

The Interplay of Society, Culture, and Language in Direct Mailing Communication

Ming Cheung

Center for Communication Research

City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This study aims at proposing a conceptual framework, titled the “Cross-linguistic Socio-cultural Model” which addresses the role of text, context, and rhetoric in sales letter study on the one hand, and the interplay of society, culture, and language in direct mailing communication on the other. With sales letters as exemplars, this article discusses how far the similarities in message encoding can be attributed to generic considerations, that is, to the contextual configuration of the field, mode, and tenor of the texts; and also how far the differences in message encoding can be attributed to the social and cultural contexts of the texts with regard to the audience, purpose, and content.

Key words:

Direct mailing communication, sales letter, society, culture, language, rhetoric

Abstracto

Este estudio tiene como objetivo proponer un marco conceptual titulado “El Modelo inter-lingüístico sociocultural”, cuyo rol principal es por una parte, dirigir el texto, contexto y la retórica en el estudio de carta de venta, y por otro lado, señalar la interacción de la sociedad, cultura y lenguaje en la comunicación de envío directo. Tomando como ejemplo las cartas de ventas, este artículo discute la relación entre la codificación de mensajes y las consideraciones genéricas, con relación a la configuración contextual del campo, el modo y el tenor de los textos. Asimismo, se analizará la relación entre la codificación de mensajes y el contexto social y cultural de los textos con relación a la audiencia, el propósito y el contenido.

Palabras clave:

comunicación de envío directo, cartas de ventas, sociedad, cultura, lenguaje y retórica.

Ming Cheung, PhD is Assistant Professor at the Center for Communication Research, City University of Hong Kong. She is currently the Program Leader of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Integrated Strategic Communication. Her research interests and teaching areas include persuasive communication, visual communication, integrated marketing communication, advertising, design, new media, and professional discourse analysis.

Introduction

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Does the above persuasive message extracted from a sales letter promoting the Benchmark magazine (see Appendix 1) arouse your interest in getting a free copy of the magazine or even in starting a subscription? Nowadays, sales letters are still one of the major vehicles through which companies promote their brands, products, or services to their potential customers. A sales letter, as a kind of direct mailing communication, typically appears in “making contact” situations (Pilegaard, 1997: 225), at the initial stage of a business communication sequence for business dealing. To excel in this globalized marketplace, understanding direct mailing communication across contexts

and across languages is becoming increasingly important. This study aims at proposing a conceptual framework, titled the “Cross-linguistic Socio-cultural Model” which addresses the role of text, context, and rhetoric in sales letter study on the one hand, and the interplay of society, culture, and language in direct mailing communication on the other. The discussion of the model will be supported by in-depth qualitative analysis of a few Chinese or English sales letters selected from a database of 3,308 sales letters collected by the author from 36 categories of recipients in Hong Kong over a six-month period.

Throughout the article, the terms *makers* and *viewers* instead of authors and readers are used. Given that the persuasive messages in a sales letter might be encoded and decoded through text, graphics, images, or a combination of these, using the terms authors and readers would be too restrictive in this research context. Here, *makers* refer to those people who are involved in the production of the letters, such as marketers, authors, and designers, while *viewers* refer to those who receive and view the sales letters, and they can be potential consumers of a product or service.

The Sales Letter

In the existing literature, it is the sharing of communicative purposes that forms the principal criterion for characterizing a class of communicative events as a genre; exemplars of a particular genre share similarities in “structure, style, content and

intended audience” (Swales 1990, p. 58). Bazerman (1988, p. 62) has a similar view: “a genre is a socially recognized, repeated strategy for achieving similar goals in situations socially perceived as being similar.” Bhatia (1993, p. 13) also stresses the essential role of communicative purposes in genre identification: “Although there are a number of other factors, like content, form, intended audience, medium or channel, that influence the nature and construction of a genre, it is primarily characterized by the communicative purpose(s) that it is intended to fulfil.”

A sales letter tends to be viewed as a highly “standardized, ritual or even formulaic” genre (Vergaro, 2004, p. 182). Almost all books on sales letter writing discuss the discourse strategy in an AIDA model, which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (for example, Guffey, 2001; Kramer, 2001; Thill and Bovée, 2002). A sales letter will first capture the viewer’s attention with an interesting opener which relates directly or indirectly to the product or service being offered. The letter will then attempt to arouse the viewer’s interest in the product or service and to create a desire in the viewer to own the product or service. The letter will lastly convince the viewer to act on that desire through a purchase, which is the ultimate goal of the sale.

A typical sales letter, according to Bhatia (1993), has its main function as being persuasive in order to elicit a specific response from its viewers. To achieve this ultimate goal, the letter should be able to capture a viewer’s attention, to offer an

appraisal of the product or service in relation to the viewer's needs and interests, to initiate business relations, and to encourage further communication. Accordingly, Bhatia proposes a seven-move structure for a typical sales letter: 1) *Establishing credentials*; 2) *Introducing the offer*; 3) *Offering incentives*; 4) *Enclosing documents*; 5) *Soliciting response*; 6) *Using pressure tactics*; and 7) *Ending politely*. The move of *introducing the offer* is further realized in three steps, namely 2a) *Offering the product or service*; 2b) *Essential detailing of the offer*; and 2c) *Indicating value of the offer* (ibid: 46-49).

