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LANGUAGE ELEMENTS AFFECTING MANIPULATION IN ADVERTISING: LINGUISTIC, SEMANTIC, AND EMPHATIC ELEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Advertising is a tool, without which it would be difficult for our society to develop from the economic point of view. By means of advertisements one can sell his/her products, services and also buy or get whatever he wants. Thus, the role of advertisement is very great in the lives of everybody, beginning from children to elderly ones. Nowadays, advertisements have the biggest power to manipulate customers. The manipulation in different types advertising has become a tool that advertisers use to attract people. It would be just to say that manipulation has moved away the mission of marketing that of meeting the needs of customers and widens the asymmetries of power between the company and the consumer. Some of manipulative advertisements are too difficult to prove because they do have controversial content and nature. In the current article, the main language elements that affect the manipulation process of advertisements are analyzed. To be more exact, three language elements – linguistic, semantic and emphatic elements that manipulate consumers are investigated deeply here. Some unhelpful features of them are also described here, to help future advertisers to avoid ineffective advertisement text or slogans.

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1. Introduction.

The word “manipulation” comes from the Latin word, originally used in the sense of “positive management” (to manage skillfully). However, it should be noted that a person's perception of advertising depends not only on the influence of information on it, but also on information itself or dominant stereotypes [Mudrov, 2004].

Nowadays, the strategy of manipulating the consciousness and behavior of the consumers is especially widespread in advertising communication. Manipulation means a hidden, unconscious speech effect that is not understood by the addressee by using various semiotic, psychological, logical, verbal, cognitive resources.

It is no secret that advertising is a very powerful tool for manipulating consciousness of people, or controlling people's, readers', customers' behavior and thoughts by exerting a purposeful influence on public consciousness. The main function of advertising is just to inform people about a product or service, and the next one is to convince people of their interest in the offered products/services [Pesotsky, 2001].

Interest in advertising goes far beyond the boundaries of science, because a fairly wide group of people participates in the production of advertising: copywriters, advertising theorists and practitioners, specialists in the field of mass communications [17]. Despite all the diversity of interest in this phenomenon, there is no doubt that such an intersection of views directly stems from the main advertising function, the manipulative nature of advertising language.

N.N. Belozerova and L.E. Chufistov develop the same idea. After analyzing several creolized advertising texts of the XXI century, researchers come to the conclusion that the informative function is not dominant in them and the information itself is presented indirectly [Belozerova, Chufistova, 2004, p. 20]. The dominant role is given to implicitly expressed discursive regulators. At the same time, “the informational integrity of the text is implicitly determined by the manipulative intention of the compilers, and explicitly determined by the combination of several verbal and descriptive means of expression” [Belozerova, Chufistova, 2004, p. 32].

Ideally, the advertising effect should be soft and invisible (implicit), just for this reason advertisers are often faced with the problem of using hidden meanings, putting different subtexts into advertising messages. In the article “Implicit content of statements” by K.A. Dolin asks what its essence of subtext (consciously refusing to isolate individual types of implicit information: allusions, presupposition, additional text) - the author limits himself to the concept common to all - the subtext [Dolinin, 1983].

2. MANIPULATION IN ADVERTISING TEXTS.

Advertising can begin with slight mockery and a positive attitude to advertising topic and end with a lie, confuse the consumer and lead them in the wrong direction. Moreover, the manipulation can be carried out secretly (implicitly), only in the intended form. Any cognitive, semantic, oral (verbal), communicative event can become a source of manipulation [2; 8]. The most important type of implicit information is presupposition in words and sayings, that is, the background aspects of the content of the statement that are initially accepted as true, ensure the correct understanding of the statement, and constitute the set of initial information of the meaningful statement. Presuppositions are often changed in advertising, which is the essence of manipulation [15].

