

Original Article

# Text Interpretation in Advertising Communication: A Semiotic Approach

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**Abstract** - Advertising, a phenomenon of contemporary society, is information that affects the mass consciousness. Social advertising promotes awareness about existing pressing issues facing society and acts as an educational tool. Previous studies that have investigated the structural analysis of the text in advertising have pointed out that most advertising headlines are composed of simple sentences. However, few studies have explored the effect of textual semiotics in advertising on consumers. This study aimed to examine the semiotic system in advertising texts and analyze the impact of advertising on the consciousness of people. It conducted a comprehensive analysis of various types of texts in advertisements. Findings revealed that the advertising text must avoid an explicit order, encourage consumers, and not provide any instructions. Furthermore, the headline must be a simple sentence structure that can be easily understood. It is suggested that a categorical imperative must be avoided, as "softer" forms of inducement are preferable to attract consumers. The study findings contribute to the literature on advertising communication and have important implications for advertising and marketing professionals to promote consumer purchase behavior.

**Keywords** - Advertising text, Inducement category, Text interpretation, Advertisements, Advertising communication, Textual semiotics.

## 1. Introduction

As a linguocultural phenomenon, language absorbs the richness of a culture. Any culture is the measure related to the characteristics and specificity of a particular language. Language plays a major role in the internationalization of cultures; the context of different cultures is reflected in language in the form of lexical borrowings.

A learner experiences culture in the process of learning or communicating in a certain language. To teach effective communication, it is necessary to encourage interest in and respect for the culture of the people who speak the language because a national context is present behind each word or evocation. Communication and marketing in modern life are largely associated with the mass media, particularly advertising. Advertising influences all individuals in the modern world. Advertising transcends the economic sphere and is a phenomenon of human culture.

In the global community, it has become an integral aspect of people's lives owing to changes in market relations. Advertising is a crucial part of modern life. The relevance of advertising can be attributed to various factors. Learning about all the aspects associated with a language is a contemporary requirement. Globalization and innovative technologies in social life are reflected in language, particularly mass information. Advertising is a unique approach in this regard and plays a significant role. The impact of advertising on the mass consciousness



has strong informational, sociological, and psychological effects on the perception of individuals. Advertising enables the formation of a relationship between the producer and the consumer and plays a key role in informing consumers about a product or service.

Advertising helps provide information to consumers about the characteristics of goods to promote the service sphere. Advertising texts are created to specifically induce consumer purchase behavior and increase the demand for the advertised products or services. Before choosing a particular method of exposure, the advertisers must determine the goal that they are pursuing to convert it into a particular form of advertising.

Due to its ability to use influencing means, advertising is designed to attract the attention of the addressee, promote the memorization of a message and product, and encourage a certain action (Akhmedova, 2015). An advertising product, which is a special creative effort, creates a unique world. Advertising not only promotes goods and services but also reinforces moral values, stereotypes, and behavioral patterns (Begin, 2010).

Although extensive research has been conducted in this area, few studies have clarified the impact of advertising on the consciousness of people. Despite the diversity in scientific research on advertising, there is an increasing need for qualitative rather than quantitative approaches. This study aimed to advance the existing literature by investigating the semiotic system in advertising texts and exploring the effect of advertising on mass consciousness. An understanding of the semiotic system in advertising texts is imperative for devising targeted strategies to improve consumer purchase behavior.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Advertising has gained widespread relevance due to the growing academic interest in the structure of headlines that induce various emotions among consumers. Incitement is formed based on the category of modality, as it combines several aspects under the general meaning of inducement. Many elements induce the addressee to take some action, but these values do not overlap, are not repeated, and have a specific incentive essence. Modality is a topical concept; therefore, it is difficult to provide definitions that are similar in meaning. According to Abdurazzakov (1985), "the nature of modality is expressed by the relevant language norms associated with a necessarily executable action (with the verb devoir), possible action (with the verb pouvoir) or non-executable action. The central part of the content of modality is considered to be a participant of the situation, i.e. the modal subject expressing a wish" (p. 28).

The role of language in the reunification of different cultures, their mixing, and their mutual enrichment should also be emphasized. Such contact and penetration transform the languages of the representatives of these different cultures. This leads to lexical borrowing. For example, to teach a foreign language at the highest level, learners' interest in that culture should be stimulated. Every word provides an idea of the world formed by the consciousness of a nation.

