. One new genre that has emerged through the introduction of this new media is the online tourism homepage and its advertorial genre.

The evolution of cybergens can be explained with reference to the following cybergens model (as shown in Figure 3.4 on the following page) proposed by Shepherd and Watters (1998).
Extant genres are existing genres that have been transferred into the digital media, while novel genres exist only in the digital media without similarities in other media. The stages of cybergenre evolution due to the functionality of the new medium have created the sub-(cyber)genres. Replicated sub-genres follow the content and form of the corresponding genre in other media with little functionality by the new online media. Variant sub-genres have new functionality added to their content and form. Emergent sub-genres have evolved further from the variant sub-genre with significant difference in content and form, and added functionality that is fully dependent on the new online media. Spontaneous sub-genres do not have any corresponding genre in other media. Dillon and Gushorowski (2000) suggest that homepages have evolved into a standard form that may be considered as an authentic digital or cyber genre.

The increasingly competitive professional environment and the overwhelmingly compulsive nature of promotional and advertising activities have led to the present-day world of work as being increasingly identified as a “consumer culture” (Featherstone, 1991). The inevitable result of this is that many institutionalised genres, whether they are social, governmental, professional or academic, are incorporating elements of...
promotion (Bhatia, 1997). These changes in discourse practices are what he calls “commodification” of institutional orders of discourse.

Thus, corporate and governmental organisations have now adopted a promotional intent in the description and in designing their websites. In the context of the present study, National Tourism Organisations (NTO) or government tourism organisations have also practised this promotional stance in their description of their countries to the world.

3.6.4 Internet Advertorial Genre

With the myriad benefits of computer-mediated communication and the World Wide Web as mentioned in Chapter One and in this chapter, advertorials have now appeared on the Internet as a form of advertisement and promotion. The development of new technologies and the large number of computer science graduates have enabled companies and computer users to "become their own publisher" (Herring, 2004). There are also local as well as international Internet publishing organisations that offer services for writing advertorials which are to be published on the Internet for a fee. The cost for this service is relatively cheap for the assistance rendered. The vast number of companies that have placed information regarding their companies and products or services in the Internet is testimony that advertising in this medium has many benefits, and is here to stay. Malaysian organisations and the government have also not been left out in their attempt to promote their products, services and country to the world.

Although a variety of genres of persuasive genres have been investigated in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in traditional media, few studies have examined Internet advertising, especially the sub-genre of online tourism advertorials. The
present study attempts to analyse how this genre is constructed to attract potential tourists to visit the places or country through the texts in which the persuasive and communicative features are used, together with promotional pictures. There is a lack of research in this professional discourse probably because online advertorials are relatively new.

In relation to this study, online advertorials are created in recent years because consumers are now more computer-savvy and technologically inclined as these hardwares are now more affordable and easily available, especially with the presence of cyber cafes everywhere. Moreover, consumers in this day and age have become more sophisticated in how they source a product/service; and in this case, tourism. They want immediate information and feedback, and the Internet can fulfil this need.

### 3.7 Summary

Advertorials have proven to be an effective means of marketing a company or product. Much like product placement, an advertorial is a non-obvious form of advertising that can subtly grab the attention of consumer audiences since they believe that they are learning useful information that can guide them to a consumer decision rather than being blatantly sold a product or service.

Advertorials are a form of persuasive promotional genre and can be used whenever we want to promote a product, service or idea, and to persuade people to do something. The overall communicative goal of advertorials is to persuade people to use the product, service or idea. Different strategies for doing so are developed in the course of the history of persuasive communication, and in the case of the present study utilises the
services of the online tourism websites in presenting the persuasive information. In other words, although it is represented here as the format of a particular text, the persuasive or promotional genre is a general format that can be applied to many different promotional genres. It is also a relatively flexible format and one that allows for variation.