Some other units of language consciousness, archetypes, stereotypes and argumentation are mainly implicitly represented in advertising texts. A stereotype is a relatively stable, simplified and generalized image of a person, some social group or society, about some phenomenon of reality. Stereotypes perform the functions of generalization and simplification of knowledge about reality, formation, etc. However, at the same time, they are quite inert, i.e. it is useless to destroy the stereotype, if necessary, it is more productive to suppress it by creating a new form. An archetype is a structural unit of the collective unconscious that governs mental processes. K. Jung used symbols that are the opposite of archetypes (images of heroes found in myths, legends, fairy tales, found in plot descriptions). Advertising messages also use archetypes that often help to decipher the cultural code [Jung, 1954]. Finally, argumentative processes become a hidden source of consumer manipulation. At the same time, both reason/thought arguments (facts, statistics, references to authorities) and appeal to the emotional-voluntary sphere, to the person, are used. The manipulation of logical arguments appears to be an argument for reason/thought, but actually appears as an appeal to man, i.e. emotional arguments are presented under the title of “rational arguments” [11].

Advertising's psychological targets are the following: they're not talked about, but they're implied. Arguments against people apply not to work, but to communication participants, they are based on basic human needs, and are associated with A. Maslow's theory of psychological motivation in advertising [Maslow, 1943]. This theory is not accepted by everyone and in everything, but it is actively used in advertising that appeals to simple basic needs. For example, advertisements for detergent “Vanish OXI POWER”.

**REMOVES STAINS
WHITENS THE WHITES
BRIGHTENS COLOURS.**

It shows that in psychology, advertising is considered as a means of influencing people in order to achieve those changes in their thinking and behavior [Лебедев-Любимов, 2006; Mokshantsev, 2009], which leads to increased sales of the advertised product or service.

Another issue for consumer manipulation via and through advertising is the capability and the extent of alteration of the mechanism of advertising which aims to persuade the consumer. The persuasive advertising could be divided into two types:

1. Non-manipulative advertising;
2. Manipulative advertising.

The non-manipulative advertising aims to presenting the product or service, in the best possible light. The advertiser doesn't need to lie, omit details or intimidate the consumer. This type of advertising is truthful, that is the facts presented are real, the information is giving in a clear, logical manner, in order to convince by informing [Grover, 2011]. The informative and persuasion functions of advertising are based on facts and emotional arguments.

While manipulative advertising aims to influence the decision of the consumer. They use arguments to influence on target-groups and individual consumers. Every time when these advertising efforts are focused on getting the consumers to do what the advertiser wants, it is considered manipulation. If a company deliberately decides to manipulate the consumer through advertising, in order to achieve its objectives, it could take into account some stimuli or praises which will ease the concrete advertising activities [14].

The advertising focuses on the process and mechanism the customer uses for making the purchasing decision. According to Maslow, the consumers have three categories of needs: [Maslow, 1943].

- *utilitarian needs*. E.g. the need of shelter, nourishment, and security.

- *social needs*. E.g. the need to be accepted by others.

- *psychological needs*. E.g. This makes the consumer behave in certain ways that are consistent with his self-image and that enhance his self-image to others.

However, some bright and literate consumers are immune to advertising and are never fooled into buying the products shown in the advertisements. When buying a product or getting a service, a consumer's reaction depends also by what non-conscious mind orders or decides, and this is called "the base of subliminal perception" [Tanski, 2004].

So, in the organization of advertising texts these needs are always taken into account.

3. METHODOLOGY.

In the article the descriptive method of investigation is used. Descriptive research refers to the methods that describe the characteristics of the people, objects, or phenomenon studied. This method focuses more on the "what" of the research subject than the "why" of it.

The method is used in this article, primarily to focus on describing the nature of a manipulative elements of advertising, to be more exact, linguistic, semantic, and emphatic ones.

4. DISCUSSIONS.

As it has been mentioned above, in the research article 3 manipulative elements of manipulation exist. The characteristic features of each of them are analysed in the next parts of the article.

4.1. LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS

One type of manipulation in advertising is linguistic manipulation. It includes linguistic material beginning with smaller or most discrete of segments/forms and leading to larger linguistic entities. While forming advertising texts, advertisers make some changes, transformation, mutation, etc. in the texts or slogans.

Advertisers take into consideration just 2 criteria:

1. Firstly, sound or word-form of lexical items is important, as it is located inside a construction. Here, every broken rule or manipulation is operated at several levels, and all elements are bound up amongst several entities [12].

2. Secondly, the consumers must be familiar with the environment of the ad firstly visually, and then, linguistically.

The advertising should be full of seduction, which makes possible for consumers to receive information on an emotional level without even being aware of it.

