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PHRASAL VERBS IN DIGITAL ADVERTISING: LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

Summary. *The aim of the study is to examine the stylistic and pragmatic functions of phrasal verbs in contemporary digital advertising discourse, with particular focus on their role as linguistic strategies of engagement. The article seeks to demonstrate how phrasal verbs contribute to accessibility, immediacy, and interpersonal closeness in digital advertising environments characterized by information overload, reduced attention spans, and the need for immediate user response. In such contexts, advertisers increasingly rely on linguistic forms associated with everyday spoken English. Phrasal verbs, defined from a linguistic perspective as multi-word verbal constructions consisting of a lexical verb and an adverbial particle that together function as a single semantic and syntactic unit, are particularly well suited to these communicative demands.*

The methodology of the study is grounded in contemporary research in phraseology, stylistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and advertising linguistics. The research employs qualitative close textual analysis of authentic digital advertising language. Particular attention is paid to interface prompts, promotional messages, and campaign discourse produced by major technology companies, including Google, Meta (Facebook and Instagram), and Apple. The analysis focuses on identifying recurrent phrasal verbs and interpreting their stylistic, pragmatic, and communicative functions within real digital contexts.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in its focus on phrasal verbs as a strategic grammatical resource in digital advertising discourse. The study demonstrates that phrasal verbs are not stylistically incidental but function as systematic linguistic mechanisms that shape conversationalization, cognitive accessibility, and trust-oriented brand communication in digital environments.

The conclusions of the study show that phrasal verbs contribute significantly to the conversationalization of digital advertising by embedding persuasive intent within familiar and cognitively accessible grammatical constructions. Through frequent use of phrasal verbs such as sign up, get started, check out, look up, set up, back up, join in, and get more out of, advertisers frame commercial actions as natural extensions of everyday behavior. By foregrounding the stylistic importance of phrasal verbs, the article contributes to linguistic research on advertising discourse and demonstrates how grammatical choices play a decisive role in shaping engagement, trust, and user experience in contemporary digital communication.

Key words: *phrasal verbs, digital advertising, discourse analysis, stylistics, pragmatics, engagement.*



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ФРАЗОВІ ДІЄСЛОВА В ЦИФРОВІЙ РЕКЛАМІ: ЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ ЗАЛУЧЕННЯ

Анотація. Метою дослідження є вивчення стилістичних і прагматичних функцій фразових дієслів у сучасному цифровому рекламному дискурсі з особливим акцентом на їхній ролі як лінгвістичних стратегій залучення. У статті показано, як фразові дієслова сприяють доступності, безпосередності та міжособистісній близькості в умовах цифрової реклами, що характеризується інформаційним перевантаженням, зниженням концентрації уваги та потребою в негайній реакції користувачів. У таких умовах рекламодавці дедалі частіше звертаються до мовних форм, притаманних повсякденному усному мовленню. Фразові дієслова, визначені з позиції лінгвістики як багатокомпонентні дієслівні конструкції, складники яких – лексичне дієслово та адвербіальна частка, що функціонують як єдина семантико-синтаксична одиниця, є особливо придатними для реалізації цих комунікативних завдань.

Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на сучасних напрацюваннях у галузі фразеології, стилістики, прагматики, дискурс-аналізу та лінгвістики реклами. У статті застосовано якісний метод близького текстуального аналізу автентичної мови цифрової реклами. Особливу увагу приділено інтерфейсним підказкам, рекламним повідомленням і дискурсу рекламних роликів провідних технологічних компаній, зокрема Google, Meta (Facebook та Instagram) і Apple. Аналіз зосереджено на виявленні повторюваних фразових дієслів та інтерпретації їхніх стилістичних, прагматичних і комунікативних функцій у реальних цифрових контекстах.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у розгляді фразових дієслів як стратегічного граматичного ресурсу в цифровому рекламному дискурсі. Доведено, що фразові дієслова не є стилістично випадковими елементами, а функціонують як системні мовні механізми, що формують процеси надання мовленню розмовного характеру, когнітивної доступності та забезпечують комунікацію, орієнтовану на формування довіри до бренду в цифровому середовищі.

