

Advertising: The Art of Persuasion and Mirror to Society

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Advertising is an effective marketing tool for reaching and informing consumers. However, it is not created in a vacuum; culture, economy, politics and technology all affect its messages. In a buyer market, advertising is far from the hard sell around the product but the user-centered communication. Therefore, advertisements or commercials can be both an art of persuasion and a mirror to society.

Linguists are interested in the advertising language itself, such as rhyme (Ex.1), puns (Ex.2), contrast (Ex.3), metaphors (Ex.4), slang (Ex.5), and slogans (Ex.6) that have become catchphrases in the daily life. Besides, brandnames like *Rice Krispies* and *L'eggs* (pantyhose), in which 'crispy' and 'legs' are intentionally spelled wrong, also attract their attention.

Ex: 1. Travel *light*, look *right*.

2. *Make up* your mind before you *make up* your face.

3. *Big* in spirit. *Small* only in size. The *small* car for *great* adventure.

4. Eat a bowl of *sunshine*.

5. You don't have to spend big *bucks* to feel like a *big deal*.

6. "*Where's the beef?*"

Advertising influences people by appealing to their emotions, or feelings. Psychologists try to work out the most powerful words and selling points that make consumers to jump on the bandwagon. In addition to the association between name brands (e.g. Mercedes Benz) and status symbols, some of the added values promised by ads are as follows:

1. *New*, *free* and *improved* are the three buzzwords in advertising copies.

2. Diamond is another kind of eternal love. Ex. A diamond is *forever*.

3. The commercial for the house is selling a house, it is selling good taste and upper class lifestyle. Ex. Experience the life in *Palace of Versailles, Paris*

4. Soft drink may appeal to the youth's need to belong.

Ex. The Choice of a *New Generation*

As a result, to be a winner, smarter, different from others, or in a good mood, the consumer may drink a certain type of beer (Ex.1), wear a certain type of athletic shoes (Ex. 2), use a certain type of handbag (Ex.3), or wash a certain type of shampoo (Ex. 4).

Ex. 1. For those who play to *win*.

2. Walk a Little *Smarter*

3. The Art of Being *Unique*

4. Feeling *High*

What's more, advertisers choose pictures of good-looking idols or sport heroes to suggest that if we want to be like them, we should buy the products. Worse still, some admen use sex appeal. Take Calvin Klein's jeans advertising for example, teenage models are often shown in provocative poses.

As for sociologists, they believe that advertising has reflected society at different times by using different words. By analyzing advertising language, they gain an insight into the cultural values that admen have catered to their target.

For instance, green consumerism is an important trend in today's buying habits. Many companies do the green advertising and make claims about the environmental safety of their products. Thus, *recycled*, *ozone friendly*, *break down naturally* and *made from degradable materials* are seen and heard everywhere. Also, endangered species are appearing as logos in eco-advertising.

Although the most used appeals may reflect modern values, advertising is, no doubt, able to shape consumers' beliefs and attitudes. Nowadays, we see many commercials for how to lose weight and keep in shape. It seems that it is more attractive for a woman to have a thin and slim figure.

Another misleading advertising is from the tobacco companies. They insist that their purpose is to make smokers change brands rather than make nonsmokers pick up the habit. However, they keep targeting at women and a younger market with the message that smoking is cool, mature, liberated, or macho just like the "Marlboro Man."

In spite of the misuse of language in advertising, such as incorrect spelling (Ex. 1), bad grammar (Ex. 2), and more exaggeration than truth (Ex. 3), advertising language is still an art of persuasion and a mirror to our times. However, the consumers must think more critically and beware of the psychological labels that advertisers put on products.

Ex. 1. Limmits. Hushhh

2. Winston tastes good *like* a cigarette should.

3. *Super and one of a kind*

Annotations of Words and Expressions

1. **advertising** n. business that deals with the publicizing of goods 廣告(業)

advertisement (= **ad**) n. a notice offering or asking for goods, services, etc. 廣告

2. **persuasion** n. the act of persuading 說服

persuasive adj. convincing 有說服力的

After a lot of persuasion, he agreed to come.

