

A Brief Analysis of the Characteristics of Advertisement Language

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Received: December 1, 2020

Accepted: December 28, 2020

Online Published: January 10, 2021

doi:10.5430/irhe.v5n4p32

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/irhe.v5n4p32>

Abstract

Advertisement plays an extremely crucial role in establishing a corporate image and enhancing its social status. Therefore, it is necessary to grab the characteristics of advertisement language and make a better planning of advertisement. This may effectively bring commodities into all major markets both at home and abroad so as to improve the economic efficiency. This study will start from the perspectives of vocabulary of advertisement language, grammar and figures of speech.

Keywords: advertisement language, vocabulary, grammar, figures of speech

1. Introduction

Approximately 50-70% of the effect of an advertisement comes from the title of the advertisement which is constituted by language. Thus, it can be seen that language is the soul of advertisement. Successful advertisement language is able to sufficiently embody the function and characteristics of advertisement. This article will elaborate the uniqueness of advertisement language compared with languages of other fields from the three perspectives of vocabulary, grammar and figure of speech.

2. Vocabulary of Advertisement Language

In 1948, the well-known communication expert Lasswell, one of the founders of modern communication studies, put forward the famous "Five W" theory (namely, Who, Says what, In which channel, To whom, With what effect). In this so-called Super Aristotle communication model, there is an extremely important "W", namely, Receiver (Song Y.S., p.102). Receiver refers to the one who receives information in the process of communication. Since a common "receiver" or consumer seldom spends much time on an advertisement, advertisement language is required to draw attention of the "receiver" within limited duration of time so as to attain the advertising purpose of "drawing attention, taking interest, producing desire and putting into practice" (Huang, G.W., 1997). Therefore, it is necessary for advertisement language to be easy-to-read and impressive in terms of design, content and language. In the following study, the author will elaborate the vocabulary characteristics of nounce words.

An important feature of advertisement is its creation of new words, namely, coin words or nounce words. Nounce words means creating new words by resorting to words and expressions, songs, idioms and proverbs which people are familiar with and which are used to effectively propagandize the products and enhance the popularity of a brand (Li, D.K., 1994). Nounce words in both Chinese and English can be approximately classified into partial tone and transliterated word.

2.1 Partial Tone

Partial tone means a word with the same or similar pronunciation is used to replace a certain word or morpheme in a nounce word. If we use skillfully a phonetic rule, some words can be re-written into new spelling forms based on their pronunciation. The following is a typical outdoor advertisement with simple and easy-to-read language which uses skillfully nounce words.

1) What could be delisher than fishes?

To achieve the purpose of rhyming with the word fishes at the end of the sentence, the designer of this advertisement combines skillfully the pronunciation of the word delicious with the spelling of the word dishes and creates the new word delisher. In this way, the readers can apprehend the meaning by considering both the pronunciation and the pattern. Besides, the entire sentence is quite simple and easy to read.

2.2 Transliterated Word

Transliterated word means a certain letter or word of a noun word is transliterated and a new noun word is formed. Usually, when an advertisement designer utilizes the pattern of transliterated word, he doesn't even take into consideration the semantic relationship between the new noun word and the original noun word. Instead, what he pursues is just to enable the new noun word to accurately and simply transmit the new content of the advertisement (Wu, F.Y., p.577).

2) The following is an advertisement of promoting yogurt:

First of all, because now Yoplait is thicker.

Second of all, because it's creamier.

Third of all, because it's still 100% natural and really good for you.

And forth of all, because well, just because

The success of this advertisement lies in its creative and unique style in addition to such figure of speech as parallelism. The design simulates the commonly used idiom first of all and then creates second of all, third of all and forth of all. And besides, the apostrophe is used after the word because in the sentence forth of all. This means that the advantages of the yoghurt Yoplait are too numerous to mention one by one.

From the above several cases, it is obvious that the particular word creating method of simulation can indeed highlight the features of novelty, oddness and peculiarity of a product and satisfy the mental requirements of consumers to pursue the new fashion and flaunt personality.