Висновки показують, що фразові дієслова надають мові цифрової реклами більш розмовного та природного характеру, передаючи переконливий зміст через звичні й легко зрозумілі граматичні конструкції. Завдяки частому використанню фразових дієслів *sign up*, *get started*, *check out*, *look up*, *set up*, *back up*, *join in* та *get more out of* рекламодавці подають комерційні дії як звичні й природні елементи повсякденної поведінки користувачів. Підкреслюючи стилістичну важливість фразових дієслів, стаття розширює уявлення про мовні особливості рекламного дискурсу та показує, що саме граматичний вибір має вирішальне значення для формування довіри й позитивного сприйняття взаємодії з цифровими сервісами в сучасній цифровій комунікації.

Ключові слова: фразові дієслова, цифрова реклама, дискурс-аналіз, стилістика, прагматика, залучення.

Statement of the Problem. Digital advertising represents one of the most dynamic domains of contemporary public discourse. Unlike traditional print or broadcast advertising, digital advertising functions within environments that require rapid processing, immediate interaction, and continuous user engagement. In

order to compete for attention within information-saturated digital spaces, advertisers increasingly rely on linguistic strategies associated with spoken and informal communication.

Despite extensive linguistic research on advertising discourse, much of the existing scholarship has focused on lexical creativity,

metaphor, evaluative language, and visual-verbal interaction (Cook, 2001; Goddard, 2002; Myers, 1994). Grammatical choices, particularly the use of phrasal verbs, have often been treated as stylistically secondary or purely functional. At the same time, linguistic research on phrasal verbs has traditionally emphasized their pedagogical relevance, semantic opacity, or acquisition difficulty (Darwin & Gray, 1999; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999; Gardner & Davies, 2007) rather than their stylistic and pragmatic roles in real-world discourse.

This gap is especially problematic in the context of digital advertising, where phrasal verbs occur with high frequency and perform crucial communicative functions. By framing actions, benefits, and processes in everyday language, phrasal verbs allow advertisers to simplify complex digital operations and to encourage engagement without overt coercion. The problem addressed in this article is, therefore, the underestimation of phrasal verbs as a strategic grammatical resource in digital advertising discourse.

The relevance of the present study is determined by the growing importance of digital advertising as a dominant form of public and commercial communication in the contemporary information society. Digital platforms have become the primary environment in which users encounter advertising messages, interact with brands, and make consumption-related decisions. In these conditions, language plays a crucial role in attracting attention, facilitating comprehension, and motivating engagement. Understanding the linguistic mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of digital advertising is a relevant task for modern linguistics.

From a linguistic perspective, the relevance of this research lies in its focus on grammatical structures that have traditionally received less attention in advertising studies. While advertising discourse has been widely analyzed in terms of metaphor, evaluative lexis, creativity, and multimodality, grammatical choices particularly the use of phrasal verbs, have often been regarded as secondary or purely functional. However, in contemporary digital advertising, phrasal verbs occur with high frequency and perform strategically important stylistic and pragmatic

functions. Their role in shaping engagement, accessibility, and trust remains insufficiently explored, which creates a clear research gap addressed by this study.

The relevance of the study is further determined by the communicative conditions of digital environments, which are characterized by information overload, reduced attention spans, and the need for immediate user response. In such contexts, advertisers increasingly rely on linguistic forms associated with everyday spoken English. Phrasal verbs, as cognitively accessible and pragmatically efficient constructions, are particularly well suited to these demands. Analyzing their functions allows for a deeper understanding of how digital advertising achieves conversationalization and interpersonal alignment.

Analysis of research and publications.

The study of phrasal verbs has a long and well-established tradition in English linguistics. Darwin and Gray (1999) provide a foundational distinction between phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and free verb–adverb combinations, emphasizing that true phrasal verbs function as single lexical units. Corpus-based research by Biber et al. (1999) demonstrates that phrasal verbs are particularly frequent in spoken English and informal written registers.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) describe phrasal verbs as a core component of informal English grammar, noting their syntactic flexibility and pragmatic versatility. Gardner and Davies (2007) further argue that phrasal verbs are central to contemporary English usage rather than marginal or stylistically inferior.

