

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study determines the characteristics of reviews of fiction and nonfiction books on the website Amazon.com – how writing style, word choice, rhetorical devices and supporting materials are used to persuade readers. This chapter presents discussions, responses to the research questions, and gives conclusions and recommendation based on the finding and result collected.

Results derived from qualitative data lead to the significant findings that enable the research to answer the research questions. The data analysis indicates that book reviews posted on Amazon.com are written in the form of combined descriptive and critical reviews for both fiction and non-fiction categories. As the analysis shows, therefore, that the descriptive review approach gives factual information concerning the books, especially non-fiction, and gives background information, including the character, plot and setting, for fiction book reviews.

Along with the data analysis and interpretation, the identification of the characteristics, the stylistic devices, and persuasive strategies of book reviews from both fiction and non-fiction categories were also described in a series of the descriptive analysis in Chapter 4.

The data analysis and interpretation together with the identification of characteristics, the stylistic devices and persuasive strategies of book reviews,

however, are made in response to the three research questions stated in Chapter 1 as described in the paragraphs below.

Responses to the Research Questions

RQ1. What are the Characteristics of Fiction and Non-fiction Book Reviews on the Website Amazon.com?

The study found that the book reviews posted on the Amazon.com website are in the form of both descriptive and critical reviews for both fiction and non-fiction. The use of descriptive reviews for non-fiction books is to inform readers of the information and content of the books and tell reader what the book is written about, as well as the topics being discussed in the book. It was also observed that book reviewers provided the key words from the books to readers.

The readers can get some idea what they will find in the book before they read or buy it. The descriptive review is consequently informative. For fiction book reviews, the use of descriptive review is to present the characters, the background of the story, the plot and setting, all of which concern story-telling.

The use of critical reviews for non-fiction book reviews is to evaluate the books with regard to whether the review writer finds the book worth reading, to point out in which ways the book is useful and for which groups of readers the book is appropriate for. The writing style of the author is also appraised in critical reviews, especially when the reviewers say that the authors make it easy and appealing for readers to read, because generally people find that non-fiction books with heavy topics are difficult to read and understand. When reviewers

point out the outstanding sides of a book, readers' attention is grabbed and they may start to consider purchasing it if they also see that the book covers the topics, as represented through descriptive review, they have an interest in. In fiction book reviews, it is found that critical reviews tend to evaluate the success of the author in entertaining readers. The development of characters and plot in the story are praised in the reviews if the reviewer considers them satisfying. On the other hand, it is also found that the reviewers comment on the weak points of a book but then often close with a positive comment based on the overall content of the book. Without a critical approach, the book review can only be a summary, in which the writer can only give information or content of the book but cannot share an opinion about or evaluate the quality of the book. Readers, consequently, would find it hard to make a decision as to whether the book is worth reading or buying. On the other hand, without descriptive writing in a review, the readers would not be able to know what the book is about and whether it has what they are looking for.

In comparison to academic or professional reviews, the researcher found that the book reviews on the Amazon.com website, even though written casually, share some similarities with academic review. One obvious characteristic is that both of them consist of an evaluation of the book by the reviewer. Evaluation can be, consequently, considered the main purpose of the reviews, as it helps point out the benefits and weak points of the book so that readers can be aware of them. However, if the reviewers only use the critical review, giving only praises or giving negative comments on the book, the reader will not have any real information on which to base a decision, even if the book is actually

good. It is, therefore, crucial that book reviewers make a balance between a descriptive and critical review for the best benefits of readers – and, incidentally, for the authors of the books.

RQ2. In Terms of Style, what is the Choice of Rhetorical Devices of Fiction and Non-fiction Book Reviews on Amazon.com?

From the study on the rhetorical devices, it was found that they appeared in both fiction and non-fiction book reviews. Fiction book reviews used rhetorical devices at the highest frequency, while non-fiction reviews used them at the lowest frequency. As reviewing books in the category of fiction is concerned with telling about imaginative stories, which are composed of feelings, rhetorical devices can help transmit the feelings to readers in more interesting and impressive ways. For the non-fiction book reviews, it seems that rhetorical devices help make the book review's content sound more relaxed, especially for the heavy topics. It can be explained that the reviewers avoid making the book reviews sound too serious and therefore attract readers into reading the rest of the contents being presented in the reviews. However, the use of rhetorical devices is not very common in non-fiction book reviews, since rhetorical devices are more suitable for fictional contents. Based on the observation, even though non-fiction book reviews use rhetorical devices at a low frequency, the use of simile occurs more frequently than it does in fiction book reviews. The most frequently used device in both fiction and non-fiction book reviews is metaphor. In non-fiction book reviews, metaphor is used to explain how the authors develop their work in the book, and it is used to criticize

the author's work, while in fiction book reviews, it is used as a device when narrating the story and it can enhance the story and increase readers' interest in reading the reviews. Critical reviews are also written with the help of rhetorical devices, which cannot be found in the academic review because the purpose of writing is different.

RQ3. In Terms of Persuasion, what Persuasive Strategies are Employed by the Book Reviewers to Attract Readers' Interest?

