

УДК 811.161.373

V. ZIRKA,

*Doctor of Sciences in Philology,
Professor of English Philology and Translation Department
of Alfred Nobel University, Dnipropetrovsk*

ADVERTISING AS MANIPULATIVE POWER

The article presents some aspects of ads manipulation of customer's conscious as well as students training to the creative process in making up of short promotional materials. It was pointed out that while creating of any ads one should mind some aspects like wordplay, ads pragmatics and creative principle of modelling.

Key words: manipulation, advertising message, creativity, wordplay, pragmatics, principle of modelling.

It is widely known that the main purpose of manipulation in advertising is impulse human to commit certain actions: whether the purchase of a product or a choice of service, a change of attitudes, opinions etc. Certainly, advertisers tend to hide their true intentions, creating the illusion of a person of confidence and independence in its decisions and actions. Manipulative influence is based on the association of words and images, as they both have the inspiring influence and cause a peculiar reaction of imagination. Manipulator tries to encode message in the advertisement so that the recipient can decode it only one single method for creating the desired manipulator images and meanings. Once I came across the certain Rudyard Kipling's statement that words are the most powerful drug used by mankind. Concerning the advertising industry it is very true. Copywriters – advertisements' creators use powerful words in unusual combinations, sometimes with visuals, to manipulate and inhabit the readers' minds. Consumers need to be aware of the various linguistic (relating to language) devices used in advertising in order to lessen the persuasive effect from the manipulation within advertisements. According to Alan C. Harris's article entitled, «Sell! Buy! Semiolinguistic Manipulation in Print Advertising» [1], *manipulation of linguistic form means that a small idea or object will undergo some enhancement, change, transformation, mutilation, or mutation that is relatively unexpected on behalf of the reader/viewer.* The manipulation usually stands out of the ordinary to grab the attention of potential purchasers which increases the purchasing consideration of the advertised product/service to the exclusion of all other similar products or services.

Advertisers use foregrounding to provide the manipulation within their advertisements. Foregrounding is considered to be a linguistic process in which certain components such as *words, phrases, intonations (inflections), or symbolic visuals* are made more meaningfully significant and prominent. By using linguistic devices in foregrounding, the advertiser marks, stresses, or contrasts in a unique, noteworthy manner which is conveyed to the consumer.

One of the more widely acknowledged linguistic devices used in foregrounding is *the claim. It is the verbal or printed part of an advertisement that makes some claim of superiority by providing an appealing manipulation sometimes with creative visuals.* Advertisers use the claim to portray an essential «rightness» which is conveyed to the reader. Jeffrey Schrank [1] speaks of ten common claims which are identified in his essay – «The Language of Advertising Claims».

As the author points out, a few of these claims are downright lies, some are honest statements about a truly superior product, but most fit into the manipulation category with carefully chosen linguistic devices.

It is quite clear that advertising has its own lexicon, which may change over time, but is fairly stable – *new, improved, proven* and other qualifiers (*bonus, prize, sales*) are seen as reliable. These qualifiers were firstly mentioned in our thesis in 2004 [4]. We usually make special stress on these very words at our lectures of «Lexis of Ads». David Ogilvy in his work «Confessions of an Advertising Man» (quoted by Shirley Russell [5]) identifies a *basic lexicon* of qualifiers such as: *new, good, crisp, better, fresh, natural, fine, free*, and of verbs such as: *buy, give, taste, go, look, feel and use*. Special registers (technical, scientific or pseudo-scientific) may be used for appropriate products.

Broadly speaking, advertisers *persuade* their audience to adopt attitudes to *lifestyle, products and services*. It is rare to find advertising that seeks to influence explicitly or directly. Less rare are advertisements in which the link to a product or service is implicit or ambiguous.

