

Selling Status on Wheels: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Prestige Construction in Philippine Automobile Branding

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ABSTRACT

In today's consumer culture, automobiles are sold not only as machines of mobility but as powerful symbols of who people aspire to become. This study examined how prestige was discursively constructed in the slogans of leading automobile brands in the Philippines using Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis, interpreted through Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction and symbolic capital. The corpus consisted of slogans from ten major automobile brands operating in the Philippine market. Through textual, discursive, and social practice analyses, the study found that automobile slogans employed aspirational vocabulary, metaphorical framing, evaluative expressions, and personalization to construct vehicles as symbols of progress, ambition, sophistication, and socially desirable identity. The findings further revealed that prestige discourse was strategically produced and circulated through integrated advertising platforms and localized to resonate with Filipino values such as family advancement, responsible provision, and respectable success. Four dominant prestige discourses emerged: prestige as social advancement, aspirational identity, distinction and sophistication, and socially valued character. These discourses normalized aspirational consumption and positioned automobiles as forms of symbolic capital that communicate status, taste, and identity. The study recommends further critical examination of branding discourse across industries and media platforms to deepen understanding of how commercial language shapes cultural meanings, social aspiration, and consumer consciousness.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Automobile Branding; Prestige Discourse; Symbolic Capital; Consumer Culture

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary marketplace, branding has evolved into a powerful communicative practice that extends far beyond product identification and commercial persuasion. Brands now function as cultural symbols that shape consumer perception, influence identity formation, and embed products within socially meaningful narratives. Central to this branding process is the slogan, a concise yet strategically crafted linguistic expression designed to communicate a brand's promise, values, and symbolic appeal. More than memorable advertising devices, slogans operate as condensed discursive texts that construct emotional resonance, strengthen brand legitimacy, and produce culturally meaningful associations between products and consumers. Recent scholarship has emphasized that corporate and brand discourse plays a vital role in shaping how brands are socially perceived and legitimized, particularly through rhetorical strategies that naturalize success, desirability, and symbolic value (Şahin, Ustaş, & Fındıklı, 2024). Similarly, research in strategic brand management highlights that contemporary branding increasingly relies on symbolic and identity-laden communication to cultivate brand salience, attachment, and cultural relevance (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Among branded commodities, automobiles occupy a particularly significant symbolic position because they are marketed not merely as functional vehicles but as representations of lifestyle, ambition, freedom, achievement, and social mobility. Modern automotive branding increasingly emphasizes emotional appeal, aspirational identity, and prestige signaling rather than solely focusing on technical specifications such as durability, efficiency, and mechanical performance. Studies in branding and consumer behavior have shown that consumers frequently associate automobiles with self-concept, status projection, and symbolic self-expression, thereby transforming vehicles from utilitarian goods into markers of identity and social positioning (Kotler, Keller, & Chernev, 2022; Bian, Haque, & Smith, 2022). In this sense, automobile branding discourse participates in the social construction of value by assigning meanings of prestige, distinction, and desirability to ownership.

This phenomenon is particularly meaningful in the Philippine context, where automobiles often carry symbolic significance beyond transportation utility. In Filipino society, vehicle ownership is commonly associated with economic advancement, professional achievement, family stability, and upward social mobility. Possessing a vehicle may signify not only convenience but also a visible marker of middle-class respectability and social progress. Recognizing these cultural meanings, automobile brands operating in the Philippines increasingly localize their advertising discourse to align with Filipino aspirations, family-centered values, and ideals of achievement. Brand messages often foreground narratives of reliability, life improvement, ambition, and personal fulfillment, discourses that resonate strongly within a society where material mobility is frequently intertwined with social recognition. Consequently, Philippine automobile branding does not simply market mobility; it sells socially meaningful visions of success and prestige.

Current trends in branding further heighten the importance of critically examining automobile slogans as discourse. The rise of digital advertising, social media branding, influencer campaigns, and integrated multimedia communication has significantly amplified the circulation and visibility of slogans in everyday life. Modern branding discourse has become increasingly affective, personalized, and symbolic, frequently embedding themes of aspiration, exclusivity, distinction, and belonging into concise promotional texts. Research in digital branding and consumer engagement suggests that branded communication increasingly succeeds not merely through information delivery but through its ability to evoke symbolic desire, strengthen aspirational attachment, and cultivate prestige-oriented consumer identification (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, Kemper, & Crawford, 2020). This suggests that slogans now function as more than promotional tools; they serve as ideological texts that normalize particular lifestyles, aspirations, and notions of what constitutes success in contemporary consumer culture.

Scholarly inquiry into branding discourse has increasingly recognized that commercial language often encodes broader ideological meanings related to legitimacy, status, identity, and social distinction. Corporate discourse strategically employs rhetorical and symbolic language that naturalizes particular values, frames consumption as socially meaningful, and constructs products as vehicles of symbolic worth (Şahin et al., 2024). However, despite growing scholarly work on branding communication, much of the literature remains concentrated on consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and purchase intention, with comparatively fewer studies critically examining the ideological and sociological meanings embedded in branding discourse itself (Ng, 2018; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Kotler et al., 2022). This gap is particularly significant in the Philippine context, where consumer aspiration, symbolic consumption, and social mobility are culturally salient forces that shape how branded meanings are interpreted and valued.

In addressing this gap, the present study investigates how leading automobile brands in the Philippines linguistically construct prestige through their current slogan discourse. Guided by Norman Fairclough's (1989, 1992) Critical Discourse Analysis, and interpreted through Antonio Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony and Pierre Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) theory of distinction and symbolic capital, the study seeks to uncover how branding language normalizes aspirational consumption, constructs symbolic capital, and positions automobile ownership as a marker of prestige, distinction, and social status in contemporary Filipino society.

Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the linguistic features used in automobile slogans to construct prestige in Philippine branding discourse.

2. To examine the production, circulation, and interpretation of prestige discourse within Philippine automobile advertising practices.
3. To explain how automobile slogans reproduce hegemonic consumer ideals and function as symbolic markers of social distinction in contemporary Filipino society.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to critically examine how prestige is discursively constructed in the slogans of leading automobile brands in the Philippines. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. How are linguistic features employed in automobile slogans to construct prestige in Philippine branding discourse?
2. How is prestige discourse produced and circulated within Philippine automobile advertising practices?
3. How do automobile slogans reinforce hegemonic consumer ideals and construct symbolic distinction in contemporary Filipino society?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is anchored on **Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**, specifically his **Three-Dimensional (3-D) Model of Discourse** introduced in *Language and Power* (1989) and further elaborated in *Discourse and Social Change* (1992). Fairclough conceptualizes discourse as both language and social practice, emphasizing that texts are not neutral linguistic expressions but socially situated constructions shaped by ideology, institutional power, and cultural structures. His framework enables the systematic examination of how discourse reflects, constructs, and normalizes social meanings. Within the context of this study, Fairclough's CDA serves as the primary methodological lens for analyzing how automobile slogans in the Philippines linguistically construct prestige and communicate socially desirable meanings associated with vehicle ownership.