Cultural competence is the ability to effectively communicate and interact with people across cultures according to the rules, laws, customs, etiquette, prohibitions, permissions, and instructions pertaining to a culture. It is based on folk traditions, customs, and the national culture.

Cultural competence and advancement in contemporary society are largely related to the mass media. One of the most effective approaches that has a powerful global impact is advertising. Advertising extends beyond the economic sphere and has become a phenomenon of human culture. It can be used to judge the ideals of a nation, as advertisers manipulate it by appealing to the ideals of the people.

The processes of globalization, which predetermine the characteristic norms of behavior, serve as the basis for the formation of common and individual actions that are characteristic of different nations. They help prevent international misunderstandings, requiring the necessary consideration of certain situations regarding feelings, attitudes, interactions, and value attitudes toward language. This is necessary when studying foreign languages, as it serves as a framework to determine the impact of advertising on society.

The study of motivational statements in linguistics is an urgent task. The peculiarity of this issue can be explained by the fact that stimulus statements play a major role in human activities. The speaker's will, direction to the impediment, and interpersonal relationships among the communication participants are expressed through inducement.

Therefore, linguists define inducement as an independent category which has its content and form of expression. Suppose content is determined by the communicative-pragmatic, and semantic essence. In that case, expressiveness is characterized by the variety of language units expressing it as well as their ability to appear in all aspects of the language.

Inducement denotes the desire, will, and intentions of the speaker through which they persuade the listener to perform any activity. In the process of inducement, two participants are required, that is, the addresser and the addressee, and with their presence, the speech act can be completed. Thus, the addresser (derived from the German word *adresant*) delivers an inducement in a linguistic form. An addressee (derived from the German word *adressat*) is a person who listens to the text of speech communication and perceives it as either actual or possible (conjectured; Shukin, 2008).

The primary purpose of advertising is to achieve the main objectives of the marketing communication system: demand generation and sales promotion. In marketing practice, it is customary to categorize the main groups of tasks, which, depending on the goals, can be solved by advertising: advertising informs, then convinces, and ultimately reminds the consumers to take action. In this regard, the inducement category is unique. The inducement of an advertising text depends on the title, subheadings, main text, captions, comments, and advertising motto (slogan). The success of inducement advertising depends on linguistic expressions. Units of all levels of language are involved in creating a text that can attract attention, convince customers, and simultaneously facilitate recall.

The purpose of inducement is to obtain the immediate reaction of consumers to an advertisement and increase the desire to buy a product or use a service. Therefore, advertising messages use such appeals as "Call now" and "Visit our store now to learn more about our discounts and promotions."

Filatova (1997) revealed that inducement is the expression of the imperative in speech or the content perspective of the imperative form, which is a specific type of expression of inducement (request, advice, offer, order). Belyayeva (1998) classified the types of inducement into the following categories: prescriptive (sentence phrases inducing the addressee to act), requisite (sentence phrases inducing the addressee to perform an action considering the interests of the speaker), and suggestive (sentence phrases expressing advice).

Prescriptive inducements comprise an order, a command, a permission, a prohibition, or an instruction; requisite inducements include a request, a plea, or an offer; and suggestive inducements encompass advice, a recommendation, or a warning. The inducement aims to convert the consumer's perception into action; therefore, it appears similar to a short motto or slogan that conceals the appeal. Since the ultimate goal of advertising is a purchase, the advertisers must clearly communicate in their message the action that is expected of the consumers: buy, call, or register. With experience, education, and competence, people tend to resist simple methods of suggestion. Therefore, specially designed techniques help neutralize their ability to resist a purchase.

According to Begun (2010), "Advertising slogans with a reliance on a paremy reorient its semantics in a materially pragmatic direction. At the same time, old paremia thrives in the new style provided by a slogan and can get new content, often contradicting the established value orientations. Moreover, the slogan, taking advantage of the power of the original catchphrase, acquires a special persuasiveness. Thus, an advertising product becomes both a source and evidence of cultural and stereotypical transformations" (p. 37).

