CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

It is common for consumers walking along supermarket aisles, reading newspapers, watching television, listening to the radio, or even checking e-mails to be swamped with invitations to participate in consumer contests. In recent years, the increasing visibility of such contests especially during popular festive or sporting events such as the Muslim Hari Raya, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Malaysia Mega Sale, Beijing Olympics, and FIFA World Cup is a clear indication that more businesses are turning to this type of promotional discourse to meet their fiscal targets. This increase underscores the persuasive power of consumer contests as promotional advertising discourse on consumer purchasing behaviour. In most cases, an individual's decision to participate in a consumer contest involves a proof of purchase requirement, which seems to be regarded as a usual procedure in a list of procedures that must be observed in order to win seemingly worthwhile prizes.

The results of promotional advertisers' efforts in highlighting these prizes have thus far proved effective since empirical evidence shows that the number of consumer contests just keeps rising (Sharen, 2007). The continuous increase in total advertising expenditure in Malaysia offers further substantiation for this statement. In 2007, our total advertising expenditure of RM5billion showed a 6% increase over 2005 (Sharen, 2007). These figures suggest that in response to contest invitations, consumers spend millions of Ringgit a year on additional products in order to try and win prizes that seem to offer more value for money for product purchases.

In part, this helps to explain the torrent of promotional advertising discourse materials including sampling coupons, in-store product sampling islands, promotional display booths, and specifically for the purpose of the present study, contest entry forms (henceforth CEF) at major shopping outlets. Further, escalating promotional advertising expenditures can lead to monopoly concentration trends where giant corporations or only businesses that can afford effective promotional advertising campaigns can compete. The reduction of business competitors eventually allows major consumer product manufacturers to dominate the economy via control over the media through which their products are advertised and (Harms & Kellner, 2007). Given that consumers depend on the media for information about daily affairs, this developmental dynamic threatens democracy by limiting the diversity of information available to consumers and amplifying the power of businesses over their consumers.

This state of affair intensifies the need to study commercial advertisements as "a vast superstructure with an apparently autonomous existence with an immense influence" (Williamson, 1978, p. 11). Moreover, despite the present economic downturn, it is surprising that neither consumers nor promotional advertisers seem to be aware that consumer contests can contribute to ethical and social issues that may stem from persuading consumers to part with hard earned money to buy additional products to respond to calls for participation, which may prove futile by the end of a contest. To date, promotional advertisers continue to generate an extraordinary desire in consumers to buy, buy, and buy, mainly by associating their messages with the attitudes, hopes and dreams of consumers. Consequently, the messages within CEFs can be considered as a celebration of "common experiences, socially shared dreams

and hopes, which are validated for readers" (Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985, p. 120). In their attempts to associate consumers' experiences with the act of participating in contests, promotional advertisers draw on commonly celebrated local and universal themes that include local celebrations such as Hari Raya, Chinese New Year, Deepavali and national events like the Malaysia Mega Sale. As these themes are generic, and most products in the same category offer similar benefits, promotional advertisers employ various tactics to differentiate themselves from competitors. Differentiation is the best way to manufacture consent on the account that consumers decide base on their perception of differences (Herman & Lichtman, 2006) and not on the specific value of a product.

From analysis of the corpus collected thus far, one of the ways that promotional advertisers or contest organisers use to differentiate their contests from others is via the use of different incentives, or prizes to be won. For example, while two different brands of similar products may use the National Day as a theme, the first may highlight prizes related to holidays, while the second, prizes related to home electrical items, or cash. At the same time, different brands may also highlight different product benefits. A brand of household laundry detergent, for instance, may be differentiated from competing brands via claims of more convenient product packaging designs such as twist to open caps, environment-friendly materials, 100% anti-bacterial properties, colour friendly, or simply more cleaning power. Other examples of differentiation derived from the corpus of CEFs collected for the present study thus far, included more contest related themes, that is, different contest skill criteria requirements such as slogan writing, guess and win, lucky draw, creative design and rank and win.

Considering that meaning is solely communicated via verbal and visual texts in CEFs to convince consumers how much better, easier, or more advantageous life would be if only they would buy into the foregrounded messages, it is only reasonable that we learn to identify these verbal and visual texts, and the strategies that underlie them. Consumers need to be made aware of covert manipulation involving words and images in promotional advertising texts so that they can learn to better protect themselves. While the notion that advertisers are merely doing their job in highlighting desirable prospects such as becoming richer, happier, or more sexually desirable seems reasonable (Soo, 2007), what the producers of such promotional discourse do to transform individuals into consumers and contest participants may not always be justifiable.

Consumers who believe that contests are generally an incentive to win prizes that could add value to their product purchases may be surprised to know that the sole purpose of promotional advertisements such as the CEF is to maximise product sales via constructed perceptions of added incentives. Van Dijk (2000) described this practice as manufacturing consent. For the purpose of the present research, manufacturing consumer consent may thus be described as the employment of underlying strategies within verbal and visual texts in CEFs to influence consumer-purchasing behaviour. This art of manufacturing consumer consent is thus related to hegemony as "relations of domination based upon consent rather that coercion, which involves the naturalisation of practices and their social relations as well as relations between practices, as matters of commonsense" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999b, p. 24). Our society of consumers has been incessantly bombarded with CEFs and other similar forms of promotional discourse over the years that instead of

deliberating over resisting possibilities to these messages, it becomes 'commonsense' for conditioned consumers to view contests as opportunities to win prizes that are dramatically represented as life improving. Bourdieu (1977) described this predicament as "doxa" (p. 164) which involves a process through which socially and culturally constituted ways of perceiving, evaluating and behaving become accepted as unquestioned, self-evident and taken for granted truths. It is this predicament that underlines the need for research into the phenomenon to uncover ideologies that underpin promotional discursive practices crafted to achieve and maintain relations of dominance. Furthermore, since language is the commonest form of social behaviour, we rely on language for "commonsense assumptions" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 2), which is related to ideology. Ideologically, commonsense assumptions are those that are "implicit in the conventions according to which people interact linguistically" (ibid.) but, which people are generally not consciously aware of.

