

FEATURES OF ADVERTISING DISCOURSE AND TEXT

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Abstract

Advertising discourse and text are unique forms of communication designed to persuade, inform, and engage audiences, usually with the goal of promoting products, services, or ideas. The features of advertising discourse and text reflect a blend of linguistic, psychological, and visual strategies aimed at capturing attention and influencing consumer behavior. The given article tries to discuss the essential key features.

Keywords. Influence, orientation, polycode nature, verbal, visual, complex nature, components, formal signals, sign, denotative and connotative.

Introduction

Advertising discourse is defined as a special type of imperative discourse, occupying an intermediate position between argumentative (persuasive) and propaganda (manipulative) discourses [7, 8]. On the one hand, the advertiser has no opportunity to command, he can only convince, persuade, which is also typical for argumentative discourse. On the other hand, advertising presents only the advantages of the product as an argument, real or constructed, and influences the mass consciousness with the aim of making changes in the cognitive base of the addressee. "The discourses of advertising and propaganda are based on the same nature of psychological influence, the weapon of which is manipulation [7, 8]". Depending on the advertising strategy, the characteristics of the target audience, the text platform (message content and the method of its implementation), the advertising discourse can be either status-oriented or personality-oriented. Advertising is defined as a "weak", "asymmetrical", "institutional" discourse. In the first case, the fact is taken into account that advertising is perceived in a single information flow, without a clear orientation to perception and, as a rule, is not subject to deep, analytical comprehension. In the second, the absence of clear feedback, a response from the addressee, who is "present in the situation only hypothetically" is taken into account. The latter characteristic is based on the understanding of discourse as communication between people, considered from the point of view of their belonging to a particular social group or in relation to a particular typical speech-behavioral situation (for example, institutional communication). V. I. Karasik identifies political, administrative, legal, military, pedagogical, religious, mystical, medical, business, advertising, sports, scientific, stage and mass-information types of institutional discourse [11].

E. A. Terpugova [7, 9] notes another feature of advertising discourse - its complex nature. This important property of advertising discourse is determined by the features of advertising text,

which has a polycode nature (i.e., often including, in addition to verbal, also visual and/or auditory signs).

The central property of a pragmatic advertising message is the property of advertising, identified by E. A. Lazareva – “the advertising focus of all components of the text on promoting its object, on attracting attention to it, on fully involving the addressee in the sphere of advertising communication” [5,144].

Let us highlight the substantive and formal signals of advertising that allow the addressee to identify the text as belonging to the advertising discourse. Substantive signals include the theme (subject of advertising), the idea (main idea) of the advertising piece, the argumentation in favor of purchase, presented in accordance with the three “maxims of advertising text” (term of E.A. Lazareva [1997, p. 31]): the maxim of command, the maxim of obsession and the maxim of unique attractiveness. Formal signals of advertising can be: 1) modular form of information presentation (advertising module); 2) brightness, catchiness; 3) special character of material presentation: creolization of text, use of iconic, auditory signs; 4) use of a special, unusual font; 5) special instructions (“advertisement rights”), etc.

An advertising work is a special kind of text, since signs of different semiotic systems can function in its structure. Before characterizing this phenomenon, let us briefly dwell on the concept of “sign”. The Philosophical Encyclopedic Dictionary defines a sign as a material, sensually perceived object (phenomenon, action) that acts as a representative of another object, property or relationship [9]. There are different classifications of signs. One of the most famous was proposed by Charles Peirce, who distinguished between iconic signs (mental images, drawings, etc.) that have a natural resemblance to an object, index signs (a graduated scale, a signal, a cry, etc.) and conventional symbolic signs (a story, a book, a law, an institution) [6,75-97]. In C. Peirce's classification there was no division of signs into linguistic and non-linguistic. For example, in addition to visual pictures, he also included metaphors in the “icons”, demonstrative pronouns in the indexes, and nouns in the symbols. This classification was later refined: the conventional nature of iconic and indexical signs was established (see: [8; 123, 131]), and only non-linguistic signs began to be included in the “icons”, indexes, and symbols. Thus, the “Brief Philosophical Dictionary”, noting the primacy of dividing signs into linguistic (signs of natural and artificial languages) and non-linguistic, classifies indices (symptoms, signs, instrument readings), iconic signs (copies, images of designated objects) and symbols (emblems, banners, coats of arms) among the latter [KF S, 1998, p. 106]. For the analysis of printed advertising, the greatest interest is in identifying iconic signs, which occupy one of the most important places in the structure of the advertising text. The problem of the place and role of the iconic sign in the advertising text is the subject of research by R. Barthes [1994] and U. Eco [8].

From R. Barthes's point of view, an advertisement is a series of discrete (i.e. separate) non-linear signs, conveying three messages:

- 1) linguistic (denotative and connotative);
- 2) iconic “denotative” (“literal”, perceptual, i.e. directly perceived);
- 3) iconic “connotative” (“symbolic”).

The linguistic message performs two functions: fixing and linking the iconic message. Any image is polysemic; under the layer of its signifiers lies a “floating chain” of signifieds; the

reader can concentrate on some signifieds and not pay any attention to others. What is needed are “technical devices” “designed to stop the floating chain of signifieds, designed to help overcome the horror of the semantic uncertainty of iconic signs: linguistic communication is precisely one of these devices” [3, 304].

