

## Use of Language in Advertisements



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### Introduction

Advertising is the best way to communicate to the customers. Advertising helps inform the customers about the brands available in the market and the variety of products useful to them. Advertising is for everybody including kids, young and old. It is done using various media types, with different techniques and methods most suited. Advertisements in mass media are fascinating, exciting and creative in this world of globalization. They are part and parcel of our day to day's life. It plays a vital role for a company to promote its sales and increase revenues. Almost all the ads use taglines to attract the customers. Everything matters in an advertisement. The kind of color, background, people who are appearing, the words used by the people are all matters in advertisements. Above all, the culture depicted in advertisements plays a crucial role in promoting the particular product of a company. It needs a lot of imagination and creativity. Those who work hard and smart can excel in this field. This paper critically analyses the language used in advertisements with reference to the products they shown in mass media, in papers and in journals.

**Objectives of advertising:**

Four main Objectives of advertising are:

- i. Trial
- ii. Continuity
- iii. Brand switch
- iv. Switching back

**Trial** – The companies which are in their introduction stage generally work for this objective. The trial objective is the one which involves convincing the customers to buy the new product introduced in the market. Here, the advertisers use flashy and attractive ads to make customers take a look on the products and purchase for trials.

**Continuity** – This objective is concerned about keeping the existing customers to stick on to the product. The advertisers here generally keep on bringing something new in the product and the advertisement so that the existing customers keep buying their products.

**Brand switch**–This objective is basically for those companies who want to attract the customers of the competitors. Here, the advertisers try to convince the customers to switch from the existing brand they are using to their product.

**Switching back**–This objective is for the companies who want their previous customers back, who have switched to their competitors. The advertisers use different ways to attract the customers back like discount sale, new advertise, some reworking done on packaging, etc.

Basically, advertising is a very artistic way of communicating with the customers. The main characteristics one should have to get on their objectives are great communication skills and very good convincing power.

**Basic features of Advertisements:**

**i. Paid form**–Advertising is always a paid form of communication and hence commercial in nature. Thus, advertising can clarify to be distinguished from publicity which is not paid for by the sponsor.

**ii. Non-personal presentation** - Advertising is a non-personal presentation. Whatever the form of presentation, advertising is always directed to a mass audience rather than to any individual.

At times, e-advertising message may give the impression of a personal appeal. However, all the sensations are non-personal in nature.

**iii. Sell or promote ideas, goods and services** – Advertising is aimed at promoting and selling not only tangible and physical goods, but also ideas and services. Most often services like banking and insurance which are sold through advertising. For example, Posts and Telegraph Department advertises to promote the use of PIN CODE for fast delivery of letters. The scope of advertising is wide and designed to sell not only goods but services and ideas also.

**iv. Identified sponsor**–Advertising always has an identified sponsor. In other words, advertising discloses or identifies the source of the opinions and ideas it presents. On the other hand, the sponsor for publicity or propaganda can remain anonymous.

**v. Inform and persuade:**

Advertising usually informs the potential consumer about products and services, their benefits and utilities. It also persuades the consumers to purchase such products and services.

### **Significance of Language**

Language is a powerful tool for a human being to communicate with others effectively. Therefore, the use of right and effective language both in spoken and in written brings success. All the successful persons use select vocabulary in order to attract their audience and get success in their life. Likewise, the kind of language used in advertisements in mass media as well as in leading journals and newspapers brought big success to companies.

### **The language of Advertising**

Language has a powerful influence over people and their behaviour. This is especially true in the fields of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is vitally important. Visual content and design in advertising have a very great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it.

The English language is known for its extensive vocabulary. Where many other languages have only one or two words which carry a particular meaning, English may have five or six.

Moreover, the meanings of these five or six words may differ very slightly and in a very subtle way. It is important to understand the connotation of a word. Connotation is the feeling or ideas that are suggested by a word, rather than the actual meaning of the word. *Armchair*, for example, suggests comfort, whereas *chair* arouses no particular feelings. The target audience, of course, also puts its own meaning into certain words. Different people sometimes interpret language in different ways.

Both the mass media, when reporting news items and marketing and advertising personnel have to consider the emotive power of the words they use. First, they make a decision about what to communicate and what to withhold. One way in which advertisers adapt language to their own use is to take compound words and use them as adjectives. These compounds often later become widely used in normal situations. Examples of these compounds which have become part of the English language are: *top-quality*, *economy-size*, *chocolate flavoured*, *feather-light* and *longer-lasting*.

The language of advertising is, of course, normally very positive and emphasizes why one product stands out in comparison with another. Advertising language may not always be "correct" language in the normal sense. For example, comparatives are often used when no real comparison is made. An advertisement for a detergent may say "It gets clothes whiter", but whiter than what?

