Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter presents an overview of the concepts that are used in the following chapters' examination of Internet advertisements. Specifically these are online advertisements which promote instructional self-defense DVDs. These Self Defense Web Advertisements (SDWAs), culled from a nearly twenty year time span, are presented here for a Document Analysis, or more precisely a Genre Analysis. This analysis uses a theoretical framework based on a synthesis of Modern Genre Theory and Genre Definitions married to a synthesized, eclectic theoretical framework. This eclectic framework includes evaluating SDWAs in a multidimensional manner using linguistic techniques and strategies from the fields of Advertising, Genre Studies and Text Analysis. In addition, the medium plays such a pivotal role in SDWAs that it will be examined to ascertain its influence in forming a new cyber/digital sub-genre.

1.2 Motivation for the Research

The motivation for this research stems from the following statements: '…we have a continuing and, indeed, growing need for understanding a document's genre,' (Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005:80). Notably, "[t]he Internet and in particular the World-Wide Web provides a particularly interesting setting in which to study the use and development of genres…" (Crowston, 2010:9). This is because "the technology of the Web extends the notion of a document—and thus the notion of genre— because Web pages can provide functionality in addition to information," (Crowston, 2010:10). It is these statements which have inspired this research's purposes.

1.2.1 Specific Purpose of this Research

The specific purpose of this research focuses on the analysis of selected SDWAs spanning nearly a twenty year time period. The goal of this research is to develop a further understanding of Genre Analysis applied to the Internet. Precisely this is to reveal a new cyber/digital Sub-Genre: Long Scroll Web Advertisements (LSWAs) (Clugston, 2012).Additionally, it should be noted that this research is innovative

empirically in that it studies a version of Genre that has not been investigated in the prior literature. Furthermore, it involves a novel approach to examining genre through a combination of the Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) Template, Move Structure paradigm and multidimensional analysis (i.e. the lenses of purpose, form, and content). This research not only aides in describing a new cyber/digital Sub-Genre it also presents a new methodology for Genre Analysis, especially for cyber/digital online genre.

1.2.2 Further Significance of the Research

The further significance of this research is to help expand the breadth of investigation within the discipline of Netlinguistics. Posteguillo (2002:37) defined this discipline as "…a new field of research and study netlinguistics…comprises…the linguistic study of language as used in the net across different levels (iconic, written, terminological, discursive, contextual and ideological levels)…" Additionally, analyzing SDWAs, also, strives to aid the ongoing investigation in the field of Netvertising (Posteguillo, 1999). While some examination has been done concerning advertising on the Internet (e.g., Cheung, 2007; Palmer and Posteguillo, 1999) there is a noticeable absence in the research literature pertaining to long text copy advertisements. This research, then, hopes to fill in part of that gap.

1.3 Background Information

The complexity of analyzing SDWAs requires providing initial background information for two aspects. These aspects are genre study and the Internet. Genre Study in this sense is used as a generic term that covers the definitions of genre, the theories of genre, and the concomitant theoretical paradigm of Genre Analysis. The Internet refers to the cyber/digital realm/ medium in which SDWAs are housed and communicated. Both are introduced in this chapter.

1.4 Genre Analysis subsumes a Genre Theory

The word genre comes from the French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. "The term is widely used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics, to refer to a distinctive type of text," (Chandler, 2000:Online). In fact, "[a] discussion of genres is a discussion of classificatory activity – specifically, of the division of some whole thing into the kinds or types of the thing," (Beghtol,

2001:17).From both of the before mentioned definitions it is clear that genre is about classifying. This idea of classifying is quite seductive, so much so that the construct of Genre Study has captivated scholars and dilettantes alike. Unfortunately, neither of these groups has found a mutually agreeable definition of genre. This lack of a concrete definition is one of the major obstacles in formulating a Genre Theory. Establishing a theoretical framework is the first necessary step in performing a Genre Analysis. Because of this, many scholars have used different operational definitions which in turn have led to different operational analyses. Thus, it seems a review of the development of genre study is necessary.