Fairclough's model consists of three interrelated analytical dimensions: [1] text, [2] discursive practice, and [3] social practice. The first dimension, textual analysis, focuses on the linguistic features of discourse, including vocabulary choice, grammatical structures, modality, metaphor, evaluative language, and rhetorical devices. In the present study, this dimension is applied to examine how automobile slogans strategically employ prestige-laden lexical items such as *power*, *dreams*, *progress*, *future*, *premium*, and *ambition* to construct favorable symbolic meanings around automobiles. Through textual analysis, the study identifies how linguistic choices shape the representation of automobiles as desirable objects associated with achievement, aspiration, and elevated social standing.

The second dimension, *discursive practice*, examines how discourse is produced, circulated, and interpreted within specific communicative settings. This level of analysis considers the institutions that create branding discourse, the media platforms through which slogans are disseminated, and the interpretive frameworks audiences use in consuming such messages. Applied to automobile branding in the Philippines, this dimension investigates how multinational automotive companies and their local subsidiaries strategically design slogan discourse to resonate with Filipino consumers through digital advertising, social media campaigns, dealership promotions, and integrated marketing communication. This level recognizes slogans as communicative products embedded within broader systems of production, repetition, and audience interpretation that contribute to their persuasive and cultural power.

The third dimension, *social practice*, situates discourse within broader social, ideological, and cultural structures. This level explores how discourse contributes to the maintenance or transformation of dominant values, beliefs, and social relations. To strengthen the interpretation of this dimension, the present study is further informed by Antonio Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony and Pierre Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) theory of distinction and symbolic capital. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony provides a macro-sociological lens

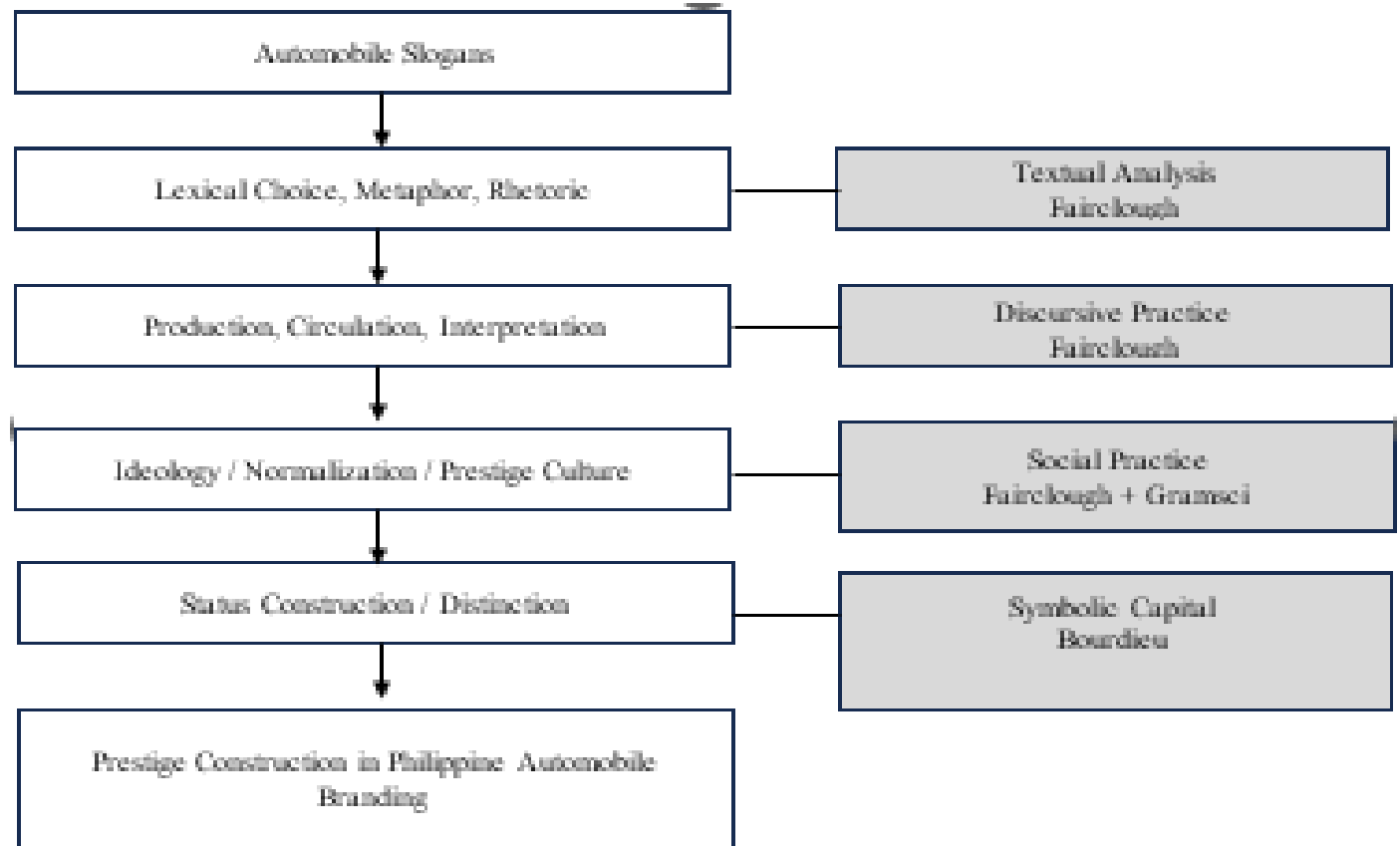
for understanding how branding discourse normalizes aspirational consumption and subtly reinforces dominant cultural beliefs linking ownership with success, prestige, and social advancement. Through repeated exposure to slogans that celebrate ambition, exclusivity, power, and upward mobility, consumers may come to accept these values as natural indicators of achievement and desirable living.

Complementing this ideological perspective, Bourdieu's theory of distinction explains how branded commodities function as forms of **symbolic capital**, socially recognized signs of prestige, taste, and class positioning. According to Bourdieu, consumption is not merely an economic act but a social practice through which individuals express identity, signal distinction, and negotiate social position. In the context of automobile branding, slogans may assign symbolic meanings to ownership by constructing vehicles as representations of sophistication, masculinity, family success, professional accomplishment, or elite status. Thus, automobiles become more than products; they become symbolic markers of social distinction that communicate prestige within the social field.