Bhatia stresses that flexibility exists in move structure; some moves are obligatory while some are optional, and they do not necessarily appear in the same order in every sales letter. The move structure proposed by Bhatia was adopted with minor modifications in Zhu's (2000) comparative study of the structural moves of 20 English sales letters and 20 Chinese ones. Two structural moves, namely *Headline* and *Postscript*, were found to be typically English. Zhu's analysis indicates that 13 out of the 20 English letters include the *Headline* move while only one out of the 20 Chinese letters includes the same. Zhu attributes the findings to the English letter makers' intention to attract the viewers' immediate attention to the benefits of the offer, since both headline and postscript are the most conspicuous places in a letter. She further claims that such usage reinforces characteristics of low-context cultures (Hall, 1989), in

which a maker tries to achieve the immediate goal of sale through an overt message.

Two structural moves, namely *Greetings* and *Introductory Move*, were added to the categories of the Chinese letters. These moves, according to Zhu (1999), are general features of private letters and seem to be indicative of the importance of personal relationship building in Chinese culture – an echo of Hall’s (1989) view of high-context cultures.

The author of this article, in another study (Cheung, 2008 forthcoming), investigates the impact of new media on the encoding of persuasive messages in direct marketing, and proposes the following move scheme in her comparative study between the discourse structure of 80 sales emails and that of 80 printed sales letters:

Move A Setting the scene

- Step A1 Relating to a social issue
- Step A2 Relating to culture
- Step A3 Relating to the market situation
- Step A4 Relating to the viewer
- Step A5 Relating to the maker/character

Move B Establishing credentials

- Step B1 Highlighting financial strengths
- Step B2 Highlighting leadership
- Step B3 Highlighting uniqueness
- Step B4 Highlighting recognition/status
- Step B5 Highlighting exclusiveness
- Step B6 Highlighting expertise
- Step B7 Highlighting track records

Move C Introducing the offer

- Step C1 Identifying needs
- Step C2 Stating the intention

- Step C3 Mentioning the product/service
- Step C4 Describing services/functions
- Step C5 Describing advantages
- Step C6 Describing limitations/restrictions
- Step C7 Showcasing latest developments
- Step C8 Providing details
- Step C9 Providing guidelines
- Step C10 Pointing to further information
- Step C11 Linking to/Presenting evidence
- Step C12 Offering guarantee

Move D Building goodwill

- Step D1 Projecting foresight
- Step D2 Showing commitment
- Step D3 Anticipating feedback
- Step D4 Encouraging circulation

Move E Offering incentives

- Step E1 Providing gifts/discounts
- Step E2 Providing free trials
- Step E3 Providing free tests/games
- Step E4 Providing value-adding services

Move F Using pressure tactics

Move G Triggering action

Move H Soliciting response

Move I Reinforcing the offer

Move J Building rapport

- Step J1 Conferring blessings
- Step J2 Expressing eager anticipation
- Step J3 Expressing gratitude/appreciation
- Step J4 Expressing apology

In the above move scheme, a move is taken as a meaningful unit deployed by the makers based on the communicative purpose of a social activity they would like to accomplish and as one that contributes to the overall discourse strategy of a genre-specific text in relation to its context of situation. It is a communicative event,

which can be realized in one or more steps. It is identified in a sales email or letter as a genre-specific text in terms of four criteria: (1) the propositional content of the email or letter; (2) the relationship between the email or letter and the co-text; (3) the context of situation in which the email or letter unfolds; and (4) the linguistic indicators typical of a particular move type in the email or letter (Cheung, 2008 forthcoming). To the best knowledge of the author, the above move scheme is the most comprehensive one to date in the field, and it forms the framework of analysis for the four sales letters included in this article.

The Cross-linguistic Socio-cultural Model

Although a genre is bound by certain constraints and restrictions on its structure, content and style of communicating meanings, the dynamism and socio-cultural values inherent in the genre have been a topic in research (for example, Jenkins and Hinds, 1987; Kong, 1998; Vergaro, 2002; Yeung, 1997; Yli-Jokipii, 1996; Zhu, 1999, 2000). Vergaro (2004) identifies rhetorical differences between 43 Italian and 26 English sales letters, and concludes: “[U]niformity of expression in the business community is limited to the conventions imposed by the genre used...within the genre constraints there is still room for creativity” (ibid: 202-203). Such discussion echoes Bazerman’s (1988) metaphor, which compares a genre to a Beethoven quartet:

That a well-established, successful genre is usually realized in relatively static formal features should not hide the social meaning and dynamics of a genre, no more than the active reality of a performed Beethoven quartet should be obscured by the sheet music (ibid: 62-63).

