

Empowering Saudi Women through Automobile Advertisements: A Transitivity Analysis

Najah Alsaedi

Department of English and Translation, Saudi Electronic University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

a.najah@seu.edu.sa

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v6i2.1714>

APA Citation: Alsaedi, N. (2024). Empowering Saudi Women through Automobile Advertisements: A Transitivity Analysis. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 6(2).297-315. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v6i2.1714>

Received:

16/04/2024

Accepted:

02/06/2024

Keywords:

media discourse,
Saudi women
driving, transitivity
analysis, women
empowerment

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine automobile advertisements that specifically targeted Saudi women during the year the ban on women driving was lifted. The study employed a critical discourse analysis (CDA) focusing on Halliday's transitivity system to identify the transitivity processes of automobile advertisements. To discern the transitivity processes used, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized to attain a comprehensive understanding of the various types of transitivity processes and the identifying themes promoted by these processes. The findings reveal that the material process was the most frequent process used in automobile advertisements targeting Saudi women, followed by the existential and relational processes. In addition, these processes were mainly employed to empower Saudi women, which is the primary theme identified during the qualitative analysis. Examining the roles and circumstances of the participants could yield more relevant data for future research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is crucial for effective communication and social engagement. As it possesses the capacity to shape individuals' perceptions and decisions, it has a significant impact on media. Within the domain of media discourse, advertising has attracted the attention of scholars seeking to understand the underlying meanings and ideologies communicated through advertisements (Moitra et al., 2022). In recent years, advertisements have significantly increased due to the advancement and proliferation of modern technology and electronic media. The primary goal of advertising is to efficiently convey information and convince individuals to purchase products or experience services.

Advertising refers to the comprehensive range of activities that are undertaken to offer and promote ideas, goods, or services; each advertisement communicates a distinct message (Rehman et al., 2019). Additionally, existing literature has documented the substantial impact of advertising on mirroring cultural norms and gender roles in societies (Nugraheni et al., 2023; McDonald et al., 2021). Therefore, optimizing advertising campaigns for maximum effectiveness, creativity, and attractiveness is imperative to gain public acceptance of a product brand and exert a positive influence (Hidayat et al., 2021).

In the context of Saudi Arabia (SA), the automobile industry has grown due to new legislation allowing women to drive. This has had a major impact on automobile marketing; the potential for companies to build brand loyalty among Saudi women is promising. The International Trade Administration (ITA) predicts a 36% growth in SA's automobile industry, the leading Middle Eastern market (ITA, 2021a). Saudi female drivers are expected to improve auto sales by 9% per year until 2025 (ITA, 2021b). In celebration of this significant milestone and in anticipation of a subsequent increase in sales, automobile companies in SA have strategically employed targeted advertising campaigns. To reach female drivers specifically, these companies have allocated resources for strategic advertising and employed specific linguistic choices to achieve their objectives.

These linguistic choices reveal the hidden meanings, ideologies, and objectives of the advertisements. In fact, the meaning of language encompasses not only word choice but also the process of making grammatical decisions; this is known as lexicogrammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). According to Halliday (1985), grammar entails meaning that is created by systemic transitivity patterns in linguistic choices. Therefore, using transitivity analysis to investigate advertisements will help in understanding the ideologies, concealed meanings, and goals of automobile companies (Agbayani, 2023). Therefore, employing the transitivity system for analysis, this study aims to examine automobile advertisements that were directed at Saudi women when the ban on women driving in SA was being lifted.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of critical discourse analysis and transitivity system

Discourse analysis examines written and spoken language beyond the sentence and seeks to elucidate its construction objectives. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), however, goes beyond this to examine language in its context and considers language as a social practice (Rojo, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Within CDA, the term "discourse" refers to a broader range of elements beyond just language. It is understood as a concept that involves social and ideological practices that influence individuals' cognitive processes, verbal communication, social interactions, written expression, and behavioural patterns (Baxter, 2010). One of the theories that informs CDA is Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory. The SFL theory provides systemic functional grammar (SFG), which focuses on the examination of linguistic forms in conjunction with the semantic content they convey. Thus, grammar is recognized as a functional resource for constructing meaning that reflects cultural contexts, power dynamics, and ideologies (Gebhard & Accurso, 2022). According to SFG, grammar encompasses meaning that is realized at the clause level through three interconnected meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational meta-function considers language to be a reflection of human experiences. The interpersonal meta-function conceptualizes language as action, which indicates that language involves interpersonal dynamics. The textual meta-function reveals the intent of the writer or speaker to make language coherent and cohesive (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The transitivity system belongs to the ideational meta-function and represents the experiential element in the grammar of the clause (Halliday & Webster, 2014). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), a clause is "a representation of some process in ongoing human experience" (p. 83). Transitivity is considered a valuable tool for interpreting human experience in terms of processes, participants, and circumstances. Processes are the core of the

clause, represented by verbs; participants are denoted by the nominal groups; and circumstances are expressed by prepositional phrases or adverbial groups in a clause (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Regarding the process types, the transitivity system comprises six distinct processes: material, mental, and relational processes (major process types) and behavioural, verbal, and existential (minor process types).

