In the Name of God

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M.A. Thesis

To Reason with Them or Tickle Them:

Reason and Tickle Advertising in Persian Print Ads

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استراتژی‌های بازاریابی و گفتمان‌های تبلیغاتی: استراتژی‌های استدلالی و فریبانه در آگهی‌های چاپ‌شده در ایران

در تاریخ ۱۳۹۱/۴/۲۱ توسط هیأت داوران زیر بررسی و با درجه عالی به تصویب نهایی رسید.

۱-استاد راهنمای پایان نامه	دکترعباس اسلامی راسخ	با مرتبه علمی استادیار	امضا
۲-استاد مشاور پایان نامه	دکتر منصور توکلی	با مرتبه علمی استادیار	امضا
۳-استاد داور داخل گروه	دکتر احمد معین‌زاده	با مرتبه علمی استادیار	امضا
۴- استاد داور خارج از گروه	دکتر اکبر حسابی	با مرتبه علمی استادیار	امضا

امضای مدیر گروه

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A Token of My Immense Gratitude

To

My Beloved Parents,

Who in My Birth Took an Oath to Give Me Their Unconditional Love and Support;

To

My Dear Brother, Omid,

Whose Gentle Soul Urged Me to Fight Back in the Time of Hardship and Sadness;

And To

My Warmhearted Friend, Ameneh,

Whose Mere Existence Taught Me the Meaning of "A True Friend"

Abstract

Consumerism and the inevitable tracking of one's desired product among the endless rows and shelves of colorful products, highlights the importance of winning advertising strategies which have the power to persuade their audience to prefer one over similar products. The present study aims to investigate two advertising strategies, reason versus tickle advertising and how they translate into the actual discourse of Persian print advertisements. To this end, a corpus of 150 ads was collected from two Iranian magazines, namely *Honar-e Ashpazi* and *Zendegi-ye Ideal.* Using the framework adopted by Simpson (2001) in telling apart reason vs. tickle ads based on their discourse features, Persian print ads were analyzed to determine why a given strategy is comparatively more prevalent. Furthermore, the nature of the advertised commodity (consumer's low-involvement or high-involvement commodity) was examined to identify their effects on the choice of the advertising strategy by the copywriter. The results of comparing the data categorized demonstrated that the nature of the advertised product does not play a significant role in the choice of strategy by the copywriter. Persian copywriters often employ a direct, factual approach offering logical reasons why customers should prefer a certain commodity over similar ones.

The implications and applications of the results of present research are three-fold. While firstly and most importantly, the findings could be fruitful to those seeking fresh insights into cross-cultural communication aspects, the results could also prove enlightening for those working in the area of English for Specific or Business Purposes who seek to provide authentic materials for junior or professional copywriters working in both in Iran and overseas. Translators might also benefit from the findings, as they illustrate how cultural factors influence the way advertising slogans, texts, etc. are translated into one's own language. Copywriters themselves, Persian or English, may benefit from the results of the study by seeing how their counterparts may vary their use of advertising strategies based on the commodity involved and more importantly the culture of the potential buyers.

Keywords: Advertising (discourse), reason advertising, tickle advertising, CDA.

Table of Contents

Title	Page

List of Figures

Title	Page

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AD: Advertisement

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CPP: Conspicuous Product Placement

RVL: Reader/Viewer/Listener

SFG: Systemic Function Grammar

Chapter One
Introduction

1.1. Overview

The growing consumerism in the present world and the endless colorful rows of diverse product types and services have not only managed to puzzle customers and clients all over the world but have also made manufactures and service providers seek more innovative ways to attract the attention of potential buyers for what they are offering. In other words, introducing one's products and services in an agreeable way to the potential customers has become a major staple for service providers and manufacturers. This emphasizes the importance of advertising which is a favorable representation of products to make consumers, customers and general public aware of the product. It is interesting to know what kind of marketing strategies and for what ideological, cultural purposes copywriters/advertisers employ in an advertisement in order to persuade people or provoke a certain reaction from the viewers.

Advertising, as a social institution that produces advertisements within a political economy of technical specialization, usually informs the public about a

product or service via pictures, films, TV, newspapers, or the Internet, and it has become one of the most important forces in our society (Dyre, 1982).

The present study seeks to investigate two marketing strategies and how they translate into the actual discourse of advertising; it also aims to explore the ideological and cultural considerations behind the decisions the copywriters make in preferring one strategy over the other when writing their advertising copies.