With reference to one of the earlier samples of CEFs collected for the present study (App. I/2), with the exception of consolation prizes which are perceptibly the least valuable rewards of participation in any set of prizes in terms of monetary value, the prizes to be won here were limited to one grand prize, one first prize, one second prize and one third prize. These amounted to four main prizes to be won by potential contest participants. According to the first point in the R&R component, except for the product manufacturer's staff and business associates as well as their family members, potential contest participants included anyone who is a citizen of Malaysia and Brunei, aged 18 years and above. Notwithstanding potential participants from Brunei, the Malaysian workforce alone makes up about 11 million potential participants out of a population of 28 million citizens (The World Factbook, 2011).

Consequently, after a contest has ended and the handful of winners announced, the majority of non-winning participants may come to feel disappointed if not somehow cheated. It is likely that the small consolation that these consumers may receive in having become part of the majority of non-winning participants is insufficient to help individuals deal with the questions of why and how they have became willing participants in the first place (Soo, 2005). These questions often remain unanswered, and their accompanying personal, emotional and financial losses, uncompensated. Perhaps worse, some people may try to console themselves with reasons such as "no luck" or "maybe next time."

At this point, it may be important to state that not all contests are detrimental. Indeed, there are contests, which do not require any proof of purchase from participants, but do offer real, legitimate benefits to the public. Amongst others, examples include fund raising promotions for charities such as a children's colouring contest, government sponsored film or batik design contests and national Sudoku contests regulated by some of the national newspapers, which are designed to help participants gain the recognition and rewards they deserve by putting their skills to the test. At the same time, these types of contests can provide assistance to deserving public interest groups that raise awareness about important social and community issues (Soo, 2007) and aid the process for legitimate businesses to deliver useful, reliable products. However, legitimate contests that offer genuine benefits neither dismiss nor alleviate the problems that more questionable contests can bring about among consumers. Although the Malaysian Ministry of Information (henceforth MOI) does impose standards by way of the Malaysian advertising code and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur Act, 1992 (Laws of Malaysia, Act 493), the

escalation of promotional advertising materials and CEFs in particular, is a glaring sign that it is high time consumers are provided with more protection from deceptive promotional advertising language. Standards established to help reduce incidents of fraud and increase truthfulness in promotional advertising for consumer protection (Asian Market Research News, 2002) merely suggest that the government is aware of the need to protect consumers but whether these standards are enforced to defend consumer interests is a different story altogether. It is imperative then, for research in the area to bring to light such issues in the hope of providing a more in-depth understanding about the verbal and visual intricacies of promotional advertising language to help generate the kind of "first class consumer mentality" outlined under the second key thrust of the 9th Malaysia plan (9th Malaysia plan, 2006).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Despite claims that people are critical of advertisements and interpret verbal and visual texts in terms of their own biases, experiences, social and group status (Myers, Batra & Aaker, 1996), a principled analysis of advertising discourse would seem imperative. This is especially so because advertising in its myriad forms and self-serving purposes constitute "discursive practice [that] contributes to both reproducing and transforming society" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 65). This argument sums the role of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) in uncovering the discourse processes of colonisation/appropriation of cultural aspects (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) that are implicit in promotional genres. Since society points to cultural identity, it can be inferred that discursive practice in the form of verbal and visual texts of advertising genres such as CEFs can be used to produce meaning to transform society, or influence consumers in a society to change their purchasing

attitudes and behaviours (van Dijk, 2006). These changes could lead to the creation of social relationships, systems of knowledge and cultural identity.

It is thus possible to deduce that people can be deceived by what they hear and read, especially from conventional sources such as newspapers and public announcements from large, long-established corporations that appear to be authoritative and trustworthy. Indeed, promotional advertising texts that occur as CEFs, particularly those that foreground more popular product brands in our society, can put consumers in a position where they become persuaded to believe in things that the promotional advertisers want them to. In retrospect of the Asian economic crisis that brought with it a surge in basic costs of living (Bernama, 2008), the increase in CEFs gives rise to questions surrounding the implications of responding to invitations to join contests that entail additional product purchases. Amongst others, the more obvious implications for consumers could include the serious social issues that stem from the constant over-spending of money, time and efforts.

Hence, research on advertising discourse has generally related the concept of hegemony to the advertising industry (Ames & O'Connor, 1993). Accordingly, Cook (2001) explored the impact of various advertising texts on readers and Craig et al. (1993) studied the impact of advertising texts on different personalities. More recently, however, such critical work have appeared to have taken a linguistic turn, as it were, to focus on the ways in which words may be employed to create more effective advertising (Applegate, 2005; Goddard, 2002). Nevertheless, apart from studies on advertising discourse that highlight lottery gambling by incorporating "an ethos of winning" with the use of "embedded words, signs, myths, and symbols"

(McMullan & Miller, 2009, p. 273), research on the language of advertising has not centred on promotional advertising discourse such as consumer contests in the form of CEFs nor have they inquired into the related aspect of what is known as trait competitiveness in the consumer domain. As Mowen (2004) has asserted, "empirical studies on the role of trait competitiveness in the consumer domain are virtually absent" (p. 52). Thus, in view of the dearth of data on contest entry forms as well as the impact of such promotional advertising genre on consumer purchasing behaviour, to date it remains largely unknown how recurrent failures to win prizes in contests could affect the progression or deterioration of consumer astuteness or willingness to participate in future contests. Given the increasing popularity of the CEF genre, the need to explore and understand its textual nature as well as its impact on consumer consciousness cannot be overstressed.

