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The Features Of Advertising Language

— Principles in Advertisement Writing

Abstract: In the course of learning English, few students know the features of advertising language. Some even don't know advertising components or what part of feature of advertising is. This paper presents some typical sentences for a detailed study of the structures and centers on the features of advertising language. The first part elaborates on the definition and components of advertising language, including definition and components. The second part elaborates on the features of advertising, including some special patterns. The last part elaborates on the advertising elements.

Key words: definition, component, headline, slogan

I. Introduction

American Marketing Association (AMA) defines advertising as "the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media." Today, with the development of the technology and the diversity of the mass media, advertising has influenced us pervasively in our daily life. However, whatever the promotive strategies advertising takes, language is the main carrier of message all along, as The Language of Advertising, by Vestergaard & Schroder says, "Advertising takes many forms, but in most of them language is of crucial importance." Advertising language is a style of immediate impact and rapid persuasion. The point of an advertisement is to persuade you of the merits of a particular product or service, in order that you will take out some of your money.

II. Advertising Components and Functions

According to the definition of the advertising, most of the advertisements should have the following components:

(1). Advertiser

The advertiser is the sender of information and all the advertising activities should be consistent with the purpose and willingness of the advertiser. Therefore, the advertiser is the main body of advertising, namely, every advertisement should have its specific owner of the advertising information. The specific owner should be a recognizable group, including corporation, enterprise, government, organization and individual. There are three significances of an advertiser (both for the advertiser themselves, and for the public): firstly, it's easy for the

target audience to recognize the company and the products of it, which will promote the propagandas and the sale of its products; secondly, it will establish a high reputation for the group, enterprise, or the individual in order that the consumer will trust the brand; finally, it will prevent the advertiser from counterfeiting and deceiving by legal supervision.

(2). A certain amount of money paid

The advertising fees are paid by the advertiser no matter it's operated by itself or other agency. Because advertising is a kind of marketing action, an advertiser has to pay for its advertisement. There are quite a few people who consider that too much advertising fee will inevitably raise the cost and price of the product, and thereby will influence the sale of the product. However, this conclusion is a one-sided view. Advertising can bring you a huge profit by reasonable planning and proper operation.

(3). Advertising Information

Advertising information is the principal contents an advertisement wants to disseminate. Advertising is a serious planning action, so the information of advertising should be aimed at the certain target market and consumers, and should avoid aimlessness. The dissemination of information should be accurate, definite, recognizable and moderate in length. An effective advertisement involves not only "what to say", but also "how to say".

(4). Advertising Media

Media are the means of the dissemination of advertising, including newspaper, magazine, broadcast, TV program, billboard and mail. The newspaper, magazine, broadcast and TV are called the four main media of advertising. Moreover, any kind of objects or tools can be a medium for the advertisement, such as airplane, train, bus, building, neon light, movie, package, exhibition, and etc. Different kinds of media have different features, disseminating area, target audience and speed.

(5). Nonpersonal

Advertising is not aimed at any individual, or by any individual. It's a nonpersonal transmission of information aiming at the public or a certain group of people. Because of the nonpersonal features of advertising, the dissemination and operation of it should be restricted by the law of a country, the moral standards, psychology, zoology, and environment protection. The information, methods, media, and other components of advertising should abide by the advertising laws, policies and rules, and should be under the supervision of the public. All of these components are mutual features and essential elements of every advertisement.

What kind of advertisement is successful? And what features a successful advertisement should possess? American Marketing Manager's Handbook points out that an advertisement should have four functions: AIDA, which represent four words—Attention, Interest, Desire, Action.

(1). Attention—a good advertisement should attract the consumer to direct their attention to the product of it.

(2). Interest—the introduction and publicity of an advertisement should arouse consumers' great interest.

(3). Desire—the publicity of advertising should stimulate consumers' desire to buy the product, and make them realize that this product is just what they want.

(4). Action—the advertising makes consumer to response to the advertising information and evoke them to take the action of purchasing.