3. The Grammar of Advertisement Language

In the literary form of an advertisement, the most prominent feature of its grammar lies in its diversity of wording and phrasing. The diversity of its grammar is mainly embodied in frequent use of simple sentences and question sentences and skillful use of imperative sentences. It is believed that all these grammatical features are quite familiar, so we here will not introduce them one by one. In the aforementioned vocabulary features of advertisement language, we have mentioned noun word in simulation. Herewith, it is necessary to elaborate another pattern of simulation, namely, imitation of sentence. Likewise, imitation of sentence is also to simulate the commonly known sayings, epigrams and proverbs to express the content of the advertisement. This is just as "an old bottle is used to fill new wine" (Li, D.K., 1994). There are also a large number of cases of imitation of sentences in advertising.

A Mars a day keeps you work, rest and play.

This is an advertisement of a brand of chocolate. It seems that this advertisement is far-fetched, but its lovely and vivid language may associate its readers with the English proverb "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" both in terms of form and content. It sounds as if one eats a chocolate each day may keep healthy and become clever. In addition, this advertisement reads easy to pronounce as the two words "day" and "play" in the advertisement rhyme with each other.

4. The Figure of Speech in Advertisement Language

It can be found from a lot of advertising products that, quite a majority of advertisement words and phrases with elegant language have successfully used the artistic expression means of figure of speech. The so-called figure of speech means application of all sorts of expression means to achieve the aim of elegance, vividness and accuracy of language. Application of figure of speech in designing an advertisement case is exactly aimed to arouse the heart and soul of the recipients by means this artistic and aesthetic perception, stimulate their enthusiasm and ultimately achieve the purpose of sales of the commodities. Compared with general literature rhetoric, rhetoric in advertising is similar in that both need to follow the conventional rhetoric rules. And the difference is that rhetoric in advertising is restrained by the specific feature of advertising. This is termed as "semi-stylistics" (Leech, 1969).

Figures of speech in advertising language style are various, such as, metaphor, personification, parallelism, antithesis, exaggeration, comparison, repetition and so on. Usually, it is easy for the recipients of advertising to distinguish between these figures of speech. This study is going to introduce some uncommon figures of speech, mainly the three types of pun, anadiplosis and loopback as well as misplacement.

4.1 Pun

Pun means a sentence in a particular linguistic environment is simultaneously associated with two aspects by means of the semantic relationship, of which one is superficial and the other is implied. Such a figure of speech which has

different words and meaning is called pun. Once applied in advertising, pun gives us a feeling of euphemism and connotation. A public service advertising "天堂说话就到" has skillfully used the feature of one phrase with a double meaning in Chinese language.

1) 开车打手机, 天堂说话就到.

This is a public service advertising about traffic which has used pun in two places. One is the word "Heaven" which almost all readers can apprehend. However, here we give special hint to the word "speak". It can not only express a concept of time, such as, "he comes in an instant", which means the time is quite short and only in an instant. Nonetheless, this word here has some other meaning which means those people who "speak" on the cellphone when driving. Therefore, the word "speak" here is a pun to alert drivers not to have a call when driving. This is not only easy to transmit, but is also accurate.

2) The Unique Spirit of Canada: We Bottled It.

This is an advertisement title of whiskey which contains two puns. The word "Spirit" not only means the mental state, but also has the meaning of "wine". Thus, this sentence has two different explanations, namely, "The specific national spirit of Canada" and "the specific wine of Canada". The second pun is the word "bottle" which has the meanings of both "a kind of container" and "concentration". Therefore, this advertisement has double meanings. One is "The specific national spirit of Canada is concentrated upon us". And the other meaning is "The specific wine of Canada will be presented to us in bottles".

Application of this figure of speech of pun in advertising can indeed achieve the effect of killing two birds with one stone. Nevertheless, we need to pay attention to the relationship between the superficial and internal meanings. Generally speaking, the superficial meaning is secondary, while the internal meaning is the primary one. When we use the style of pun, it is necessary to try to highlight the superficial meaning so as to enable the audience to get the meaning at a glance.