A study of vocabulary used in advertising listed the most common adjectives and verbs in order of frequency. They are:

Adjectives		Verbs	
1.	new	1.	make
2.	good/better/best	2.	get
3.	free	3.	give
4.	fresh	4.	have
5.	delicious	5.	see
6.	full	6.	buy
7.	sure	7.	come
8.	clean	8.	go
9.	wonderful	9.	know

10.	special	10.	keep
11.	crisp	11.	look
12.	fine	12.	need
13.	big	13.	love
14.	great	14.	use
15.	real	15.	feel
16.	easy	16.	like
17.	bright	17.	choose
18.	extra	18.	take
19.	safe	19.	start
20.	rich	20.	taste
<b>Good and new</b> were over twice as popular as any other adjective.			

**Hyperbole** - exaggeration, often by use of adjectives and adverbs.

Frequent use of **adjectives** and **adverbs**

A limited range of **evaluative adjectives** includes new, clean, white, real, fresh, right, natural, big, great, slim, soft, wholesome, improved ....

**Neologisms** may have novelty impact, eg **Beanz Meanz, Heinz, Cookability,**

**Schoweppervescence, Tangoed, Wonderfuel ...**

**Long noun phrases**, frequent use of pre and post modifiers for descriptions.

**Short sentences** for impact on the reader. This impact is especially clear at the beginning of a text, often using bold or large type for the "Headline" or "slogan" to capture the attention of the reader.

**Ambiguity** is common. This may make a phrase memorable and re-readable. Ambiguity may be syntactic (the grammatical structure) or semantic (puns for example).

**Weasel words** are often used. These are words which suggest a meaning without actually being specific. One type is the open comparative: "Brown's Boots Are Better" (posing the question "better than what?"); another type is the bogus superlative: "Brown's Boots are Best" (posing the question "rated alongside what?") Look out for the following Weasel words:

Helps            like            virtually

Enriched	worth	fresh
Tested	guaranteed	scientific
Traditional	home-made	organic

Use of **Imperatives**: "Buy Brown's Boots Now!"

**Euphemisms**: "Clean Round the Bend" for a toilet cleaner avoids comment on "unpleasant" things. The classic example is "B.O" for "body odour" (in itself a euphemism for "smelly person")

**Avoidance of negatives** – advertising normally emphasises the positive side of a product - though see Marmite, Tango, Benetton, for whom it seems that all publicity is good.

**Simple and Colloquial language**: "It ain't half good" to appeal to ordinary people, though it is in fact often complex and deliberately ambiguous.

**Familiar language**: use of second person pronouns to address an audience and suggest a friendly attitude.

**Present tense** is used most commonly, though nostalgia is summoned by the simple past.

**Simple vocabulary** is most common, **my mate Mary**, with the exception of technical vocabulary to emphasise the scientific aspects of a product (computers medicines and cars but also hair and cleaning products) which often comes as a complex noun phrase, **the new four wheel servo-assisted disc brakes**.

**Repetition** of the brand name and the slogan, both of which are usually memorable by virtue of **alliteration, finger of fudge, the best four by four by far**;

**Rhyme** – **mean machine, the cleanest clean it's ever been**;

**Rhythm**- **drinka pinta milka day**

**Syntactic parallelism** - **stay dry, stay happy**

**Association** – **fresh as a mountain stream**

**Humour**–This can be verbal or visual, but aims to show the product positively. Verbal Puns **wonderfuel** and graphic juxtapositions are common.

**Glamorisation** is probably the most common technique of all. "Old" houses become **charming, characterful, olde worlde** or **unique**. "Small" houses become **compact, bijou, snug** or **manageable**. Houses on a busy road become **convenient for transport**.

A **café** with a pavement table becomes a **trattoria**, moving up market aspires to be a **restaurant**, too cramped it becomes a **bistro**. Not enough room to serve it becomes a **fast food servery**. If the menu is English food it is likely to be **traditional**, **home-baked** or **home made**; if the menu is French the cake will be **gateau**, the potted meat **paté**, bits of toast in your soup will be **croutons**. The **decor** will be probably **chic**, possibly **Provençal**.

Finally **potency**.

David Ogilvy identifies the following words as giving **news value**, **novelty** and **immediacy** to a piece of copy.

free	now	how to
suddenly	announcing	introducing
improvement	amazing	sensational
remarkable	revolutionary	startling
miracle	magic	offer
quick	easy	wanted
challenge	advice to	compare
bargain	hurry	last change

### Critical analysis of leading advertisements

With the mushrooming of satellite channels teleshopping becomes a big business concept now a days. The concept of this is that a customer can select products of their own choice which are shown in the channels and place orders through telephone or mobile. The product will reach to customers within few days. This helps people who do not have time to go to shops and select products. Moreover, it saves time and energy. The question is whether all the products shown in channels are worthy to buy. They use convincing language to buy the products. For example, advertisements relating to diet, fitness, weight reducing, physical exercise, etc. are shown repeatedly. If we carefully analyze the advertisements on weight reducing, we can easily find out the fact that how can a man can reduce his weight within the stipulated time. Of course it may be possible for some people, not for all.

