

## LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES OF UNAUTHORIZED PREMIUM FEATURE SELLERS ON PLATFORM X

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### Abstract

A complicated issue that touches on linguistics, digital ethics, and platform governance is the growth of digital gray markets, especially the illicit sale of premium application features on social media. Although the legal and economic sides of these behaviors have been studied, there is still a great deal to learn about the intentional language tactics used by sellers to influence potential customers and normalize illegal transactions. Using the framework of Appraisal Theory, this study seeks to discover and analyze the word choices and evaluative language used by unauthorized sellers on Platform X (previously Twitter) (Martin & White, 2005). Data from 30 seller accounts were gathered by non-participatory observation and documenting using a mixed-method convergent parallel design. Appraisal categories and quantitative frequency analysis were then used for qualitative analysis. The results show that language from the Appreciation category (72.62%) is most frequently used to highlight the value of the product (e.g., murah/cheap, full garansi/full warranty), followed by Judgment (27.38%) to establish the seller's reputation (e.g., trusted, quick response). Interestingly, the Affect category was missing (0%), suggesting a deliberate preference for logical, value-based persuasion over emotional appeals. According to the study's findings, sellers use "linguistic camouflage," imitating professional business discourse, to counteract the illegality of their offerings, foster trust, and appeal to consumers pragmatism. Enhancing digital literacy, improving platform content moderation algorithms, and guiding regulatory approaches to informal digital economies are all made possible by these insights.

**Keywords:** linguistic strategies, Appraisal Theory, unauthorized sellers, Platform X, evaluative language.

### INTRODUCTION

Within social media ecosystems, informal and even illegal marketplaces have emerged as a result of the profound transformation of economic connections brought about by the digital age. Because of its real-time, networked communication, Platform X (previously Twitter) has become a common location for the illicit sale of premium digital service features, such shared Spotify, YouTube Premium, or Netflix accounts. Operating outside of official licensing agreements and in violation of platforms

Terms of Service, copyright law, and fair digital commerce principles, this behavior creates a digital gray market (Yanti; Sarip & Himsyah, 2023). Although these sellers have been portrayed as illegal actors in legal and ethical studies, little is known about the precise communication strategies they use to draw clients and justify their business practices.

In digital worlds, persuasion is primarily linguistic. In unregulated settings, sellers must actively create credibility and desirability through language since they cannot rely on institutional trust. Thus, linguistic strategies the intentional application of discursive framing, syntactic structures, and lexical choices are essential to their functioning (Jha & Kumar, 2023; AlMamoory & Al-Khazaali, 2024). According to research on digital marketing language, common strategies include utilizing informal, peer-like registers, providing social evidence, and building urgency (Darmawanti et al., 2023; Maharani et al., 2024). However, genuine e-commerce is frequently the focus of this research. It is necessary to specifically examine the linguistic landscape of unlawful, peer-to-peer digital sales, when risk perception is high and institutional controls are lacking.

This study fills this gap by analyzing the linguistic attitudes ingrained in the advertising discourse of unlicensed merchants using Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), a framework under Systemic Functional Linguistics. Affect (expressing emotion), Judgment (judging character and ethics), and Appreciation (evaluating objects and phenomena) are the three areas into which Appraisal Theory methodically divides evaluative language. This methodology is especially useful for analyzing how sellers negotiate interpersonal trust, encode values, and present their illegal services as trustworthy and worthwhile. Prior uses of Appraisal Theory have looked at language in editorials, social media commentary, and official marketing (Pamungkas & Mulia, 2020; Mulia, 2023; Hamdani, 2021), but not in relation to unauthorized digital sales.

Thus, this study poses the following questions: (1) What kinds of words are frequently employed by unlicensed vendors of premium app features on Platform X? (2) How do these words choices correspond to the Appraisal categories of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation? By providing answers to these queries, the study hopes to advance linguistic theory, digital consumer protection, and platform governance tactics by revealing the strategic linguistic architecture of this gray-market activity.

## **METHOD**

In this research, qualitative and quantitative data were gathered simultaneously, evaluated independently, and then combined during the interpretation stage using a mixed-method research design using a convergent parallel approach (Nagpal et al., 2021). By fusing the breadth of qualitative research with the broadly applicable patterns identified by quantitative frequency counts, this design enabled a thorough comprehension.

The promotional language employed by unauthorized sellers of premium digital application features (like Spotify and YouTube Premium) on Platform X served as the research object. Primary and secondary data were categorized (Undari Sulung & Mohamad Muspawi, 2024). Thirty promotional

posts and interaction threads from identifiable seller accounts made up the primary data, which was gathered in May 2025 by screenshot documentation and non-participatory observation (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Using purposeful sampling, data was chosen according to three criteria: the existence of phrases that foster trust, the use of persuasive language, and the explicit promotion of premium accounts. Secondary data comprised pertinent academic works over the past 10 years on digital communication, linguistic tactics, and appraisal theory.