In this article, a sales letter is taken as a “communicative vehicle” (Swales, 1990: 46) that opens up a world of business opportunities so that the “common goals” (ibid: 26) of the business community, winning renown and generating profit, can be attained. It is the communicative *purpose* of exchanging goods, services and information, the social *function* of informing and persuading, and the *form* of transmission that allow a sales letter to be recognized by both makers and viewers as a genre distinct from other modes of communication found within the business community.

Figure 1 below shows the “Cross-linguistic Socio-cultural Model” proposed by the author. The model is based on the theories of *social discourse analysis* (van Dijk, 1997) and *genre analysis* (Swales, 1990). It centers on a tripartite relationship among *society*, *culture*, and *language*.

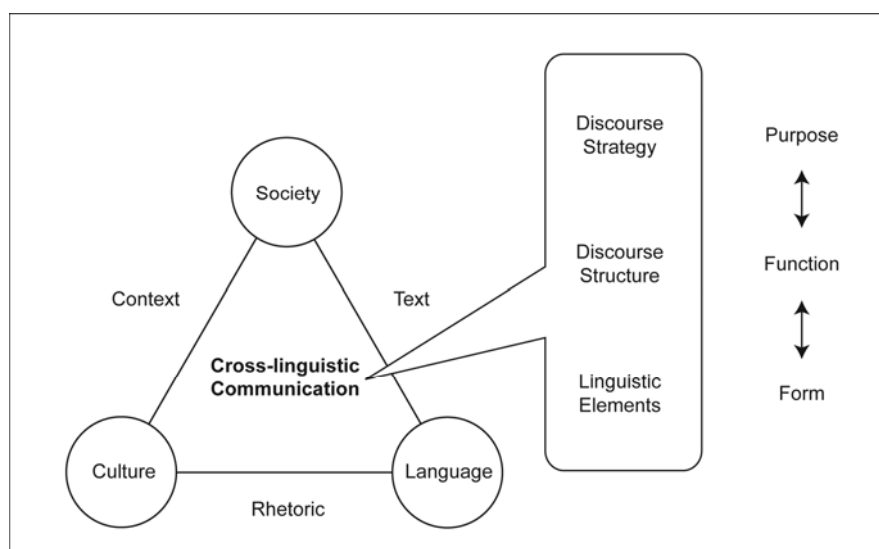


Figure 1. Cross-linguistic Socio-cultural Model

According to the theory of *social discourse analysis* (van Dijk, 1997), the explanation of discourse needs to take into account not only the internal structures, social actions, and cognitive operations in language use, but also the broader socio-cultural structures and processes. It provides an ideological framework to look at discourse from a dynamic perspective. In direct mailing, the same product may be promoted in different strategies in two societies, and a sales message may be encoded through different expressions, styles, tones, etc. As Kress (1987, p. 42) states, “what appears as the same generic form at one level has recognizably distinct forms in differing social groups.” A comparison between a sales letter from American International Assurance (see Appendix 2) and another from Dr. Dobb’s Journal (see Appendix 3) will reveal how *text* and *context* interact to respond to a need in *society*.

The main purpose of the sales letter from American International Assurance (AIA)

is to promote the extra protection plan offered by AIA to cover death insurance as a result of terrorist attack. The letter starts with a subject line “Now the dust is settling...Let’s rebuild our confidence in life!” in (1), which is labeled as *Move A: Setting the scene; Step A4: Relating to the viewer*. The letter then points to a social issue – the 911 terrorist attacks in (2), which is identified as *Move A: Setting the scene; Step A1: Relating to a social issue*. By describing these attacks as a most serious human disaster, the maker successfully sets the crisis as a backdrop for his or her sales proposition. Linguistically, this *Step A1* contains a real world entity subject “The September 11 terrorist attacks” as sentence-initial element, followed by the verbs “shocked” and “could result” in simple past tense to affirm truthfulness of the social issue. It may be argued that this step can be seen as a dependent move that is closely linked to the subsequent *Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B1: Highlighting financial strengths* in (3). The crisis serves three major functions here. First, it draws the viewer’s attention to the letter since the 911 attacks shocked the world. Second, it helps establish the credentials of the company, by creating a contrast between the expected net pre-tax losses to AIG (AIA’s parent company) and the financial strengths of AIG in overcoming this adversity. Third, it makes the viewer become aware of the need for more protection in crisis.