III. Features of Advertising

The wide use of advertising has created a special style of English—advertising English. Its unique features, simple language and immense attraction separate it from other kind of language. In the development of advertising English, this kind of language has formed its own features in several aspects.

3.1. English Morphology in Advertising

As a means to disseminate information, advertising English must be compact, vivid, visual, emotional and attractive. Therefore, morphology in advertising is quite different from common English.

(1). Simple and informal

The function of advertising is to provide information, attract consumer, exploit market, and promise the quality. Therefore, advertisement must pay attention to its impelling language, and the first step is to use popular and oral language to make it easy to understand and memorize. For example: "I couldn't believe it, until I tried it!" "I'm impressed! I'm really impressed!" "You've gotta try it!" "I love it!" This is an advertisement of a microwave oven. The words in it are very simple and oral. It uses the slang "gotta", which means "got to" in American English, to give an impression that this advertisement comes from the real life.

(2). Contraction

Because the advertisement fees are so high, some use contraction to cut short the length, and reduce the cost.

To Let or For Sale Furnished Edinburgh Court, 426 Argylst, 2nd floor, 1,630 sqft 4 bedrooms with dining and living room, prive garage. Sale at 130,000. Rent 1,400. Tel, 38954 office time or 823748. This is an advertisement to rent or sell a house.

There are many contractions, such as: st=street, sq=square, ft=foot, Tel=telephone.

(3). Use of verbs

Although the ultimate purpose of advertising is to persuade consumers to buy its products, advertisements seldom use the word "buy" in it. Statistics show only two out of ten advertisements use the verb "buy" directly. On the one hand, the advertisers try their best to

promote their product; on the other hand, they don't want to give the consumers a feeling of spending their money. Therefore, the choice of verbs is very careful in advertising. The most frequently used 20 verbs and phrasal verbs are: Try, ask, get, take, let, send for, use, call, make, come on, hurry, see, give, come, remember, discover, serve, introduce, choose, and look for. Example:

Getting places in the business world is easier if your banker is there to meet you.—Security Pacific Asian Bank. We can give you a better view of investment opportunities from both sides of the Pacific.—City Bank.

(4). Use of Adjectives

The most frequently used adjectives are:

new . crisp . good/better/best . fine . free . big . fresh . great . delicious . real . full, sure . easy, bright . clean . extra, safe .special and rich.

(5). Use of Compound words

There are lots of compound words in advertisement mainly because the element of compound words could be any part of speech, and has few limits in grammar and word order. The following are the main ways of word forming:

adj+noun: short-term goal, high-fashion knitwear;

noun+adj: the farmhouse-fresh faste, brand-new;

v-ing+adj: shining-clean;

oun+v-ed: honey-coated sugar puffs, home-made;

adj/adv+v-ed: warm-hearted, perfectly-testured cakes;

noun+v-ing: a relief-giving liquid, record-breaking;

adj+v-ing: innocent-looking, fresh-tasting milk;

adv+v-ing: hard-working, the best-selling soft toilet tissue;

noun+noun: economy-size shredded wheat, a state-of-the-art cell sorcer;

adv+noun: up-to-the-minute sculling.

3.2. English Syntax in Advertising

(1). More simple sentences, less complex sentences

It will get better effect to use simple sentences than compound sentences, because the readers will get bored on reading complex sentences. Another reason is to reduce the cost of advertising, and effectively stimulate the consumers.

(2). More interrogative sentences and imperative sentences

According to statistics, in every 30 sentences there is one interrogative sentence. Because interrogative sentences are quick and effective to arouse readers' response. The following is an advertisement of Lurpark Danish butter:

What's so special about Lurpark Danish butter? Well, can you remember what butter used to taste

like — real fresh farm house butter? Do you remember how you used to enjoy it when you were young? Today — the taste of Lurpark brings it all back to you — that's why it's so special.