Another advertisement relating to health drinks like boost, horlicks, complan etc. The tag line for boost ad is 'boost is the secret of my energy.' If it really gives energy we do not even

need food. Another example is the ad for Complan, which says that it is 'complete planned food'. If it is complete planned food and contains all the essential nutrients there is no necessary to take our food. It is better we can have a cup of Complan for all the three times rather than taking our breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Next we can take up advertisements regarding electronic goods. Philips is a global company which manufactures all kinds of electrical and electronics goods. Tube lights manufactured by Philips are world renowned product. The tag line for this is that '**sense and sensibility.**' Actually the title is from one of the famous novels by the English novelist, Jane Austen by the same title. How a light can have sense and sensibility? Years before there was an advertisement for a new television product. That was for Onida television. It had an attractive tag line of 'Owner's pride and neighbours' envy. What was the pride for owners and what was the envy for neighbours. If we analyse this ad we can find out that a customer buys a new television by investing huge amount. Actually it is a big burden for him. Then what is the pride for a buyer? Nothing.

Almost all the commercial establishments create advertisements to win over the edge. It is because everyone is in a win-win situation. Accordingly, they create ads and show it through mass media and other leading dailies. For example, one of the leading Indian nationalized bank which says that '**pure banking and nothing else.**' In reality, what is happening in nationalized banks is contrary to the nature. When a bank opens a new branch in a new locality they canvass people to open account. After it gets sufficient account and funds the service from the bank reduces. When one enters the bank for a minor problem, it will not be solved even after months. Then what is the meaning of that tag line. Another bank uses the following tag line, '**taking technology to the common man.**' India is primarily an agricultural country. Now a days, farmers find it difficult to grow food crops and sell them. In some cases farmers are not able to repay their loans. Due to this, some of them commit suicide. This is the reality. Instead of encouraging our traditional farming system they encourage to open account and use the bank. How can a farmer use a bank even when he finds it difficult to get his single time food for a day.



Insurance companies both govt. owned and private companies are coming up every day. The common tag line for insurance companies is '**insurance is the subject matter of solicitation.**' The meaning is that it is a matter of choice of an individual. And it is not a compulsory one. There are different types of insurance available in the market. One such kind is 'life protection' insurance. How a company can protect an individual's life? Is it a life giver? No. It is a well known fact that no one has the ability to protect other's life. If this is true, how does it possible for an insurance company to protect our lives. It is totally contrary to nature.

Maruti Suzuki, One of the leading car manufacturers in India, has given the tag line "designed to keep you calm and comfortable" for its model RITZ. The question is that in this global slowdown in economy, people all over the world find it difficult to buy even essential commodities. They lost their sleep and peace. Everyone is in stress and in problems. Is it possible to get calm and comfortable just by buying a car? Of course, it is possible for rich men. Not for all.

In these days, using refrigerator in homes as well as in commercial establishments is a common scene. But the poisonous gas emitted by the fridge is very dangerous to our health and to the atmosphere. There is a mushrooming of brands available in this segment. Because of heavy competition each and every company wishes to sell their products in one way or the other. There is a tag line, "your refrigerator may be cool but burning inside". The meaning is somewhat puzzling. We can feel coolness only inside the fridge, not the outside. Then, how can it be burning inside, if it cools inside. The advertisement is misleading, if one thinks deeply.

Our life will become stand still without computers. It plays a crucial role in our life. There are number of computer companies producing computers throughout the world. Dell is considered one of the best brands in the world. The tag line goes, "gets second glances and puts you on top of the world". Without taking any effort how does it possible to be on top of the world just by buying a computer. No one knows.

Modern houses are decorated with ultra modern water heaters in the bathrooms. One of the leading brands in this line gives the following tag line to its brand, "now your great

mornings can always start on time.” How a water heater decide our punctuality and our mornings are the great ones. It is our own will to get up at right time in the mornings. No external force can compel us to do something.

### **Summing up:**

In fact, the advertisements lure the consumers. By seeing them consumers tend to buy the products whether they are needed or not. Such is the power of advertisements. Vance Packard (1960) memorably said: "The cosmetic manufacturers are not selling lanolin, they are selling hope ... we no longer buy oranges, we buy vitality. We do not just buy an auto, we buy prestige." In other words, advertising helps educating people. There are some social issues also which advertising deals with like child labour, liquor consumption, girl child killing, smoking, family planning education, etc. In short, advertising is the art of influencing human action and awakening of a desire to possess products and services. It is a mass persuasion activity duly sponsored by the manufacturer, retailer, or dealer for whom the advertising is done.

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