

# Persuasion and Power

Linguistic aspects of how information is presented in persuasive ways are important in many public media forms. Two influential fields of media practice are news and adverts. Newspaper has persuasive undercurrent. Advertising persuades consumers to buy and conveys information about products and services. Persuasive or rhetorical techniques are used in both news and advertizing.

# News

News has long and complicated history: notices, announcements, 24 hour news, newsfeed to mobile and PC.

News as events or accounts of events?

- Events or actions in the world
- Newspaper, magazine or other media news reports and stories

- What constitutes news?
- John Bogart, the editor of The New York Sun, said “Dog bites man” is not news, man bites dog” is.

Three aspects of news value:

- **Topic areas**
- **Newsworthiness**
- **Sources**

## Topic areas

- **Politics:** parliaments, policies, decision making
- **The economy:** companies, figures, trade, imports and exports, wages, inflation, prices
- **Foreign affairs:** relations between governments
- **Domestic:** Hard- conflict, Soft-humour
- **Occasional stories :** disasters, celebrities
- **Sport :** football, cricket

## **Newsworthiness**

Bell (1991) proposes that an action or event is likely to be newsworthy if it:

- is bad or negative
- has only just happened
- took place geographically close to the reader or viewer

- fits the reader's or viewer's perceptions or stereotypes about how the world is
- is relatively clear-cut and unambiguous
- is rare, unexpected or unpredictable
- is outstanding or superlative in some respect
- can be presented as relevant to the audience's own lives or experience
- can be pictured in personal terms



- involves news actors who are socially prominent in some respect
- comes from news sources who carry some kind of socially validated authority
- consists of or can be supported by facts and figures

### **Sources**

Bell (1991) offers the following lists of sources that go into news story

- Interviews
- Public addresses

- Press conferences
- Written text of spoken addresses
- Organizationally produced documents: reports, letters, minutes, research
- Papers
- Press releases
- Prior stories on a topic
- News agency copy
- Journalist's notes

# Adverts

## Function

- To persuade consumers to buy
- To convey information about product and service

Advertising space and advertising time are expensive, so people who buy media slot concentrate on value for money. With commercial radio and TV, media purchasers prioritise programmes watched or listened to by large audiences.

As regards the verbal discourse of advertising, three topics stand out.

1. The register of advertising

The language of advertising focuses on creative use of poetic devices. Such devices include:

a. Sound patterning

- Rhymes and consonance: Beanz meanz Heinz
- Alliteration: The salon secret for silky shine

b. Parallelism: I found a way to be a good mother and still be a great mom

## 2. Suggestiveness

It uses mini-stories or dramas, or exoticised images, irony and indirect humour, rather than directly stating claims about the product. With such language, it is the connotation as much as the stated meaning that has power to attract and attention.

### 3. Specific claims about products and services

The advertisement states attributes of the product in such a highly favorable light that is considered to be merely exaggerated praise (it puffs up or inflates, the quality of what is being sold with rhetorical praise).

Such language is thought typical of anyone engaged in selling, and considered unlikely to be taken literally or interpreted as a truth-claim by a potential consumer.

Examples: best ever, unique, stunning, fantastic, outstanding, and excellent.

- Rewind time, Helps fight the signs of up to two years' hair damage in just one wash.