

## THE LANGUAGE OF ONLINE ADVERTISEMENTS

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The article aims at presenting typical linguistic features of the language of advertising. The latter plays an extremely important role in promoting various products. Advertising language sometimes is intended to inform, but more often to persuade and influence. In order to make the information accessible to audience, the choice of words in advertising is very cautious. The idea to focus on online advertisements stems from the fact that since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, emerging technologies have had a dramatic impact on the growth of advertising. The Internet sends information promptly to people's desktops, cell phones and by clicking on the advertisement we are only a step away from buying the product. The further discussion includes the semantic, syntactic and other basic features of persuasion in online advertising.

**Key words:** online advertisements, functions of advertising, linguistic features, persuasion.

### **Introduction**

Advertising is something that we are all exposed to. It is also something that is likely to affect most of us in a number of different spheres of our lives. It is reasonable to say that we live in a world of advertising. As potential consumers, we are always bombarded with all kinds of product or service information from various media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, Internet, etc. The advertised product is most likely shown in a desirable context, evoking emotions and feelings in the audience by promising them to gain pleasure if they purchase or possess a product (Dyer 1982). In other words, advertisements create desires that did not exist before, trying to manipulate people into buying a way of life together with the product. However, advertising does more than merely selling products or forming consumption patterns – it also informs, educates, changes

attitudes, and builds images, since what is sold is never a product, but always an idea (Medawar 1979).

Regarding web advertisements, Janoschka (2004) points out their three main functions: catching the user's attention, persuading the user to activate the advertisement, and meeting the user's expectations provoked by the advertising message. This is easily recognized, but the ways to achieve the effect vary considerably. The language characteristic of advertisements just mirrors these functions, since the majority of linguistic, stylistic, textual and contextual meanings arise from that particular goal.

The article aims at presenting the characteristic linguistic elements of online advertisements at different language levels (orthographic, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic), which will be identified, explained and illustrated. The role of the Internet as a new medium is highlighted as it has established new strategies in the communication process within the short period of its existence.

In the last two decades the focus of the growing advertising industry has shifted from the traditional print and broadcast media towards the Internet and its most prominent application, the World Wide Web. Many authors outline potential benefits of online advertising, which cannot be found in traditional media advertising (Zeff & Aronson 1997; Armstrong 2001; Kaye & Medoff 2001; Schumann & Thorson 2007). The purpose of this paper is not to compare print and web advertisements, but to gain a better understanding of the main linguistic strategies in online advertising.

### **History of Advertising**

It is important first to start with a brief introduction of advertising throughout the history to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning, advertising was verbal, delivered in ancient times by Greek and Roman criers in the marketplace shouting the wares of traders. Outside advertising can be traced to posted notices on papyrus in ancient Egypt for runaway slaves. Rather than something for sale, notices of runaway slaves and bond servants, with rewards offered, may have been the first advertising (Fang 1997).

Not many references exist to advertising the Dark Ages, when literacy was regarded of little worth; in fact, to advertise an item might bring bandits as well as customers to the door. The growing of Mercantilism during the Middle Ages

changed the attitude. Notices called *siquis* were posted in public places, the term originating from Latin *si quis* ("if anyone") because so many began "if anyone knows..." or "if anyone desires...". Then later, the word advertisement started to appear in the second half of the seventeenth century, replacing *advices*, which had replaced the older *siquis*.

A noticeable modern form of advertising appears with the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution and the overproduction of goods through new manufacturing techniques (Brantson and Stafford 1999). This meant that consumer goods companies were in need of stimulating demand.

### **The Main Types of Advertising**

We can classify the types of advertising according to the type of medium: TV, radio, brochures, leaflets, magazines, newspapers and other printed material advertising, the Internet and Direct Mail advertising, outdoor advertising, etc. Janoschka (2004) classifies two general categories of advertising.