Regarding the major process types, the material process pertains to clauses of doing and happening with two participants: an actor and a goal. The mental process relates to the realm of cognition. It encompasses thinking, perception, emotion, and feeling, and involves two participants: a sensor and a phenomenon. The relational process relates to clauses of being and having, which are generally represented in the conventional concept of copula constructions in English. This process can be further classified into attributive and identifying processes. The attributive process is connected to clauses of characterization, with a carrier and an attribute as the main two participants. The identifying process pertains to the assignment of identity to an entity and involves two primary participants: a token and a value (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

The minor processes are situated between the major processes, with “behavioural at the boundary between material and mental, verbal at the boundary between mental and relational, and existential at the boundary between relational and material” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 300). The behavioural process refers to psychological and physiological behaviours, encompassing phenomena such as staring and dreaming, that involve the process and behaviour. The verbal process is linked to communicative actions involving the use of verbs such as “speak,” “say,” “tell,” and “report.” In this process, there are typically two participants: a sayer and a target. Lastly, the existential process signifies the existence of an entity, often indicated by using “there” in constructions such as “there is” or “there are.” Other verbs like “exist,” “follow,” “occur,” and “emerge” can also be employed in this process. Notably, only one participant is involved in this process: the Existent (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Thus, understanding these processes is essential in clause construction since clauses serve as the central element that conveys meaning within discourse.

2.2. Women and Driving in SA

Until 2018, Saudi women were banned from driving vehicles in SA. They advocated for their right to enhance their freedom of mobility, a privilege that was exclusive to their male counterparts. Many campaigners have been fighting for driving licenses since the 1990s. Saudi women who defied the ban and drove were arrested.

It has been demonstrated that the Saudi government’s steadfast commitment to upholding the strict interpretation of Islam (*Wahhabi*) was the motivation behind the ban. Doumato (2010) stated that “the basic law of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not guarantee gender equality. To the contrary, gender inequality is built into Saudi’s governmental and social structures and is integral to the country’s state-supported interpretation of Islam” (p. 425). The Wahhabi ideology affected all aspects of Saudi society. It segregated genders in education, workplaces, and other public places and made women dependent on male relatives for major decisions regardless of age, limited their professional prospects, and limited their freedom of movement (Doumato, 2010; Harun et al., 2019; Mustafa & Troudi, 2019). Al Alhareth et al. (2015) noted that although the ban on women driving has been historically attributed to religious reasons, it is deeply rooted in culture.

Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world that forbade women from driving. However, on September 26, 2017, King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz lifted the driving ban, and on June 24, 2018, women were allowed to drive. This was a historic event covered by global, local, and social media outlets like Twitter (Wheeler, 2020). Since then, Saudi women have celebrated its anniversary annually.

Amirat et al. (2021) found that the driving restriction was found to have reduced women's contributions to national growth; Saudi women make up nearly half of university graduates in SA, yet only 16% work. Consequently, the major goal of lifting the ban is not just to eliminate the prohibition on women driving but to also increase the number of Saudi women in the labour force. It is part of Saudi Vision 2030, a government program that seeks to diversify the economy, include women in the workforce and improve the quality of life. These reforms help women shift from traditional to non-traditional roles, enabling them to work in business and sports and hold leadership positions. Boosting Saudi women's involvement in the nation's growth would boost its GDP by 40% and create \$58 billion in revenue.

2.3. Women and advertising

Empirical research has demonstrated that advertising significantly contributes to the representation of cultural values, influences society, and shapes gender norms (Alharbi & Boling, 2022; Dai, 2015; Heathy, 2020; Nugraheni et al., 2023). With more women working globally, the conventional perspective of women as mothers or wives doing housework has shifted (Drake, 2017); modern women work and raise children. This transformation in advertising has been gradual, as women have been stereotyped for almost two centuries (Sylvendahl, 2017). Consequently, the concept of femvertising emerged as a form of advertising that seeks to empower women (Drake, 2017), and the current focus on gender equality, cultural advances, and women's rights movements have increased its use (Sharma & Bumb, 2021).

Despite the rise of women in non-traditional advertising roles, stereotypes persist (Heathy, 2020; Fajula et al., 2021; Sharma & Bumb, 2021). Heathy (2020) stated that advertising has failed to reflect women's changing roles in society. Heathy (2020) found that Indian print ads neglected to reflect women's accomplishments and continued to degrade the status of women by portraying them as weak, emotional, and dependent on males. Similarly, Fajula et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative study to investigate gender roles in Spanish radio advertising. The researchers gathered 679 radio ads from three Spanish stations over 10 years to examine how feminist social movements have influenced radio advertising's portrayal of women's roles. Their results indicate that radio advertisements continue to portray women in predominantly traditional roles (Fajula et al., 2021). Similarly, Sharma and Bumb (2021) reported that women continue to be depicted in conventional roles and advertisers must promote women in modern roles to reduce gender stereotypes.

The representation of Saudi women in advertising has changed due to the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030, which has led to significant improvements in the status of women. These transformations have granted women authority and led to modifications to traditional gender roles in advertising (AboAlsamh et al., 2023; Alharbi & Boling, 2022). According to AboAlsamh et al. (2023), lifting the ban on women's driving has led to major advertising changes. The researchers examined Saudi women's portrayal in advertising and found that while some ads still portrayed women in conventional positions, many showed women in contemporary fashion and driving cars (AboAlsamh et al., 2023).

Regarding automobile advertising, Alharbi and Boling (2022) examined car ads targeting women drivers during the time the ban on women driving was being lifted. The data was collected from car ads on Twitter. Content analysis showed that the ads supported Saudi women, showing them as more independent and powerful than usual. The evaluated ads were found to effectively promote women's empowerment and values preservation (Alharbi and Boling, 2022). These ads demonstrate how Saudi women may integrate their religion and culture with independence. They also portray Saudi women as robust and self-reliant, emphasizing that driving and achieving independence will not affect their familial responsibilities or relationships with men.