Advertisers manipulate the consumers, by using techniques that interfere with subliminal knowledge and alter it toward the advertiser's objective. The use of any persuasive method to influence on the consumer's thought process may be called manipulation which time when the advertiser has the intention to win and the consumer to lose. Thus, advertisers thoroughly use the following language elements in advertising text, especially slogans, which are concise and shorter in size:

1. Nouns (simple nouns, compound nouns, proper nouns, common nouns, noun phrases).

A Rolex will never

CHANGE THE WORLD.

We leave that to the people ("ROLEX" advertising)

2. Verbs, verb phrases, verbals and combinations, idioms, phrases (modal verbs and modal expressions).

Make your glamour statement every day (“MaxFactor” advertising)

Compensating, ARE WE?

We can give you a better view of investment opportunities from both sides of the Pacific.

3. Adjectives, degrees of adjectives (all 3 degrees – positive, comparative and superlative).

For the creation of the illusion of superiority, there are two major language techniques that are the use of the comparatives and superlatives.

Brilliant. In every way. (“Apple” advertising)

Faster than Schnell. (“Porsche” advertising)

“[Jack in the Box](#) Buttery Jack” burger advertisement used just the following superlatives.

“Juiciest. Butteriest. Craviest.” (“Burger advertising”)

4. Pronouns (all types of pronouns)

It’s time to decide.

Which side are you?

5. Adverbs.

Surprisingly good. But you’ll still buy the TESLA. (“TESLA” advertising)

6. Numerals (cardinal and ordinal ones).

30% OFF

80% DISCOUNT

No.1 in the Sun. (“Coca-cola” advertising)

The Scottish BrewDog company launched a campaign stating:

‘First Russia, then Qatar. Can’t wait for North Korea’.

7. Punctuation marks.

NEW!

79c, 89c, 99c.

WHY PAY MORE!

8. Particles.

Airbnb Live There Live There Even If Its Just For A Night Ad?

9. Exclamations or interjections.

Special offers. Wow sale (Shops).

KNOW.HOW.WOW (“LVMH” advertising)

Oh!

Yeah!

4.2. SEMANTIC ELEMENTS

In advertising some semantic elements are also used, and one of the elements is persuasion. Advertising becomes manipulative, when the advertising persuasion is appropriate, emotional, rational. Consumers can be manipulated by persuasion, emotive features, logical arguments, factual information, fallacious arguments, price and by vision [13]. All these issues are realized in advertising mostly by the help of linguistic features and then visually.

Manipulative advertising in itself, semantically, can be divided into several groups:

1. **False advertising**, which uses untrue facts when promoting a product or a service. The term “false advertising” means just false facts or statements. Besides, some significant facts can be hidden or not mentioned in the text of advertisement. E.g.

FREE LUNCH!

Lose 30+ pounds without dieting! (“Los-Angeles burger” advertising).

2. **Bad arguments** or the use of negative makes another group of manipulative advertising. At present, some advertising texts include or may include bad arguments and, it is considered to be a hook in attracting customers’ attention. E.g. See the following **Kleenex** advertising.

“Your hands are only as clean as the towel used to dry them”. (“Kleenex” advertising).

3. **The emotive persuasion** is another group of manipulation. It plays on consumers emotions and usually threatens consumers with dangers. It may also promise amazing results to consumers. Advertising with *emotive persuasion* persuade consumers with visions of happiness, fear, passion. E.g. From “Social charity campaign” advertisement.

SAVE SYRIA’S CHILDREN

***Four Million Children Need
Food, Care and Protection***

4. ***Nostalgic advertising*** is the next group of manipulation and is used to advertise so called “traditionally made” products. Such kind of manipulation aims to highlight the ingredients and the methods used in the old days and imply them nowadays, too. We should mention one fact that the claims are not always true. This type of advertising is usually addressed to people over 35 years old. For example, let’s see Coca-Cola advertising of 1940. E.g.

HAVE A COKE. (“Coca-Cola” advertising).

This one has been used periodically during last eight decades.

4.3. EMPHATIC ELEMENTS

The main goal of all types of advertising is to persuade consumers to buy a product or service. For this reason, advertising tries to do that by mostly plying with consumers emotions in a misleading and deceptive manner.

- The mostly used element in manipulation through advertising is the **exaggeration of the quality or puffery** of a product or service by means of fallacious arguments and emotional appeals. Exaggeration is used by the seller to increase the degree of quality of his product or service. In this case, it is not considered to be false or untrue.