Advertising appeal is a complete promotional product through which advertisers address their customers and hope to convince them to make a purchase, use services, or enter into a business relationship. Many factors contribute to how the advertising product is executed and whether the consumer will positively perceive it (Theory and Practice of Advertising, 2013). As previously mentioned, the design of the appeal is considered one of the most important elements of advertising activities, and the specifics of the headlines are crucial in this case.

"Advertising, represented by advertising texts, is a form of human activity and solves certain speech tasks. The forms and content of advertising texts are constantly improving, obeying the tightening market requirements for the promotion of goods and services. One of the effective ways to increase the advertising capacity of the text, in addition to artistic graphics, is an advertising slogan, which is increasingly used by advertising makers and shows a tendency to replace the advertising text" (Turbina & Saltikova, 2012).

"The purpose of any advertising message is to induce the recipient to a specific action. Discussing the addresser's target, we touch upon the most problematic area of social advertising i.e. the problem of the effectiveness of the final advertising product. If, by analyzing commercial advertising, we can operate with the concepts of communication (memory ability, reproducibility of the text) and economic efficiency (increased sales), then everything is much more complicated in social advertising. Its effectiveness cannot be measured in terms of economic performance. Moreover, the communicative effectiveness of it belongs to a different level. In fact, social advertising is designed to change the way of life, and this is a very complex and time-consuming process" (Terskikh & Zaitseva, 2015, p. 96).

There are various types of advertising, such as outdoor advertising, billboards, panels, banners, Busorama advertising elements installed on vehicles, firewalls (end wall of the building, which is used as a platform for advertising), cartouches (panels, billboards, and tablets), mobile devices (rotating advertising structures), and stretches.

A certain means of dissemination is suitable for a specific type of goods and services. However, it is challenging to determine the best option from among the media, such as television and radio; the Internet; and the "rational," such as the press, in the city (outdoor advertising), on serious sites and radio stations. The peculiarities of the product and target audience should be carefully considered. Media selection should be meticulously performed by examining the possible indicators. Carriers are divided into the following categories: outdoor advertising, the Internet, press, television, and radio. Each carrier has its advertising appeal and effectiveness. Outdoor advertising is any advertising located in the city, such as on the walls and roofs of houses, standees, billboards, and stretches, in the subway, and on modes of transport. This advertising method is relatively inexpensive and covers a large geographical area. It should also be considered that the greater the flow of citizens (and the closer it is to the center), the more expensive it is. Outdoor advertising: shields are installed along roadways and pedestrian roads as poles with advertisements. Such advertising is effective and always draws attention.

However, advertisers must consider the fact that addresses and telephone numbers are often easily forgotten. Therefore, billboard advertising is appropriate when a product or service is known to the consumers. Large fonts should be utilized in billboard advertising. If possible, a few signs must be installed on the road such that if the consumer cannot see or remember the message after viewing it the first time, they will get another opportunity to

do so. Billboards have active and inactive sides. The one facing people is the active side, and the other side is the inactive side. Stretches: The material with the text is stretched over a roadway. The duration of contact with passersby and motorists is much longer compared with billboards. Therefore, it is advisable to include phone numbers and addresses (Theory and Practice of Advertising, 2013).

Arrows: The arrows indicate the direction of the office, store, or warehouse. Signposts are mini-billboards that are hung in front of the entrance to offices, institutions, and stores. Bright colors and large fonts will ensure that the sign attracts attention over long distances. Standees are folded structures with the company name, phone numbers, and list of services. They are typically set up directly next to the company building. Men and women dressed in suits draw the attention of passersby. They may entice them with words and hand out flyers. Pneumatic figures are three-dimensional inflatable figures that are available in all shapes. This is a non-standard method of advertising; therefore, they attract the attention of potential customers. Applications include posters and stickers used on poles, walls of houses, subways, entrances, and schools. Urban design involves sticking pamphlets on booths, trashcans, and bus stops. Advertising on and in public transport, such as buses, trams, streetcars, trolley buses, and trains, is another option. One can choose a route cab, which is "on duty" in the area, and advertise about the company as well as the products and services they provide.