2.4. Related studies on the transitivity system and advertising

Several scholars have employed the transitivity system to evaluate literary works due to its capacity to uncover implicit meanings. Additionally, it has been utilized to analyze diverse types of discourse, disparities in communication patterns between genders, and how discourse is directed toward different genders to reveal implicit messages that shape gender ideologies within a specific culture. For example, Alhumsy and Alsaedi (2023) investigated gender variations in political discourse; Kayani and Anwar (2022) explored how linguistic choices in a literary novel construct female and male characters; and Wibowo and Lililacs (2022) examined gender equality in e-sports. Within the realm of media discourse, advertising has captured the interest of researchers aiming to understand the hidden meanings and ideologies conveyed via advertisements (Adrian & Faiza, 2022; Agbayani, 2023; Dai, 2015; Nugraheni et al., 2023).

Dai's (2015) study sought to investigate Motorola's cellular phone commercials' transitivity choices to examine gender roles. The results indicate that material, mental, and relational processes were employed, with the material process being the most dominant, accounting for 85%. Women are seen as actors because they have agency and ability to control their fate. Their agency in decision-making shows their equality in a culture that encourages women to take on varied duties like men. Dai (2015) also stressed the importance of material processes in portraying the narrative function used to capture a modern woman's future life journey. Due to economic and social advancement, modern women can buy cars, laptops, and high-end phones. Thus, the linguistic choices employed in commodity advertising have the potential to shape and reinforce gender norms within a society.

Recently, Adrian and Faiza (2022) revealed the theme of women's empowerment in two Nike ads using multimodal discourse analysis. The first commercial focused predominantly on the mental process. The second one covered more processes: material, existential, relational, and mental, with material, which uses action verbs to make the subject the agent, being the most prevalent. Remarkably, mental processes were the least prominent. The researchers concluded that the meta-functions showed women as actors, thus adding to the discourse on women's empowerment (Adrian and Faiza, 2022). Likewise, Nugraheni et al. (2023) used transitivity analysis to evaluate gender roles in Indonesian women's facial-care ads. It appears that only material, relational, and mental processes were observed, with the material process accounting for 56.25%, proving that women are capable of making decisions. However, in explaining how a woman displays her feelings to the world, the relational process accounted for 25% and the mental process accounted for 12.5% (Nugraheni et al., 2023).

Regarding automobile ads, Agbayani (2023) investigated vehicle advertisements in the Philippines via transitivity analysis. The results show that all six transitivity processes were

found, with the relational process being the most dominant, followed by the material process. Relational processes were prevalent because advertisers sought to grab people's attention and get a positive response, while material processes were prevalent to influence the public as capable agents to purchase the promoted cars. The mental process was ranked as the third most frequent, while existential, verbal, and behavioural processes were found to have relatively lower frequencies. Hence, the employment of transitivity or verb processes in automobile commercials enables advertisers to effectively communicate their opinions, objectives, and values.

The above examination of pertinent literature demonstrates that many scholars have employed transitivity analysis to examine advertising texts. This analytical approach aims to reveal how meanings, ideological ideas, and societal awareness are communicated within a text through the utilization of verbal processes in the transitivity system. Nevertheless, literature that specifically explores the linguistic aspects of automobile advertising through the framework of transitivity analysis is lacking. Agbayani (2023) asserts that it is crucial for researchers to actively engage in the scrutiny and evaluation of the language employed in automobile advertising.

In the context of SA, the body of research exploring the discourse of automobile advertising is limited and mostly utilizes a content analysis approach (e.g., Alharbi & Boling, 2022). To the researcher's best knowledge, no research examining the utilization of the transitivity system in automobile advertising texts targeting Saudi women currently exists. Therefore, this study aims to examine automobile advertisements specifically targeting Saudi women during the historical lifting of the ban on women driving in SA, using the transitivity system for analysis. The following research questions guide this study:

1. Which transitivity process types are used in the automobile advertisements that targeted Saudi women during the historical event of lifting the ban on women driving?
2. What themes are conveyed through the transitivity system in these advertisements?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions. According to Jensen (2012), qualitative research is employed by scholars to examine and interpret advertising phenomena using several methodologies, such as the examination of pertinent materials or texts to unveil implicit meanings and acquire a full comprehension of the phenomena. Furthermore, Köhler (2012) pointed out that the utilization of quantitative methodologies is necessary to improve the accuracy and precision of analyzing textual data, such as clauses.

The scope of the textual analysis conducted for this study was limited to the two leading automobile companies in SA: Toyota and Hyundai. Toyota holds a 30% market share in SA, followed by Hyundai (ITA, 2021a). Since Twitter (currently known as X, which represents a rebranded identity but the same content) has been used as a data source in many studies (e.g., Alharbi and Boling, 2022; Altoaimy, 2018), the data were gathered from the official Twitter accounts of Toyota and Hyundai. Advertisements targeting women drivers from September 26, 2017 (when the driving ban lift was announced) to December 30, 2018 (the conclusion of the subsequent year) were collected from a total of four accounts, as Hyundai has a presence in SA through three authorized agents: Hyundai Almajdouie, Hyundai Naghi, and Hyundai Wallan. It is important to note that these accounts contain both Arabic and English textual content as

well as video advertisements. To facilitate the analysis in this research, the Arabic versions of texts and video transcripts were translated into English. The researcher translated the Arabic ads and had the translations verified by a professional translator. The data were compiled in Microsoft Office Word. After removing duplicates, a total of 37 original ad tweets were collected and analyzed using the transitivity system, which categorizes clauses according to processes, participants, and circumstances. It is crucial to point out that not all the ads were clauses, as some of them were fragments and imperative phrases that lacked explicit subjects and verbs. In such cases, the researcher used brackets to integrate implied subjects and verbs into clauses to fulfil the necessary criteria. The total number of processes and their frequency were then calculated using Microsoft Office Excel. Table 1 displays the transitivity system, comprising six process types, and describes the participants' roles and the circumstances involved.