Taken together, Fairclough's CDA, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, and Bourdieu's theory of distinction provide an integrated framework for understanding how automobile slogan discourse operates at linguistic, communicative, and sociological levels. Fairclough provides the primary analytical process for examining discourse; Gramsci explains how prestige-oriented meanings become culturally normalized; and Bourdieu clarifies how these meanings are transformed into symbolic capital and markers of social distinction. Through this integrated framework, the study seeks to critically uncover how Philippine automobile branding linguistically constructs prestige, normalizes aspirational consumer ideals, and positions vehicle ownership as a socially meaningful symbol of distinction and status.

Analytic Framework

Figure 1 Theoretical and Analytical Framework of the Study



The framework illustrates the application of Fairclough's (1989, 1992) Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis, interpreted through Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) theory of distinction and symbolic capital, in examining prestige construction in Philippine automobile branding.

Thematic Review of the Literature

Branding Discourse and the Communicative Power of Slogans

Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes branding as a communicative and discursive practice that extends beyond commercial persuasion into the construction of meaning, identity, and social value. Within this communicative framework, slogans function as concise but strategically designed linguistic units that encapsulate a brand's philosophy, values, and emotional appeal in ways that are both memorable and socially resonant. Their communicative strength lies in their brevity, rhetorical density, and symbolic flexibility, allowing brands to embed broad ideological meanings into compact verbal expressions that can be easily circulated and repeatedly consumed across media platforms. As such, slogans become powerful discursive tools capable of shaping public interpretation, framing consumer perception, and establishing enduring associations between products and desirable social meanings.

Recent discourse-oriented scholarship supports this understanding of slogan communication. Şahin et. al. (2024) explain that corporate discourse plays a significant role in shaping brand awareness and legitimacy through rhetorical strategies that strategically construct credibility, desirability, and symbolic authority. Their findings suggest that branding language does not merely provide information about products; rather, it actively participates in framing how brands are socially understood and culturally valued. Similarly, Keller and Swaminathan (2020) emphasize that modern branding increasingly depends on symbolic communication, where verbal and visual brand messages cultivate emotional attachment, identity resonance, and long-term consumer meaning-making. Through carefully chosen lexical items, evaluative expressions, and emotionally evocative language, slogans become condensed ideological texts that subtly shape what consumers associate with value, aspiration, and belonging.

From a discourse-analytic perspective, slogans are therefore more than promotional phrases; they are socially situated texts embedded in broader communicative systems of persuasion, symbolism, and identity construction. Their repeated circulation across advertising campaigns, digital platforms, and public media further reinforces their persuasive influence by normalizing particular narratives about desirability, lifestyle, and achievement. This communicative power makes slogans especially significant objects of inquiry in Critical Discourse Analysis, as they provide insight into how brands construct meanings that resonate not only commercially but culturally and socially as well.

Automobile Branding as Symbolic Consumption

It is apparent that Automobile branding occupies a distinct place in marketing discourse because vehicles are often promoted not solely for their functional capabilities but for the symbolic meanings attached to ownership. Unlike ordinary commodities, automobiles frequently operate as social symbols that communicate personal identity, lifestyle orientation, economic capacity, and social positioning (Pojani, Balla, & Dhramibi, 2018). Branding discourse in the automotive industry therefore extends beyond highlighting technical features such as safety, efficiency, or performance, and increasingly focuses on narratives of ambition, modernity, prestige, confidence, and personal fulfillment. In doing so, automobile brands transform vehicles from utilitarian objects into symbolic commodities imbued with cultural meaning.

This phenomenon is closely associated with the concept of symbolic consumption, wherein consumers acquire products not only for practical utility but also for the meanings those products communicate about who they are or aspire to become. Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction provides a sociological explanation for this process by arguing that consumer goods often function as markers of taste, class identity, and symbolic capital. Within the context of automobile branding, vehicles may signify refinement, masculine strength, upward mobility, family success, or elite sophistication depending on how they are discursively positioned. Supporting this perspective, Philip Kotler, Kevin Lane Keller, and Alexander Chernev (2022) note that contemporary brand positioning increasingly appeals to consumers' aspirational self-concepts, emphasizing symbolic value and emotional connection over functional differentiation. Thus, automobile branding discourse becomes a powerful site where ownership is linked with prestige, distinction, and socially desirable identity.

Within this symbolic economy, slogans serve as compressed narratives that assign cultural value to vehicles. Through terms such as *power*, *dreams*, *progress*, *toughness*, and *ambition*, automobile slogans communicate meanings that consumers may interpret as representations of status, capability, and achievement. As such, automotive slogan discourse contributes significantly to the symbolic construction of automobiles as markers of prestige and distinction.

Prestige, Aspiration, and Consumer Identity

Recent branding scholarship increasingly demonstrates that advertising discourse plays a major role in constructing aspirational consumer identities. Modern promotional language frequently positions branded products as pathways toward improved selfhood, elevated status, and social recognition. This shift reflects the broader transformation of consumption from an act of utility acquisition into a process of identity formation and symbolic self-expression. Consumers are no longer simply invited to buy products; they are encouraged to buy into narratives of success, exclusivity, belonging, and aspiration that promise social or personal enhancement.

This process is especially evident in prestige-oriented branding, where discourse strategically aligns products with ideals of excellence, distinction, and elevated social identity. David Aaker (2021) notes that successful brands derive much of their strength not from functional superiority alone but from the symbolic associations they cultivate in the minds of consumers. Likewise, Keller and Swaminathan (2020) emphasize that brand resonance is strengthened when consumers perceive branded goods as extensions of their ideal selves. This symbolic relationship between brand and selfhood allows consumption to function as a means of projecting identity, communicating social belonging, and signaling personal aspiration.

In the Philippine context, this discourse of aspiration may be particularly powerful due to cultural narratives surrounding upward mobility, visible achievement, and family-centered success. Possessions that visibly represent progress, such as automobiles, may become symbols of having attained a desirable social position. Consequently, prestige-oriented automobile slogans are likely to resonate strongly with Filipino consumers because they tap into broader cultural aspirations tied to advancement, recognition, and social distinction.