The present study attempted to address the foregoing concerns with respect to the CEF as promotional discourse genre by examining the ways in which preferred meanings are constructed and conveyed via the use of verbal and visual rhetorical devices. In critically analysing the language of those who may be responsible for the existence of unfair discursive practices and who also have the means to improve conditions (Wodak & Meyer, 2001), the study hopes to offer new insights into developing more ethical, consumer-friendly and effective promotional discourse that could aid the development of a more "self-reliant and empowered community" (ERA Consumers Malaysia, 2005) that actively participates in protecting and asserting itself as intelligent consumers.

1.2 Research questions

The present study is concerned with investigating verbal and visual texts in the promotional advertising genre of CEFs to manufacture consumers' consent. To ensure that the interests of the investigation remain in focus throughout the study, the following research questions were formulated from the outset:

1. What are the key textual components in CEFs?
2. What are the verbal and visual strategies that are realised via the key textual components in CEFs?
3. How do the verbal and visual strategies in CEFs serve to manufacture consumers' consent?
4. What are promotional advertisers' views about CEFs both as consumers and as producers of the discourse??
5. What are consumers' perceptions about CEFs?
6. How can insights gained from the qualitative data analysis as well as the survey inform consumer interests?

1.3 Purpose of the study

Guided by the research questions, and in consideration of the points put forward in the statement of the problem, the primary purpose of this exploratory, mixed methods study is to investigate how promotional advertisers manufacture consumer consent via verbal and visual texts contained in CEFs. In the process, the present thesis aims to unveil useful insights surrounding promotional advertising discourse and the extent of its texts on consumer interests. The researcher proposes to begin investigating these issues by identifying dominant verbal and visual components in CEFs with respect to their effectiveness in manufacturing consumer consent.

In response to calls for more work that demonstrates the use of mixed methods research (Rocco et al., 2003), a survey to address consumer perceptions about CEFs will also be performed. In this order, the purpose of the present study expands to support the underlying rationale for the mixed-method inquiry to help "generate deeper and broader insights, and develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives" (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989, p. 7). The researcher also believes that a subconscious dissatisfaction which focuses merely on the lack of one's luck without a critical component, is inadequate to make up for the losses that non-winning consumers inevitably come to experience at the end of a contest. The results and findings from the present study are thus expected to help raise consumers' consciousness in ways that have the potential to emancipate us from the psychological, emotional and financial losses incurred from our positions as consumers brought to "self-persuade and accept without question" (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 26) all that promotional advertisers say in order to sell more products.

1.4 Theoretical framework

Having introduced the topic, research questions, and some research germane to the present study, this section is devoted to discussing the framework within which the present study takes place. The key concepts employed for the present study will be discussed to articulate a rationale for adopting the mixed methods approach, which includes the qualitative approach of CDA to guide the overall phases of data collection and analysis for this study. More specifically, this section aims to demonstrate that the methods employed for the present study are appropriate and useful in meeting the purpose of the study. Taking into account that "CDA has never been and has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory"

(Wodak, 2002, p. 7) and that there is no specific methodology characteristic of research in CDA, it is possible to state that there is no present standard of textual analyses for the selected promotional advertising genre of CEFs, which comprise the present study's texts for analysis. Apart from the fact that they are readily available along supermarket shelves and information counters at shopping outlets throughout the nation, a fundamental motive for selecting CEFs is rooted in the characteristic of the text as the most comprehensive body of information in a promotional advertising campaign (Soo, 2005). Every promotional advertising campaign regards the CEF as the main consumer communication device for that campaign while supporting materials for the same campaign that are often highlighted in other media from newspaper, radio and television bursts, to in-store posters, island displays, Internet and SMS (Short Message Service) announcements, are presented as reproductions of the particular CEF and often include a message for consumers to visit their nearest supermarket to get their entry forms, or refer to the CEF for the contest's rules and regulations (henceforth R&R).

The mixed methods approach used for this study is drawn from Creswell's (2003) sequential exploratory design, which is characterized by an initial phase of qualitative data collection and analysis. According to Cresswell (2003), the purpose of this approach is typically to "use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a quantitative study" (p. 213) It is particularly useful for the present study since the key verbal and visual texts or components identified from in the corpus of CEFs in the qualitative phrase can assist the formulation and organisation of the survey instrument in the form of a questionnaire. In addition, the approach may establish useful results in the event of unexpected outcomes in the

quantitative phase that contrast with the findings from the qualitative phase. Analysis at the qualitative phase is rooted in critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA). Leading proponents of CDA include Gee (2005), van Leeuwen (1993), van Dijk (1993, 1997, 1998a, b, 2001), Wodak (1996, 2001), and Fairclough (1992a, b, 1993, 1995a, b, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2003). It is Fairclough's approach to CDA that forms the basis for the present thesis' qualitative phase of analysis. The following paragraphs are thus aimed at discussing Fairclough's approach to CDA. A critique of CDA with the aim to establish the value of the approach for the present thesis will also be discussed. Although many proponents of CDA introduce their own versions of the principles of CDA (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 1996; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Meyer, 2001), the present thesis subscribes to the widely cited principles of CDA by Fairclough and Wodak (1997, pp. 258-271). Accordingly, the discussion begins with a summary of these principles.