Finding accounts using keyword searches (such as “wtb YT prem,” “wtb Spotify prem,” etc.), recording interactions, and creating a corpus of textual data were all part of the data collecting process. The methodical approach used for data analysis was influenced by (Miles et al., 2014). First, irrelevant content was eliminated through data reduction. Second, each evaluative term or phrase in the corpus was coded into one of the three Appraisal categories (Affect, Judgment, or Appreciation) for data display. Martin & White, (2005) paradigm served as the basis for this coding, which was verified for consistency using more recent methodological improvements (Zeng et al., 2024). Third, the frequency and percentage distribution of terms among the categories were determined by quantitative analysis. In order to create a cohesive debate, the final step in conclusion drawing and verification was to interpret the strategic significance of the observed linguistic patterns by combining the numeric distribution with the qualitative insights from the coded cases.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Research Findings

The analysis of 30 data samples yielded 84 evaluative keywords. Their distribution across the Appraisal categories is presented in Table 1. A distinct strategic pattern can be seen in the quantitative results. With keywords emphasizing the worth, usefulness, and dependability of the good or service, the Appreciation category is highly dominating (72.62%). The most used terms, which directly addressed customer concerns about fraud or service interruption, were complete garansi and bergaransi (warranty). While testimoni (testimonials) offer social proof of quality, murah (cheap) emphasizes economic value. Efficiency and safety are emphasized via quick processes and aman (safe).

The Judgment category (27.38%) concentrates on assessing the operational ethics and character of the seller. In a setting when trust is lacking, keywords like trusted and amanah openly state the seller's honesty and reliability. Quick reaction reduces customer uncertainty by evaluating the seller's actions as admirably attentive and efficient.

One important discovery is the total lack of the Affect category (0%). In their promotional core messaging, sellers did not utilize any terms that convey emotions, such as joyful, thrilled, or disappointed.

B. Discussion

The predominance of appreciation is consistent with the fundamental problem faced by unauthorized sellers, who must overstate the usefulness and financial value of their goods in order to make up for their illegality. Pamungkas & Mulia, (2020) study on Sharia hotel websites, which found that appreciation language improved perceived service quality, is consistent with this finding. Sellers redefine the transaction from a risky, illegal conduct into a logical, cost-effective buy by continuously assessing the service as inexpensive, guaranteed, and proven (via testimonials). This is a type of “linguistic camouflage” (Qalbi Andini, 2024) in which gray-market behavior is normalized by appropriating official corporate jargon.

When institutional support is lacking, the use of judgment acts as a personal endorsement for the sellers. Directly demonstrating one's reliability (trusted, amanah) becomes an essential tactic in the low-trust environment of Platform X's informal economy (Batbold, 2024). This is consistent with research on editorial discourse, where authority is established by critical language (Mulia, 2023). When Judgment (fast response) and Appreciation (fast process) are combined, a strong composite image of a seller who is both morally trustworthy and effectively operational is produced.

Strategically, the complete absence of affect is telling. Although emotional language is common in some marketing and social media conversations (Hamdani, 2021), it's lack here implies that sellers purposefully steer clear of emotive solicitations. Emotional language may be interpreted as unprofessional, manipulative, or detracting from the seller's logical calculation of risk and benefit in an illicit or high-risk transaction. This lends credence to Yanti, (2023) assertion that pragmatism, rather than emotion, governs gray-market exchanges. Instead of being emotive, the persuasion is designed to be transactional and value-based.

Additionally, the use of colloquial terms like “murce,” which is slang for “very cheap,” and phrases like “no drama” strategically fosters solidarity with a younger, digitally native audience (Mahrus et al., 2024), creating a peer-to-peer atmosphere that further separates the interaction from formal commercial imagery while increasing relatability. The frequency distribution of keywords by appraisal category, can be seen below:

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Keywords by Appraisal Category

Category	Keywords	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Appreciation</b>	full garansi (full warranty), bergaransi (warranty), murah (cheap), aman (safe), fast process, testimonials, fast fixing	61	72,62%
<b>Judgment</b>	Trusted, amanah (trustworthy), fast response	23	27,38%
<b>Affect</b>	(none)	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>

## CONCLUSION

The results of the investigation show that illegal premium feature sellers on Platform X mostly use tactical word selections, emphasizing lexical words that highlight the value of the product and the seller's legitimacy. Their persuasive lexicon is centered around key terms like garansi (warranty), murah (cheap), testimoni (testimonials), trusted, and speedy response. The functional and economic value of the unlawful service is constructed through the strategic use of Appraisal Theory categories, which are typified by an overwhelming emphasis on Appreciation (72.62% of the evaluative language). This is supplemented by the application of judgment, which accounts for 27.38% of the data, to create an image of operational competence and ethical dependability. Interestingly, there is a purposeful avoidance of Affect, which is completely absent from the data, suggesting a planned marginalization of emotional persuasion in favor of a logical, morally grounded discourse intended to reduce perceived risk.

In essence, language serves as the primary tool through which these sellers attempt to engineer trust, normalize their offerings, and navigate the constraints of their illicit marketplace. The findings suggest that efforts to combat such gray-market activities must extend beyond legal enforcement to include linguistic awareness both in educating digital consumers to critically decode such persuasive strategies and in developing more nuanced platform algorithms capable of identifying this specific genre of camouflaged promotional discourse.

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