Advertising Discourse, Ideology, and Cultural Normalization

Critical discourse scholarship consistently argues that advertising language is ideological in nature because it embeds broader social values beneath seemingly simple promotional messages. Advertising does not merely communicate product features; it also constructs and normalizes particular understandings of success, desirability, identity, and consumption. Through repetition, emotional framing, and symbolic appeal, advertising discourse transforms socially constructed values into accepted norms, subtly shaping public consciousness about what is admirable, aspirational, and culturally legitimate.

Moreover, this process definitely aligns with Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which explains how dominant ideas become normalized as common sense through repeated cultural reinforcement. In branding discourse, repeated associations between luxury and success, ownership and prestige, or mobility and personal freedom may eventually become socially unquestioned assumptions. Şahiniz et al. (2024) explain that corporate rhetoric frequently naturalizes values such as ambition, achievement, distinction, and exclusivity by presenting them as desirable and socially legitimate. Through strategic discourse, brands are able to shape what consumers come to perceive as markers of success and identity.

Hence, in automobile branding, slogans may therefore function as ideological instruments that reinforce hegemonic beliefs linking vehicle ownership with accomplishment, social respectability, and elevated status. By repeatedly framing automobiles as symbols of aspiration and distinction, branding discourse contributes to broader cultural narratives that define prestige consumption as a meaningful and desirable social practice.

Gap in Philippine Critical Branding Studies

Despite growing scholarly endeavors on branding communication, symbolic consumption, and consumer identity, relatively few studies have critically examined branding discourse through sociological and ideological

lenses, particularly within localized national contexts (Ng, 2018). Much of the existing literature remains focused on consumer behavior, brand loyalty, market segmentation, and purchase intention, with less attention given to how branding language itself constructs meanings of prestige, distinction, and social legitimacy (Barrero, 2025; Ikezoe et al., 2021). While these behavioral approaches provide valuable marketing insights, they often treat slogans as persuasive tools rather than as ideological texts embedded in broader social and cultural systems of meaning.

This limitation is especially apparent in Philippine scholarship, where studies on automobile branding have largely concentrated on market competitiveness, consumer preference, and purchasing patterns, while comparatively little research has explored how automobile slogans linguistically construct prestige and normalize aspirational consumption. Given the strong cultural association in Filipino society between visible possessions, social mobility, and symbolic achievement, the ideological meanings embedded in automobile branding discourse warrant closer critical examinations.

This gap highlights the need for discourse-oriented inquiry that examines how Philippine automobile branding constructs prestige, reproduces hegemonic consumer ideals, and positions vehicle ownership as symbolic capital and social distinction within contemporary Filipino society. Such inquiry not only contributes to discourse studies but also broadens understanding of how commercial language participates in shaping cultural meanings of success, aspiration, and identity.

METHODOLOGY

Discourse / Text / Corpus

The corpus of the study consists of the official slogans and selected supporting promotional texts of leading automobile brands operating in the Philippines. The primary unit of analysis is the brand slogan, defined in this study as a concise, strategic linguistic expression used by automobile companies to communicate brand identity, symbolic appeal, and consumer value. Supporting discourse materials, including short campaign headlines, official advertising copy, website promotional texts, and selected social media campaign captions, may likewise be included to provide contextual depth and enrich interpretation of slogan discourse.

The selection of brands shall focus on the top automobile brands in the Philippine market, identified based on market visibility, consumer presence, and industry relevance. These may include brands such as: [1] Toyota Motor Philippines, [2] Mitsubishi Motors Philippines, [3] Honda Cars Philippines, [4] Ford Philippines, [5] Nissan Philippines, [6] Hyundai Motor Philippines, [7] Isuzu Philippines, [8] Suzuki Philippines, [9] BYD Philippines, [10] MG Philippines.

The corpus shall specifically include slogans and promotional texts circulated in the Philippine market in the present year 2026, emphasizing localized branding discourse targeted at Filipino consumers. These texts are treated not merely as commercial statements but as discursive constructions that communicate symbolic meanings related to prestige, aspiration, social mobility, and distinction.

Table 1 Slogan of 10 Automobile Brands in the Philippines

No.	Automobile Brand	Current Slogan / Tagline
1	Toyota Motor Philippines	“Let’s Go Places”
2	Mitsubishi Motors Philippines	“Life Made Better”
3	Honda Cars Philippines	“The Power of Dreams”
4	Ford Philippines	“Built Ford Tough”
5	Nissan Philippines	“Innovation That Excites”
6	Hyundai Motor Philippines	“Progress for Humanity”
7	Isuzu Philippines Corporation	“Your Responsible Partner”
8	Suzuki Philippines	“Way of Life!”

9	BYD Philippines	“Build Your Dreams”
10	MG Philippines	“Made Global. Made Great.”

Data Collection Procedure

This study shall employ purposive sampling in selecting discourse materials relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling is appropriate because Critical Discourse Analysis prioritizes the selection of texts that are socially meaningful, ideologically rich, and contextually relevant rather than statistically representative samples. The inclusion criteria for discourse materials are as follows: (1) the slogan must be officially released by the automobile brand or its Philippine subsidiary; (2) the slogan must be used within the Philippine advertising context; (3) the discourse must be publicly accessible through official brand websites, verified social media accounts, television advertisements, press releases, dealership promotional materials, or digital campaign platforms; and (4) the selected text must contain symbolic or evaluative language suggestive of prestige, aspiration, distinction, success, modernity, or upward mobility.

The data collection process shall proceed in four stages. First, the researcher shall identify the leading automobile brands in the Philippines using recent market rankings, industry reports, and brand visibility indicators. Second, official slogans and supporting promotional texts shall be gathered from brand-owned communication channels such as websites, digital advertisements, and verified social media platforms. Third, collected discourse materials shall be archived, transcribed when necessary, and organized according to brand, campaign medium, and slogan theme. Fourth, the texts shall be coded and classified according to recurring discursive patterns such as ambition, prestige, aspiration, family success, exclusivity, power, or social advancement.

Data Analysis

The collected corpus shall be analyzed using Norman Fairclough’s (1989, 1992) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, interpreted through Gramsci’s (1971) concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) theory of distinction and symbolic capital.

The first analytical dimension, *textual analysis*, examine the linguistic properties of automobile slogans, including lexical choice, grammatical construction, modality, metaphor, evaluative expressions, and rhetorical devices. Particular attention is given to prestige-oriented language such as expressions of ambition, power, excellence, sophistication, freedom, and progress, which may linguistically construct desirable meanings around automobile ownership.