First, within traditional advertising, conventional and direct advertising are distinguished and both categories are further divided according to the means or instruments they use.

Second, on-line advertising, which has several manifestations (e.g., web ads, pop-up windows, etc.) is based on traditional advertising but develops some distinctive communication strategies and therefore it is treated as a category of its own

### **Linguistic Means used in Advertising Language**

The language of advertising is characterized by the use of certain stylistic devices, as well as semantic and syntactic features which make it more expressive. Because most advertisements approximate to every day conversation, there is relatively free selection of sentence types. Leech offers the results of the research dealt with the frequency of sentence types in English advertising: "...in the television sample, over one in thirty major independent clauses were interrogative, and over one in four major independent clauses were imperative."

As to syntactical features, it should be stated that simple statements are more often used. Sentences in advertisements are short, consisting of about 12 words. Quite common are the cases of using rhetorical questions. But why do advertisements use **questions**? It is for the same reason as why they use

commands: they evoke the sense of personal communication in the reader. In advertising language, presupposition is a very frequent way of expressing the content. Angela Goddard writes that presupposition is "all about reading between lines; since this is, as it suggests, a hidden process, it is very interesting to advertisers, as we can be taking in all sorts of assumptions without consciously paying attention to them." (Goddard 1998).

In advertisements the question can be stated as kind of a 'problem' and then the text offers an answer – 'a solution' to the problem:

*"Got wedding on the brain? Time to visit our new website."*

Another typical question used in advertising is a **rhetorical question**. It assumes only one possible answer:

*"What more could anyone ask from a Clarins gift?"*

The implied answer to this is: *"Of course, nothing."*

There is one other sentence type plentifully presented in advertisements – **exclamatives**, such as *"And, it's already wrapped!"* Exclamations may actually have the sentence structure as simple statements, but the exclamation mark tells us to read them emphatically.

As to rhetorical devices, simile and metaphor are used in advertisements to vividly highlight the characteristics or special features or functions of the advertised products or services. Usually, similes are marked by the use of the words 'like', 'than', 'as' or 'as if'. We may also find comparative constructions used when comparing two things or two situations: "as...as", "so...as". Here is an example of such a simile: *"Breakfast without orange juice is like a day without sunshine."* The writer compares the advertised brand of orange juice to sunshine, which provides people with comfort and warmth. Thus, it realizes its function of persuasion.

A single metaphor may be worth a hundred words of advertising text. It has an interesting value and stimulates the curiosity of the reader about the product. In advertising, a metaphor usually creates a comparison between the product or service and some other quality the advertiser wishes to be associated with the product or service advertised:

*"One touch. One light, effortless touch and she realized freedom was something you feel."* (metaphor)

This advertisement is for Revlon face powder. The sentence indicates that the freedom is actually the powder, because when you put the powder on your face, you will feel free.

The effectiveness of personification in English advertisements lies in its potential ability to endow products with emotion and liveliness.

*"Unlike me, my Rolex never needs a rest."* (Rolex)

From the above mentioned advertising slogan we can easily learn that Ford Quality-Care workers love and care for Ford cars as much as they do for their own children.

Hyperbole is another stylistic device through the use of which advertisements become effective, emotional and humorous.

*"Samsung presents 'World best'."* (Samsung)

In this advertisement the hyperbole is used to claim that the product is the best in the world. It shows the confidence and heroic spirit of this brand of product. Thus, it gives the readers a very profound impression. Of course, hyperbole should be appropriately used in advertising, otherwise it will arouse the readers' doubt about the products or services and make the advertisement a total failure.

A metonymy is "the use of a single characteristic to identify a more complex entity. In advertisements, an associated word often expresses the whole group: *'I like Volvo'* (= Volvo cars), *'woman is an uncharted territory'* (= all the women), *'a fragrance of Sabatiny'* (= perfumes made by Sabatiny).