Ad borrows and adapts structures and forms from texts of all kinds. Many broadcast advertisements are dramatic, with a narrative conducted through dialogue. Others may show a narrative by images alone, to the accompaniment of music and/or a voiceover. Examples could serve: Puns, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, rhyme and other kinds of comic or poetic wordplay are common in advertising. Ambiguity, irony and allusion (reference) are also powerful techniques. Of some interest is special lexis in any ad.

The ads' material used at our practical lessons show that advertising often makes use of *short texts* – whether in print or broadcast media – where every word has to work hard (in this respect very much like poetry). It is very common for the advertiser to use words that belong to some other special *lexicon*, as if to establish a rapport with the target audience. The commentator could utter the phrase, which is the slogan of the campaign: «top bombing». The non-standard noun, *bombing*, suggests something which is typically male, fun and demotic – it is unpretentious, aimed at people who have traditional ideas of bitter [3].

It is very easy to find special lexis in any advertisement. But in explaining how it works, we will need to think about how far the copywriter is using a particular register, or feature of style, which in turn is related to the product brand and image, and the attitudes or values of the audience. Look at the following examples of extracts of text from adverts, culled from a quick look through a selection of newspapers and magazines (the product and the producer appear in parenthesis after the advertisement text):

- The British Airways Sale. Go on. Take off. (Reduced-price flights/British Airways)
- Imagine a healthier fitter you. (Tanita body fat monitor)
- Move Mountains. (Sim City 4 PC/Dixons)
- Not so much a price as an invitation. (Flights to Spain/Iberia Airways)
- Every year 39,200 women are newly diagnosed with breast cancer. (Medical insurance/

AXA PPP healthcare)

- Go Mobile. (Voyager laptop computer/Evesham Technology)
- A win, win, win, win, win, win situation. (6 months' free business banking/Barclays)
- We don't need your tears we need teachers urgently (Voluntary Service Overseas)
- Lose weight, the healthy herbal way. (Weight Loss Aid/Herbal Concepts)
- Always on call. (Day & Night Nurse)
- Technology with style. (DWF614SS dishwasher/Smeg)
- Kurt Geiger for her. Paul Smith for him. Tax-free prices for you. (Airport shopping/BAA)
- Authentically French mellow cheese. (Cheese/Port Salut) [1].

If we look for the lexical words (*nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs*) in the ads *what* can stand after those words? What ideas do they suggest? Does the text suggest the ideas of good value (low price), of style, status, sophistication, convenience, fitness and so on? The Iberian Airways advertisement repeats the idea found in many airline ads of good value, while at the same time suggesting something personal about visiting Spain, through the noun «invitation» – which we associate with parties and celebrations.

Some advertisement uses a phrase that is a cliché or buzzword among business people: a «win-win situation» implies an arrangement that benefits people at either end, and challenges

the received wisdom that if X gains then Y loses. So in using the phrase, the advertiser keeps to a register familiar to the business customer, while printing the adjective six times to indicate the number of months for which the free offer runs [1].

«Technology with style» is one example of a pattern familiar here – that suggests that the product has two things that the audience may think to be normally contradictory or oxymoronic (the idea of «having your cake and eating it»). Sometimes the opposition is of price and quality.

This same contrast also appears in the other advertisement – but the lexis there is more explicitly making the distinction, for example, in diesel and Va Va Voom. The adjective diesel has immediate denotations of the known properties of this engine type – the engine has a *longer* life, is *more dependable* and gives *better* fuel economy, but takes *longer* to reach high speeds. The advertiser wants to suggest that the car nonetheless has a combination of *style, flair, power and youth appeal* (not normally associated with diesel engines). Rather than use any of these words, Renault has invented its own compound abstract noun – Va Va Voom. This is alliterative, and has an interesting sound – being quite memorable. The advertisers develop the image by association with, for example, the soccer player Thierry Henry – who is French, but lives and works in England, and is exceptionally talented and athletic. At the same time, T. Henry is shown in situations that suggest a caring and feminine side – with pets, sitting at home among soft furnishings, for instance [3]. In this way the advertisements *appeal to potential drivers of both sexes*, and are highly specific to one make and model of car. By inventing the word, the advertisers are able to adapt it so that it carries exactly the suggestion they wish to make to the audience – it should have no prior negative connotations.