Stylistic research has increasingly emphasized the role of grammar in shaping discourse meaning. Simpson (2004) and Fairclough (1995) argue that grammatical patterns contribute directly to voice, stance, and audience alignment. Mahlberg (2013) demonstrates that recurrent grammatical constructions create cohesion and stylistic identity in texts.

Advertising discourse has been examined extensively by Cook (2001), Goddard (2002) and Myers (1994), who highlight creativity, persuasion, and audience positioning. Fairclough's concept of conversationalization (Fairclough, 1995) is particularly relevant for digital advertising. Pragmatic and phraseological

approaches by Wray (2002), Carter (2004), and Bozhko (2025) emphasize the role of formulaic and phraseological units in emotional economy and communicative efficiency.

Research on digital discourse by Crystal (2011) and Tagg (2015) further underscores the importance of immediacy, informality, and user-centred communication. Bozhko's work on advertising language as a pedagogical tool highlights the applied relevance of advertising discourse for understanding authentic contemporary English usage (Bozhko, 2025).

The aim of this study is to analyze the stylistic and pragmatic functions of phrasal verbs in digital advertising discourse and to demonstrate how they operate as linguistic strategies of engagement. The article seeks to identify major functional groups of phrasal verbs used in digital advertising and to explain how these constructions contribute to accessibility, persuasion, trust-building, and user involvement.

Presentation of the material. This section analyzes the use of phrasal verbs as linguistic strategies of engagement in contemporary digital advertising discourse. The analysis draws on authentic examples from advertising campaigns, interface language, and promotional communication produced by major technology companies, including Google, Meta (Facebook and Instagram), and Apple. The results demonstrate that phrasal verbs are systematically employed to promote user action, reduce cognitive effort, and construct informal, trust-oriented brand voices. When examined collectively, these constructions reveal a coherent grammatical pattern that supports conversationalization, accessibility, and persuasive effectiveness in digital advertising.

A defining feature of digital advertising discourse is the prevalence of short, directive messages designed to prompt immediate user action. In this context, phrasal verbs function as highly effective call-to-action devices because they are concise, familiar, and action-oriented. Google advertising interfaces and promotional materials provide numerous examples of this strategy, including phrasal verbs such as **sign up** (e.g. *Sign up for Google Workspace*) and **get started** (e.g. *Get started with Google Ads*). The phrasal verb *sign up* replaces more formal alternatives such as *register* or *enrol*, framing commitment as a low-effort and reversible action.

Similarly, *get started* emphasizes initiation rather than obligation, encouraging users to begin interaction without implying long-term responsibility. Semantically, these phrasal verbs foreground process and accessibility, while stylistically they align with spoken English, reinforcing Google's brand identity as intuitive and user-friendly.

Meta platforms rely heavily on comparable call-to-action phrasal verbs, including **log in**, **find out more**, and **join in**, particularly in community-focused prompts on Facebook and Instagram. In these contexts, *log in* functions as a procedural phrasal verb embedded directly into interface language and rendered almost invisible through habitual use. *Find out* invites curiosity rather than demanding attention, while *join in* emphasizes participation and inclusion. Pragmatically, these constructions lower psychological barriers to engagement and increase the likelihood of interaction by framing digital actions as familiar and socially motivated rather than institutionally imposed.

Beyond calls to action, digital advertising frequently encourages users to explore content, products, or features without immediate purchase pressure. Phrasal verbs play a crucial role in framing exploration as casual, voluntary, and self-directed. Google regularly employs exploratory phrasal verbs such as **check out** (e.g. *check out new features*) and **look up** (e.g. *look up places near you on Google Maps*). The phrasal verb *check out* suggests browsing rather than evaluation, minimizing the sense of commercial obligation. *Look up* aligns directly with Google's core search function and embeds the brand's identity into everyday language use, reinforcing habitual interaction.

