

A Study of the Advertising Claims of Seven Hair Products Co-Creators:

Quotes in Sunsilk's Advertising

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Abstract

The research aims to explore and describe the advertising claims used in seven hair products co-creators' quotes on the advertising of Sunsilk. It investigates and determines what types of claims are verbally employed and with what intentional purposes from each hair products co-creator in terms of persuasive strategies for promoting the products.

The substantial subjects of the study gathered from the Unilever Group's main website, (<http://www.sunsilk.com.my/index.aspx>). Seven pieces of quoted passages from co-creators—Dr. Francesca Fusco, Jamal Hammadi, Ouidad, Rita Hazan, Teddy Charles, Thomas Taw, and Yuko Yamashita—then are analyzed through the theory of advertising claims. The percentage is also applied to illustrate the frequency of each claim together with the relative interpretation.

Constituting sixty two sentences throughout the quotes, the research reveals that the co-creators employ forty-four types of claims to hype either the products or the brand name to be more positively preferable for customers. In relation to advertising techniques, the Present Tense is intentionally used (100%) to make the products timeless while Alliteration or Assonance and Transfer techniques (50%) are used to draw people's attention and manipulate the products. Similarly, Emotive Appeal (43.55%) is used to fascinate customers. Loaded language and simple solutions (29.04%) are made up to create a positive connotation to the products. Other claims appeared fragmented, but were still significant for promoting the products.

Keywords: *Advertising, Persuasive technique, Quoted passage.*

Introduction

The advertising plays many crucial roles for the business world and in business competition. Advertising consists of several boundaries to be explored as well as different types, ranging from the traditional ones such as magazines, posters, brochures, etc., to the modern ones such as TV and the Internet. The formation of an advertisement could be both dynamically and statically designed for persuading people. *Longman Business English Dictionary* (2007) defines the term of *advertising* as “telling people publicly about a product or service in order to persuade them to buy it.” Pricewaterhouse Coopers, a global professional services firm, reported that \$16.9 billion were spent for online marketing just in the United States alone (Wikipedia, 2012). Online

advertising is created and used to serve the same aim as other commercial printed media. It is about changing people's attitudes and behavior towards a product or service of a business. The websites for marketing promotion are the same as using magazines and newspapers. Just as clearly, advertisements are used to advertise products and services.

The advertising of cosmetic and hair care products has appeared in our daily lives for a very long time. The famous and well-known products with a long history include products such as Pantene, Sunsilk, Head and Shoulder, Rejoin, and so on. Wikipedia states that the world's leading shampoo company nowadays is the Pantene Company followed closely by the Sunsilk Company. For hair conditioning, however, Sunsilk Company is now considered as the world's leading firm and brand name as well. However, the shampoo and hair conditioning advertising that has impressed people around the world since the year 2011 is the advertisements of Sunsilk Company when it has invited the world's best seven hair experts to be the co-creator team. This may be considered to be the best way of presenting images of the company as Sunsilk has expected it to be: the “talk of the town.”

The ways in which the seven hair co-creators use to create and communicate their messages through the company's advertisements can be very useful sources to be investigated; especially through language analysis. The message strategy describes the advertiser's goals of the advertisement and how the goals can be successful (O'Guinn, Allen, and Semenik, 2009). In this respect, quoted statements for promoting this brand name and products have been posed on the company worldwide websites and can be accessed in many different languages. They are also represented as experts' opinions about the co-creation; on the other hand, they may be, in fact, the best way of advertising for Sunsilk. As such, an analysis of the textual information individually based on the concept of advertising claims will be conducted during this research project.

The quotations appeared here are pure textual information without other components, such as graphics, which is used in a normal piece of advertisement. The researcher is interested in the advertising claims used in the seven hair experts' quoted words: how to persuade audiences with what types of claims and intention.

Objectives

1. To investigate the persuasive techniques (the advertising claims) used in advertising Sunsilk by seven hair co-creators that appears on the website of Sunsilk, Unilever Group.
2. To better understand the language of advertising in the age of information technology, especially advertisements of a hair care product from a well-known company.
3. To accumulate more knowledge about cosmetic advertising so that it can be used to study other types of advertising on other businesses.