Advertising in elevators is extremely simple and effective. It enables people to pay attention to the announcement, read it, and note down the contact details. Outdoor advertising can be categorized into two types: dynamic and static. Dynamic advertising is used in high-traffic areas. People do not have much time to perceive these ads; hence, they must be clear, written in large font, and contain a short text. Static advertising, which has a fixed content, design, and format, can be utilized in subways and elevators, as they are low-traffic areas. Facts, details, descriptions, and detailed texts can be provided in this type of advertisement. Furthermore, colors, size, font, and backlighting can also be used to achieve greater efficiency. It is observed that the higher the flow of people passing through an advertisement, the more effective it is. The cost of outdoor advertising depends on the location, size, materials, and complexity of its production (Theory and Practice of Advertising, 2013).

At present, advertising slogans with headline structures are the basis of the global outlook, life activity, and cultural stereotypes of any individual, as well as the linguocultural community as a whole. Advertising plays a key role in the expansion of the sphere of influence of information technologies on the consciousness of the youth that is not yet sufficiently formed. Furthermore, it influences the globalization of society, integration of various linguocultures, and global issues.

Dobrosklonskaya (2008) noted that "having the purpose of intense, concentrated impact, advertising uses a rich range of expressive means at all language levels. Among the most significant features of the advertising text at the morpho-syntactic level are such as the frequent use of imperative verb forms, which greatly enhances the dynamism of the advertising appeal" (p. 4).

Previous studies that have analyzed advertising headlines have highlighted that most are composed of simple sentences. Sentences of linguistic means headlines are constructed based on this and require fast-reading messages. The key factor in the sentence is not only the principle of the structure of linguistic means but also the achievement of a certain power of influence on the client.

Maidanova (1986) highlighted that "Genre is an important regulator, on the one hand, of the embodiment of the idea, and on the other, of the perception of the work, since it from the author's point of view predicts and limits the choice of form, and from the addressee's point of view predicts and limits expectations (and, therefore, the construction of hypotheses about the text)" (p. 118).

The peculiarity of the headline lies in the structure of the sentence, which must be easy to comprehend. In French, these sentence structures are constructed using expressive linguistic means. In foreign linguistics, simple sentences are often referred to as elliptical constructions. Elliptical sentences are those in which certain words are omitted from the text but are implied by the context, that is, by the words present in the sentence. "Elliptical structures, as a special type of two-part sentences, are syntactically so stable, widespread, and commonplace that they become typical constructions, without requiring to fill in or to restore missing parts in any way. The greatest number of elliptical constructions falls on sentences with an ellipsis of the predicate" (Kruvko, 2012, p. 46).

The personal form of a verb, often considered a formal feature of a sentence, is not found in every sentence; that is, it does not serve as an indispensable indicator. However, if the verb is not an indispensable feature of any sentence, then such a sentence cannot be considered elliptical in all cases, as pointed out by several researchers (Kruvko, 2012).

To identify the structural peculiarities of complex sentences in advertising headlines, the presence of conjunctions and conjunction less relations between predicative bases was considered a criterion for their differentiation. This principle of differentiation facilitates the identification of the tendency to reduce linkages, both conjunctive and subordinate, which are characteristic features of advertising discourse. Compound sentences, with formally expressed allied conjunctive and compound conjunctive links, are rarely used in headlines, whereas compound constructions with conjunctionless links between their constituent elements are very common.

Simple sentences in headlines consist of single compound sentences, complete double compound sentences, and incomplete constructions. Double compound sentences have two main components: the subject and the predicate, which contain the main grammatical meaning of a sentence, that is, predication. Single compound sentences have only one main component: the predicative center. A single compound sentence with a noun as the main component combined with intonation expresses the correlation with the reality of the existence of the named object.

Incomplete constructions can be elliptical sentences in which one or both the main components are formally missing. Elliptical sentences can be successfully reconstructed according to the verbal context and situation.

A single compound sentence is a semantically complete structure with no implicit elements. By structural type, simple sentences with headings can be considered compound sentences. The morphological expressions of the main components are represented by two main types: nominal and verbal (Kruvko, 2012).

Zvegintsev (1978) pointed out that such sentences that are common in dialogue and text are functionally ambiguous, require context, and, therefore, are difficult to classify; it is more appropriate to consider them as components of the single communicative unity of a speech utterance. Such sentences are typical in advertising texts.

The advertising text should not express an explicit order; on the contrary, it should encourage customers but not provide any instructions. An advertising slogan has a specific feature, the aim of which is to avoid a categorical imperative and give preference to "softer" forms of inducement.