The second dimension, *discursive practice analysis*, investigate how prestige discourse is produced, circulated, and interpreted within Philippine automobile branding communication. This includes examining how slogans are developed by branding institutions, disseminated through various media platforms, and positioned toward target consumers through repeated communicative exposure. At this level, slogans are understood as strategic communicative products embedded within broader systems of branding, persuasion, and audience interpretation. Moreover, the slogans are treated not as isolated texts but as communicative products embedded within broader institutional systems of branding, media circulation, and audience consumption (Hernandez, 2022; Linguistic Insights into Philippine Automobile Advertisements, 2025). The analysis considered the role of corporate producers, media platforms, localized messaging strategies, and target audience positioning in constructing and sustaining prestige discourse.

The third dimension, *social practice analysis*, shall interpret the broader ideological and sociological meanings embedded in slogan discourse. Through the lens of Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, the study shall examine how branding discourse normalizes dominant consumer ideals such as aspiration, prestige, success, and socially desirable consumption. Through Bourdieu’s theory of distinction, the analysis shall further explore how automobile ownership is discursively positioned as symbolic capital, a socially recognized marker of taste, distinction, status, and prestige within Filipino society. This integrated analytical approach allows the study to uncover how branding language functions not only as persuasion but as a mechanism for constructing social meaning and symbolic hierarchy.

This section examined **social practice**, focusing on how automobile slogan discourse reinforced dominant consumer ideals and constructed symbolic meanings of status, distinction, and prestige in contemporary Filipino society. At this level, discourse was interpreted not merely as communication but as a social practice embedded within ideology, power relations, and systems of symbolic valuation. To deepen this interpretation, the analysis drew on Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) theory of distinction and symbolic capital.

Ethical Considerations

Since the study utilizes publicly available commercial texts and promotional materials, risks involving human participants are minimal. No direct participant recruitment, personal interviews, or private data collection are involved in the primary discourse analysis. Consequently, informed consent is generally not required for the use of publicly accessible advertisements, slogans, and official promotional texts. However, proper academic and ethical practice shall be observed by accurately citing all discourse sources, acknowledging brand ownership of promotional materials, and maintaining faithful representation of collected texts.

The study recognizes the ethical responsibility of critical scholarship to avoid defamatory interpretation or unjust characterization of specific brands. The objective of analysis is not to evaluate brands commercially nor to assign malicious intent to advertising institutions, but to critically examine how branding discourse constructs meaning within broader social and cultural contexts. Findings shall therefore be presented analytically, objectively, and responsibly, emphasizing scholarly interpretation rather than evaluative judgment against any brand or organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Problem 1: How were linguistic features employed in automobile slogans to construct prestige in Philippine branding discourse?

Table 2 Linguistic Features Employed in Selected Automobile Slogans in Constructing Prestige

Automobile Brand	Slogan	Key Linguistic Features	Dominant Discursive Cue	Prestige Constructed
Toyota	Let's Go Places	Inclusive pronoun, imperative mood, movement metaphor	exploration, forward movement	freedom, limitless opportunity
Mitsubishi	Life Made Better	evaluative adjective, passive enhancement framing	improvement, quality of life	upward mobility, life advancement
Honda	The Power of Dreams	abstract noun, metaphorical empowerment	aspiration, possibility	ambition, ideal selfhood
Ford	Built Ford Tough	adjective intensifier, declarative certainty	strength, endurance	rugged prestige, masculine capital
Nissan	Innovation That Excites	personification, emotive evaluation	novelty, excitement	modern prestige, progressive identity
Hyundai	Progress for Humanity	social idealism, broad collective framing	advancement, human betterment	enlightened prestige, ethical sophistication
Isuzu	Your Responsible Partner	personalization, relational framing	trust, dependability	respectable ownership
Suzuki	Way of Life!	identity framing, exclamatory emphasis	lifestyle integration	belonging, everyday distinction

BYD	Build Your Dreams	imperative mood, aspirational metaphor	ambition, self-construction	future-oriented prestige
MG	Made Global. Made Great.	parallelism, repetition, evaluative intensifier	excellence, cosmopolitanism	elite distinction, global prestige

The textual analysis revealed that automobile slogans consistently employed concise yet meaningful language to construct prestige through symbolic rather than functional appeals. Instead of emphasizing technical specifications such as engine performance, fuel efficiency, or safety features, the slogans relied on aspirational vocabulary, evaluative language, and metaphorical expressions to associate automobile ownership with success, personal growth, and social recognition. These findings suggest that prestige in Philippine automobile branding is created primarily through strategic linguistic framing that encourages consumers to attach broader social meanings to vehicle ownership.

One of the most prominent linguistic patterns was the use of **aspirational vocabulary**. Words such as *dreams*, *progress*, *better*, *great*, *innovation*, and *places* consistently conveyed ideas of advancement, opportunity, and a better future. Honda's *The Power of Dreams*, for example, combined the abstract concepts of *power* and *dreams* to evoke ambition, possibility, and self-realization. Rather than describing the vehicle itself, the slogan encouraged consumers to associate ownership with achieving their personal goals. Similarly, BYD's *Build Your Dreams* employed the imperative mood to invite consumers to take an active role in shaping their future, symbolically linking automobile ownership with aspiration and personal achievement.

Another recurring feature was the use of **movement and transformation metaphors**. Toyota's *Let's Go Places* extended the meaning of mobility beyond physical transportation by presenting movement as a metaphor for personal and social progress. The verb *go* suggested action and momentum, while *places* symbolized opportunities, accomplishments, and future possibilities. Within the Philippine context, where upward mobility remains a widely shared aspiration, this metaphor reinforced the belief that owning a vehicle represents progress in life. Likewise, Mitsubishi's *Life Made Better* implied that automobile ownership improves one's quality of life, portraying the vehicle as a catalyst for personal and family advancement rather than simply a mode of transportation.

The analysis also highlighted the strategic use of **personalization and relational language**. Isuzu's *Your Responsible Partner* established a direct relationship between the consumer and the brand through the possessive pronoun *your*, making the message feel personal and relevant. At the same time, the word *partner* transformed the automobile from a commercial product into a dependable companion. Likewise, Toyota's use of the inclusive pronoun *let's* fostered a sense of shared purpose between the brand and its consumers. These linguistic choices strengthened emotional connection and encouraged consumers to view automobile ownership as part of their personal journey rather than as a simple purchasing decision.