Table 1. *Types of Processes, Participants' Roles, and Circumstances.*

Process Types	Participants' Roles	Circumstances
Material	Actor + Goal	Extent
Mental	Senser + Phenomenon	Location (time, place)
Verbal	Sayer + Target	Cause
Relational	Carrier + Attribute	Manner
Existential	Existent	Matter
Behavioural	Behaver	Accompaniment

4. FINDINGS

The following section covers the study's quantitative results, followed by the qualitative findings.

4.1. Quantitative findings

The findings demonstrate that all six transitivity process types were identified in the 82 clauses in the 37 automobile advertisements. Table 2 below presents the distribution of the six process types.

Table 2. *Distribution of Process Types in Automobile Ads Targeting Women.*

Process types	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	46	56.09%
Mental	7	8.53%
Verbal	3	3.65%
Relational	10	12.19%
Behavioural	4	4.87%
Existential	12	14.63%
Total	82	100%

Table 2 shows that the material process type was widely utilized in the ads, accounting for 56.09% of the total clauses and surpassing other process types. The existential process ranked second highest, with a percentage of 14.63%, and the relational process followed closely at 12.19%. The mental, behavioural, and verbal processes achieved the lowest percentages: 8.53%, 4.87%, and 3.65%, respectively.

It is important to highlight that the following table (Table 3) provides an analysis of the transitivity process types employed in automobile advertisements that targeted female drivers during

Empowering Saudi Women through Automobile Advertisements: A Transitivity Analysis

the period when the ban on women driving was being lifted. The material process was the most frequently employed type of process. The existential and relational processes were the next most frequently used process types; both had similar percentages. The identification of mental processes, however, was restricted to a small set of verbs such as “believe,” “forget,” and “dream.” Additionally, the findings show that the behavioural and verbal processes were observed in the lowest percentage of verbs, with the behavioural process observed in four verbs (“wait,” “bless,” “deserve,” and “stood”) and the verbal process observed in three verbs (“tell” and “ask”) (with “ask” appearing twice).

Table 3. *Transitivity Analysis of Process Types in Automobile Ads Targeting Women.*

	Advertisement clauses	Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
1.	[Hyundai] Welcome [you] to the driver's seat	Actor (Hyundai)	Material (welcome)		to the driver's seat
2.	The Journey is just beginning	Actor (The Journey)	Material (is beginning)		
3.	[you have] the spirit to drive further.	Carrier (you) Actor (you)	Relational (have) Material (drive)	Attribute (the spirit)	further
4.	when we create, we do it with our hearts when we tell stories, we write new ones when we teach about the past, we help shape the future when we move forward, we aim for more to this day, we constantly drive change. Now it's time to let the real journey begin	Actor (we) Actor (we) Sayer (we) Actor (we) Actor (we) Actor (we) Actor (we) Actor (we) Existent (it) Actor (the real journey)	Material (create) Material (do) Verbal (tell) Material (write) Material (teach) Material (help shape) Material (move) Material (aim) Material (drive) Existential (is) Material (begin)	Goal (it) Verbiage (stories) Goal (new ones) Goal (the future) Goal (change) Existent (time)	with our hearts about the past forward for more to this day
5.	You design it, you win it.	Actor (you) Actor (you)	Material (design) Material (win)	Goal (it) Goal (it)	

6.	[I am] Proud to drive forward	Sensor (I) Actor (I)	Mental (am proud) Material (drive)		forward
7.	[we take] Our first step towards success	Actor (we)	Material (take)	Goal (Our first step)	towards success
8.	Change is really good!	Carrier (Change)	Relational (is)	Attribute (good)	
9.	[Women drive] From Saudi to everywhere.	Actor (women)	Material (drive)		From Saudi to everywhere
10.	Progress is the only way	Existent (progress)	Existential (is)	Existent (the only way)	
11.	[you] Never stop driving forward	Actor (you)	Material (stop)	Goal (driving)	forward
12.	We keep moving forward because the journey has only begun.	Actor (we) Actor (the journey)	Material (keep moving) Material (has begun)		forward
13.	I cannot believe, I am going to drive a car that no woman has driven before.	sensor (I) Actor (I) Actor (woman)	Mental (cannot believe) Material (am going to drive) Material (has driven)	Goal (the car) Goal (it)	before
14.	[you] Drive peacefully towards more of your achievements and ambitions	Actor (you)	Material (drive)		peacefully towards more of your achievements and ambitions
15.	[woman] Don't make shopping make you forget Hyundai offers from Almajdouie	Actor (woman) Sensor (woman)	Material (make) Mental (forget)	Goal (shopping) Phenomenon (Hyundai offers)	
16.	[we are] Together in your first step	Carrier (we)	Relational (are)	Attribute (Together)	in your first step
17.	your journey starts here	Existent (your journey)	Existential (starts)		here

Empowering Saudi Women through Automobile Advertisements: A Transitivity Analysis