First, CDA not only centres on language and language use, but also on the linguistic characteristics of social and cultural processes. The approach thus addresses social problems in its aims to make hidden power relations explicit by exposing results and implications, which are of practical relevance to the social, cultural, political and economic contexts. Second, CDA views power relations as discursive by explaining how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated in and through discourse. Third, discourse constitutes society and culture so every instance of language use contributes towards reproducing and transforming society and culture, including relations of power. Next, discourse is an ideological device since ideologies are often produced via discourse. However, texts analysis is not enough to understand how ideologies are produced. The discursive practice i.e. how texts are interpreted,

received, and socially implicated must also be taken into account. Fifth, CDA considers that discourses can only be grasped with reference to their historical context, which may be referred to from archived extralinguistic factors such as culture, society and ideology (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996). Sixth, the relation between text and society is mediated in that CDA is concerned with making connections not only between sociocultural processes and structures, but also textual properties (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996; Meyer, 2001). Fairclough (1992a, 1995a) examines the mediated relationship between text and society by looking at "orders of discourse" (Foucault, 1970). Grounded in the theory that CDA goes beyond textual analysis, the seventh principle postulates that CDA is not only interpretative, but also explanatory in intent (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996). Further, these interpretations and explanations are dynamic, which leaves them open to changes that may occur from new readings and contextual information. Meyer (2001) described this process as hermeneutic, which can be understood as a method for understanding and producing meaning relations from a part of the whole context. In relation to the present research, hermeneutic interpretation thus requires detailed documentation such as an explicit linguistic analysis of texts.

A socially committed scientific paradigm with the principle aim is to uncover opaqueness and power relationships to bring about change in communicative and socio-political practices (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), CDA also views discourse as a form of social action. Numerous attempts to systematize CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 1992a, 1995a, 2000, 2001, 2003; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; van Dijk, 1993, 1997, 2001; Wodak, 1996; Gee, 2005; van Leeuwen, 1993) draw from text analysis frameworks or political and sociocultural approaches. Fairclough (1992a, 2001) and

Wodak (1996), for instance, look to linguistic analysis of texts, particularly Halliday's (1985, 1994, 2004) systemic functional linguistics (henceforth SFL). SFL begins with a systematic analysis of lexical resources, and moves on to an analysis of syntactic functions, genre and text metafunction. Others like van Dijk (1997) and Gee (2005), developed approaches that were more focussed on cultural and social contexts. While van Dijk's (1997) approach features four categories: action, context, power and ideology, Gee (2005) put forward methodological heuristics based on six categories: semiotic building, world building, activity building, identity and relationship building, political building and connection building. However, "a linguistic and text analytic metalanguage, no matter how comprehensive, cannot do CDA in and of itself" (Luke, 2002, p. 101) because CDA requires the overlay of a social theoretic discourse for explaining the social aspect, including its contexts, associations, and consequences of any given text or discourse. Similarly, Pennycook (2001) argued that what texts do cannot be explained solely through text analysis. In short, as Luke (2002, p. 100) puts it, CDA involves "principles and transparent shunting back and forth between the microanalysis of texts using varied tools of linguistics, semiotic, and literary analysis and the macroanalysis of social formations, institutions and power relations that these texts index and construct." To provide a more in-depth understanding of Fairclough's CDA, the following paragraphs pertain to some theoretical considerations which are germane to Fairclough's (1992, 1993, 1995a, b, 2000, 2001, 2003) approach.

Genre

Fairclough (1993) described genre as the use of "language associated with a particular social activity" (p. 138). As such, different genres are "different means of

production of a specifically textual sort, different resources for texturing" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 441), both of which are creative and conservative: stable and simultaneously, open to change.

Discourse

Discourse "is the question of how text figure (in relation to other moments), in how people represent the world, including themselves and their productive activities" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 170). Different discourses are thus different ways of representing different positions and may be "conceived as social practice" (Fairclough, 1993, p. 138) in the way that it may be employed to signify experience from a particular perspective. More simply, "discourse is a language or socially developed system of representation to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings to serve the interests of a section of society (Fiske, 1987, p. 14). Fairclough (2003, p. 124) further submit that discourse is associated with "ways of representing aspects of the world- the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the mental world of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth and, the social world." For these reasons, promotional advertising discourse includes "assumptions about what there is, what is the case, what is possible, what is necessary, what will be the case, and so forth… such assumptions, and indeed the discourses they are associated with, are ideological" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 58).

Dialectical

Discourse as social practice entails that language and society have a dialectical relationship: language is influenced by society and at the same time, society is shaped by language. Since language plays multifunctional roles in texts, Fairclough,

drawing from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, operationalised the theoretical assumption that texts and discourses are socially constitutive in that "language use is always simultaneously constitutive of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs" (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 134). The ideational function of language constitutes systems of knowledge; the interpersonal function creates social subjects or identity and the relationship between them; the textual function creates discourse so every text contributes to the constitution of these three aspects of society and culture, which are simultaneously present although one may take precedence over the others (Fairclough, 1995a).

Mediation

Mediation refers to the relation between language and society, inferring that the relationship is not direct. Language is only the medium to express values, beliefs and norms of society. In considering the relationship between language use and wider social and cultural structures, CDA considers the relationships between a specific communicative event such as a CEF for a promoting a product, and the total structure of an order of discourse, as well as modifications to that order of discourse and its constituents, genres and discourses (Fairclough, 1995a).