Against this background, the maker goes on to describe AIA as “Your 1st Choice in

LIFE” in (4), by highlighting its foresight in being the first insurer in Hong Kong and Macau “to explicitly state over 30 years ago that personal accident riders...were valid in cases of death as a result of terrorist activity”. The use of simple past tense in this highlight forms a contrast with the use of simple present tense in the following sentence “Currently there are only very few insurers in the market...” This is another attempt to establish credentials for the company, and is thus labeled as *Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B3: Highlighting uniqueness*. The maker then introduces the offer by portraying it as an extra protection to the AIA policyholders in (5). This *Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C8: Providing details* describes the terms and conditions of the extra protection plan in a conditional statement “those who...if the insured...” and in simple future tense. In order to convince the viewer, the maker puts forward an assurance that the offer will certainly give the valued policyholders peace of mind. This *Move D: Building goodwill; Step D2: Showing commitment* in (6), signaled by the use of “believes” and “will”, serves to boost the viewer’s confidence in AIA and in its insurance service. Finally, the maker attempts to trigger the viewer’s action of purchasing the service, by mentioning that the extra protection will be beneficial to the viewer as a policyholder himself or herself and also to his or her loved ones. This *Move G: Triggering action* is signaled by the use of lexical items “now” and “plan ahead” in (7). The letter ends on *Move H: Soliciting response* in (8) to provide contacts for further

communication between the viewer and the company. Explicit signals of this move include “For enquiries” and “contact”. Targeting a societal need, the maker of the sales letter has been describing through text about what AIA has done and can offer to its customers in context. Toward the end of the letter, the viewer is prompted and encouraged to plan ahead by contacting his or her AIA insurance consultant.

In the English sales letter promoting Dr. Dobb’s Journal, the maker starts by specifying the target viewers of the letter with “Dear Programmer” in (1). Labeled as *Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C1: Identifying needs*, this move realizes the maker’s attention-getting strategy by putting himself or herself and the viewer into the same shoe, with the use of a conditional statement “If you’re like me, you tackle a lot of complex software development problems.” Following this, the journal is introduced as a solution in response to the viewer’s societal needs in work-related context through “Whether you program in..., you need a magazine that...” The maker goes on to describe the major components of the journal in (2) and highlights the uniqueness of the journal by making a comparative claim that “no other magazine addresses the needs of programmers so directly” in (3). Upon these descriptions, the maker gives the viewer the first push for action in (4) by asking him or her to fax or mail back the enclosed order form right now to start the journal subscription. The maker also helps the viewer previsualize the benefits that the journal will bring to him or her, with a statement “You will see for yourself what

an indispensable programming tool DDJ really is” in simple future tense.

From (5) to (11), there is evidence that the maker has been trying to achieve two major goals in relation to promoting the journal – to provide detailed description about its content on the one hand, and to establish credentials for the journal on the other. In (5), for example, the maker stresses the journal’s mission in meeting the high technical level demanded by its readers. The long list of programming topics and technical jargons that follows indeed serves to support the maker’s description of the journal with “social proof” in context (Shimp, 2000, p.168). In (6), (7) and (11), the maker highlights the leadership role played by the journal in the field and also the expertise and recognition associated with the journal. Linguistically, the rhetorical elements such as “revolutionary contributions”, “far-sighted people”, “inspiration”, “top-notch analysts, programmers, and designers”, “free, creative thinking”, and “dramatic breakthroughs” all serve to build up a strong, positive brand image for the journal. Textually, the mingling of the product details with the credential highlights in and between each other brings some variations to the discourse structure while maintaining the overall coherence of the text. The sales letter ends with “a personal invitation” together with “a guarantee” in (12), giving the technically-framed outlook of the sales proposition an intimate wrap-up. The maker gives the viewer a second-time push for action in (14), which is then followed by a postscript reinforcing the offer and guarantee again in (15).

The discourse strategy of both sales letters from AIA and Dr. Dobb's Journal seems to follow the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model, which is typical of the genre of sales letters. It reinforces the genre theory which posits that the communicative purpose of a social activity governs the textual choices in a text. However, due to the difference in the societal contexts from which the texts emerge, the two letters exhibit variations in their contextual configuration, i.e. in the variables of field, tenor, and mode of discourse (Swales, 1990) – the letter from AIA is promoting insurance plans to the general public in a rather informal, caring tone, while the letter from Dr Dobb's Journal is portraying the journal as a problem-solution guide and speaking to a particular social group, namely programmers, with a lot of technical jargons.

The discussion so far also reveals that a sales letter is indeed a form of *language* use; it is a genre-specific *text* with a structure, which refers to the formal or textual features related to not only the organization or patterning of semantic units but also the linguistic choices. Analyzing genre-specific texts would provide information on the conventions of writing and on the *rhetorical patterns* emerged for a genre. Through these conventions and patterns, we can gain an understanding about how the makers of a genre contribute to shaping the viewers' perception and knowledge of the world.

Genre analysis, as an approach to text analysis, helps reveal how the different discourse

and linguistic choices interact to achieve the social purpose of persuasion in direct mailing communication. It looks into the relationships between the communicative processes, the viewer-maker interaction, and the textual features of genre-specific texts; in particular, it investigates how the former two are represented through the latter.