Claims such as “world best car” or “king of burgers” are examples of puffery in the manipulation by advertising. This element influences the people who are not major consumers of the product or service. The exaggeration of the quality or puffery attracts new consumers, however, it can result in losing many consumers who are loyal to the product or service. E.g.

***BEST BURGER EVER
ONLY \$4.99***

- ***Poor or false arguments.*** They arguments can be made ignorantly and intentionally. The poor arguments are very important in marketing advertising because of its potential for consumer manipulation [Teves, 2009]. Mainly, the poor or false arguments of credibility are an important category which is largely used in advertising. E.g.

LET'S SAY A CAR COMPANY SUGGESTS, “YOU'RE EITHER DRIVING A SUBARU, OR YOU'RE NOT COOL.” (Newspaper advertisement text)

- ***Emotional appeals*** are the claims, which play with consumers emotions both at conscious and unconscious level. In the advertisements the following types of emotions can be observed: to dominate, feel safe, nurture, satisfy curiosity, scare; the need of sex, attention, autonomy; physiological needs such as food, drink, sleep and so on. The advertisers can speculate on the consumer emotions and the advertisement texts work out in such a manner that seem to promise or imply a possible connection between a product and happiness, social acceptance, a good family, a good sex life intimate friendship and so on. The mostly used emotion type in advertisements, during COVID pandemics, was the use of scare, which included soaps, antibacterial gels and masks. “National Foundation for Infectious Diseases” used such a slogan in its mask advertisement: E.g.

“We need more everyday heroes to help protect those at risk from COVID-19” (“National Foundation for Infectious Diseases” advertising).

So, that was an emotional appeal, which included some percentage of scare and protection.

Scare/Fear arguments are created through linguistic means. Scare/Fear is a powerful emotion, and advertisers are aware of it well. Thus, in advertisements, the most important needs become the target of scare/fear: the health of people, children, loved ones, the well-being of the family, younger generation, and security

All the above mentioned emphatic elements in advertisements become effective by using linguistic, visual, also auditory techniques and various combinations as vehicles for creating manipulative messages.

CONCLUSION.

It is impossible to imagine our life without advertising. Advertising could be divided into two types:

1. Non-manipulative advertising;
2. Manipulative advertising.

The manipulation in the world has become an issue which accompanies the daily life of the consumers and even producers. The purpose of all companies is to manipulate the consumers mainly in the following cases:

- Every time when the interests of the consumers are not appropriate to their interests;
- The companies are not able to persuade consumers otherwise.

As the advertising focuses on the useful mechanism to manipulate customers, it pays attention to three categories of needs of customers: *utilitarian needs, social needs, and psychological needs*. Thus, in the organization process of advertisement texts or slogans, all these needs become decisive.

The research revealed three main elements, which are used in the manipulation of customers.

1. Linguistic elements. As professionals consider, the advertising should be full of seduction; in this case it becomes possible for consumers to receive information on an emotional level without even being aware of it. So, consumers receive information by reading advertisement texts or slogans, and in this issue language units are of help to them. In advertising, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, interjections and some other parts of speech are used. Depending on the characteristic of advertisements, the advertisers make successful, sometimes unsuccessful choice among these language units.

2. Semantic elements. Semantic elements used in advertising are *false advertising, bad arguments or use of negatives, and emotive persuasion*.

For the sake of getting financial benefit, the use of false advertising has become wider and wider. When using faulty arguments it is much more difficult to assign blame to the advertisers. Experienced consumers are expected to realize which argument is real and which is bad and, if advertisers use fallacies, one would expect that the consumers know better. In such cases, the burden of responsibility appears to fall primarily upon the consumer.

3. Emphatic elements. The mostly used element in manipulation through advertising are exaggeration of the quality (or puffery) of a product or service by means of fallacious arguments. Another emphatic element is poor (or false) arguments, which results in the loss of customers. The last emphatic element which is customary for manipulative advertisement is emotional appeals, and they might be the claims, which play with consumers' emotions at conscious and unconscious level.

Many of the manipulative actions in advertising are difficult to prove and no one can say if harder regulations will reduce the natural tendencies toward manipulation through advertising.

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