Consequently, advertising that uses verbs with coercive semantics tends to alienate potential consumers. Verbs, such as offers, advice, and recommendations, contain a softer form of unforced advice, although they carry the same incentive message and are, therefore, frequently used by advertisers.

The largest group of single compound sentences in headlines is represented by nominative sentences in which the main component is expressed by a noun or noun group. The single compound sentence is characterized by a

timeless realization, where the actualizer is not the verb in its form but rather the linguistic situation. Benveniste (1966) argued that the nominative phrase constitutes a statement that is “timeless, impersonal, not modal” (p. xx).

However, in the absence of a verb, the nominative phrase reflects certain aspects of the utterance (e.g., elation and exclamation), which makes it modal and more expressive than the normative phrase. As the volume of grammatical expressions decreases, the expressiveness of the phrase increases and is represented by a single interjection, reaching its maximum expression.

Gak (1979) emphasized that “incentive sentences... are characterized by two features: establishing contact with the interlocutor and emotionality” (p. 56). The following types of single compound sentences are found in advertising headlines.

- a) Nominative (nominal) sentences are the most common groups, with the main component expressed as a noun denoting the name, firm, or brand of the product. Almost every advertising message begins with the name of the brand and an element of the title, the main function of which is to represent the advertised product. An advertising headline may consist of only a nominative naming sentence or may be supplemented by another sentence.
- b) Nominative (non-nominal) sentences with the main component denoting not the brand name but rather its merits, advantages, evaluations, or characteristics (Kruvko, 2012).

Pseudo-sentences consisting of a single interjection can be classified as single compound sentences. Formula sentences, associated with typical situations of greeting, farewell, and prohibition, including one interjection, are characterized by intonation completeness and independence from the context in which they have a bright, expressive meaning, and the effect they produce is more significant than the communicated meaning.

Verbal single compound sentences in which the verb expresses the main component in the imperative constitute a large group. In terms of the frequency of use, this group immediately follows nominative single compound sentences.

Double compound sentences are divided into two types: double compound complete sentences in which the subject and the predicate are formally expressed, and double compound incomplete or elliptical sentences in which one or both main components are implicitly expressed.

In advertising, the emphasis on the main component with the construction *c'est* by the frequency of occurrence prevails over other types of emphatic emphasis (e.g., the phrase *c'est ... qui, que*). The allocated element can be a noun or verb in the infinitive form with dependent words (Kruvko, 2012).

Elliptical sentences with ellipsis of one or both main components function in dialogical question-and-answer units and as separate rejoinders of expressive affective statements imitating dialogical speech. In dialogical speech, elliptical utterances result from speech compression. Unexpressed elements can be syntactically and semantically recovered from a linguistic context. To reinforce the message already expressed in the question, the answer is almost always a truncated phrase.

In written advertising discourse, the imitation of dialogue is actively used and carried out by disparate fragments of colloquial constructions. Individual sentences function outside of question and response combinations and do not form a semantic whole as they do in dialogue. Since they are compressive, elliptical sentences imply the obligatory presence of a complete correlation. They impart an intentional incompleteness of meaning and a certain understatement to the utterance; furthermore, their expressiveness increases at the expense of syntactic compression. Thanks to the situational context, a part of the unexpressed predicate group of this sentence carries a

spatial and temporal reference to the real world. It reveals the double compound structure of the incomplete sentence with an ellipsis of the subject and predicate.

Elliptical sentences, which include interjections originating from the grammatical class of names, are affective-modal sentences containing words of apology, gratitude, and approval. The headline in advertising discourse is organized as a construction of colloquial syntax, where the presentation of thought is carried out in two ways. First, there is an emphasis on the name of the brand, followed by the extension of this representation into other clarifying, explanatory, and evaluative information (Kruvko, 2012). Advertisements highlight several social issues.

For example, the loneliness experienced due to orphanhood is a pertinent issue. The number of children living in shelters has been increasing. At one time, international residents had adopted many children, and cases of their deaths and disappearances became very frequent. Therefore, with the help of advertising, calls for adoption (especially on television) within the state and not outside its borders are made.

People's attitude toward people with disabilities is considered a social problem. In reality, it is difficult for such individuals to obtain employment, and the infringement of their rights persists during employment. Advertising (when such an issue is advertised) in such cases can increase the motivation to take specific action.