In addition, several slogans employed **evaluative language and syntactic compression** to strengthen prestige-related meanings. MG's *Made Global. Made Great.* used repetition, parallel structure, and positive evaluation to project international quality and refined sophistication. The repeated use of *made* created rhetorical emphasis, while *global* and *great* reinforced ideas of excellence and cosmopolitan identity. Similarly, Ford's *Built Ford Tough* relied on a concise declarative structure and the adjective *tough* to communicate durability, resilience, and strength. These linguistic features associated ownership with qualities that extend beyond the product itself, allowing the vehicle to symbolize confidence, capability, and masculine prestige.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that automobile slogans function as condensed expressions of prestige. Every lexical choice, grammatical structure, and rhetorical device contributes to constructing socially desirable meanings around ownership. Rather than equating prestige solely with wealth or luxury, the slogans associated it with ambition, progress, reliability, innovation, strength, and identity fulfillment (Barrero, 2025). Through carefully crafted language, automobiles were discursively transformed from functional commodities into symbolic representations of aspiration and social distinction (Hernandez, 2022; Ikezoe et al., 2021).

The findings also indicate that prestige was constructed through multiple symbolic pathways rather than through a single dominant narrative. Honda and BYD associated prestige with ambition and future aspirations, Mitsubishi emphasized life improvement and personal advancement, Ford highlighted strength and resilience, while MG and Nissan linked prestige with global sophistication and technological innovation. This diversity suggests that automobile brands strategically employed different linguistic resources to resonate with the varied aspirations, identities, and social experiences of Filipino consumers.

These textual patterns illustrate how language functions as a powerful symbolic resource in automobile branding. Through the deliberate use of aspirational vocabulary, metaphor, personalization, evaluative language, and rhetorical compression, the slogans assigned meanings that extended well beyond the functional qualities of the vehicles. Instead of merely describing products, the linguistic features framed automobiles as representations of progress, identity, social recognition, and desirable ways of living. These textual constructions provide the foundation for understanding how prestige discourse is subsequently produced, circulated, and interpreted within broader branding practices.

Problem 2: How was prestige discourse produced, circulated, and interpreted within Philippine automobile advertising practices?

Table 3 Production and Circulation of Prestige Discourse in Philippine Automobile Branding

Automobile Brand	Primary Production Source	Major Channels of Circulation	Localized Discursive Positioning	Target Consumer Identity	Discursive Function
Toyota	Global brand + Philippine subsidiary	TV commercials, dealerships, Facebook, YouTube, website campaigns	mobility, family aspiration, reliability	middle-class families, professionals	normalized aspiration
Mitsubishi	Philippine-localized branding adaptation	digital ads, dealership promotions, social media	life enhancement, family progress	practical aspirants, family-oriented consumers	lifestyle improvement discourse
Honda	Global branding localized in campaigns	television, online campaigns, brand websites	ambition, possibility, self-development	upwardly mobile professionals	aspirational identity formation
Ford	Global branding + local rugged positioning	pickup campaigns, digital advertising, events	strength, endurance, masculine identity	male professionals, entrepreneurs	masculine prestige discourse
Nissan	Global innovation-centered branding	digital media, integrated campaigns	modernity, excitement, future mobility	younger professionals, urban consumers	progressive prestige
Hyundai	Global ethical-progress discourse	multimedia branding, online channels	advancement, responsible modernity	socially conscious middle class	enlightened prestige
Isuzu	Reliability-centered brand communication	dealerships, commercial media, social campaigns	trust, dependability, practical prestige	business owners, family providers	respectable utility prestige

Suzuki	Lifestyle-centered brand messaging	social media, digital campaigns, dealerships	everyday mobility, identity fit	younger households, practical buyers	accessible prestige
BYD	Emerging future-driven discourse	digital-first campaigns, tech-centered branding	future orientation, innovation, aspiration	tech-oriented aspirants	futuristic prestige
MG	Premium-value global positioning	multimedia campaigns, online branding	cosmopolitan quality, global sophistication	prestige-seeking middle class	aspirational distinction

The analysis revealed that prestige discourse in Philippine automobile branding is carefully produced, localized, and circulated through coordinated communication strategies. Rather than functioning as isolated advertising slogans, these messages operate within a broader branding system that includes television commercials, digital platforms, dealership promotions, official websites, and social media campaigns. Through continuous exposure across these communication channels, automobiles are consistently portrayed as symbols of aspiration, achievement, and social distinction, making these meanings increasingly familiar and culturally meaningful to Filipino consumers.

A notable finding was that prestige discourse emerged through the collaboration between multinational automobile companies and their Philippine marketing subsidiaries. While global manufacturers established broad brand philosophies centered on mobility, innovation, ambition, and progress, local marketing teams adapted these messages to reflect Filipino values and everyday experiences. As a result, global branding narratives were not simply transferred to the Philippine market but were strategically reshaped to emphasize family advancement, practical success, dependability, and visible social mobility.

This process of localization was evident across several brands. Toyota's *Let's Go Places*, for example, promoted the universal idea of movement and opportunity. However, within the Philippine context, the slogan was consistently associated with family-centered advertising, reliable transportation, and life-stage achievements, positioning vehicle ownership as a symbol of middle-class success. Likewise, Mitsubishi's *Life Made Better* emphasized quality of life, family well-being, and practical improvement, themes that strongly resonate with Filipino aspirations for collective progress and family upliftment. These examples suggest that prestige in Philippine automobile branding is often framed as relational and community-oriented rather than purely individualistic.

Equally important was the extensive circulation of prestige discourse across multiple communication platforms. Branding messages appeared not only in traditional media such as television commercials but also through official websites, dealership promotions, Facebook pages, YouTube advertisements, influencer partnerships, and other digital campaigns. Consequently, consumers encountered these slogans repeatedly in different contexts, allowing the messages to become more recognizable and persuasive over time. Rather than serving as simple advertising statements, the slogans evolved into recurring symbolic cues that reinforced the association between automobile ownership and personal success.

The findings further showed that prestige discourse was carefully tailored to different consumer groups. Each brand communicated a distinct version of success by appealing to specific aspirations and lifestyles. Ford's *Built Ford Tough*, for instance, was consistently paired with images of resilience, rugged terrain, and entrepreneurial masculinity, appealing primarily to male professionals and business owners. In contrast, Hyundai's *Progress for Humanity* associated prestige with responsible innovation, ethical progress, and modern sophistication, attracting consumers who valued social responsibility alongside technological advancement. Similarly, BYD's *Build Your Dreams* targeted technology-oriented consumers by linking vehicle ownership with innovation, future readiness, and upward mobility. These findings indicate that prestige discourse is not uniform but strategically differentiated according to the identities and aspirations of its intended audiences.

Another significant finding was the use of multimodal storytelling to reinforce prestige. The slogans rarely stood alone. Instead, they were accompanied by images of successful professionals, happy families, adventurous journeys, and refined lifestyles that strengthened the intended message. Through the combined use of language, visuals, narratives, and repeated media exposure, prestige became more than a textual concept. It developed into a socially meaningful story that consumers could easily recognize and relate to in their everyday lives.