Intertextuality, interdiscursivity and hegemony

To better operationalise these theoretical considerations, Fairclough (1992a, 1995a) developed an analytical framework that draws on various concepts including intertextuality (relationship between text before and after e.g. a national holiday and contest promotion); interdiscursivity (combination of genres and discourses in a text e.g. movie genre and promotional messages), and hegemony (predominance in and

the dominance of political, ideological and cultural domains of society e.g. popular brand and dominance of brand's product category in the particular consumer market). Fairclough (1995a) attributes these three dimensions to each discursive event, which are simultaneously text, discursive practice (including the production and interpretation of texts) and social practice. He further proposed that the "concept of intertextuality sees texts historically as transforming the past" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 85) that is, changing existing conventions and prior texts by bringing them into the present in relatively conventional and normative ways which makes them seem routine and natural. In attempting to establish a systematic method for exploring the relationship between text and its social context, Fairclough (1995a) bases analysis on three components: description, interpretation and explanation. Description deals with the linguistic properties of texts. Interpretation is about the relationship between the productive and interpretative processes of discursive practice and texts, and explanation concerns the relationship between discursive and social practice.

For the purpose of the present thesis, CDA is employed to systematically explore opaque relationships between discursive practices, texts, wider social and cultural relations and processes in order to draw attention to social inequities, non-democratic practices, and other injustices in hopes of spurring people to corrective actions. In brief, to help encourage consumer awareness and consumer protection laws that may bring about more ethical promotional advertising practices. This may be achieved by bringing "social science and linguistics together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, setting up a dialogue between them" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 6). Fairclough (1995a, p. 98) conceptualises the theoretical conditions for CDA in terms of three dimensions: i. Textual analysis

dimension, or micro level is concerned with description about the form and meaning of the text; ii. Discourse practice dimension or meso level focuses on the discursive production and interpretation of the text; and iii. Sociocultural practice dimension or macro level operates at the level of broader social analysis and is concerned with the explanation of the text, as visually represented in Figure 1.1 on the next page. As shown, the relationship between the three analytical levels of Fairclough's multi-dimensional approach to CDA involves moving between the levels of description (micro), interpretation (meso), and explanation (macro). Each level has its own type of analysis i.e. text analysis at the level of description; processing analysis at the level of interpretation; and social analysis at the level of explanation.

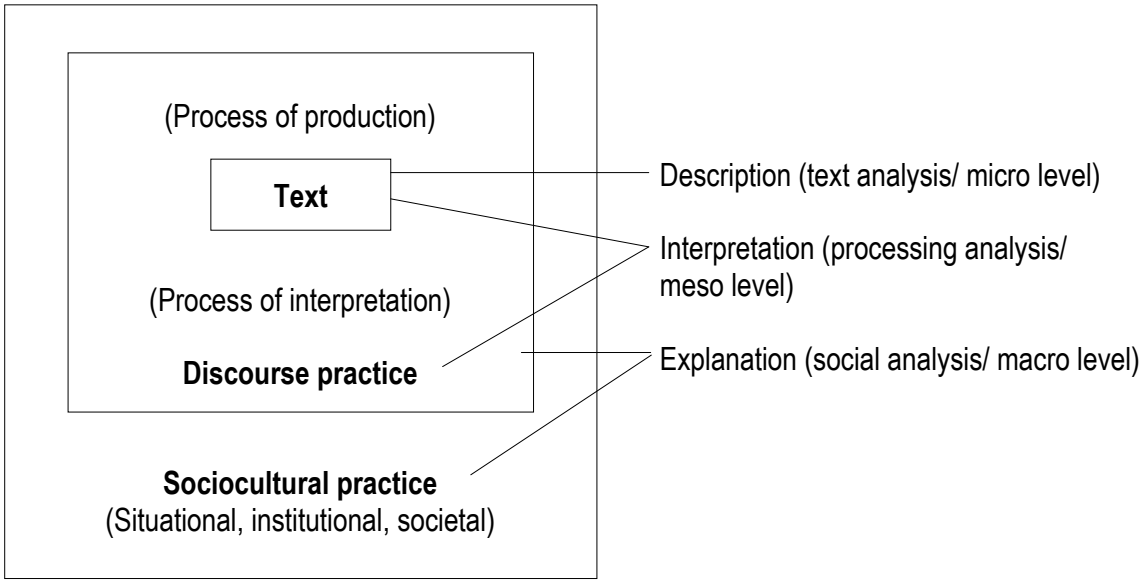

Figure 1.1 **Dimensions of discourse** (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 98; 1992a, p. 73)

All three levels are interdependent and thus, whichever level of analysis the researcher decides to begin with is of no consequence since all three levels are "mutually explanatory" (Janks, 1997, p. 27). In the present case, analysis generally involves moving from identifying and describing the linguistic components in CEFs

at the micro level, to interpreting the interaction between these components and the promotional advertising discourse practice context at the meso level, and moving on to explain the implications of these interpretations on consumers, promotional advertisers and the authorities at the wider macro level. Promotional discourse involves power struggles between opposing groups, from competitor brands and companies, to advertising and promotional agencies vying for the business of brand manufacturers. These struggles often take place in and over language. Hence, critical discourse analysts need to see language as a means for social practice and analyse not only the texts but also the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions. As a result, the researcher's focus is constantly alternating between what is 'there' in the text, and the discourse types that the text may be drawing upon. A key objective in Fairclough's framework is to produce an approach to CDA that is both useful for investigating changes in language practices as well as studies relating to social and cultural change. This makes the framework useful in facilitating a systematic approach for analysing specific sites in promotional advertising practices: making visible through analysis connections between properties of texts and social processes. These relations are not always obvious to those who produce the texts or consumers who interpret those texts whose effectiveness depends on this opacity. Fairclough (2003) added that his approach is not a blueprint for research, but needs to be drawn upon selectively for particular research tasks and combined with other suitable forms of social analysis. Accordingly, Fairclough's (1995a, pp. 6-10) CDA approach draws upon systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and social semiotics. He posited that SFL is a compatible premise for CDA because it is multifunctional, well adapted for text analysis and concerned with relating language to social context and reasoned that social semiotics is similarly compatible as it can be located within

the broader field of CDA. As a specialised domain to unveil close relations between language, ideology and power in society, social semiotics draw attention to the "multi-semiotic character of texts in society and exploring ways of analysing visual images and the relationship between language and visual images" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 164).