1.1.1. Advertising

As Goddard (1998, p.11) has pointed out, the terms 'advertisement' and 'advertising' have, at their root, a Latin word, 'advertere', meaning 'turn towards'. This unit will focus on some of the strategies used by advertising copywriters in their attempts to capture our attention.

There has been an enormous upsurge of interest in the linguistic and discourse characteristics of advertising over the last two decades. Introductory book-length treatments of the subject have tended to concentrate on the major levels of language organization in advertisements, including phonology, graphology, lexis and syntax (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985; Cook, 1992; Myers, 1994). More specialist studies of advertising have highlighted, variously, its cognitive features (Pateman, 1983; Redfern, 1982; Harris, 1983), its cultural and anthropological dimensions (Aman, 1982; Goldman, 1992; Schmidt et al., 1994; O'Barr, 1994; Ohmann, 1996) and its status as a genre or register of discourse (Toolan, 1988). Working within the tradition of critical discourse analysis, other analysts have explored the political and ideological significance of advertising discourse (Williamson, 1978; Kress, 1987; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1990) and from this perspective special attention has been given to the representation of gender in ads (Goffman, 1976; Barthel, 1988; Thornborrow, 1994). Finally, given the interactive and dynamic properties of advertising, and the importance of

contextual factors on the processing and interpreting of ads, it is not surprising that this type of discourse has been investigated within the parameters of models in linguistic pragmatics (Lakoff, 1982; Geis, 1982; Coleman, 1983, 1990; Tanaka, 1994; Short and Hu, 1997).

As illustrated by the wide and diverse range of studies conducted in the realm of advertising and its various subcomponents, it could be asserted that advertising could be approached from many different views and perspectives. Ahmed (2000, p.11) contends however "whether from a qualitative, quantitative or interpretive perspective, whether the researcher follows a modern social scientific approach, critical theory perspective or postmodernist approach, analysis of advertising and other media content is of growing importance."

From the viewpoint of Cook (1992, p.5), advertising is a prominent discourse type in all contemporary societies. For him, the important distinguishing feature of advertising discourse is its function, which is usually to persuade people to buy a specific product. This is not in any way to say that the audience of an ad could be treated as a submissive lot who could be ordered what to do or buy; the copywriter is aware of the fact that the reader plays an important role in the process of meaning making from an advertising discourse. McCracken (1988, p.79) states that "advertising relies on the reader to complete the meaning transfer as active participant."

According to Durant & Lambrou (2009, p.93), "advertising conveys information, so that consumers know what is available, who makes it, and where and how they can get it." Cook (1992, XV) states that, "writing on advertising is difficult. The reasons are partly formal, arising from its ever-changing uses and combination of language, pictures and music. Reiss (1971) regards advertising as an operative text type by attempting to persuade people or to elicit desired response. According to Bloor & Bloor (2004, p.141), "one aim of advertising is to inform, and a lot of advertising is informative without being overtly

persuasive." But the main aim of most advertising perhaps is to promote the sale of goods or services, which means that it must persuade. Advertising theory and practice propose that to resonate with the audience, advertising should present models similar to the reception language (Belch & Belch, 2003).

Williamson (1978, p.19) believes that an advertisement does not create meaning initially but invites us to make a transaction where it is passed from one thing to another. This claim is supported by Saren et al. (2007, p.138), who states that adverts utilize " a pre-existing referent system of meaning, because the product, prior to signification in the advert, has no meaning." Goldman (1992, p.2) reads ads socially by identifying advertising as a key institution in "producing and reproducing the material and ideological supremacy of commodity relations". He calls this system 'commodity hegemony'; because "they reproduce a sense of commodity relations as a natural and inevitable part of the lives of different individuals" (Saren, et al. 2007, p.129).

Although several studies have examined advertisements in the West, very little has been done in Asia. For example, Cook (1992), using an approach derived from linguistics and discourse analysis, examined contemporary British advertisements. He analyzed advertisements as discourse and his focus was not only on language but also the context of communication. His concern was on "who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of situation; through what medium; how different types and acts of communication evolved, and their relationship with one another" (Cook 1992, p.1).