Viewed through Fairclough's concept of discursive practice, these findings suggest that prestige discourse is systematically produced and reproduced through institutional communication processes. The slogans function as discursive anchors around which broader narratives of success, mobility, identity, and aspiration are constructed. As these narratives circulate across multiple media platforms, they gain credibility, familiarity, and persuasive power within society.

The findings also highlight the importance of localization in shaping the meaning of prestige. Unlike branding strategies that focus primarily on luxury or exclusivity, Philippine automobile advertising frequently associates prestige with family well-being, responsible provision, practical achievement, and steady social advancement. By aligning branding messages with culturally valued ideals, automobile companies increase the relevance and persuasive appeal of their campaigns among Filipino consumers.

Prestige is not an inherent quality of automobiles but a socially constructed meaning created through strategic communication. Through carefully localized messages and sustained circulation across various media platforms, automobile branding transforms vehicle ownership into a recognizable symbol of aspiration, achievement, and desirable identity. In doing so, these discursive practices establish the foundation for the broader hegemonic consumer ideals and symbolic distinctions that emerge at the level of social practice.

Problem 3: How did automobile slogans reinforce hegemonic consumer ideals and construct symbolic distinction in contemporary Filipino society?

Table 4 Ideological and Symbolic Meanings Embedded in Automobile Slogans

Automobile Brand	Dominant Hegemonic Ideal Reinforced	Symbolic Capital Constructed	Marker of Social Distinction
Toyota	mobility as life advancement	dependable middle-class prestige	family success and respectable progress
Mitsubishi	better life through ownership	practical symbolic upliftment	improved quality of living
Honda	ambition and dream fulfillment	aspirational capital	success through self-realization
Ford	toughness as success identity	masculine symbolic capital	rugged capability and dominance
Nissan	innovation as modern status	progressive symbolic capital	technologically advanced identity
Hyundai	ethical progress and enlightened success	moral-symbolic prestige	socially conscious sophistication
Isuzu	responsibility and dependable provision	respectable provider capital	disciplined and practical achievement
Suzuki	lifestyle alignment and belonging	accessible symbolic distinction	practical but meaningful ownership
BYD	future-building through consumption	futuristic aspirational capital	innovation-centered prestige
MG	global sophistication and excellence	cosmopolitan symbolic capital	elite taste and refined distinction

The analysis revealed that automobile slogans consistently reinforced the idea that owning a vehicle represents more than a practical means of transportation. Instead, ownership was portrayed as a symbol of success, personal

progress, and social recognition. Across the ten automobile brands, automobiles were discursively positioned as pathways to a better life, the fulfillment of aspirations, and the expression of desirable social identities. Consequently, branding messages extended beyond promoting product features and encouraged consumers to associate vehicle ownership with achievement and prestige.

One of the most prominent ideological patterns was the construction of **mobility as success**. Slogans such as Toyota's *Let's Go Places*, Mitsubishi's *Life Made Better*, and BYD's *Build Your Dreams* consistently associated automobile ownership with the idea of moving forward in life. Although these slogans referred to physical mobility, they simultaneously conveyed broader meanings of economic advancement, personal growth, and future opportunities. Within the Philippine context, where upward mobility remains a deeply valued aspiration, these messages reinforced the cultural belief that material acquisition serves as a visible indicator of achievement and social progress.

From Gramsci's perspective, this pattern illustrates the operation of cultural hegemony. Through the repeated circulation of these messages, the notion that consumption leads to success gradually becomes accepted as common sense. As a result, automobile ownership is no longer viewed merely as a purchasing decision but as a socially recognized symbol of progress, stability, and accomplishment. Over time, these ideological meanings become normalized, shaping public perceptions of what it means to succeed.

In addition to promoting consumer ideals, the findings demonstrated that automobile slogans constructed different forms of **symbolic capital** that allowed consumers to communicate distinct social identities. Rather than presenting a single definition of prestige, each brand offered its own interpretation of social distinction by associating ownership with particular values and lifestyles.

For instance, Ford's *Built Ford Tough* associated prestige with strength, resilience, and rugged capability. In this discourse, ownership symbolized not only economic capacity but also culturally admired masculine qualities. In contrast, Hyundai's *Progress for Humanity* and Nissan's *Innovation That Excites* connected prestige with technological advancement, innovation, and responsible progress. These slogans appealed to consumers who sought recognition through intelligence, modernity, and forward-thinking values instead of overt displays of luxury.

Similarly, MG's *Made Global. Made Great.* constructed prestige through associations with global standards, refinement, and sophistication. By linking ownership with international quality and cosmopolitan taste, the slogan positioned consumers as culturally refined and socially distinguished. This finding supports Bourdieu's (1984) argument that consumption functions as a marker of distinction by communicating taste, refinement, and social position.

Interestingly, not all brands emphasized exclusivity or elite status. Toyota, Mitsubishi, and Isuzu instead highlighted values that strongly resonate within Filipino society, including family well-being, responsibility, and dependable provision. Their slogans suggested that prestige is achieved not only through wealth but also through one's ability to provide comfort, security, and improved living conditions for family members. In this respect, automobile ownership symbolized responsible adulthood and practical success, reflecting culturally valued forms of social recognition.

Another important pattern that emerged was the construction of identity through consumption. Across the branding messages, consumers were invited to view themselves as dream builders, innovators, responsible providers, resilient achievers, or globally minded individuals. Consequently, automobiles became symbolic extensions of personal identity, enabling consumers to communicate both who they are and who they aspire to become. Ownership therefore functioned not only as an economic act but also as a form of symbolic self-expression.

These findings demonstrate that automobile slogans operate as ideological discourse that shapes cultural understandings of prestige and success. Through repeated symbolic messages, branding reinforces the belief that automobile ownership represents progress, personal fulfillment, and social recognition. Viewed through Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, these messages normalize consumer aspirations by presenting

ownership as a legitimate measure of accomplishment. At the same time, Bourdieu's theory of distinction explains how automobiles function as forms of symbolic capital through which consumers communicate taste, identity, and social position. Although each brand promotes a different image of prestige, whether family-centered, masculine, progressive, cosmopolitan, or aspirational, all contribute to the broader cultural belief that owning a vehicle signifies achievement and social distinction. Ultimately, the findings suggest that automobile branding in the Philippines extends well beyond product promotion. It actively participates in constructing contemporary Filipino understandings of prestige, success, and identity through the strategic use of symbolic discourse.