Meta advertising language similarly favours exploratory phrasal verbs such as **scroll through** (e.g. *scroll through stories*) and **tap into** (e.g. *tap into your audience*). These constructions reflect embodied digital actions. *Scroll through* mirrors actual user behaviour and physical interaction with interfaces, while *tap into* metaphorically frames access to audiences or insights as effortless and intuitive. Stylistically, these phrasal verbs reinforce immediacy and user agency, positioning users as active explorers rather than passive recipients of information.

One of the most prominent functions of phrasal verbs in digital advertising is the

simplification of technical or procedural information. Digital products and services often involve complex operations that must be communicated quickly and clearly. Advertisers rely on familiar multi-word verbs to translate technical processes into everyday actions. Apple provides particularly clear examples through phrasal verbs such as **set up** (e.g. *Set up your iPhone in minutes*), **back up** (e.g. *Back up your data with iCloud*), and **turn on / turn off**. The phrasal verb *set up* compresses a potentially complex technical process into a simple, routine action, while *back up* transforms data security into an almost domestic activity. Stylistically, these choices align with Apple's long-standing emphasis on simplicity and human-centred design. Pragmatically, they reduce anxiety associated with technology and promote trust by presenting digital procedures as familiar and controllable.

Google and Meta also rely heavily on phrasal verbs such as **fill in**, **set up**, and **switch on**, particularly in onboarding and account-creation contexts. These verbs frame digital procedures as familiar physical actions, reinforcing cognitive accessibility and supporting rapid user engagement. Through such constructions, complex digital environments are linguistically reshaped to resemble everyday experiential reality.

Phrasal verbs are also frequently used to construct digital engagement as social participation rather than mere consumption. This strategy is especially prominent in social media advertising, where platforms aim to present themselves as spaces of interaction, creativity, and belonging. Meta campaigns commonly include expressions such as *join in the conversation*, *hang out live*, and *share with friends*. The phrasal verb *join in* emphasizes collective participation and shared experience, while *hang out* draws directly from informal spoken discourse associated with leisure and friendship. These constructions position the platform as a social environment rather than a commercial product, thereby enhancing emotional engagement and long-term user loyalty.

Google similarly adopts community-oriented phrasal verbs in educational, creative, and collaborative initiatives, using expressions such as **take part in** (e.g. *online challenges*

or programs) and **work together**. These constructions frame digital activity as cooperative and inclusive, reinforcing positive brand values and encouraging sustained engagement.

Another important functional group includes phrasal verbs that encode improvement, optimization, and personal growth. Such verbs are particularly common in performance-oriented and self-development advertising, where benefits must be communicated persuasively without appearing aggressive. Google and Meta frequently use constructions such as **boost up** (e.g. *boost up your reach*) and growth-oriented expressions. These phrasal verbs convey upward movement and enhancement, framing improvement as dynamic and achievable.

Apple, by contrast, often favours more understated improvement-oriented phrasal verbs, including **get more out of** (e.g. *get more out of your Mac*) and **move up to** (e.g. *move up to iCloud+*). The phrasal verb *get more out of* frames improvement as unlocking existing potential rather than undergoing radical change. This strategy aligns with Apple's minimalist ethos and avoids overt persuasion. Pragmatically, such constructions encourage users to perceive added value without pressure.

Trust-building is another domain in which phrasal verbs play a crucial role. Digital environments often involve issues of data security, privacy, and long-term commitment, making reassurance essential. Apple and Google frequently use phrasal verbs such as **look after** and **stand by** in contexts related to user support and data protection. While expressions such as *protect against* approach prepositional usage, *look after* functions as a clear phrasal verb expressing care and responsibility. Stylistically, it humanizes the brand and frames technical safeguards as personal concern rather than abstract policy.

Taken together, these findings show that across platforms phrasal verbs consistently serve three core and interrelated functions: engagement initiation, cognitive simplification, and interpersonal alignment. Their high frequency and functional diversity demonstrate that phrasal verbs are deliberate linguistic strategies rather than incidental stylistic choices. By embedding commercial intent within everyday grammatical structures, advertisers reduce formality, foster trust, and encourage interaction. Phrasal verbs

contribute directly to the conversationalization of digital advertising discourse, enabling brands to manage attention, reduce complexity, and construct meaningful relationships with users. Recognizing the strategic role of phrasal verbs, therefore, allows for a more nuanced understanding of how grammar operates persuasively in contemporary digital communication.