1.4.1 Genre Theory

In this introductory chapter genre will only be surveyed in a superficial manner. The purpose is to give an outline of the perspectives held and the definitions used during a generalized period of time, not to give a profound dissection of each idea or term. To attempt to present a complete evolution of Genre Theory would require several books; at best, this chapter merely gives the reader a passing acquaintance with the field.

1.4.1.1 Classical Genre Theory

Genre investigation has been of interest to scholars throughout history. *"The study of genres—the fusion of content, purpose and form of communicative actions—stretches back hundreds of years to the beginning of self-reflective human communication"* (Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005:2).Aristotle, for example, delineated criteria in his Poetics that could be used to define and identify Tragedy, Comedy, and Epic. In the Classics this idea to characterize and label certain features and attributes defined what was genre. This idea has certainly not died out in the intervening years. For example,

> *Robert Allen notes that 'for most of its 2,000 years, genre study has been primarily nominological and typological in function. That is to say, it has taken as its principal task the division of the world of literature into types and the naming of those types - much as the botanist divides the realm of flora into varieties of plants, (Allen 1989: 44) in (Chandler, 2000: Online).*

A benefit and a result of the Classical Genre Theory/Study led to codifying certain structural components and elements found in various genres. This codification process created a template that could be used as a combination check list and scaffolding outline. The template, then, functioned to verify that specific writing met

a genre's standards or as a blueprint for creating specific genre writing. Understandably, the power and utility of this device has not diminished in the modern era. It, in fact, has remained robust. Many writers continue to use a conceptual template for writing such varied texts as cook books, guide books, academic papers, business letters, etc. For example, many various writing templates are readily available for use online (http://wisesloth.wordpress.com/2009/11/17/4-simple-formula-plot-templates/).

1.4.1.2 Post Classical Genre Theory

This idea of genre was not, however, just salient to scholars of the Classics. The truth is that "[g]enres are invoked in response to commonly recognized recurrent situations or occasions for communication…" (Orlikowski and Yates, 1994:3). This concept will be picked up later for further study, suffice to say at this point that genre serves some purpose that a community deems of value. Thus, the idea of creating categories to aid humans in understanding various components of communication was not just held to in the field of literature. Genre is, in fact, a powerful construct that aids study and comprehension within various disparate fields found in Literature, Poetry, Music, Art, Film, and Dance. Each of these fields has created its own working construct of what constitutes genre. The use in various fields is a testament to the intrinsic value and power of genre. This sentiment is clearly stated in Ryan's (1981:112) words: "[t]he significance of generic categories thus resides in their cognitive and cultural value, and the purpose of genre theory is to lay out the implicit knowledge of the users of genre."

1.4.1.3 Modern Genre Theory

Moving towards modern definitions of genre involves incorporating aspects from the disciplines of sociology and psychology. Considering the influence within social contexts is important to understanding the underlying communication goals. An example of a sociologically influenced definition is the following: "Given a definition of document genre including both socially recognized form and purpose, in studying document genres it is necessary to look at the context of use as well as the formal technical details of the documents," (Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005:3)

While the impact of the society, group and culture in which the communication is used has spawned sociological definitions of genre, it is not the only new perspective influencing genre definition. Another major influence is via the psychological

perspective which considers the individual's cognitive structuring and perception. This entails that perspectives and focus can be changed; thus, the idea of genre can depend entirely on what one focuses on. The focus then drives the identification. From this psychological perspective it should be remembered that identification of a document's genre makes the document more easily recognizable and understandable and this reduces the cognitive load of processing it by the reader (Bartlet, 1967).

1.4.2 Medium Controlled Genre Theory

As the means of producing communication via the printed text changed, so did the concept of Genre Theory. Genre now could be thought of as existing in one type of medium (e.g., hand written versus print type set). The form of the medium was also important for classifying a genre (e.g., coffee table books versus pocket editions of novels or dictionaries). This change in medium which has led to the cyber/digital world of the Internet requires some background.