18.	Toyota is your place	Existent (Toyota)	Existential (is)	Existent (your place)	
19.	[you] Start driving today	Actor (you)	Material (start)	Goal (driving)	today
20.	[you] Visit us and choose your future car	Actor (you) Actor (you)	Material (visit) Material (choose)	Goal (your future car)	
21.	This is your day, this is your dream. [woman] Be happy because you deserve it	Existent (this) Existent (this) Carrier (woman) Behaver (we)	Existential (is) Existential (is) Relational (be) Behavioural (deserve)	Existent (your day) Existent (your dream) Attribute (happy)	Range (it)
22.	This is the moment, I was waiting [I am] excited to try my new life Every girl dreamed of this day and the dream became a reality. Alone, I can [drive]	Existent (this) Behaver (I) Actor (I) Actor (I) Sensor (every girl) Actor (the dream) Actor (I)	Existential (is) Behavioral (was waiting) Mental (am excited) Material (try) Mental (dreamed) Material (became) Material (can drive)	Existent (the moment) Goal (my new life) Goal (a reality)	Of this day
23.	[we asked] What is next?	Sayer (we)	Verbal (ask)	Verbiage (What is next?)	
24.	It was a year full of surprises and changes We started it with a celebration of giving you the right to drive The time is approaching and we will bless you for owning your first car	Existent (it) Actor (we) Actor (you) Actor (the time) Behaver (we)	Existential (was) Material (started) Material (to drive) Material (is approaching)	Existent (year) Goal (it)	with a celebration for owning your first car

			Behavioural (will bless)		
25.	[Toyota ask you] What will your car be?	Sayer (Toyota)	Verbal (ask)	Verbiage (What will your car be)	
26.	The road ahead of us is more beautiful	Carrier (The Road Ahead)	Relational (is)	Attribute (beautiful)	
27.	The future has just started	Existent (Future)	Existential (has started)		
28.	[you] show them how good you are	Actor (you) Carrier (you)	Material (show) Relational (are)	Goal (them) Attribute (good)	
29.	your status is preserved	Actor (your status)	Material (is preserved)		
30.	One day he [your father] stood with you, made your dreams come true, and fulfilled your requests as if they were orders to him. The day is near, you can do the same and fulfil his requests as if they are orders to you.	Behaver (He) Actor (He) Actor (He) Carrier (they) Existent (The day) Actor (you) Carrier (they)	Behavioral (stood) Material (made) Material (fulfilled) Relational (were) Existential (is) Material (do, fulfil) Relational (are)	Goal (your dreams) Goal (your requests) Attribute (orders) Goal (the same) Goal (his requests) Attribute (orders)	as if they were orders to him Near as if they are orders to you
31.	Beautiful as you are	Carrier (you)	Relational (are)	Attribute (beautiful)	
32.	[you] Drive safely with Hyundai	Actor (you)	Material (drive)		safely with Hyundai
33.	The future is the reality we are living today through the accelerating changes and advanced technologies. which [Toyota’s advanced technologies] aim to secure a safe future for transportation	Existent (The future) Actor (we) Actor (Toyota’s advanced technologies)	Existential (is) Material (are living) Material (aim to secure)	Existent (reality) Goal (safe future) Goal (our health and	Today for transportation

	that protects our health and the environment for us and for the coming generations. I'm very optimistic because our children will live a clean life on a clean and safe planet.	Sensor (I) Actor (our children)	Material (protects) Mental (am optimistic) Material (will live)	the environment) Goal (clean life)	for us and the coming generations on a clean and safe planet
34.	[Hyundai is] Behind every woman who dreams to drive safely	Existent (Hyundai) Sensor (every woman) Actor (woman)	Existential (is) Mental (dream) Material (to drive)		Behind every woman safely
35.	[Hyundai] [is] for your safety	Carrier (Hyundai)	Relational (is)	Attribute (safety)	
36.	[you] Drive safely	Actor (you)	Material (drive)		safely
37.	[you] Start driving peacefully	Actor (you)	Material (start driving)		peacefully

4.2. Qualitative results

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the quantitative findings, a qualitative analysis was conducted to identify related themes. The quantitative results indicate that more than 50% of the verbs were assigned to the material process type in the automobile ads. Moreover, the qualitative analysis shows that the material process, which is linked to clauses of doing and happening, has been found in all identified themes. The most dominant theme identified in the analysis is the empowerment of Saudi women, along with two minor themes: the prioritization of safety as a key feature and Saudi cultural values. The following qualitative findings provide further details on the quantitative data.

4.2.1. Empowerment of Saudi women

The main theme of the automobile ads is related to power and women's empowerment. Power refers to the ability of an individual or a group to exert control over the actions or choices of others (Rowlands, 1998). It can manifest in overt forms, such as physical force, or covert forms, where psychological manipulation limits perceived choices and convinces individuals that the desired option aligns with their desires. The concept of empowerment originated in the 1970s in the context of women's development discourse. Its purpose was to enable women to actively engage in economic and political aspects of society and gain power and influence (Rowlands, 1998). Female empowerment can be defined as "an individual's capacity to take control of her own life and resources; to make decisions about strategic life choices; to alter power relations that constrain her options, autonomy, and wellbeing; and to achieve her desired outcomes" (Elliott, 2008, p. 7). Thus, empowerment is influential in molding and validating changes in the global economic and political structure as well as in endorsing policies and practical strategies for development that involve women (Rowlands, 1998). Undoubtedly, the

transformation of Saudi women's roles necessitates empowering them to actively participate in society and contribute to the achievement of Saudi Vision 2030. This vision emphasizes the importance of increasing female participation in the workforce as it has a substantial impact on economic advancement.