1.4.1 CDA and SFL

One of the strengths of SFL in the context of CDA is its ability to ground concerns with power and ideology in the detailed analysis of texts as they unfold, clause by clause, in real contexts of language use, including the analysis of multi-modal texts involving visual elements (Martin, 2000). SFL provides critical discourse analysts with a technical language for talking about language, making it possible to study meaning in detail, to be explicit and precise in easily understood terms, and to engage in quantitative analysis where appropriate (Nesbitt & Plum, 1988; Plum & Cowling, 1987). The foremost exponent of SFL is linguist Michael Halliday who emphasized that grammar "goes beyond formal rules of correctness. It is a means of representing patterns of experience… enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience and what goes on around them and inside them" (Halliday, 1994, p. 101). It is on Halliday's model that Fairclough's approach draws upon. The essential assertion of Halliday's SFL is that each level in his model of language and context is realised in choices made at the level below it in predictable, systematic ways. This relationship of realisation extends from the most abstract levels of context (ideology) down to the most concrete levels of spoken sounds or marks on the page, and can be read, both in a downward, predictive direction and, an upward, deductive direction.

This is important for CDA because it means that formal features of texts can be analysed to recover aspects of ideologies. As illustrated in Figure 1.2 on the next page, Halliday's model separates context into context of culture and context of situation. Context of culture has two levels: ideology and below ideology is genre. Ideology refers to the whole set of beliefs, ideas and values that make up a person's world-view. Genre deals with culturally appropriate, step-by-step structures for carrying out any goal-oriented activity. The context of situation is defined in terms of register, which has three variables: field, mode and tenor. Field refers to the topic i.e. what the language is used to talk about. Mode refers to the role that language plays in the social interaction and tenor, to the role of relationships between interactants.

C O N T E X T	Context of Culture	Ideology		
		Genre		
	Context of Situation	Register		
		Field	Mode	Tenor
T E X T	Discourse Semantic Level	Experiential *How text producers relate the message(s)*	Textual *How message(s) in texts is organised*	Interpersonal *How relationships are created between text producers and interpreters*
	Lexico Grammar Level	Transitivity System *-Processes* *-Participants* *-Circumstances*	Thematic System *-Theme and Rheme (Given and/ or new information)*	Mood System *-Mood* *-Modality*
	Expression	Phonology/ Graphology		

Figure 1.2 **Hallidayan model of language as social semiotic** (Eggins, 1994, p. 113)

Moving down now from context to text in Halliday's model, texts have three basic levels of organization. The discourse-semantic level is the highest level and the unit of analysis here is the text as a whole. This level is concerned with the cohesion of

the text (the discourse aspect) and the meaning of the text (the semantic aspect). Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) add that all use of language simultaneously fulfil three semantic functions: i. experiential, which is about relating our experience of the world; ii. textual, which is about organizing the information of the text; and iii. interpersonal, which is about creating interpersonal relationships between text producers and text interpreters. These functions realize the field, mode, and tenor aspects of register. The three functions at the discourse-semantic level are themselves realized at the level below, or the lexico-grammar level by choices in transitivity, theme and mood systems of the language. Here, the unit of analysis is the clause. The transitivity system concerns processes, participants and circumstances in the text and asks the question: who does what to whom, when, where and how? The theme system involves patterns of thematic foregrounding and continuity in the text, and asks the question: how is the content of the text organized? Advancing to mood, there are two interconnected sub-systems here: the clause structure (e.g. declarative, interrogative, or imperative) and patterns of modality (e.g. degrees of probability and obligation). This system asks, what is the writer's attitude to herself, the reader, and the subject? Choices made at the lexico-grammatical level are then realized by choices at the level of phonology and graphology.

More to the point, SFL takes the stance that each time language is used, the user is making choices that are essentially about meaning. CDA, through the lens of SFL views language as a semiotic system that cannot be studied without reference to meaning i.e. language is used not only to construct reality, but is also socially formed (Eggins, 1994) so the relationship between society and language is dialectical. SFL's social constructivist conception of language and CDA's practical-orientation to

address social problems can benefit the anticipated results of the present study by providing a platform to be more systematically and critically aware of promotional advertising language, its ideological presuppositions and issues that surround it.

1.4.2 CDA and social semiotics

Social semiotics is concerned with looking systematically at how textual strategies are deployed to convey meanings by considering three questions: Who made the rules, how, and why they might be changed (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 135). In short, social semiotics deals with the visual signification processes of change and power imbalance, defined via two ends: representation or encoding and interpretation or decoding. Since the power to establish or violate the rules of visual representation is restricted to certain social actors such as the producers of mass images or texts (e.g. mass media institutions, promotional and advertising agencies, their business partners and customers), semiotic resources are not merely tools for communicative exchange, but also tools produced in the course of cultural histories, stemming from specific interests and purposes (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; and, Aiello & Thurlow, 2006). The ways in which visual images are organized in texts such as CEFs thus create a "field of possible meanings, which need to be activated by the producers and viewers of images" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 135).