Communicating through a genre would also mean encoding and decoding the discourse in relation to the *context* and *rhetoric* of the related *culture*. Genre is a social process (Martin 1992, p. 503) which focuses on distinguishing similarities in the patterns in text types with regard to context of situation, purpose, content and audience, whereas rhetoric is a discourse process which is concerned about identifying the different choices made in text across cultures. According to Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2001, p. 514), culture refers to “a set of values, ideas, artifacts, and other meaningful symbols that help individual communicate, interpret, and evaluate as members of society”. For example, it is a taboo to openly talk about death in Chinese culture. Indeed, the influence of socio-cultural elements on interactional strategies and linguistic structures is evident in research studies (for example, D’Souza 1988; Scollon and Scollon 1991; Kathpalia 1997; Kamimura and Oi 1998; Kirkpatrick and Zhichang 2002; Wong 2004; Watkhaolarm 2005). Hall (1989) proposes a distinction between high- and low-context cultures:

A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person,

while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (ibid: 91).

High-context cultures are characterized by using covert messages; Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Korea are on the list. Low-context cultures are, on the other hand, characterized by using overt messages; Western countries such as the USA, Australia, and New Zealand are exemplars. High-context cultures emphasize shared context, and the covert messages tend to be perceived as indirect and not speaking to the point by those in the low-context cultures. Low-context cultures stress clarity of styles and straightforwardness of expressions, and the overt messages tend to be perceived as a lack of stress on relationship building by those in the high-context cultures (Ulijn and St Amant, 2000). In other words, what appears to be appropriate and relevant in the high-context cultures may be unsuitable in the low-context cultures, and vice versa.

Extract (1) below, being identified as *Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B4: Highlighting recognition/status*, comes from a Chinese sales letter from Dynegy promoting its one-stop IT solution package for enterprises in Mainland China and Hong Kong (see Appendix 4 for a translated version of the extract in English). To highlight Dynegy's recognition and status in the market, the maker states that its Asian headquarters was among the various foreign enterprises invited by the Government of

the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to a welcoming cocktail hosted by the Chief Executive, and that its Chairman paid a courtesy call at the Office of the Chief Executive and exchanged views with the latter on the economy and the market situation. Rhetorically, the maker is trying to differentiate Dynegy from its competitors, by establishing its credentials as a niche player in the market and by describing the existence of a “關係” (relationship) between the government and the enterprise. It is noteworthy to mention here that relationship is perceived as an integral part of Chinese culture (Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998).

- (1) DYNEGY INC. 為擴展亞洲區及中國業務，今年初在本港設立 DYNEGY ASIA COMMUNICATIONS LTD. (達力智亞洲通訊有限公司)作為亞洲區總部，發展先進通訊及高科技電子業務。日前，行政長官在禮賓府設歡迎酒會，答謝數十家外國企業今年來港設立地區總部或辦事處，表達衷誠謝意，本公司亦被邀請出席。不單如此，總公司主席 MR CHUCK WATSON 月前來港及前往國內視察分公司業務時，行政長官亦在特首辦公室親自接見，詳談甚久，可知其對本公司之重視。

Extract (2) below is identified as *Move A: Setting the scene; Step A4: Relating to the viewers*. In this extract from a Chinese sales letter from Honour Securities (see Appendix 5 for a translated version of the extract in English), the maker is using the notion of “孝” (filial piety) which explicates the proper parent-child relationship in

Chinese culture (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998) to metaphorically compare a balanced diet advised by parents to a balanced investment portfolio the viewer will need today. The metaphor is grounded on an expected mutual understanding between the maker and the viewer of the strong family bond in Chinese culture, and of the respect and obedience a child should show to his or her parents. The understanding is implicit in the rhetoric, and is assumed to exist in a shared context when the text is encoded and decoded.

- (2) 童年時，父母親都會教導我們要有均衡的飲食習慣，以爭取均衡的營養。在感謝父母親的慈祥教悔之餘，我們都會身體力行，盡力改變偏吃或暴飲暴食等生活習慣，以達到吸收均衡營養的目的。今天我們擁有財富之餘，亦同時擁有健康，我們都衷心感謝父母親的教導。然而，當我們都事業有成，在工作上獨當一面的時候，在投資的角度裏，爸爸媽媽的話是否依然有效？

Indeed, the importance to consider socio-cultural values in the process of encoding and decoding persuasive messages finds its echo in Martin (1984); he refers to genre as “a staged, goal oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture” (ibid: 25). His view of genre as a staged and culturally purposeful activity is picked up by Christie (1985) who further adds, “we create texts representative of particular kinds of genres to serve different social purposes” (ibid: 12). Their discussions of genre as a staged activity serving social and cultural purposes highlight

the facts that there is a specific discourse structure within a genre and that this structure evolves with dynamic social and cultural factors.