Advertisements 1 to 28 fell within the theme of empowering Saudi women, accounting for 75.68% of the total number of ads. The predominant use of the material process was employed to empower Saudi women, depicting them as active agents capable of performing actions and making decisions. Thus, the material process type was used to construct and promote the concept of women's empowerment, as conveyed by such verbs as "drive," "create," "do," "move," and "make." Additionally, other process types were used to prompt the concept of Saudi women's empowerment as existential and relational processes. For example, the verbs "is" in the ad "Progress is the only way" and "has started" in the ad "Future has just started" refer to the existential process and are employed to empower Saudi women, instilling in them the belief that the collective female dream to drive in SA has been realized and exists as a tangible reality. On the other hand, the verb "is" in the ad "Change is really good!" and "The road ahead of us is more beautiful" relates to the relational process in order to depict the positive nature of the ongoing transformation concerning women's rights, namely, the newly gained capacity for women to drive and participate more actively in society.

4.2.2. Safety as a key feature

The second theme identified in the qualitative analysis is the safety of the vehicles, which is the sole aspect explicitly addressed in the ads. Ads 32 to 37 were related to this theme and constituted 16.22% of the total number of ads. Several transitivity processes were used by the automobile companies to show they would provide high-quality, safety-focused vehicles for Saudi women. The material process was used to demonstrate the company's proficiency as a producer of safety; the relational process was used to indicate that the car company possesses the safety attribute; and the existential process was used to demonstrate the existence of companies to supply extremely safe cars. Ad 33 by Toyota utilized material, existential, and mental processes to convey that they have the capacity to offer not just secure and safe vehicles but also a safe future for transportation in general.

4.2.3. Saudi cultural values

The third theme found in the qualitative analysis is related to Saudi cultural values. In addition to promoting the empowerment of Saudi women, three of the advertisements (ads 29, 30, and 31) were found to reflect Saudi cultural values. These advertisements constituted 8.10% of the total number of ads. For example, ad 30 portrayed a scenario where a father used to fulfill his daughter's dreams, suggesting that she should reciprocate this by fulfilling her father's requests in a similar manner since she has gained the right to drive. This ad strongly depicts Saudi culture, which places significant importance on parental values that are based on principles derived from Islamic traditions. In fact, Saudi culture underscores the importance of robust familial bonds, reverence of parents, the obligation of parents toward their children, and the responsibility of adults toward their parents. In this ad, the material process was dominant due to the use of verbs such as "made," "fulfilled," and "do," which symbolize the shift in roles usually assigned to daughters. This depiction emphasizes the shift in the role of Saudi women, portraying them now as autonomous individuals who possess the ability to take action.

Additionally, ad 29 "Your status is preserved" and ad 31 "Beautiful as you are" exhibit a significant connection to Saudi culture, which places great importance on women as esteemed

figures in the roles of mothers, wives, and daughters. Ad 29 utilized a material process, while ad 31 employed a relational process. These advertisements employed both processes to reassure women in SA that their appreciated position would remain unaltered and that would, as always, consistently receive the necessary support.

To this end, the qualitative analysis shows that the language employed in this advertising discourse played a pivotal role in effectively conveying the concept of empowerment to Saudi women while also mirroring their Saudi values and highlighting safety as a key feature to be considered. Therefore, transitivity processes were used to convey the meaning of these themes. Specifically, the material process was predominantly used to help shape the concept of Saudi women's empowerment while also reflecting on Saudi culture and emphasizing safety as a key attribute of future cars.

5. DISCUSSION

This study employed the transitivity system proposed by Halliday (1985) to examine the different types of transitivity processes in automobile advertisements that targeted Saudi women during the period of the driving ban lift.

In answer to the first research question, "Which transitivity process types are used in the automobile advertisements that targeted Saudi women during the historical event of lifting the ban on women driving?", the findings indicate that the ads employed six different types of processes: material, existential, relational, mental, verbal, and behavioural. It is noteworthy that the material process type achieved the highest ranking, representing 56.09% of the total number of process types in automobile ads. This outcome suggests that women are portrayed as actors and possess the power to obtain the privilege of driving vehicles as well as contribute to shaping the future of the country. The material process plays a crucial role in illustrating the transformation of Saudi women from passive contributors to active contributors in society, ultimately aligning with the country's 2030 vision. Consequently, the automobile companies extensively employed the material process in their ads to empower women in SA. This finding aligns with the outcomes observed in the investigations carried out by Dai (2015), Adrian and Faiza (2022), and Nugraheni et al. (2023), where the material process exhibited the highest level of dominance. The finding also revealed that the existential process achieved the second highest position at 14.63%, while the relational process closely trailed behind at 12.19%. This outcome is consistent with the results of Adrian and Faiza's (2022) study, which revealed the material process as the most prominent, followed by the existential and relational processes. However, these findings differ slightly from Agbayani's (2023) research, which indicated relational processes as the predominant type, followed by material processes. This discrepancy might be ascribed to the fact that the advertisements examined in Agbayani's (2023) research targeted both males and females, whereas those examined in studies with comparable results solely concentrated on women.