1.4.2.1 Paper Medium

Examples abound differing newspaper genres from magazine genres regardless that the subject matter is the same (e.g., public consumption magazines from niche, esoteric magazines based in a large part solely on the stock of paper used), novels from short stories, guide books from satire, etc. 'For instance, in the print world web differentiate between a publication with glossy paper and photographs, and one with plain paper, simple design, and the absence of formatting gimmicks. We often use these cues to say, "This is a more scholarly publication," or "This is commercial," (Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005:6)

It should be noted that the stock of paper is also, often, wedded to a change in typography with certain fonts being associated with certain genres (e.g., common newspaper font in comparison to what the New Yorker magazine uses; respectively, Poynter and Miller Text Roman fonts).

1.4.2.2 Cyber/Digital Medium

"While the medium of any document has always been understood to be important, the medium with respect to the web is critical for a person's participation in any given genre because it touches upon not only the content of the document but also on how that document is accessed," (Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005:8). The Internet which began in the 1960s and then gained considerable expansion in the 1990s is

the largest, most pervasive communication platform that mankind has seen at any time in history (Crystal, 2001;Posteguillo, 2003).The closest comparison to its ramifications in the World of communication was the advent of the printing press. "[T]he introduction of printing in the XV century, which entailed a passage from hand-written manuscripts to printed books, radically enlarged and transformed the potential for written genres," (Santini, 2007:3). However, it is the contention of this research that as life changing as the printing press was it hardly compares to the reach and power of the Internet. Simply stated, the reach and ease of use have made the Internet the unparalleled zenith in communication platforms known to mankind (Crystal, 2001; Posteguillo, 2003). This platform's power is redefining the concept of genre. "It may be necessary to incorporate the notion of 'medium' into the notion of 'genre," (Askehave and Nielsen, 2005:121). This power rests, in part, on the number of genres it manifests, the amount of genres that it mutates and the genres that it creates (Crowston and Williams, 1997). Its power also rests in the ability of so many people to use it.

1.4.2.3 Size of the Internet Medium

The Internet's huge potential of global communication has resulted in accruing a daunting number of users (users are not only readers as the Internet allows readers to also be writers). The numbers are so vast that they cannot be readily understood, grasped or held in a human's mind. However, to gain an idea about the power and reach of the Internet, the 2012 Internet user numbers are as provided:

- *2.4 billion – Number of Internet users worldwide.*
- *1.1 billion – Number of Internet users in Asia.*
- *519 million – Number of Internet users in Europe.*
- *274 million – Number of Internet users in North America.*
- *255 million – Number of Internet users in Latin America / Caribbean.*
- *167 million – Number of Internet users in Africa.*
- *90 million – Number of Internet users in the Middle East.*
- *24.3 million – Number of Internet users in Oceania / Australia.*
- *565 million – Number of Internet users in China, more than any other country in the world.*
- *42.1% – Internet penetration in China'(Pingdom, 2013)*

1.5 Eclectic Genre Theory

"The three underlying concepts that appear consistently in the definitions of the term 'genre' are: style, form, and content of a document. The purpose of a document is subsumed by these features," (Boese, 2005:6). These three components, purpose, form, and content, are not denied in this research. As a continuation of the evolution of genre it should be noted that the idea of genre has transformed from rigid categories to a more flexible construct. This construct, then, changes according to the medium used and the message to be conveyed. "The concept of genre is both a semantic and a pragmatic concept (i.e. it includes the semantic meaning + the situational/communicative context)," (Santini, 2012:Online). At the outset, this has rendered genre investigation complex: on one hand, genre is a difficult term to define in a hard science sense as there is no one specific, concrete notion of it; on the other hand, because genre is not rigidly fixed, but, rather, evolves, genre has become instrumental in the investigation of new and diverse messages. That is to say, genre is dynamic (Devitt, 1993). And this aspect is no more important than it is in the process of classifying and categorizing cyber/digital genres. 'A world being transformed by new technologies and media as well as new social and economic arrangements creates the need for rapid and deep transformation of genres,' (Bazerman, Bonini, and Figueiredo) in (Bawarshi and Reiff, 2010:5). That this changing dynamic of genre should be researched in regards to SDWAs seems to be a natural extension of genre analysis. That is '[t]his proliferation of genre analysis for various purposes means that we cannot exclude any kind of text (or other kind of document that can be mounted on the Web) from an investigation of the usefulness of genre,' (Berghtol, 2001:Online). In fact, Askehave and Nielsen (2005) call for more research into sub-genres used by different discourse communities on the web. With this in mind the objectives of this research can be presented.