Conclusions

This article proposes the “Cross-linguistic Socio-cultural Model”; with sales letters as exemplars, it discusses how far the similarities in message encoding can be attributed to generic considerations, that is, to the contextual configuration of the field, mode, and tenor of the texts; and also how far the differences in message encoding can be attributed to the social and cultural contexts of the texts with regard to the audience, purpose, and content. Although the overall discourse strategy of the analyzed sales letters is found to follow the AIDA model, variations are found in their structural and linguistic variables which allow the viewers to understand how the makers of a genre contribute to shaping their views and knowledge of the world.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1. An English sales letter from the Benchmark magazine

<p>Dear Readers,</p> <p>(1) It is widely agreed among financial experts that unit trust is one of the safest and smartest investments available today. But investing without guidance will cost you.</p>	<p>Move A: Setting the scene; Step A3: Relating to the market situation</p>
<p>(2) So if you want to be profitable, you'd need to have a good understanding of what unit trust is and how it works; or have an excellent investment advisor with whom you can make sound decisions.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C1: Identifying needs</p>
<p>(3) And this is where Benchmark comes in. As Asia's ONLY Fund magazine, it offers you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Guide to Fund Investing Essentials – industry jargons explained in plain everyday language, tips on how to pick funds, timely updates on award-winning funds, fund managers and company profiles and more. • Global Market Analyses – top fund managers' forecast on market outlooks from Asia, Europe, North America to the Emerging Markets. • Monthly Performance Tracker – regular updates on new market data, risk categories, performance ranking. • Exclusive Interviews with Investment Experts – industry professionals from top fund houses are invited such as OCBC Asset Management, DBS Asset Management, Templeton Asset Management, Merrill Lynch Mercury Asset Management, Schrodgers Investment 	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C4: Describing services/functions</p>

<p>Management to share their wealth of wisdom and expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Advice on Investment Strategy – best funds recommendations, investment portfolio suggestions, individual market and fund analyses. • In-depth Assessment of Selected Funds – index fund, health care fund, leisure fund, technology fund, hedge fund. <p>If you're a newcomer, Benchmark provides you with all the basic steps to make for a profitable start into the world of unit trusts and continue to be successful. A must read for all those who are just starting out. If you're already a unit trust investor, Benchmark offers comprehensive and professional fund analyses that enable you to master the winning secrets and get the most out of your investments. It will prove to be one of your most valuable assets for making good investment decisions.</p>	
<p>(4) Enjoy Benchmark Absolutely Free! See how Benchmark can better your life – without risking a thing. You'll benefit from our 100% RISK-FREE offer which entitles YOU to enjoy a free copy of Benchmark.</p>	<p>Move E: Offering incentives; Step E2: Providing free trials</p>
<p>(5) Simply detach the Free Trial Reply Form and return it in the postage paid reply envelope today.</p>	<p>Move G: Triggering action</p>
<p>(6) Rest assured that you'll be under no obligation to continue after the free trial. Simply notify us to cancel your subscription and it won't cost you anything. However, if you'd like to continue receiving Benchmark after the free trial, you need to do nothing.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C12: Offering guarantee</p>
<p>(7) We'll start your 12-month subscription right away, and at a specially discounted rate of just HK\$398! That's over 30% OFF the full price of HK\$576. You SAVE as much as HK\$178!</p>	<p>Move E: Offering incentives; Step E1: Providing gifts/discounts</p>
<p>(8) You see, it won't cost you a penny to enjoy a free copy of Benchmark. So why not give it a try? Again, you've no obligation to continue your subscription once the 12</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C12: Offering guarantee</p>

months are up.	
(9) But experience tells us that most people, once they've sampled Benchmark, want to go on reading it; so just like any newsagent who receives an order, we guarantee to go on sending you Benchmark until you tell us to stop – which you may do at any time.	Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B7: Highlighting track records
(10) And you can also enjoy our Unconditional Money-Back Guarantee – if you want to cancel later, you will receive a full refund on your entire payment.	Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C12: Offering guarantee
(11) Hold on... that's not all. A FREE Executive Briefcase too! Yes! To top it all off, you'll receive a FREE Executive Briefcase. This convenient briefcase is perfect for work, school, business trips and more! It will be your trusted companion wherever you go.	Move E: Offering incentives; Step E1: Providing gifts/discounts
(12) See exactly what it can help you on the enclosed flyer.	Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C10: Pointing to further information
(13) Remember, not everyone was selected for this chance to enjoy a free copy of Benchmark and receive a FREE Executive Briefcase.	Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B5: Highlighting exclusiveness
(14) Don't miss out! Post back the Free Trial Reply Form now.	Move G: Triggering action
(15) Wishing you a prosperous year in investment! Peter Jeffery, Publisher of Benchmark Monthly	Move J: Building rapport; Step J1: Conferring blessings

APPENDIX 2. An English sales letter from American International Assurance (AIA)