To the second research question, "What themes are conveyed through the transitivity system in these advertisements?", the findings suggest that the primary theme of the ads is the promotion of women's empowerment in SA. This theme is accompanied by two secondary themes: the prioritization of safety as a key feature and the reflection of Saudi cultural values. The present findings align with the results of studies conducted by Alharbi and Boling (2022), AboAlsamh et al. (2023), Adrian and Faiza (2022), and Dai (2015). These studies found that in the current century, women's empowerment is a significant advertising goal due to the

evolution of women's roles in society to include active participation in the work field. Hence, the ads analyzed in this study aimed to convey and depict this message to encourage women to obtain cars as the first step toward actively participating in the country's 2030 vision. Furthermore, the current study demonstrates that the empowerment of women in SA does not neglect cultural norms. On the contrary, women may both provide and receive support from their families while also having the same rights as their male counterparts. This finding aligns with the conclusions obtained by Alharbi and Boling (2022), who pointed out that Saudi women are capable of adhering to Saudi traditions and religious values, embracing personal autonomy, and achieving greater freedom without compromising their obligations and responsibilities.

On the other hand, the current findings conflict with those of earlier studies by Heathy (2020), Fajula et al. (2021), and Sharma and Bumb (2021). These studies demonstrated that although society has recognized the shift in women's societal responsibilities, advertising continues to depict women in stereotyped and traditional roles, thereby failing to accurately portray contemporary women. In the context of SA, Saudi Vision 2030 has resulted in profound changes across several aspects of Saudi life, particularly with regard to the status of women in the country. This transition necessitates the empowerment of women at all levels. Advertising is a crucial instrument that utilizes the power of language to communicate the necessary messages for this critical stage in the country's history.

In short, the findings of this study point out that the material process was the transitivity process type most commonly employed in automobile advertisements that targeted women during the historical driving ban lift in SA. The material process relates to clauses of doing and happening, which portray women as actors with the goal of not only driving vehicles but also shaping and contributing to the future of the country.

6. CONCLUSION

The current study used the transitivity system to analyze the types of transitivity processes in automobile ads that specifically targeted Saudi women during the period when the prohibition on women driving was lifted. The transitivity system is primarily dependent on processes in which the portrayal of a particular process within the ongoing domain of human experience represents the meaning of the clause. Halliday (1978) categorized transitivity processes into six types: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal, and existential. The verbs in clauses serve as a representation of these processes. Thus, the selection of verbs within a clause has a significant impact on the role of the participants and the specific type of process involved (Halliday & Webster, 2014).

Based on the results, all six transitivity process types were identified in the automobile advertisements that targeted Saudi women. However, there was a substantial variation in the proportion of each type of advertisement that was examined. The findings revealed that the material process was the predominant type of process used in the ads, accounting for 56.09% of the overall process count. The percentage of the material process was significantly higher than that of the processes ranked second and third: the existential process accounted for 14.63%, and the relational process accounted for 12.19%. Mental, behavioural, and verbal processes were the least used in the ads (8.5%, 4.8%, and 3.6%, respectively). Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed prominent themes that emphasize the choice of verbs in automobile advertisements, mirroring the goals and objectives of automobile companies in

Empowering Saudi Women through Automobile Advertisements: A Transitivity Analysis

Saudi Arabia. The main goal of automobile advertisements in SA, which make up 75.68% of the total number of ads, is to promote women's empowerment. In addition to promoting women's empowerment, these advertisements showcased some Saudi cultural values, highlighting the ability of women to uphold these values while still enjoying the same rights as men. The only prominent feature explicitly addressed in the ads that targeted Saudi women was safety, which accounted for 16.22% of the ads. Thus, these automobile companies demonstrated their endorsement of the country's decision by contributing to the development of a new ideology regarding the transition of Saudi women's roles. The language of their advertisements was constructed, mostly via the material process, to convey the message of empowering Saudi women to drive and actively participate in the country's 2030 vision. The material process contributes to the construction of the meaning of women as active actors who are capable of fulfilling their newly assigned roles.

The present study is limited by the small sample size used; only advertisements from the two most dominant automobile companies in SA were examined. Moreover, this study exclusively concentrated on the process types of the transitivity system. It is recommended that future investigations include the examination of circumstances and participants' roles, as they are integral elements of the transitivity system. In addition, future research could incorporate advertisements from other automobile companies and conduct a comparative analysis between advertisements aimed at women and those aimed at men.

REFERENCES

- AboAlsamh, H. M., Siddiqui, K., & Alahmadi, M. (2023). Changing role of women in Saudi advertising. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 420, 06047. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202342006047>
- Adrian, D., & Faiza, E. (2022). Women's empowerment in Nike advertisements: A multimodal analysis. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(3), 416–424. <https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v5i3.22081>
- Agbayani, R. (2023). Transitivity processes in the discourse of automobile advertisements. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 5(2), 209–235. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i2.1255>
- Al Alhareth, Y., Al Alhareth, Y., & Al Dighrir, I. (2015). Review of women and society in Saudi Arabia. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3(2), 121–125. <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-3-2-3>
- Alharbi, K., & Boling, K. (2022). Saudi women take the wheel: A content analysis of how Saudi Arabian car companies reached women on social media. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 43(2), 165–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2021.1995543>
- Alhumsi, M. H., & Alsaedi, N. S. (2023). A transitivity analysis of two political articles: An investigation of gender variations in political media discourse. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(6), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n6p107>
- Altoaimy, L. (2018). Driving change on Twitter: A corpus-assisted discourse analysis of the Twitter debates on the Saudi ban on women driving. *Social Sciences*, 7(5), 81. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7050081>