Table 5 Integrated Emergent Discourses of Prestige in Philippine Automobile Branding

Integrated Theme	Emergent Discourse	Core Meaning Constructed
Prestige as Social Advancement		Automobile ownership was discursively constructed as a pathway toward upward mobility, improved quality of life, and socially recognized achievement.
Prestige as Aspirational Identity		Vehicles were framed as symbols of ambition, self-realization, lifestyle expression, and the pursuit of an idealized identity.
Prestige as Distinction and Sophistication		Ownership was associated with innovation, global refinement, technological modernity, and elevated symbolic status that signaled taste and social distinction.
Prestige as Socially Valued Character		Automobiles were linked with culturally admired qualities such as strength, responsibility, dependability, and respectable adulthood, positioning ownership as reflective of valued personal character.

The integrative analysis revealed four dominant discourse themes that shape how prestige is constructed in Philippine automobile branding: **prestige as social advancement, prestige as aspirational identity, prestige as distinction and sophistication, and prestige as socially valued character**. Together, these themes suggest that automobiles are presented as more than functional products. Instead, they are portrayed as symbols of achievement, personal identity, refinement, and socially admired values. This finding supports Keller and Swaminathan's (2020) view that modern branding increasingly relies on symbolic meanings that connect products with consumers' aspirations, lifestyles, and sense of self.

The first theme, prestige as social advancement, shows that automobile ownership is consistently associated with progress and upward mobility. Slogans such as *Let's Go Places*, *Life Made Better*, and *Build Your Dreams* encourage consumers to see vehicle ownership as a step toward a better future and a higher quality of life. Rather than promoting transportation alone, these messages present automobiles as markers of personal growth and success. As Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2022) noted, contemporary branding often shifts its focus from product features to the life improvements and values that products symbolize. In the Philippine setting, where economic mobility and family advancement are highly valued, these messages become especially meaningful.

The second theme, prestige as aspirational identity, highlights how automobile brands position vehicles as reflections of who consumers are or hope to become. Slogans such as *The Power of Dreams* and *Way of Life!* encourage buyers to associate ownership with ambition, self-expression, and the pursuit of an ideal lifestyle. This supports Aaker's (2021) argument that successful brands derive their strength from the symbolic meanings they carry. Likewise, Keller and Swaminathan (2020) explained that brands become influential when consumers perceive them as extensions of their desired identities rather than simply as products.

The third theme, prestige as distinction and sophistication, emphasizes innovation, global standards, and refined taste. Slogans such as *Innovation That Excites*, *Progress for Humanity*, and *Made Global. Made Great.* portray automobiles as symbols of intelligence, technological advancement, and elevated social status. This finding reflects Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction, which explains that consumption serves as a way for individuals to express cultural taste and social position. In this sense, owning a branded automobile becomes a symbolic expression of sophistication rather than merely a practical purchase.

The fourth theme, prestige as socially valued character, demonstrates that branding also connects automobile ownership with qualities such as responsibility, reliability, and strength. Ford's *Built Ford Tough* and Isuzu's *Your Responsible Partner* illustrate how prestige can be communicated through moral and character-based values instead of luxury alone. This finding is consistent with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of symbolic capital, which suggests that socially respected qualities can function as valuable forms of social recognition. In the Philippine context, where responsibility and dependability are widely admired, these messages reinforce the idea that owning a vehicle reflects good character as much as material success.

In summary, the overall findings show that prestige in Philippine automobile branding is multidimensional and deeply embedded in cultural meanings. Consistent with Fairclough (1992), the slogans do more than advertise products, they shape the way consumers understand success, identity, refinement, and personal worth. Through repeated exposure, these messages contribute to what Gramsci (1971) described as cultural hegemony, where particular beliefs and values gradually become accepted as common sense. At the same time, Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) theory helps explain how automobiles function as symbolic goods that communicate achievement, aspiration, sophistication, and socially valued character. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate that branding discourse extends beyond commercial promotion and plays an important role in constructing prestige, identity, and social meaning within Philippine society.

CONCLUSION

This study critically examined how prestige was discursively constructed in the slogans of leading automobile brands in the Philippines using Fairclough's 3-D Critical Discourse Analysis, interpreted through Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's theory of distinction and symbolic capital. The analysis revealed that automobile slogans employed strategic linguistic features such as aspirational vocabulary, metaphorical framing, evaluative expressions, and personalization to construct automobiles as symbols of progress, ambition, sophistication, and socially desirable identity.

At the level of discursive practice, prestige discourse was found to be institutionally produced, culturally localized, and strategically circulated through integrated advertising platforms in ways that aligned with Filipino values of family advancement, aspiration, responsibility, and respectable success. At the level of social practice, automobile slogans reinforced hegemonic consumer ideals by framing ownership as a culturally meaningful marker of achievement, identity fulfillment, and social distinction.

Four dominant prestige discourses emerged from the analysis: prestige as social advancement, prestige as aspirational identity, prestige as distinction and sophistication, and prestige as socially valued character. Viewed through Gramsci and Bourdieu, these discourses normalized aspirational consumption and positioned automobiles as forms of symbolic capital through which consumers communicate status, taste, and identity. Nevertheless, this study demonstrated that Philippine automobile slogans did not merely market vehicles, they discursively constructed social meanings of prestige, aspiration, and culturally valued success within contemporary Filipino consumer society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

For Future Researchers - Future studies may broaden the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis in branding by examining other promotional materials such as television advertisements, digital campaigns, visual branding, and social media content. Comparative studies across industries and cultural contexts may also provide deeper insights into how prestige and symbolic distinction are discursively constructed.

For Scholars in Discourse and Communication Studies- Researchers in discourse, communication, and media studies are encouraged to further explore commercial discourse as a site of ideology, identity construction, and symbolic meaning-making. Applying Critical Discourse Analysis to branding communication may enrich understanding of how advertising language shapes social values and consumer culture.

For Branding and Advertising Practitioners- Branding professionals are encouraged to recognize that slogans shape not only product perception but also cultural meanings of success, prestige, and identity. Advertising messages should therefore remain persuasive while being socially responsible, culturally sensitive, and ethically grounded.

For Consumers and Media Literacy Advocates – Consumers are encouraged to develop critical awareness of the symbolic and ideological meanings embedded in branding discourse. Media literacy initiatives may help individuals engage more reflectively with advertising messages and make informed consumption choices.

For Philippine Cultural and Communication Research - Future Philippine-based studies may continue examining how branding discourse reflects and shapes local cultural values, aspirations, and social meanings of achievement within contemporary consumer society.

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