<p>(1) Now the dust is settling... Let's rebuild our confidence in life!</p> <p>Dear Valued Policyholder,</p>	<p>Move A: Setting the scene; Step A4: Relating to the viewer</p>
<p>(2) A Most Serious Human Disaster - The 911 Attacks</p> <p>The September 11 terrorist attacks shocked the world and could result in total insurance claims of more than US\$40 billion to many insurers worldwide.</p>	<p>Move A: Setting the scene; Step A1: Relating to a social issue</p>
<p>(3) AIA's parent company, American International Group, Inc. (AIG), expects that its net pre-tax losses will be US\$800 million. As AIG is a leading U.S.-based international insurance and financial services organization with total assets of over US\$400 billion, these terrible attacks will not adversely affect the AIG financial structure.</p>	<p>Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B1: Highlighting financial strengths</p>
<p>(4) AIA - Your Insurer with Foresight</p> <p>After the 911 attacks, AIA understands that our customers have concerns about whether their accident policies cover terrorist activities. In fact, AIA was the first insurer in Hong Kong and Macau to explicitly state over 30 years ago that personal accident riders with 'Riot and Civil Commotion (RCC) Coverage' were valid in cases of death as a result of terrorist activity. Currently there are only very few insurers in the market that explicitly offer such coverage, which deservedly makes AIA 'Your 1st Choice in LIFE'.</p>	<p>Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B3: Highlighting uniqueness</p>
<p>(5) AIA Policyholders get Extra Protection</p> <p>To fulfill the motto 'Trust us for LIFE', AIA pioneers to respond pro-actively to our valued customers by offering the following extra protection:</p> <p>'From now until December 31, those who</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C8: Providing details</p>

<p>successfully apply for any individual life insurance plan or accident rider with AIA, will receive an additional 50% of death benefit, payable to the beneficiary if the insured, in the unfortunate event of death as the result of a terrorist attack anywhere in the world. This offer will be valid for one year from the issue date of the policy or rider.’</p>	
<p>(6) AIA believes that the offer will give our valued policyholders peace of mind regarding terrorist activities and further strengthen their confidence in AIA.</p>	<p>Move D: Building goodwill; Step D2: Showing commitment</p>
<p>(7) It is your policy anniversary now. Plan ahead and let you and your loved ones be protected.</p>	<p>Move G: Triggering action</p>
<p>(8) For enquiries, please feel free to contact your AIA insurance consultant, or our Customer Hotline at 2232 8888 (Hong Kong) / 988 1822 (Macau).</p> <p>Yours sincerely, Senior Vice President and General Manager American International Assurance Co. (Bermuda) Ltd.</p>	<p>Move H: Soliciting response</p>

APPENDIX 3. An English sales letter from Dr. Dobb's Journal

<p>(1) How does the Windows Scheduler really work? How does one object-oriented language differ from another? What can one debugger tell me that another can't?</p> <p>Dear Programmer, If you're like me, you tackle a lot of complex software development problems. Whether you program in C, C++, Java, Fortran, Assembly, Pascal, Perl, or Visual Basic, you need a magazine that's light on frills and heavy on practical programming techniques. A source of technical information that enables you to write the most elegant and efficient programs. ...That's where DR. DOBB'S JOURNAL comes in.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C1: Identifying needs</p>
<p>(2) DDJ brings you algorithms, coding tips, discussions of fundamental design issues, and actual program listings guaranteed to make you a better programmer.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C4: Describing services/functions</p>
<p>(3) In fact, no other magazine addresses the needs of programmers so directly.</p>	<p>Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B3: Highlighting uniqueness</p>
<p>(4) Fax or mail us the enclosed order form right now to start your DR. DOBB'S JOURNAL subscription. You will see for yourself what an indispensable programming tool DDJ really is.</p>	<p>Move G: Triggering action</p>
<p>(5) We keep the technical level high because our readers demand it. They write in every programming language and on every machine, doing work from compiler development to device control to applications writing. Regular columns with informed opinion and source code address the broad range of readers' interests such as: PROGRAMMING PARADIGMS – Popular columnist Michael Swaine aims his piercing wit and insight at the emerging trends and technologies in the software development industry. PROGRAMMER'S BOOKSHELF – DDJ's</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C8: Providing details</p>

resident book reviewers, renowned authors and programmers themselves, look at books that every programmer should have on the bookshelf.

EMBEDDED SYSTEMS AND REAL-TIME DEVELOPMENT – From the 68HC11 microcontroller to sophisticated 64-bit systems, columnist Ed Nisley and other industry experts delve into the software and hardware challenges that embedded systems and real-time designers face -- and provide the most elegant and cost-effective solutions.

JAVA Q&A – Every month, DDJ answers the thorniest questions you have about the Java programming language.

ALGORITHM ALLEY – Every month, DDJ examines exciting and powerful algorithms -- the heart and soul of every program -- and implements them in Pascal, C, C++, and Java.

THE C/C++ LANGUAGE – Good C/C++ programmers are in high demand. Al Stevens, DDJ's popular C programming columnist, gives C/C++ programmers an edge by publishing powerful routines written in C/C++, and discussions of the underlying theory of the C/C++ language and of compilers in general, with tips for both new and experienced programmers.

INTERNET PROGRAMMING – From protocols to scripting languages, every month DDJ covers the latest in Internet and World Wide Web development.

OBJECT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING – DDJ's monthly coverage in these areas focuses on usable techniques and practical applications of OOP research -- including C++, SmallTalk, Eiffel, Object Pascal, Java, and more.