1.6 Objectives of the Thesis Research

1. to identify a cyber/digital-genre.

2. to apply three lenses of genre analysis: form, content, and purpose.

3. to demonstrate that SDWAs are a cyber/digital sub-genre, LSWA, which manifests genre hybridism (embedded texts/genres).

4. to demonstrate that LSWAs are a variant, extant cyber/digital sub-genre.

5. to demonstrate that SDWA/ LSWAs manifest fixity.

6. to demonstrate that the AIDA/Moves template is a viable means of establishing a self-defense LSWA's structure, cohesion, coherence and purpose. Furthermore, it will aid in providing a salient lens for classifying this cyber/digital sub-genre.

7. to demonstrate that the development of a set of criteria will aide in identifying and classifying a cyber/digital sub- genre. (Specifically, this means to present an analytical process that may be applied in a generic fashion to reveal the underlying structure and purpose unique and inherent to the self-defense LSWA variant, extant cyber/digital sub-genre.)

1.7 Research Questions of the Thesis Research

In relation to the objectives, the research questions of this study are the following:

1. Are self-defense LSWAs a cyber/digital sub-genre?

2. In what manner do self-defense LSWAs demonstrate Genre Hybridism?

3. What aspects are salient in establishing a self-defense LSWA as extant and then variant?

4. How does the application of the AIDA/Moves template describe and define a self-defense LSWA's structure and, furthermore, how does it demonstrate cohesion, coherence and purpose?

5. What are the unique strategies used in the content (e.g., lexical choices, verb choices, overall page length of the advertisements, sentence length, tenses, punctuation marks and personal pronouns usage within self-defense LSWAs)?

6. Do self-defense LSWAs show fixity?

1.8 Hypothesis

The hypothesis to be tested: The AIDA template used by Bird (1994), Gallant (2011), Guffey (2001), Kramer (2001), Thill and Bovee (2002), Khankhrua (2007), and Cheung (2007) combined with a modified moves template will reveal and describe the functional, structural, and content elements of LSWAs. Furthermore, it could offer a method of viable (sub) genre classification.

1.9 Implications

Several scholars have stated the need for progress in the field of genre analysis, a partial listing includes Yates and Orlikowski, 2002; Walters and Shepherd, 1997, 1998; Sumner and Yates, 1997; Santini, 2003, 2006, 2007; Posteguillo, 2003, 2007; Palmer, 1999; Orlikowski and Yates, 1994; Medina, 2005; Kwasnik, 2001; Kwasnik and Crowston, 2005. It is expected, then, that the results of this analysis of SDWAs will yield information that will expand the breadth and depth of cyber/digital genre studies. In addition, this research, should, also, further accurate methodological investigation methods in the field of Netvertising.

1.10 Limitations, Delimitations, Scope

Limitations for Genre Analysis at the level of a master thesis abound. Two of the most glaring limitations of this research are time and money.

Scope is limited to the selection of four SDWAs; however, these SDWAs span nearly a twenty year period.

Delimitations are imposed through the small sample of four SDWAs used in this research. The research also does not consider in detail the psychological underpinnings, theories, or ramifications involved in genre or especially in the Advertising Genre.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter covered various aspects concerned with a document analysis of selected online, cyber/digital documents. Specifically, the category of Self Defense Web Advertisements (SDWAs) was presented for a genre analysis. A small history of genre studies was then given, as were differing definitions of genre. A gap in research was revealed concerning long text copy advertising documents. Removing part of this literature research gap was mentioned in conjunction with the special aims of the analysis. Following this, the research objectives and questions were presented to clarify the goals of the analysis. A hypothesis that the Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) template would be applicable to this analysis was presented. The chapter ended with the limitations and delimitations.