Many such studies have tended to provide deep and systematic insights into the realm of advertising language; some were based on ideas expressed so far and some attempted to approach the matter from a whole fresh perspective. One piece of work especially, seems to stand apart in its engaging account of goals and strategies of modern marketing. Bernstein in his engaging account of professional advertising and marketing (1974) draws a binary distinction between

two major advertising strategies, (a) reason advertising and (b) tickle advertising. In his approach to advertising, one cannot argue that his views are grounded in any theories of discourse. His fresh insights, however, make his whole approach worthwhile.

1.1.2. Reason and Tickle Strategies in Advertising

Writing as a professional copywriter and through the course of a generalized discussion about the strategies and goals of modern marketing, Bernstein (1974) draws a binary distinction between two principal copywriting strategies i.e. reason advertising and tickle advertising. Based on Bernstein's ideas, Simpson (2001) investigated not only these marking tactics, but also how these tactics are encoded into the discourse of advertising. His study was different from the previous ones in that they were pragmatic explorations of advertising discourse and tended to focus on the text-processing strategies taken up by the audience of advertisements (Reader/Viewer/Listener- RVL). His study changed the focus from the audience of the ads to the writers of those ads, the copywriters. Sifting through Bernstein's generalized discussion of marketing strategies, Simpson comes up with clear, more clean-cut definitions of Bernstein's binary distinctions drawn between reason and tickle advertising.

He defines reason advertising as an attempt to persuade the consumer by providing direct and easily decipherable reasons for the purchase. Tickle advertising, on the other hand, takes a more indirect approach by appealing to the humor, memories, and feelings of the potential customer. As he contends, while reason advertising emerges to be direct, factual and simple, tickle advertising seem to be indirect, more difficult to comprehend and in comparison with reason advertising, they need more active participation on the part of RVL to be understood.

1.1.3. Reason and Tickle Strategies in Advertising Discourse

On how reason-tickle distinction translates itself into the advertising texts, Simpson (2001) contends that reason ads are characterized prototypically by:

1. Conspicuous product placement with brand name and (if available) company logo visually prominent,

2. A clear and unambiguous statement of the principal reason to buy the product.

No matter where they appear, whether in print or broadcast media, the basic discourse pattern of reason advertising remains stable and unchanged. In print media ads, which are space-based, and which appear on the pages of newspapers and magazines or on billboards, reason ads are normally made of three basic components: 1. The brand name, 2. A picture of the involved product, 3. A sequence of written text which explains the reason to buy the product.

It is the structure of the verbal text in print ads which will receive closest scrutiny in the present analysis. Simpson based his study on the corpus of British print and media ads which were either published or broadcasted in 1996-1997 and adopted Halliday's systemic-functional framework (1994) to come up with the underlying discourse structure of 'reason' ads. According to Halliday, there are sets of connectives within the text building devices in English, which he terms conjunctive adjuncts and when applied to reason advertising, they can be greatly illuminating. Here are the four major types of conjunctive adjuncts identified by Halliday:

(i) additive: and; also; moreover; nor.

(ii) adversative: but; yet; however; on the other hand.

(iii) conditional: [positive] if . . . then; in the event of, when. [negative] otherwise; if not.

(iv) causal : so; then; because; as a result; that's why, ...

To exemplify the use of the conjunctive adjuncts in reason advertising, Simpson (2001) draws various examples from the corpus of British print and broadcast ads. (The conjunctive adjuncts are highlighted in capitals.)

(i) *And IF of course you're not satisfied, Lever Brothers will give you, your money back.*

(TV ad for 'Surf' washing powder, with testimonial from 'actor and Surf user')

(ii) *BECAUSE new Pampers have many more long soft fibers, they clean much more easily.*

(TV ad for 'New Pampers' baby wipes)

(iii) *Laura Ashley knows that 'clean' means 'impeccably clean'. THAT'S WHY we recommend Bold washing liquid.*

(TV ad: 'cross brand-name' endorsement for Bold and Laura Ashley)

Though the underlying structure of these advertisements could be used to promote a wide range of other products and services, their propositional structure essentially remains unchanged. It is easily comprehended by the audience and one can place and replace the two-place conditional with thousands and thousands of other conditional clauses and consequents to produce a large sum of easily-understood advertisements. The structure of reason-plus-result in the second ad also demonstrates another semantically well-formed structure which could be used to generate numerous instances of reason advertising. Tickle advertising does not demonstrate the factual direct, easy-to-understand attributes of the reason advertising though on the surface they might display the structural features of reason advertising. Let us take into consideration the following example:

If *you want to drink cola, drink Cola.*

(Coca-Cola soft drink, the product only faintly visible in the background)