Conclusions. This study has demonstrated that phrasal verbs constitute a central stylistic and pragmatic resource in contemporary digital advertising discourse. Their systematic and recurrent use across digital platforms confirms that phrasal verbs are not accidental or merely stylistic embellishments, but integral components of the grammatical architecture of advertising communication. By drawing on linguistic patterns associated with everyday spoken English, phrasal verbs contribute decisively to the process of conversationalization, allowing advertising discourse to adopt an informal, dialogic, and user-oriented tone. This conversational quality enables advertisers to communicate persuasively while avoiding the rigidity and impersonality traditionally associated with institutional or commercial language.

The analysis has shown that the use of phrasal verbs significantly enhances cognitive accessibility in digital advertising. Digital products, services, and platforms often involve abstract processes and technical complexity, which may present barriers to user engagement. Phrasal verbs help to overcome these barriers by translating complex digital actions into familiar, routine activities expressed through everyday language. As a result, phrasal verbs reduce cognitive effort, facilitate rapid comprehension, and support intuitive interaction. In this way, they function as linguistic tools that mediate between technological complexity and human experience, making digital environments more approachable and user-friendly.

In addition to promoting accessibility, phrasal verbs play a crucial role in trust-building within digital advertising discourse. By employing grammatical constructions associated with interpersonal communication, advertisers construct brand voices that appear supportive, reliable, and emotionally attuned to users. This trust-oriented function is particularly important in digital contexts where users are required to

share personal data, commit to subscriptions, or rely on technological systems. Phrasal verbs contribute to the perception of brands as caring and responsive entities, thereby strengthening emotional bonds and fostering long-term user loyalty.

The study further demonstrates that phrasal verbs are central to initiating engagement in digital advertising. Through action-oriented constructions, advertisers prompt user interaction in a manner that is direct yet non-imposing. These grammatical choices frame engagement as voluntary and effortless, encouraging participation without exerting overt pressure. At the same time, phrasal verbs are instrumental in simplifying complex digital processes, ensuring that users can navigate platforms and services with minimal linguistic or cognitive difficulty.

Moreover, phrasal verbs play an important role in representing improvement and benefit in digital advertising discourse. By encoding enhancement, optimization, and positive change through familiar multi-word constructions, advertisers present benefits as attainable and incremental rather than radical or disruptive. This strategy allows users to perceive value without feeling coerced, aligning persuasion with empowerment. At the emotional level, phrasal verbs contribute to the construction of alignment between brands and users, reinforcing a sense of shared experience and mutual understanding.

The function of phrasal verbs thus extends well beyond informality. They operate as core grammatical tools of digital persuasion, shaping how actions, processes, benefits, and relationships are linguistically constructed and interpreted. These findings support Yu. Bozhko's view of advertising language as both communicatively and pedagogically valuable, demonstrating that advertising discourse reflects authentic patterns of contemporary language use and offers rich material for linguistic analysis and language teaching (Bozhko, 2025).

By foregrounding grammatical analysis, this article contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of advertising discourse and challenges approaches that prioritize lexis or visual design at the expense of grammar. The findings highlight the importance of phrasal verbs in shaping user experience and brand perception, showing that grammatical choices play a decisive

role in how digital advertising communicates meaning, builds trust, and sustains engagement. Future research may extend this approach through corpus-based investigations or cross-linguistic analyses of digital advertising discourse, further elucidating the role of phrasal verbs in global digital communication.

Prospects for further research include corpus-based quantitative investigations of phrasal verb frequency and distribution across different digital platforms, genres, and industries,

as well as cross-linguistic and contrastive studies examining how equivalent engagement strategies are realized in other languages. Further research may also explore the reception of phrasal verbs by different user groups, including non-native speakers, and investigate their pedagogical potential in teaching digital literacy, pragmatics, and professional communication. Such directions will allow for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the role of grammar in global digital advertising discourse.

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