4.2 Anadiplosis and Loopback

4.2.1 Anadiplosis

These two figures of speech of anadiplosis and loopback are most frequently used in Chinese advertising and are of Chinese characteristics. In anadiplosis, the ending of a previous sentence is used as the beginning of the latter sentence to make the two sentences continuous. It reflects the sequential relationship between objects, which is coherent from one object to another. And its formula is A-B, B-C, C-D.... Resorting to this sort of rhetoric pattern, the key which an advertisement appeals to is usually a repeated word or phrase. It does not leave a deep impression on the audience, but also is easy to remember at one stretch. For example,

车到山前必有路, 有路必有丰田车 (Toyota)

世界看中国, 中国有先科 (SAST's VCD advertisement)

4.2.2 Loopback

Loopback is extremely similar with anadiplosis in terms of end-to-end continuation, but they are fundamentally different. Loopback is to skillfully dispatch the same phrases and to form a tortuous and repeated language pattern by means of the different meanings caused by different structural relationships of these phrases. It reflects the circular relations of different objects and uses the same phrases to repeatedly express the close association of mutual dependence between these objects. Its formula is A-B and B-A. Application of loopback in advertising can not only form the musical beauty with repetition of words and phrases, but can also repeatedly transmit the primary information in advertising with changes so as to leave a deep impression on the audience. For example,

放心漆, 漆放心 (Songju oil paint)

客上天然居, 居然天上客 (天然居茶馆 Tianranju teahouse)

到"南洋", 喜洋洋; 喜洋洋, 到"南洋" (南阳商场 Nanyang Shopping Mall)

All the above advertisements adopt the figure of speech of loopback which is skillful in language, prominent in effect and easy to read and remember.

4.3 Misplacement

In recent years, such a kind of advertisement is often noticed: advertising form has nothing to do with the advertising purpose propagandized by advertising designers. More than that, the two even go contrary to each other sometimes. This type of advertisement totally breaks people's perception of traditional advertisement which they have been

familiar with. This gives rise to a feeling of being completely at a loss. What this type of advertising cases apply here is the method of misplacement we will mention hereafter. Advertising propaganda often employs a variety of means such as humor and advocating virtue to achieve the effect of "misplacement" and to draw attention of the receivers to the advertisement.

For instance, the American Zairian Beer has such an advertisement on TV. A funny-looking and worker-look old person holds a bottle of beer in his hand and opens the bottle. Then, he turns in the face of the audience, saying, "From now on, I won't have to open the bottle with my teeth." Then, he grins and smiles complacently. At first glance at this advertisement, we may have the feeling that the form of the advertisement and the content of the title are misplaced, but again it seems that the two are, to some extent, related with each other. However, when the actor grins and shows his teeth, one suddenly perceives the implication of his words "I won't have to open the bottle with my teeth". This advertisement has successfully used the rhetoric of misplacement to convey the information that "Zairian Beer is so easy to open".

This is another TV advertisement for propagandizing cold medication. On the TV, a thief stretches out his hand to stole a passenger's wallet on a bus. Exactly at this time, another passenger nearby coughs because he has caught a cold. Finally, the thief hastens to draw back his hand. Then, such a line of words appear on the picture, "Sometimes, coughing is also a kind of virtue". After reading this advertisement, one may mistakenly hold the viewpoint that the advertisement form has deviated from the propaganda purpose of the advertiser which is to promote the cold medication because the advertising form seems to advocate catching a cold. As a matter of fact, this advertisement has successfully applied the theme of "virtue" which is unanimously approved by the audience of the advertisement to achieve the aim of advertising propaganda. When watching this type of advertisement, the audience will subconsciously associate the advertising form with the title of the advertisement. Nowadays, this type of advertising propaganda method has been more widely applied.

5. Conclusion

This study has elaborated the language characteristics of advertisement language from merely the three representative aspects of vocabulary, grammar and figure of speech in combination with a lot of advertisement cases. The advertising master Raymond Rubicam has ever said, "The best symbol of a superior advertisement is that it can not only enable its audience to struggle to purchase its products, but can also enable the audience and the whole advertising circle to regard it as an admirable master piece which they will remember for ever." It can be said that advertising language is formed under the influences of multiple elements in several disciplines, such as, linguistics, psychology, sociology and economics, etc., so it has the research value of multiple aspects. We can also start from the cultural background and advertisement creation intention to analyze its language characteristics.

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