The verbal component of an advertising message allows for the identification of both individual elements of the image and the entire image as a whole. “The naming function helps to consolidate — with the help of linguistic nomenclature — certain denotative meanings,” “allows ... to choose the correct level of perception,” and also to manage the acts of interpreting the “symbolic” message.

According to R. Barthes, the implementation of the function of fixation leads to the fact that “the text, as it were, leads the person reading the advertisement, among a multitude of iconic signifiers; often very subtly manipulating the reader, the text guides him, directing him to a predetermined meaning”. The text is capable of “dictating one or another view of the image: fixing the meaning is a form of control over the image”. Iconic signifiers have freedom, the text plays a repressive role. According to R. Barthes’s observations, the connecting function of the advertising text is realized in the case when both the text and the image turn out to be “fragments of a larger syntagma”. “Verbal links are rarely found in static images, but they acquire a special role in cinematography, where the dialogue not only explains the image, but - making possible the transition from statement to statement, operating with meanings absent in the pictorial series - ensures the development of the action”[3, 307].

A linguistic message can simultaneously perform both functions, but it is important which of them prevails. An iconic sign conveys the properties of an object: optical (visible), ontological (assumed) and conventional, conditionally accepted, modeled (for example, the rays of the sun, depicted as dashes) [8, 131].

At the same time, the consumer of advertising perceives denotative and connotative iconic messages simultaneously; such syncretism corresponds to the very function of the image within the framework of mass communication. [3,302]. The task of a denotative message is to “naturalize a symbolic message, to give a natural appearance to the semantic mechanism of connotation, especially noticeable in advertising”. Analyzing a connotative message, R. Barthes points out that it is “a certain construction formed by signs extracted from different layers of our dictionaries (idiolects)”. The signs of the “symbolic” message are discrete and are drawn from a certain cultural code. At the same time, the number of possible readings of the same image by different subjects varies depending on different types of knowledge. “This means that the same lexicon (image) is capable of mobilizing different vocabularies”. This is due to the fact that the meaning of an iconic sign can be interpreted ambiguously. A similar point of view is shared by E. E. Anisimova, who believes that an image is not such a clearly expressed sign unit as a word, and its semantics, compared to the latter, are characterized by significantly less certainty, vagueness, and blurriness of its boundaries [2, 11]. Therefore, a verbal sign is needed that clarifies the meaning of the image or “fixes” the iconic sign. Eco classifies iconic codes as hard-to-define weak codes, and verbal codes as strong ones [8;134, 136]. The works of R. Barthes served as a theoretical and methodological basis for further semiotic studies of advertising text. At the same time, some of the above provisions of his theory are rethought by Umberto Eco. Thus, U. Eco asserts the continuity of the iconic sign,

the impossibility of isolating discrete meaning-distinguishing elements in its field, similar to those existing in natural language [8,137]. The position on the totality of the clarifying meaning of the verbal sign in relation to the visual is questioned. According to the researcher, “advertising always uses visual signs with an established meaning, provoking familiar associations that play the role of rhetorical prerequisites, the same ones that arise in the majority”. In addition, U. Eco identifies several codification levels in visual communication:

1) *iconic* (corresponds to the denonative iconic level of R. Barthes). For example: woman, sword;

2) *iconographic*, the level of iconograms, which are not separate, discrete visual signs, but their combinations, which U. Eco calls “seme”s. An iconic seme is an idiolect (a special, unique code), and it itself is a kind of code that gives meaning to its own elements. In the example above, this level corresponds to the understanding:

3) the level of tropes, including visual equivalents of verbal tropes, among which the most widespread is the visualization of metaphor. According to the researcher's observations, almost every advertising visual image is a rhetorical figure of antonomasia, which imparts the features of a genus or species to any depicted object. For example, a girl drinking lemonade does what all girls do. An individual case becomes a typical situation, supplied with the general quantifier “all”. This mechanism, due to which the particular is perceived as universal and exemplary, is fundamental in the field of advertising communication; 4) the level of *tophos* - premises, commonplaces of argumentation, complexes of assimilated views, capable of both serving as a prerequisite for an enthymeme and acting as a general scheme for uniting similar enthymemes. “The iconogram induces a field of *topoi*, habitually associatively leading to a number of implicit premises”. For example, a woman leaning over a cradle (the iconogram of a “nursing mother”), according to U. Eco, gives rise to a series of arguments: all mothers love their children and strive to please them - all mothers buy product X - the one who buys X brings joy to the child. Most visual advertising relies not so much on the explication of premises and commonplaces, as on the demonstration of an iconogram, which in itself connotes a series of *topoi*, which in turn suggest one or another premise;

5) *the level of enthymemes* — the level of visual argumentation as such. In connection with the characteristic polysemy of the image and the need to assign one meaning to it with the help of words, rhetorical argumentation itself either comes only from the verbal series, or its source is the correlation of the verbal series with the visual. In this case, iconograms, similar to how they evoke entire sets of *topoi* in memory, should connote sets of enthymemes, referring to established methods of argumentation [8, 181-184].

We believe that the levels identified by W. Eco (iconograms, tropes, *topoi* and enthymemes) are related to the iconic connotative image of R. Barthes, representing the levels of division of the latter, its structural-semantic variants, sublevels. Verbal and iconic elements of advertising text “are not a sum of semiotic signs, their meanings are integrated and form a complexly constructed meaning”. Accordingly, one of the tasks of studying the rhetoric of advertising, according to U. Eco, is to trace how the rhetorical solutions of both registers (verbal and visual).

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