You'll also find such useful departments and articles as:

- * **Programmer's Services** – a section devoted to supporting the programming community by covering new products of interest to programmers, news of developments in microcomputer design, and professional issues in software design.

- * **Articles** focusing on the programming techniques in artificial intelligence, object-oriented programming, GUIs, and telecommunications.

<p>DDJ was there at the beginning. Before Steve Wozniak designed the Apple II or Gary Kildall started selling the CP/M operating system. In fact, DR. DOBB'S published Wozniak's early programming efforts and issued the first word on CP/M.</p>	
<p>(6) Times haven't changed that much</p> <p>Now people like yourself are making revolutionary contributions to the computing field every day. That's why far-sighted people rely on the technical inspiration that DDJ encourages -- the kind of inspiration that gives top-notch analysts, programmers, and designers an edge over the rest of the world. It's just that kind of free, creative thinking that opens the door for even more dramatic breakthroughs.</p>	<p>Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B2: Highlighting leadership</p>
<p>(7) DDJ isn't just a language magazine</p> <p>We have to say we're strong in the language area, but we're equally strong in other areas as well. It's the eclectic nature of DDJ that will make its contents such a comprehensive resource to you.</p>	<p>Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B6: Highlighting expertise</p>
<p>(8) Perhaps that's why 93% of our subscribers never discard a single issue of DR. DOBB'S. We cover such a varied range of useful programming tools that our readers refer back to the pages of DDJ for years.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C11: Linking to/Presenting evidence</p>
<p>(9) You'll find regular technical coverage of 680X0, 80X86, PowerPC, and Pentium architectures; MS-DOS, OS/2, Windows, real-time, NT, and UNIX operating systems. The pros and cons of each, bugs and fixes. Our program listings are useful systems utilities, often complete in themselves...compilers, cross-assemblers, and much more. DDJ even publishes code for machines as diverse as an 8051-based embedded system and the latest Pentium-based computer.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C8: Providing details</p>
<p>(10) How can we be so many things to so many programmers? We do it by emphasizing the algorithms underlying the code. It's</p>	<p>Move D: Building goodwill; Step D2: Showing commitment</p>

<p>something we have to evaluate with each candidate article and with our readers' needs in mind.</p>	
<p>(11) For 25 years, DR. DOBB'S JOURNAL has lived up to its reputation as the foremost source of technical programming techniques in the field. But the only way you'll discover that for yourself is to subscribe. You won't want to miss any of the exciting issues we have planned!</p>	<p>Move B: Establishing credentials; Step B4: Highlighting recognition/status</p>
<p>(12) << A PERSONAL INVITATION >> Try DR. DOBB'S JOURNAL. I am sure you will find DDJ the most valuable source of technical information available anywhere. If DR. DOBB'S does not live up to my promise, just let me know and I will gladly send you a refund on all unmailed issues.</p> <p><< A GUARANTEE >> If at any time during the course of your subscription you are unhappy with DR. DOBB'S, you may cancel your subscription and receive a full refund on all unmailed issues.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C12: Offering guarantee</p>
<p>(13) Why am I making you such an offer? It's simple, really. DR. DOBB'S began more than 25 years ago as a forum of shared technical information among programmers. I'm carrying on that DDJ tradition in the hope that you'll join us, and perhaps even provide our other readers with some technical insights of your own.</p>	<p>Move C: Introducing the offer; Step C2: Stating the intention</p>
<p>(14) Act now to start your subscription. Return your order form with payment today!</p> <p>Sincerely, Jonathan Erickson Editor-in-Chief</p>	<p>Move G: Triggering action</p>
<p>(15) P.S. Consider ...there is no risk whatsoever. At any time during the course of your subscription you may cancel and receive a full refund on all unmailed issues.</p>	<p>Move I: Reinforcing the offer</p>

APPENDIX 4. A translated version of the extract from a Chinese sales letter from Dynegy

To expand its market influence in the Asia Pacific and China, Dynegy Inc. established its Asian headquarters in Hong Kong by creating Dynegy Asia Communications Ltd. early this year. In August, Dynegy Asia was among the various foreign enterprises invited by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to a welcoming cocktail hosted by the Chief Executive. Back in June, Dynegy Inc.'s Chairman, Mr. Chuck Watson, was in Hong Kong and China to visit the enterprise's offices in the region. While in Hong Kong, Mr. Watson paid a courtesy call at the Office of the Chief Executive and exchanged views with the Chief Executive on the economy and the market situation.

APPENDIX 5. A translated version of the extract from a Chinese sales letter from Honour Securities (忠誠證券)

When we were young, dad and mum taught us to have a balanced diet for balanced nutrition. By heart we appreciated their words, and we would try our best to do what they expected us to do. We shall change our imbalanced dining habit, give up junk food, and dine off more vegetable and fruit. Thank you, dad and mum, we're enjoying a wealthy and healthy life. When we have grown up, however, we used to think that we don't need to listen to their words, especially when we are quite successful in our own career. Is it true?

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