The imperative sentences have a meaning of claiming, calling and commanding, similarly the goal of advertising is to persuade and urge consumers to accept its product or service. Therefore, there are lots of imperative sentences in advertising, such as:

Get ready to encounter the new trend in timepieces. The Citizen Espreme Collection Watches that are indicators of tastes and moods. That express you. --Citizen Watch

(3). Disjunctive Clause

Disjunctive clause is unique for advertising English, which separates a long, complex sentence into several simple sentences by using full stop, dash, semi-colon, hyphen, etc. Those sentences are independent in form, but are related in the content. The use of disjunctive clause could add more information and save more space and money. The separated parts are usually the features of the product, so that they could emphasize the good points of the product. There is an example of Amtrak, which has successfully used the disjunctive clauses:

Amtrak has created a new. nationwide passenger rail system. Literally from the ground up. A system that represented a viable alternative for people who fly. For business or pleasure.

(4). Minor Clause

Minor clause has simple elements, which could lay stress on the key words. It could not only reduce the length and cost, but also disseminate information more effectively. More than a timepiece, an acquisition.

--Piagit So come into McDonald's and enjoy a Big Mac Sandwich. --McDonald

3.3. Rhetorical Devices in English Advertising

Rhetorical devices are variations of literal or ordinary form of expressions. Their use is to make the thought more striking and effective, for they have the power to vivify and illustrate. A fresh, apt rhetorical device appeals to the imagination, creates mental pictures and makes the speech or writing vivid, impressive and interesting. For this reason, advertisers often use various rhetorical devices to increase the readability and appeal of an advertisement and to arouse consumers' interest of buying the product.

(1). Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or are represented as possessing human form. The use of personification in advertising will endow the product with human emotion, and will make them amicable to consumers.

Flowers by Interflora speak from the heart.

--Interflora We are proud of the birthplaces of our children, the grapes of Almaden. On our classic varietal wines, you will find the birthplaces of our children. --Almaden

(2). Simile and Metaphor

Simile is a figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by like or as. Light as a breeze, soft as a cloud. Ride like a feather in your pocket. Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison. Go for the Gold which is brightest star in electronics.

(3). Pun

Pun is a play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

Ask for More --More cigarette Spoil yourself and not spoil your figure. A Deal with Us Means A Good Deal To You.

(4). Repetition

In some advertisements, the copywriters often use the method of repetition to stress certain information.

When you're sipping Lipton, you're sipping something special. --Lipton tea

(5). Rhyming

Rhyming is correspondence of terminal sounds of words or of lines of verse.

Pepsi-Cola hits the spot, Twelve full ounces, that's a lot, Twice as much for a nickel, too, Pepsi-Cola is the drink for you.

IV. Advertising Elements

A complete written advertisement (newspaper, magazine) is usually composed of headline, body copy, slogan, illustrations and colors, trademark, and brand name. These elements are named as visual elements. Another kind of elements—audio elements are advertising commentary, advertising music and advertising sounds. In these elements, headline, body copy and slogan are the most important elements in an advertisement.

4.1. Headline

Headline is the theme and center of advertisement. It's usually in the most conspicuous position of advertisement to attract consumers' attention. Therefore, headline is crucial to the success of advertisement. But what kind of headline is a good headline? There are 7 principles for headline writing:

(1). Hit on what readers like, and make them feel it will benefit them. When people are reading advertisement, they always wish to find something good to them. So to give the reader a feeling of getting benefits will have the best result in advertisement. "Every time we race, you win." This is an advertisement for Yamaha electronic organ. It tells the consumer that every price war in the industry will benefit the consumers out of question.

(2). Try to introduce new things.

Any new product, new concept or improvement of old product will effectively attract readers' attraction. The words "new" and "free" are the most frequently used words in advertisement.

(3). Try to include the name of trademark in the headline.

(4). Use words that could arouse readers' interest.

(5). Keep moderate length.

A research by Institute of the Retailer Business Researching of New York shows that: headlines that have more than 10 words usually have better effect than short headlines. The most effective headlines have 6 to 12 words.

(6). Avoid to use vague words.