In making up creative self-made ad special attention to our mind should be given to «Wordplay». One can create some good effects by using similar words but with slight differences of form and meaning. Semantics in advertising is very peculiar. There are some state controls on what advertisers may or may not claim about their products. Advertisers, therefore, often exploit the possibilities of connotation (suggested meaning) rather than strict denotation (stated meaning) and imply that products have various merits, without saying so explicitly.

One common way of doing so is to use pseudo-technical lexis or scientific names for everyday things. However, this is not desirable in all contexts. In cosmetic and pharmacological products, most advertisers will use scientific lexis to suggest efficacy, as in these examples: «*Perle de Caviar draws the essential elements of long-lasting beauty and a youthful complexion from the depths of the ocean...trace elements, amino acids, mineral salts, iodine and plankton. Combining a perfect balance of these precious elements, each Perle de Caviar product provides an intense thalassotherapy treatment designed to hydrate and regenerate*». «*...one simple tablet helps safeguard your diet with botanicals, natural caratenoids, vitamins and essential trace minerals...Advance your beauty regime with Perfectil® – because true radiance starts from within*». «Regime» elevates the use of cosmetics to something complex, while the ® symbol suggests that there is something technically sophisticated in the product. It may really simply denote the registration of the trade name to protect against misuse. This pseudoscience is not simply found in the advertisements proper but in the joined-up marketing, so that people who apply and demonstrate the products are «beauty therapists» – which may imply similar learning, academic qualifications and status to, for example, speech therapists or physiotherapists. The «beauty therapist» wears a white garment like a lab coat, implying some kind of likeness to a pharmacist. It is rather interesting to compare the examples above with one designed for a scientifically qualified readership. Let us take an advertisement for Xalatan a 0,005% eye drop solution of latanoprost, licensed for use, and advertised in The Pharmaceutical Journal. The advertisement includes details of nine references to the product in published scientific sources, followed by detailed prescribing information, divided under standard headings such as Presentation, Indication, Dosage and Administration, Contra-indications, Precautions, Side Effects, Interactions, and information about the drug's effects in Pregnancy, Lactation and for Driving, Overdosage, Pharmaceutical Precautions, Legal Category, Packaging Quantities and Basic NHS price and details of the Product License Number and Holder. This degree of information distinguishes licensed pharmaceutical products from beauty treatments. In the latter case, the advertisers might wish us to believe that Laboratoires Garnier and the Ponds Institute are

comparable to medical research institutions. In relation to food and drink, however, advertisers are usually keen to stress its *naturalness*. So while the product packaging will list all additives, flavourings and colourings, advertisements will identify the brand and basic food content- the brand name and the principal ingredient appear twice, along with the adjective “pure”, to suggest the idea that there is nothing but the natural oil in the bottle that the advertisement depicts.

Concerning pragmatics in advertising, – copywriters occupy the spaces where we are typically attending to other things – watching television, reading or browsing a magazine on the way to work, looking at posters on an underground train, platform or escalator, or from a car, bus or bicycle. They will try to appeal to all our senses and different language processing faculties at the same time.

A very good pragmatic approach is to consider the position and viewpoint that the audience is being asked to adopt. This can be something very simple, as in an assumption that we all *want to save money*. This assumption is very widespread among advertisers and marketers. Someone of them could telephone to ask if one (he or she) would like to save a given figure on utility bills. The stock response is to say that he or she does not wish to save this amount (or even a lot more) to change something with which he is currently content, thinking it a fair price for a reliable service. By no means all advertisements make this assumption. Others assume that the reader or listener has anxieties about his or her self-image, and that he or she can become more attractive by wearing the watch or clothes advertised, or driving a different car. Various advertisers of mobile phones *try to persuade* existing owners that they need to replace a model that is not stylish and a likely cause of ridicule, as in an advertisement series (shown on television) for Phones4U. In these adverts the actor speaks a voiceover: «We'll find the right phone for you».