In view that texts producers routinely strive to benefit from the rules of visual representation by favouring particular meaning potentials over others, it follows that visual strategies can be deployed within and across texts to achieve ideological ends. Hall (1997) identified three kinds of reading or interpretations that can take place in response to a media message: i. dominant or hegemonic, which accepts the preferred

reading; ii. negotiated, which mediates the preferred readings; and iii. oppositional, which rejects the preferred meaning. Despite options presented from different kinds of reading, dominant cultural norms embedded within media messages allow them to be better reinforced and internalized. As a result, messages disseminated via various media resources can lead to hegemonic or dominant cultural norms. In this light, it is clear that social semiotics is interested not only in revealing ideological meaning, but also in understanding how consent is manufactured, both of which are aligned with the requirements of CDA. For the purpose of the present study, the social semiotics framework is employed to "provide usable descriptions of major compositional structures which have become established as conventions in the course of the history of visual semiotics, and to analyze how they are used to produce meaning by contemporary image-makers" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 1).

1.5 Scope of the study

Verbal and visual strategies, two key facets of promotional advertising discourse will be used as reference points in comparing data collected from both the qualitative CDA phase and the quantitative survey phase. The scope of the investigation into verbal and visual strategies will be brought to materialise via a critical analysis of the corpus of CEFs collected from the aisles of major Malaysian supermarkets such as Carrefour, Cold Storage, Giant, Jusco and Tesco. The central justification for a mixed methods research is the proposition that while single methodology approaches such as primarily qualitative or quantitative methods have strengths and weaknesses, a combination of methodologies can focus on the strengths of both methodologies. The researcher hopes to achieve this central aspect by mixing qualitative and quantitative research methods in the present study to produce a final body of work

that “highlights the significant contributions of both” (Nau, 1995, p. 1). To begin, prevalent textual components within the corpus of CEFs collected will be identified. These will then be subjected to CDA to expose underlying strategies, as well as aid the construction of the survey in the form of a questionnaire. Two groups of adult consumers will then be approached and invited to participate in the survey. The first group comprise those whose occupations are related to the promotion and advertising fields while those in the second group comprise anyone whose occupation is not unrelated to the promotion and advertising fields. As such, part of the anticipated results may include participants’ insights about significant current practices from within and outside the promotional advertising fields. A more detailed discussion about the corpus of CEFs and participants in the study will be discussed in chapter 3. Gender did not limit the scope of this study.

1.6 Limitations of the study

Two principal limitations need to be acknowledged and addressed. The first concerns the texts for analysis, which were collected during specific points in time, which could limit the scope and possible interpretation of the findings (Polit & Hungler, 1999). Given the fast paced role of the media, a more longitudinal approach might provide additional insights about the use of promotional advertising strategies embedded within key textual components in CEFs to manufacture consumer consent. Second, only CEFs were included in the study so the corpus might not conform to a variety of characteristics such as category (e.g. kinds of promotional advertisements in newspapers, magazines and the internet, or different products like items for pet and personal care), theme (e.g. sale or festive periods) and corporate image (e.g. banking and insurance services). In these regards, further studies may be developed

using a more categorically focussed, extensive sample of CEFs, which could include those delivered via direct mailers, the Internet and magazines. At the same time, the nature of the CEF as the most detailed material or device in a promotional advertising campaign means that data extrapolation and the opportunity to generalize overall results would not be limited to other promotional advertising discourse materials, including reproductions of those contests in mainstream media sources. While there is no longer an argument that a mixed methods approach has much to offer a researcher, there have been criticisms of its use. A number of methodological purists believe in the dichotomy of worldviews and research methods and argue against the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (e.g. Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007; Guba, 1987; Sale, J., Lohfeld, L. & Brazil, K., 2002). However, the emergence of the mixed methods approach in response to argued limitations of the sole use of either quantitative or qualitative methods in itself makes the mixed methods a legitimate alternative to solely using either methods. Onwuegbuzie (2002) argues that the purists' view of the dichotomies between positivist and post-positivist philosophies are in fact false dichotomies and suggests that positivist and non-positivist philosophies lie on an epistemological continuum with mixed methods research occupying the middle ground.

In much the same manner, Howe (1988) suggests that researchers adopt a pragmatic approach and forge ahead with what works. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) similarly asserted that researchers within the pragmatist tradition should abide by the dictatorship of the research question i.e. consider the research question to be more important than either the method or the paradigm that underlies it. Other criticisms of a mixed methods approach are more practical. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2004)

suggest that it may be difficult for one researcher to carry out a mixed methods study if the qualitative and quantitative phases are to be undertaken concurrently. In consideration of these responses to criticisms surrounding the mixed methods research approach, as well as the understanding that the mixed methods approach could pose a major drawback in terms of requiring substantially more time and resources to complete two data collection and analyses phases, it is employed in the present study in recognition that all methods have limitations and "biases inherent in any single method can neutralise biases of other methods" (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). In addition, a combination of methods may offers substantial advantages to validate the value of the present thesis, which include amongst others, the possibility of exposing new, unexpected categories within the research and presenting results and findings that can be concrete, comprehensive, detailed and persuasive. Data gained from the mixed methods can therefore significantly facilitate the researcher's aspirations to help address the lack of knowledge within the field of promotional advertising genre, and support the advantages of using both CDA and mixed methods research.

1.7 Definition of key terms

The definitions of key terms are provided to help minimize doubts surrounding the overall findings of the present research that may arise at any stage during the processes of analysis. At the same time, these terms are described and explained to precipitate a more coherent and accurate communication of conclusions, interpretations and findings. This is to help readers to gain a better understanding of their intended meanings in relation to the present research, specifically in cases where the definition of terms used may go beyond the common knowledge of individuals outside the field of study (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000).

