

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

LINGUISTIC CUES OF DECEPTION
IN ILLEGAL INVESTMENT SCAMS'
PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

Scams are prevalent in today's digital environment, and they take advantage of those who need to pay attention through intriguing claims about the financial rewards and luxurious lifestyles they would get in return. One way this catastrophe activity has spread so rapidly across the globe is through a strategy implemented by the platforms in promotional materials intended to allure potential investors. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the linguistic cues of deception used and identify the recurring patterns presented in promotional materials of illegal investment scams. The multi-method research design utilised this study by using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC-22) and Atlas.ti23 software through Criteria-Based Content Analysis (CBCA) and Reality Monitoring (RM) theory for a comprehensive analysis. The data collection was provided by the Securities Commission Malaysia (SC), Royal Police Malaysia (RPM), and Central Bank of Malaysia (CBM). The present research reveals unique linguistic patterns that promotional materials employ to attract potential investors. The unique linguistic patterns include exaggerated claims, misleading information, and psychological manipulation strategies. These patterns are discovered through in-depth research. The results of this study make a valuable contribution to the field of deception detection methodologies and possess theoretical and practical implications for policymakers, regulatory approaches, and public education campaigns that seek to protect potential investors and promote financial awareness. By clarifying the illusory rhetoric intertwined within these deceptive promotional materials, this study provides individuals with a wealth of knowledge necessary to make intelligent choices and secure themselves against becoming prey to illegal investment scams.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the study

In this technologically dependent era, the world has shifted to a borderless information transfer, making communication more efficient and faster at the convenience of fingertips just a click away. This technological advancement has tremendously improved the quality of human life professionally and personally. However, despite these advantages, fake news and cybercrimes can be found everywhere, including social media platforms, where they can easily mislead readers and persuade them to believe that social media is currently the most effective way to have conversations, share information, and create web content, giving anyone looking for work as a content creator or influencer (Adha, 2020). Many trending social media sites, such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Facebook, can promote materials, learn new things, or connect with friends and family. Besides broadening the user's knowledge in a particular field, social media also allows its users to build their professional network by connecting with other professionals in the same industry. Therefore, these networks could gain customers' feedback other than commercialising their schemes or brands by effectively implementing strategies to attract customers' or readers' attention.

On the other hand, social media makes it easier for those with innovative ideas to connect globally. By sharing photographs, text, multimedia, and other content, social media has created a foundation for communication. These platforms offer advantages such as entertainment, information access, practicality, and pleasure. Today, people use social media mainly for a variety of goals. Newspapers are another form of communication and advertising besides social media (Xu et al., 2022). Social media is typically used for advertising because users frequently view free advertisements.

Nevertheless, this advancement led to other circumstances where an irresponsible individual purposely misled and took advantage of the technology by influencing and convincing others to be in their games because the power of words and sentence structure they have used is compelling and convincing to attract their buyer's attention. Language is used to communicate in many ways among cultures, including