- Amirat, A., Zaidi, M., Haddad, F., & Awawdeh, I. (2021). Analysis of the economic and social dimensions of Saudi women's driving. *Ilkogretim Online-Elementary Education Online*, 20(6), 1413–1427. <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.06.143>
- Baxter, J. (2010). Discourse analytic approaches to text and talk. In *Research methods in linguistics* (pp. 117–137). London: Continuum.
- Dai, D. G. (2015). Constituting gender roles through the transitivity choice in commodity advertising. *Asian Social Science*, 11(28), 58. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n28p58>
- Doumato, E. A. (2010). Saudi Arabia. In S. Kelly, & J. Breslin (Eds.), *Women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress amid resistance* (pp. 425–459). Freedom House.
- Drake, V. E. (2017). The impact of female empowerment in advertising (femvertising). *Journal of Research in Marketing*, 7(3), 593–599. <https://doi.org/10.17722/jorm.v7i3.718>
- Elliott, C. M. (2008). *Global empowerment of women: Responses to globalization and politicized religions* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Fajula, A., Barbeito, M., Barrio, E., Enrique, A. M., & Perona, J. J. (2021). Feminist stereotypes and women's roles in Spanish radio ads. *Media and Communication*, 9(2), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i2.3762>
- Gebhard, M., & Accurso, K. (2022). Systemic functional linguistics. *The concise encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, 1029–1037. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1137.pub2>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Hodder Education.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar*. Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A., & Matthiessen, C. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Halliday, M. K., & Webster, J. J. (2014). *Text linguistics: The how and why of meaning*. Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- Harun, F. N., Ismail, M. M., Daoudi, A., & Thompson, P. (2019). The Driving Restriction on Saudi Women: Critical Analysis of Modality in Arabic Online News Discourse. *Journal of Fatwa Management and Research*, 13(1), 466–487. <https://doi.org/10.33102/jfatwa.vol13no1.137>
- Heathy, B. H. (2020). Gender stereotypes in advertising: A critical discourse analysis. *Language in India*, 20(1), 45–56.
- Hidayat, M., Mahalayati, B. R., Sadikin, H., Shaddiq, S., & Zainul, H. M. (2021). Advertising media strategy as product ordering. *Jurnal Mantik*, 5(2), 812–819.
- International Trade Administration. (2021a). *Saudi Arabia automotive market*. <https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/saudi-arabia-automotive-market>
- International Trade Administration. (2021b). *Saudi Arabia women boost the automotive industry*. <https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/saudi-arabia-women-boost-automotive-industry>
- Jensen, K. B. (2012). The qualitative research process. In K. B. Jensen (Ed.), *A handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies* (pp. 82–265). Routledge.

- Kayani, A. I., & Anwar, B. (2022). Transitivity choices and gender representation: A feminist stylistic analysis of Ali's 'The book of Saladin'. *Journal of Arts & Social Sciences (JASS)*, 9(1), 14–28. <https://doi.org/10.46662/jass.v9i1.208>
- Köhler, R. (2012). *Quantitative syntax analysis*. Walter de Gruyter.
- McDonald, R. E., Laverie, D. A., & Manis, K. T. (2021). The interplay between advertising and society: An historical analysis. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 41(4), 585–609.
- Moitra, R., Purohit, N., & Bhattacharjee, A. (2022). Advertising ethics: Towards a stakeholder approach. *PURUSHARTHA - A Journal of Management, Ethics and Spirituality*, 15(1), 142–158.
- Mustafa, R. F., & Troudi, S. (2019). Saudi Arabia and Saudi women in research literature: A critical look. *Asian Social Science*, 15(2), 133–141. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v15n2p133>
- Nugraheni, Y., Santosa, R., Nababan, M., & Wiratno, T. (2023). *Gender roles construction through transitivity in Indonesia's facial care advertisement for woman*. In *1st Lawang Sewu International Symposium on Humanities and Social Sciences 2022 (LEWIS 2022)* (pp. 361–368). Atlantis Press.
- Rehman, F., Javed, F., Yusoff, R., Harun, A., Khan, A., & Ismail, F. (2019). What is advertising? A short review of historical development. *Academic Research International*, 10(4), 128–143. [http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.10\(4\)/ARInt.2019\(10.4-14\).pdf](http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.10(4)/ARInt.2019(10.4-14).pdf)
- Rojo, L. M. (2001). New developments in discourse analysis: Discourse as social practice. *Folia Linguistica*, 35(1–2), 41–78. <https://doi.org/10.1515/flin.2001.35.1-2.41>
- Rowlands, J. (1998). A word of the times, but what does it mean? Empowerment in the discourse and practice of development. In Afshar, H. (Ed.) *Women and empowerment. Women's studies at York* (pp. 11–34).. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-26265-6_2
- Saldanha, G., & O'Brien, S. (2014). *Research methodologies in translation studies* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760100>
- Sharma, S., & Bumb, A. (2021). Role portrayal of women in advertising - An empirical study. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(9), 236–255. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss9/16>
- Sylvendahl, F. (2017, June 15). *Why femvertising is the future of advertising*. BrandBa.se. <https://www.brandba.se/blog/femvertising>
- Wheeler, D. L. (2020). Saudi women driving change? Rebranding, resistance, and the kingdom of change. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 11(1), 87–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2020.1733865>
- Wibowo, S. S., & Lililacs, A. (2022). Gender equality in e-sports: A transitivity analysis in Saloni Pawar's achievement posts. *Lililacs Journal: English Literature, Language, and Cultural Studies Journal*, 2(1), 36–43. <https://doi.org/10.21009/lililacs.021.04>
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods for critical discourse analysis*. (2nd ed, pp. 1-33). London: Sage.