Based on the findings in aspects of language, it is found that the use of rhetorical devices, which are deemed as tools for persuasion, are employed quite frequently in fiction book reviews. Instead of narrating the story plainly, reviewers use rhetorical devices to vividly describe the characters and development of the story, which enables reader to know the tone of the book and see whether it is comedy, thriller, drama, or romance, and the application of rhetorical questions stimulates a reader's interest to know more about the rest of the story. Interestingly, rhetorical devices are also employed in non-fiction book reviews. They are used to describe the development of the content as well as the writing style of the author. Reasons behind this use can be explained by the commercial context where these book reviews exist. As many books need to be sold as possible, so rhetorical devices are employed to make the reviews sound attractive and persuasive. In summary, for both fiction and non-fiction book reviews, the rhetorical devices are expected to effectively attract readers' or customers' attention so that they want to know more about the books and to purchase them.

In aspect of advertising, the study finds informative material, namely writer's information and reference, awards and popularity, quotations from the book, and recommendation or evaluation of the reviewer, as common elements established in both fiction and non-fiction book reviews. Informative material is deemed necessary to give credibility to the work of the author, especially for non-fiction works, which generally concern fact and realistic knowledge, so in these cases, the author's qualifications, education degrees and careers are most frequently referred to. In the fiction category, the informative materials most used are the winning of awards and the popularity of the author's other books, as well as the reputation of the writer. This phenomenon signifies that all of these components are keys or techniques in appealing to reader's interest and trust in the quality and validity of the book before making a decision to purchase. The recommendation and evaluation on the book, based on the book reviewer's experience as gained from reading the book, also convince readers about its value. Lacking all this supporting material will make it difficult for readers to see if the book is valid and reliable (for non-fiction), and worth their time or enjoyable (for fiction).

Discussion



The role of the book reviews on the Amazon.com website has been illustrated all through this research, as can be seen also through the study on the consumer's behavior as explained in Chapter 1. For Amazon.com, which sells books to millions of people worldwide through the on-line market, the

importance of book reviews is even greater, and they have an influence on the decision-making of the customers. It is, therefore, crucial that the book reviews are written and employed appropriately and strike a balance between being informative and evaluative, as these two approaches are beneficial in their own way. Through critical reviews, readers see a better view of the books based on the comment, evaluation and recommendation of the writer, so it is important, either positively or negatively, that the writers do not overuse it, as it can turn the reader away. Overuse of the critical approach can persuade readers not to read or buy the book, as they feel that there are too many weak points in the book, which, in fact, might be so small that the readers themselves may find it acceptable if they read it themselves. The balance in the use of the two reviewing approaches, therefore, is crucial when reviewing the book.

It is interesting to notice that even though the writers are reviewing the non-fiction books, they also use these devices to present the content, the thesis, the author's writing style and the tone of the books. One possible reason is that the writers try to get the attention of readers, so it is necessary that they make their reviews as interesting as possible. By mentioning the education and related work and experience of the author, readers can acknowledge the trustworthiness of the book, especially the non-fiction books, which concerns fact and reality. Also, the popularity of the book also helps make it easier for reader to judge whether they should pick it. By seeing how many copies a book has sold, or how many languages the book has been translated into, the readers can have more trust in its quality; because they see that so many people have read it and that it has been translated into many languages, the quality of the

book is assured. However, regarding this point, especially the sales volume or the claim that the books are good sellers, readers will need to be cautious because the book could be popular just among a specific group of readers, not all.

As for the use of quotations from the book, this material can help readers to see more clearly the tone of the book and it can help prove that the reviewer does not just based on his or her opinion because the readers can have some experience with the book themselves from reading the quotations or the conversations of the characters in fiction, which would make it easier for readers to consider whether the books are valuable and suitable for them to read. It can be concluded that writing book review on the website Amazon.com requires both descriptive and critical reviewing skills, along with a decorative style with rhetorical devices and figurative language.

All of the phenomena described above are the result of the context, which forces book reviewers to employ certain styles and certain approaches in writing, such as the use of rhetorical language and informative materials to compose book reviews. In a different context or environment, some or many of the elements may be absent or useless. This situation confirms the theory that context plays greatest role in designing the style and purpose of communication.

Conclusion

In this research, the descriptive qualitative method is employed to analyze the findings of the study of book reviews on the website Amazon.com.

The analysis was preceded by examining the writing styles, namely

descriptive and critical reviews, applied in the book reviews, as well as the use of rhetorical devices and informative material that are used as persuasive tools to appeal to readers' interest and credibility of the messages. The study has accomplished its purposes, and the findings reveal that in a commercial context such as Amazon.com, specific linguistic instruments – which are the rhetorical devices, namely metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole and rhetorical questions – are employed by reviewers in writing the book reviews, in an attempt to create vivid images and the persuasive sense, to attract the readers' interest toward purchasing the book. Furthermore, apart from describing the content of the books, extra informative material is given in the book reviews to provide other necessary supporting information for potential buyers before they make a purchase. It can be said that communication in e-commerce requires specific strategies in creating attractiveness and persuasiveness in order to sell products.

Recommendation

Since the study concerns the persuasive strategies used in book reviews, particularly aspects of writing style and the use of rhetorical devices, further study may be conducted by using some surveys as a tool to examine more deeply how the content of the book reviews affect the readers' thoughts. The book reviews of one book could be separated into three types: pure descriptive review, pure critical review, and mixed descriptive and critical review, with or without the use of rhetorical devices. Another recommendation could be that the

researcher in a future study could find out how these styles of writing book reviews can be applied to the writing of librarian book reviews and whether it can help promote the use of books in a library.

Summary

This final chapter summarizes the findings of the study. The chapter provides some critical considerations. The research questions were answered and discussed in detail. The meaningful issues related to the study were presented for the benefit of related future research. It can therefore be claimed that the study achieved its purposes.