(7). Avoid to use privative words. There are many ways to write a headline, and 5 types often appear in written advertisement:

(a). Straightforward headlines. This kind of headlines usually uses interrogative sentences and imperative sentences to arouse readers' interest.

Ever wonder why most guys in pants ads are standing up? Discover the wonder of your first Dash wash!

(b). News headlines Pursuing new things is the nature of human beings. People are always interested in finding some new products or improvement of old products. Therefore, news headlines could attract consumers' attention better.

Introducing Renunt Freshell, The New wave in Air Fresheners.

(c). Information headlines Example:

Datsun saves about a gallon of gasoline a day.

(d). Emotional headlines Example:

Soft shoes for hard world.

(e). Curiosity headlines Example:

Saturday night On Sunday Morning.

4.2. Body copy

After their attention has been attracted to the advertisement by headline, the readers will move to the body copy, which is the main part of advertising information, to find something useful. Whether an advertisement has met the consumers' requirement, satisfied their desire, and stimulated them to take action are the factors to judge a good advertisement. There are 5 kinds of body copy writing.

(1). Straight-line Copy

This kind of body copy is to objectively state the features and advantages of the product.

(2). Question Copy

Question copy is to use a series of questions in the beginning of the advertisement, and

then give positive answers to each question. Moreover, all of these answers are just the good points or advantages of the product.

(3). Narrative Copy

This body copy is to introduce a product by telling a story, which will obviously increase the interest and attraction of the advertisement.

(4). Extend Knowledge Copy

This form of advertisement is to state the scientific knowledge that is correlative to the information of the product. The consumer will feel the product is creditable and advanced.

(5). Testimonial Copy

Testimonial copy is to make up a speaker, or take out a real witness to judge and praise the product.

(6). Similar Copy

Similar copy is to compare the product with other brand of product, which will make the strength of the product more prominent.

4.3. Slogan

Slogan, which is also known as taglines, shares some similarities with headline, because some slogans come from successful headlines. Explicit, refined and inflammatory are the features of slogan. The principle of slogan writing is:

(1). Briefly

The slogan of an advertisement should be brief. Normally no more than 10 words.

(2). Point out the advantages and arouse the readers' interest

(3). Inflammatory

The slogan should be inflammatory to urge the readers to take action.

V. Classification of Advertisements

By using the above principles and forms of writing advertisement, we could easily find a way, which we believe is the best one, to write an advertisement. The headline may be attractive, the body copy may be persuasive, and the slogan may be memorable. All the details are perfect in linguistic direction. However, the result may not be well pleasing. But why? One answer is that we may have forgotten which kind of target audience we are pleasing, or what kind of product we are selling. The process of finding a proper position for advertisements is classification. We must analyze the features of different kinds of advertisements, in order to find a proper position for our own advertisement, and choose methods fit it best. The advertisements can be classified into four groups by factors as target audience, functions, and product types. The four groups are Consumer Advertising, Business Advertising, Service Advertising, and Public Interest Advertising. There will be 20 advertisements chosen at random from newspapers, magazines, and other advertising books, for each group to help the

analyses.

VI. Conclusion

From the analysis of the above-mentioned different features of advertising language, we can say that advertising language as a special kind of language is very different from common language. It has its own features in morphology, syntax, and rhetorical devices. Simple and attractive are two general features of advertising English. Because there are different types of advertisements, and they are differed in the way of writing according to their target audience, the product or other aspects. Therefore, we must analyze the features of different kinds of advertisements, in order to find a proper position for our own advertisement, and choose methods fit it best. In the statistics of four groups of advertisements I find that: consumer advertising uses the widest range of forms and devices, whose main task is to attract readers and urge them to buy the product; business advertising, on the contrary, needn't put much effort in attracting its readers, its words are more practical; service advertising has the similar feature as consumer advertising in the use of words, but the former describes more about its product in some imaginable way; public interest advertising is a nonprofit action, which however still needs to attract readers' attention, tries to strike the reader in emotional way and urges them to take action immediately.

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