Theories

Language of advertising

The most basic elements of the advertisement are text, image, and organization of elements (Sells, 2012). The advertisement's text provides information about the product, and more importantly, it works with the image about the product. The most basic goal of advertising messages is to persuade the audience to believe or do something (Media Literacy Project, 2012). To study the language of persuasion is very important for us because it will help us to gain more knowledge towards media and advertisements. Furthermore, it will help us understand and make better judgments on making media messages better. The sarcastic saying like “victims of media” won't happen then. Examining a piece of advertisement may be a good way to encourage us to learn the language of persuasion.

There are three basic scopes used for analyzing the persuasive techniques when we consider advertising messages: audiences and messages, persuasive techniques, and intended effects. These strategies should be used to pave the way for investigating the language the advertisers use to convey their intended meaning.

The so-called persuasive techniques are usually employed by advertisers when they create an advertisement. One of the basic purposes of studying the language of advertising is to raise the level of awareness about the persuasive techniques appearing in advertisements (Schrank, 2012). Interesting focus on advertising can include the use of symbols, color, and layouts. But perhaps the simplest and most direct way to study ads is through an analysis of the language of the advertising claim (Schrank, 2012).

As almost all advertisements are made up with special and selected techniques called by the term “a claim”. According to *Longman Business English Dictionary* (2007), a “claim” is described in terms of marketing terminology, “as a favorable statement made about a product by its producer that may or may not be true.” The same explanation is also emphasized by Schrank as “the ‘claim’ is the verbal or print part of an ad that makes some claim of superiority for the product being advertised”. To make the products more prestige, advertisers always employ different claims to the advertisements and intend to create one more effects.

Studies on Advertising Language

A large number of studies has been conducted and published in various fields of language study. For example, (Geis, 1982) did a study on the language of advertising on American television, and he also described how the language was used. He pointed out that the linguistic devices were prominently used on American television advertisements. In a study on “Persuasive Communication for Tourist through Advertising in Brochure: A Look at National Tourist Organization” conducted by Pitchsinee (1994) indicated that positive appeals, for example, comfortable appeal, local culture appeal, and health appeal were used in the brochures.

In 2001, Diyaporn investigated the persuasive techniques that appeared on the cover story of *Thailand South* guide magazine during 1998-1999. By focusing on the text elements, she found that many types of appeals

were used to promote travelling and satisfy readers. Rational appeals emotional based techniques: imaginary, connotation, figurative language, direct address and giving statistics became important parts of persuasive techniques. Similarly, the advertising language in the billboards in Bangkok by Pawinee (2008) was conducted, focusing on the characteristics of both social language and verbal and non-verbal languages. The use of verbal language was mostly employed to tell the names of the products while nonverbal language was used for product shot.

Methodology

“A Study of the Claims of Seven Hair Products Co-creators: Quotes in Sunsilk’s Advertising” is a descriptive analysis research based on textual data. Using persuasive appeals to describe the data, the outcomes will be presented in a table and categorized by each appeal it fits with. Explanations of the outcomes will also be provided together with calculating the percentage of the frequency. The sources of data used to investigate in this study were aimed to discover the persuasive techniques appeared in seven hair products Co-creators’ quotes in Sunsilk’s Advertising. The whole process of this study consists of the following main movements.

1. Source of Data

The primary source of data for conducting this study is solely the materials of the Sunsilk brand name. It consists of seven hair products Co-creators’ quotes in Sunsilk’s advertising, appearing on (<http://www.sunsilk.com.my/index.aspx>) the website of Unilever Group in English. The seven pieces of quoted passage are from Sunsilk’s hair products co-creators: Dr. Francesca Fusco, Jamal Hammadi, Ouidad, Rita Hazan, Teddy Charles, Thomas Taw, and Yuko Yamashita.

The secondary source of data is related literature and information on the language of advertising and persuasive techniques. Both the websites and libraries are the main sources of the data.

2. Population

The population used in this study is the Sunsilk’s seven hair co-creators’ quoted passages which appeared since year 2011 on the website of (<http://www.sunsilk.com.my/index.aspx>). The seven pieces of quoted passage only belong to the seven hair co-creators: Dr. Francesca Fusco, Jamal Hammadi, Ouidad, Rita Hazan, Teddy Charles, Thomas Taw, and Yuko Yamashita.

3. Samples

Samples are seven pieces of quoted passage which belong to the seven hair co-creators.

4. Research Criteria

This study will be based upon the theories of advertising claims used in advertisements; however, the researcher would not only use the techniques, but will provide explanations for each of the techniques which will

link to Sunsilk’s hair products in order to see the connection to the advertising. Also, the frequency of the use of the persuasive techniques will be counted and shown with the number of percentage.