Lack of family values is another issue. Demographic problems are among the most difficult; it is challenging to determine what has a greater impact on the birth or divorce statistics in a particular city.

Charity funds take different directions. They are called upon to do good for socially vulnerable groups. Some of these funds are designed to help older adults and children with various problems. These funds advertise their assistance to disadvantaged individuals.

The above examples indicate that the scope of social advertising is unlimited. For a comparative analysis, let us examine some areas of communication activity in this work, using examples of Uzbekistan and international advertising. In social advertising, promoting a healthy lifestyle and creating awareness of bad habits (e.g., alcohol, smoking, drug addiction) occupy the main share.

1. Advertising about smoking habits. Smoking is a severe addiction facing society. Therefore, advertising is used to promote awareness and fight this addiction, considering that it has a great influence on people. In this case, advertising has received enormous societal support. Owing to advertising about the ill effects of smoking, many smokers rethink and consider the repercussions of this habit and attempt to quit it. Inscriptions that appear on cigarette packaging, such as "Smoking causes premature aging" and "Smoking kills," also help drive this message.

In Uzbekistan, signs on the ban on smoking in subways, buses, trains, stations, and airports can be observed. Such advertisements have a strong influence on smokers because every cigarette pack contains photo illustrations of the dangers of smoking. This enables them to consider their health to some extent. France prohibits smoking in public places or on official transport. In addition, the sale of tobacco products is prohibited for individuals under the age of 18 years.

2. Advertising for alcoholic and energy drinks. Alcoholism and addiction to alcohol are serious problems. It leads to the degradation of human health and increases mortality risk. The fact that people often carry out criminal acts on this basis is alarming. Therefore, advertising to protect the population is important and useful for society.
3. Advertising about drug addiction. At present, numerous advertisements are devoted to this topic. Many social projects have been developed to address this issue. Posters and videos are posted to defend people, particularly

teenagers. The power of this addiction is considerable; unfortunately, an effective way to enable individuals, especially young people, to fight this addiction has not yet been found.

4. Advertising for proper nutrition (refusing harmful food additives).

Owing to parents' ignorance or lack of attention to their children for various reasons, children often become victims of this habit. Contemporary advertising campaigns on the dangers of food additives lag behind those on smoking and alcoholism. However, the need to increase advertising is reasonable. In some countries, a ban on the sale and consumption of goods harmful to health is implemented to promote healthy lifestyles. Poor eating habits pose a serious threat to the physical and mental health of individuals and, therefore, cause harm to society as a whole.

Thus, advertising is a component of the social process that has become so deeply entrenched in an individual's life and activities that it seems impossible to imagine them without advertising. The importance of social advertising in society should be acknowledged, as it promotes awareness about existing pressing issues. Its goal is simultaneously oriented toward a subject and a group of people with a wide range of interests, thereby achieving high efficiency, a characteristic of social advertising.

### 3. Conclusion

Advertising is a form of communication to persuade customers to purchase products or take certain actions regarding services. It includes the name of the product or service their benefits to the consumer, and then convinces them to purchase or use the product. The daily impact of advertising on people's consciousness contributes to the formation of consumer preferences. It is involved in the formation of certain types of thinking and behavioral stereotypes, thereby playing a social role. The educational role of advertising is to inform customers about modern achievements in science and technology and their real-life applications. It provides information about how to use the goods and explains the principle of their functioning, thus acting as an educational tool. Advertising plays an active part in the formation of personal self-esteem creation of an adequate perception of the surrounding reality. It actively affects the formation of life attitudes of people, performing a psychological role in society. Appealing advertising attracts consumers' attention. Watching commercial advertisements can offer consumers true aesthetic pleasure. Advertising participates in forming people's aesthetic tastes and introducing new trends in fashion. Outdoor advertising is becoming an organic component of the aesthetic environment of modern cities, adding color and variety to the urban landscape. Unfortunately, not all advertisements fully perform their aesthetic role. Modern advertising contains tasteless and outright rudeness, and explicit erotic scenes are not always justified. However, it is no longer possible to imagine modern life without advertising. The study findings have valuable implications for advertising and marketing professionals to promote consumer purchase behavior.

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