3. **mirror** n. a piece of glass; a true representation 鏡子; 真實之反映
The newspaper claims to be the mirror of public opinions.
4. **marketing** n. the organization of the sale of a product 行銷
Direct marketing is now popular in Taiwan.
5. **vacuum** n. emptiness; lack 真空; 空白
6. **hard sell** n. selling by putting repeated forceful pressure on buyers 強力推銷
7. **commercial** n. an advertisement on TV or radio 電視或廣播上的廣告
8. **linguist** n. a person who studies the science of language 語言學家
9. **rhyme** n. sameness of sound between words, esp. the ending 押韻; (尤指)韻腳
10. **pun** n. a play on words that have two meanings 雙關語
11. **contrast** n. difference clearly seen when unlike things are compared 對比
12. **metaphor** n. a phrase describing one thing by saying another with which it can be compared 暗喻; 隱喻
13. **slang** n. (abbr. *sl*) very informal words, phrases, etc. 俚語
14. **slogan** n. word or phrase easy to remember and used as a motto in ads 標語; 口號
15. **catchphrase** n. a phrase with little meaning, which becomes popular for a short time
風行一時的口頭禪
16. **brandname** n. a special name, sign, etc. which is marked on a product 商標(名稱)
name brand n. a luxurious trademark 名牌
17. **Rice Krispies** tdmk. a breakfast food made from rice, usu. eaten with milk & sugar
商標名
crispy adj. fresh; hard, dry and easily broken 新鮮的; 脆的

18. **pantyhose (=pantihose)** n. tights 褲襪
19. **intentionally** adv. done on purpose 故意地
20. **buck** n. an American dollar 美金一元
21. **appeal to** v. phr. to look for support in 訴諸於
appeal n. interest; earnest request 吸引力; 訴求
22. **emotion** n. strong feeling of any kind 情感(緒)
23. **psychologist** n. a person who studies or is skilled in psychology 心理學家
psychological adj. of or affecting the mind 心理的
24. **jump on the bandwagon** v. phr. to do sth just because many people are doing it
一窩蜂; 趕時髦
25. **status** n. high rank or social position 身分地位
26. **added value** n. phr. the amount by which the value of the product is increased
附加價值
27. **buzzword** n. word or phrase that becomes fashionable and popular 流行語
28. **eternal** adj. going on for ever 永恆不滅的
29. **Palace of Versailles** n. in N central France, built for King Louis XIV 凡爾賽宮
30. **achievement** n. thing done successfully 成就
31. **athletic** adj. of athletes or athletics 運動(員)的
32. **idol** n. someone or someting admired or loved too much 偶像
33. **provocative** adj. tending to arouse sexual desire 挑逗的; 煽動的
34. **sociologist** n. a person who studies or is skilled in sociology 社會學家

35. **insight** n. ability to see into the nature of something 領悟; 洞察力; 深刻了解
36. **cater to** v. phr. to provide with what is necessary 迎合胃口; 滿足需要
37. **target** n. the result aimed at 目標 v. to aim at sth 瞄準
38. **trend** n. a general direction or course of development 趨勢
39. **ozone** n. a type of oxygen 臭氧
40. **degradable** adj. able to become less complex in structure 可分解
41. **endangered species** n. a type of animals or plants which may soon disappear
瀕臨絕種的物種
42. **logo** n. symbol used by a business or company (企業, 公司)專用的標幟
43. **eco-** prefix ecological or of ecology 生態的
44. **shape** v. to influence and determine the course or form of 塑造; 影響
n. the appearance or form of sth 形狀; 外型 **keep in shape** 保持健康
45. **slim figure** n. the attractively slender shape of the body 苗條身材
46. **mis-, in-, , non-** neg. prefix 否定字首
misleading 誤導 **incorrect** 不正確 **nonsmoker** 不抽煙者
47. **tobacco** n. a type of plant used chiefly in smoking 煙草
48. **liberated** adj. having freedom in social and sexual matters
解放的; 不受傳統束縛的
49. **macho** adj. masculine 陽剛的; 雄糾糾的
50. **in spite of** prep. phr. despite 不慣; 不顧; 雖有
53. **exaggeration** n. action of exaggerating 誇張; 言過其實

54. **critically** adv. carefully examining and judging 批判性地

55. **beware of** v. phr. to be careful 當心; 注意