1.7.1 Power and control

In seeing language as social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), CDA involves power to be an intricate part of that practice. Promotional advertising texts may thus be analysed to reveal where "discursive differences are negotiated" (Wodak, 2002, p. 10) and governed by differences in power that may be encoded in and determined by the discourse and genre. As other texts, promotional advertising texts may be viewed, in CDA terms, as a site of struggle in showing "traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (Wodak, 2002, p. 10).

1.7.2 Ideology in promotional advertising texts

Texts are ideological in the ways that they may be viewed as "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). Ideologies within texts may thus be employed to "sustain, legitimate or manage group conflicts, as well as relationships of power and dominance" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 24). The present study intends to explore the ways in which promotional advertising texts may be employed to deliver ideological aspects to help sustain or increase the fiscal goals of contest organisers.

1.7.3 Manufacture of consent (MOC)

The manufacture of consent (henceforth MOC) is related to the concept of hegemony in its employment of linguistic forms to generate "relations of domination based upon consent rather than coercion" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 24). This involves the naturalization of practices, their social relations and relations between practices as matters of common sense. Hence, MOC in the present thesis stresses the

employment of various strategies embedded within the identified key textual components in CEFs by promotional advertisers to achieve and maintain market domination of certain products over others. Ergo, CEFs may be regarded as "instruments of power that mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity" (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. xi). Grounded in its employment to manufacture mass consumers' consent in the interests of the product manufacturers, a CEF may be characterized as an "agent of hegemony" (Hackett, 1991, p. 56). These insights add to the task of the present study to help generate the kind of awareness required to endorse perceptions in the interests of consumers.

1.7.4 Promotional advertising discourse

Discourse is "any form of language above the sentence level" (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1), "any form of oral language" (Alcaraz & Martínez, 1997, p. 185) and, "any form of language in use" (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1). For the present study, discourse also "reaches out further than language" (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 7) by taking into account "systematic clusters of themes, statements, ideas and ideologies" (Luke, 2000, p. 456) as well as the succession of production, consumption and distribution of texts to accommodate "the construction of some aspect of reality from a particular perspective" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 63). Promotional advertising discourse thus refers to both linguistic (verbal) and non-linguistic (visual) forms within CEFs. Consistent with the aims of promotional advertisements to boost product sales, the related discourse within CEFs are engaged to express aspects of reality that its text producers need their consumers to accept in order to convince these consumers' participation in the contests. By extension, a focus on consumer literacy includes a focus on helping to generate critical literacy on promotional

advertising discourse, which entails challenging the control of discourse to aid the emergence of a more fair and equal representation of contests in the interest of consumers. Further, Fairclough (2001) presented three central tenets of CDA in relation to discourse, which he posits is shaped and constrained by: i. social structure (status, age, ethnic identity and gender; ii. culture (members of a social structure have a culture, which shapes and constrains its discourse and; iii. discourse (language use that shape and constrain our identities, relationships, systems of knowledge and beliefs). As members of society, our identities, social relationships and belief systems are shaped and constrained by the language and words espoused by us and by others. Hence, discourse can be used to make unbalanced power relations appear to be commonsense and natural even when the reality is prejudice, injustice, and inequities. Unless steps are taken to demystify promotional advertising discourse, consumers can thus be deceived into accepting as normal, those popular promotional advertising worldviews and ideologies solely generated to increase the profits of certain promotional advertisers at our expense.

1.7.5 Promotional advertisers

For the present research, promotional advertisers and contest organisers are used interchangeably to mean individuals, groups or organizations that include product manufacturers, media buyers and management teams in promotions and advertising, marketing and media companies who directly or indirectly facilitate textual decisions "to influence targeted consumers to accept and/ or purchase a manufacturer's products" (William, 2005, p. 432). Where relevant, the term text-producers, is also used to describe promotional advertisers. Consistent with Fairclough (2002, p. 13), the increasing construction of audiences as consumers can be seen as part of a

normalization of consumer behaviour and culture that helps to isolate "existing relations of power and domination from serious challenge." One reason for this is conceivably because people are constructed as mere audience rather than citizens who can actively challenge the norms of promotional advertising discourses.

1.7.6 Contest entry form (CEF)

The CEF is a promotional advertising tool designed to increase sales of consumer products via delivering the perception of added incentives in the form of prizes. It is commonly found along supermarket aisles in the form of an A4 size sheet of paper. While persuasive bodies of text fill both sides of the single sheet, the front page may be distinguished from the back via more colourful rhetoric. The CEFs collected showed that the colourful rhetoric always drew attention to contest prizes. At a glance, readers are often urged to win these prizes. Going by what is said in the text, consumers assume that participation is easy. This supports the notion that "meaning making depends upon not only what is explicit in a text, but also what is implicit-what is assumed" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 11).

As a device related to the advertising genre the CEF is designed to "accelerate the selling process by inducing purchase" (Arens, 1999, pp. 295-296). In part, this helps to explain the CEFs' growing presence in our markets. The effectiveness of the CEF as a device to sell products at the immediate place of purchase is further established by the nature of its character as the only type of mass medium executed at the critical point where products, consumers and the money to purchase the product(s), meet at the same time, which indicates its contribution to the observation that "74% of all purchase decisions are made in store" (Global Association for Marketing, n.d.).

1.8 Overview of thesis

This chapter presented the background of the present study, statement of the problem, the research questions and purpose of the study. The chapter proceeded to introduce the theoretical framework, scope and limitations, and definition of the key terms to provide a better understanding about the perspectives, analytical approaches and procedures used in the present research. All these provide a basis for the following chapters on the literature review, methods and materials, and results from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the mixed methods analyses.