Antithesis has the characteristics of harmonious combination of sound and rhyme, balanced syllables, sharp rhythm and compendiousness. The combination of pleasant senses of vision and hearing often stimulates the good feelings of readers and arouses consumers' buying desire. It is based on antonyms (words of opposite meaning) or opposite ideas, as in the following example: *"Imagine a mini phone with maximum style and design."* (Apple)

Summing up, advertisers tell the prospective consumer about the existence of their products and services. They try to persuade the consumer to buy through the use of language. The language of advertising suits the advertisers aims which are to inform, entice, excite, induce the audience to buy. The audience cannot believe the copywriter unless he convinces them of the truth in his copy. Believing the advertiser depends on whether he uses his language wisely. To achieve his aims, he must apply imaginative, original, and fresh language. Therefore the novelty and

freshness of advertising language is justified for the purpose of attracting people's attention, winning their trust and swaying their thinking. Emotional connotative meaning which are mostly used by advertisers are connected with pleasantries. Personification can help to create advertisements that are more interesting, human and engaging and ultimately, more relevant to your audience. Metaphors and similes are the high-performance jet fighters of creative communications. Hyperbole is used in advertising, often referred to as "dramatizing the selling point." Antithesis is the combination of pleasant senses of vision and hearing and it often stimulates the good feelings of readers and arouses consumers' buying desire.

Although there is always the danger of ambiguity, it is the writer's job to manipulate the verbal context so that the unwanted connotations do not arise. It is important to note also that signifiers and the signified have a place in the meaning of the language of advertising.

### **Persuasion in Online Advertising**

Persuasion plays an important role in advertising texts. In order to persuade potential customers, two strategies can be used; first, to provide the "reason why" or second, to include the "USP" (i.e. 'Unique Selling Proposition'). USP is frequently incorporated in the advertising message, or body copy and highlights the advantages of a product and contrasts it with competitive items. The goal is to persuade customers that the product being advertised is more desirable to them (Janoschka 2004).

The last two decades have witnessed a continuous debate among scholars on the issue of globalization versus localization of international business, particularly marketing activities and advertisements. This dilemma has led to the formulation of a new concept which is Glocalization. The latter gains importance as markets are culturally distinct; culture dictates beliefs about consumption and purchase behavior. Using glocal strategy in advertising implies that international firms can project a global image of their brands, and at the same time design their messages in the culturally correct context.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, investigating linguistic means and strategies employed in online advertisements in English, the research reveals different linguistic means applied in

an advertising message which are used as attention-getting devices, not only to create an interest, but also to provide information. They are also employed to make a product or service desirable for the purpose of prompting clients into taking an immediate action. For this reason, the language of online advertising is persuasive, trying to influence potential customers' attitudes and purchasing habits.

The basic principles of advertising language are: an advertisement must be attractive, the text should be memorable and easy to read and it also should be so well designed as to stimulate consumption. The final aim of advertisement is to promote products or services. So advertising language should be vivid and have the force to drive the readers to consume.

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### **Առցանց գովազդի լեզվական առանձնահատկությունները**

Սույն հոդվածը նվիրված է ժամանակակից կյանքում առցանց գովազդի դերի և նշանակության հիմնահարցերին: Այն հատկապես անդրադառնում է գովազդային լեզվի հիմնական առանձնահատկություններին՝ ընդգծելով շարահյուսական, իմաստային և լեզվաոճական միջոցների ընտրության կարևորությունը գովազդային խոսքի ներգործման և սպառողների կողմնորոշման հարցում:

### **Языковые особенности интернет-рекламы**

Статья посвящена изучению роли интернет-рекламы и ее языковых особенностей. Более детально рассматриваются семантические, синтаксические, а также стилистические особенности языка рекламы. Подчеркивается важность правильного выбора слов и грамматических конструкций для воздействия на потребителя, так как функция языка рекламы заключается не только в том, чтобы информировать, но и убеждать покупателя сделать правильный выбор.