A more objective approach to pragmatics might be to consider what grammatical person or form of address advertisers' use, if they try to speak directly to us. Do they use imperatives («Look at the clues»), do they make statements («We don't serve lobster in the directors' dining room») or do they plant noun-phrases («Free servicing for 3 years») and leave us to work out what to do about these?

During our studies in writing creatively short ad or slogan we use one time-tested creative principle. It is modeling. Students are taught to borrow liberally from the best slogans out there. They will hear the similarity, but as endless movie remakes and sequels testify, they actually prefer similarity. Should you want to capitalize on students' career anxieties, «Got milk?» could become «Got chops?» Or if your school favors innovation and design-your-own-degree programs, you might take the slogan – «The curiously strong mints», and turn it into «The curiously curious college».

Due to the material taken partially from the below sources, and our own 15-year-experience in ad study, students can have the opportunity to use it in their Diploma papers which are dealt with the questions being discussed. The word power, its manipulative character is vividly observed in ads. The theme will always be attractive and have undoubtedly interest among researchers of advertising since advertisers and copywriters will seek after and find new linguistic ways and means to persuade readers/viewers (customers).

Bibliography

1. Moore A. Language and Power [Electronic resource] / A. Moore. – Available at: <http://www.zigzageducation.co.uk>
2. Roman K. How to Advertise. Building Brands and Business in the New Marketing World / K. Roman, J. Maas. – Uk.: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003. – 218 p.
3. Thomas J.W. Advertising Effectiveness. Decision Analyst [Electronic resource] / J.W. Thomas. – Available at: <http://www.decisionanalyst.com/Downloads/AdvertisingEffectiveness.pdf>
4. Зирка В.В. Языковая парадигма манипулятивной игры в рекламе: дис. ... д-ра филол. наук. / В.В. Зирка. – К., 2005. – 461 с.
5. Russell Sh. Grammar, Structure and Style / Sh. Russell. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. – 177 p.

References

1. Moore, A. Language and Power. (2003). Available at: <http://www.zigzageducation.co.uk>
2. Roman, K.; Maas, Jane. **How to Advertise. Building Brands and Business in the New Marketing World.** UK, St. Martin's Griffin, 2003, 218 p.
3. Thomas, J. W. [2007]. Advertising Effectiveness. Decision Analyst. Available at: <http://www.decisionanalyst.com/Downloads/Advertising Effectiveness.pdf>
4. Zirka, V.V. *Yazykovaya paradigm manipulyativnoy igry v reklame.* Diss. dokt. filol. nauk [Linguistic Paradigm of Manipulative Play in Advertising. Doct. Diss.]. Kiev, 2005, 414 p.
5. Russell, Shirley. *Grammar, Structure and Style,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, 177 p.

В статье освещаются вопросы манипуляции сознанием потребителя с помощью рекламного сообщения. Рассматривается задача обучения студентов творческому процессу составления коротких рекламных обращений. Отмечено, что при создании рекламного текста должны учитываться некоторые аспекты: игра слов, прагматика рекламы и креативный прием моделирования.

Ключевые слова: манипуляция, рекламное обращение, творчество, игра слов, прагматика, прием моделирования.

У статті висвітлюються питання маніпуляції свідомістю споживача за допомогою рекламного повідомлення. Розглянуто завдання щодо навчання студентів творчого процесу складання коротких рекламних звернень. Зазначено, що при створенні рекламного тексту необхідно враховувати деякі аспекти: гру слів, прагматику реклами та креативний прийом моделювання.

Ключові слова: маніпулювання, рекламне звернення, творчість, гра слів, прагматика, прийом моделювання.

Одержано 3.03.2015.