5. Data Collection

The Sunsilk’s seven hair co- co-creators’ quoted passages are used as the main source of data for the study. The researcher only considers the advertising that appeared during 2011 when Sunsilk’s website was first launched.

6. Data Analysis

6.1 The use of advertising claims will be employed to analyze the data.

6.2 Only textual information will be interpreted through the qualitative method.

7. Each of persuasive appeal or advertising claim will be presented on the table and described by its characteristics.

8. The numbers of the employed techniques will be calculated into a percentage.

9. Presenting the discoveries.

10. Providing a summary, discussion and suggestions.

Findings

Dr. Francesca Fuscus, a New York dermatologist, employed 23 types of techniques. The top three prominent techniques are: (1) Present Tense (100%), (2) Alliteration or Assonance (66.66%), and (3) Emotive Appeal (55.55%).

Jamal Hammadi, for Black Shine, used 28 different techniques in his quote. The Present Tense (100%), Alliteration or Assonance and Emotive Appeal (70 %), and Explicit and Intensity (60%) are the top three most employed techniques.

Ouidad, for Defined Curls, used 17 persuasive techniques in her quote. The top three most use techniques are the Present Tense (100%), Alliteration or Assonance and Transfer (45.45 %), and Emotive Appeal and Fear (36.36%).

Rita Hazan, for Vibrant Colour, employed 22 different techniques in her quote. Focusing on the top three ones, the Present Tense (100%) comes first and followed by Alliteration or Assonance (44.44), Loaded Language, and New (33.33%)

Teddy Charles, for Plumped Up Volume, used 26 different types of techniques in his quote. The top three most frequent uses are the Present Tense (100%), Transfer (75%), and Alliteration and Assonance, Emotive, Glittering Generalities, and Maybe (50%).

Thomas Taw, for Damage Reconstruction, used 23 different types of techniques in his quote. The Present Tense (100%) is still the most prominent use, followed by Transfer (85.71%), Alliteration and Assonance, and Loaded Language (57.14%).

Yuko Yamashita, for Smooth Hair, used 24 different types of techniques in her quote. The Present Tense (100%) still remains the most prominent use among others techniques. It is followed by Transfer (50%), Cumulation, and Emotive Appeal (37.50%).

Conclusion and Discussion

Advertising plays very important roles in business world as well as online advertising. While cosmetics are being advertised on many types of media, Sunsilk's hair conditioning products are currently addressed as the world's best-selling ones, sold in more than 69 countries worldwide, according to Wikipedia (Wikipedia, 2012). This might be because the company launched its advertisements to public using “the world's famous seven hair experts” during 2011. The researcher then is interested in examining the advertising claims used in the advertisements of Sunsilk through the seven hair experts' quoted expressions on the website of Unilever Group. After a long investigation, many types of advertising claims were revealed.

In this research, 62 sentences constituting the advertising claims among the seven co-creators were analyzed. The persuasive outcome of the use of the advertising claims is the expectation of “hyping” the product to be more positive among the customers. All the claims are of the vast of persuasive techniques which the co-creators use to promote the actual benefits of the products to people.

With exact 44 types of advertising claims employed among the seven co-creators' quotes, it is found that the Present Tense is always used (100%) to communicate with audiences in order to make the products and messages timeless. Alliteration or Assonance and Transfer techniques are form 50% and used are to draw audience's attention to the product and create positive perception it. This is similar to the use of Emotive Appeal (43.55%) which makes customers fascinated by the product. Likewise, Loaded Language and Simple Solution (29.04%) also help create positive connotation to the product as if it were the best product.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. In this study, the advertising claims that appeared on Sunsilk's website have been investigated. It might be necessary to do a further research on the other brand names such as Pantene and Head and Shoulder in order to make comparison with the results of this study.

2. According to this study, all quotes have been collected from Sunsilk's website only and only focused on textual information. Therefore, it might be interesting to consider other elements; for example, color and other images on the website as well.

3. Other types of media for advertising Sunsilk such as posters and pictures in magazines, might be needed to investigate so as to make comprehensive understanding of Sunsilk’s advertisements. This may include the product containers such as bottles and caps.

4. Dynamic media, especially video clips, might be necessary and interesting to examine through either the same theory or different ones because video clips from the seven co-creator are also used to advertise the product.

5. Other types of products from the Unilever Group (for example, detergent and skin care products) might be needed to investigate, making to understand the company’s advertising better.

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