

Critical Discourse Analysis: Intertextual Voices in Beauty Product Advertisement

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Abstract: This research aims to reveal how intertextuality is manifested and exploited in advertising discourse. The analysis is based on TV advertisements for anti-ageing facial beauty products from various brands and types. The result shows that different genres and voices are inserted in the advertising texts to promote the overall persuasive power. Two main types of intertextual voice found in the advertisements are discursive and character voice, which is in line with previous findings (Feng & Wignell, 2011). By intermingling different kinds of voice and discourse, advertisers can add various media to reinforce its own ideology. The most commonly accepted and repeatedly reinforced ideology is that physical attractiveness is portrayed as desirable and admired. It is hoped that the study will show that advertisements not only promote specific products but also shape the beauty ideology of social practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The influx of beauty product advertisements has covered various media such as internet, television, and magazines. Advertising discourse, as a genre, is easily recognizable due to its distinct style. Cook (2001) argues that advertisements inform, persuade, remind, and influence people. However, direct persuasions from advertiser have become less and less while intertextual voices are more widely exploited. In other words, advertisements have transformed into a ‘hybridized discourse’ (Rahm, 2006), intermingling with all kinds of discourses and voices. This study adheres to Fairclough (1995a, 1995b)’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which emphasizes not only the textual features but also the social significance embedded in social discourses. Therefore, the present study examines how various discourses and voices intermingle with the advertising discourse to enhance its persuasive power and how the ideologies are constructed through intertextuality.

Kristeva (1980) introduces the term “intertextuality” in her article *Le mot, le dialogue, le roman* (Words, Dialogue, Novel). She describes a text as “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize on another” (p.36). In other words, she views text not as an original creation of the author but a reconstruction of texts already existed. Therefore, intertextuality occurs after the process of recontextualization. According to Kristeva, the word “intertextuality” is used to describe the heterogeneous interplay among different types of discourses. To be more specific, intertextuality shows how the different texts integrate and transform into a new text with distinctive meanings (Xin, 2000).

Maingueneau (1987) distinguished two types of intertextual resources, namely ‘manifest intertextuality’ and ‘constitute intertextuality’. The distinction aims to pinpoint whether the source originates from existing discourses or styles and conventions of other discourses. Those sources are defined as character voice and discursive voice in advertisement by Feng and Wignell (2011). Character voice refers to the utterances of participants who act in the advertisement. They found that various characters, such as celebrities, reporters, teachers are employed to engage with the products and demonstrate the advertisers’ ideology. Discursive voice concerns with conventions including styles and structures commonly adopted in social practices. They argue that when the recontextualization of certain social practices occurs in a type of discourse, the voice is also ‘borrowed’ (p.569). Therefore, the different voices interact with each other to reinforce the advertised information.

Emerging in the 1970s, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been extensively adopted to analyze public discourses. Unlike Discourse Analysis which focuses on the speaker's intention and the function of context in a discourse, the studies in CDA embed discourses into cultural, social context and highlight its relation to power and ideology (Fairclough, 1992b). Therefore, a number of studies have examined the relationship between intertextuality and ideology (e.g., Fairclough, 1992b; Lemke, 1995). The results indicate that the intertextuality should not only be interpreted as a mix of texts but also as be viewed as the reflection of the change in power and ideologies. In the field of CDA, intertextuality provides a new approach to interpret the relationship between texts and social power and ideology (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). It plays an important role in unravelling the way that speakers' and writers reinforce or reconstruct ideas and beliefs.

The study will address the following research questions:

What are the voices commonly adopted in beauty product advertisements?

How the voices interact with each other to reinforce the ideologies the advertisers aim to convey?

2. METHODOLOGY & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on a qualitative analysis of the intertextuality in beauty product advertisements. 20 television advertisements published within 1 year were retrieved from their official webpages. The advertisements all promote anti-aging beauty products and the target consumers are middle-aged women. Since this study only focuses on the linguistic features in discourse text, visual scenes and intonation will not be discussed and transcribed.

Apart from the classification of the source of intertextual voice, the data analysis is also based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework (2001). The three-dimensional framework explains how the linguistic choices affect the higher levels, namely meso level (discourse practice) and macro level (sociocultural practice). It facilitates the exploration of the relationship among language, ideology and power.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

3.1. Discursive Voice

A common strategy used in advertising is to incorporate scientific discourses, especially in cosmetic and health advertisements. The general assumption about scientific studies is that they present certain factual evidence in a comparatively unbiased and objective way. As a result, the insertion of scientific voice into advertising discourse would increase the credibility and authority of the product without much direct comments on the part of the advertiser.

However, the scientific texts employed in advertising context are distinctive from the real scientific genre. It is quite common to find advertisers' stances in the scientific discourse delivered overtly or covertly. The following beauty product advertisement from Olay illustrates the recontextualized scientific discourses in advertising:

Did you know skin has a natural repair rhythm?

Discover Olay regenerist night ritual that works with your skin's repair rhythm and gives stunning youthful skin in just five nights.

Starting in 2012, Olay's first of a kind clinical research, Multi-Decade and Ethnicity study analyzed over 20,000 unique genes, revealing breakthrough insights into skin aging.

Science has established that during the day time skin is preoccupied with fighting stressors like UV rays and pollution. During the night, when these stressors are taking away, skin's DNA repair becomes more active, making the night a golden time for skin repair.

Olay's MDE research discovered that this natural repair decreases as we age. Consequently, aging skin requires a boost in skin renewal at night. Formulated with Olay's most advanced anti-aging ingredients, Olay night ritual penetrates up to 10 skin surface layers deep.

From the first drop, it starts the renewal of skin. And when used with our most advanced cream, it boosts skin renewal by 60% in just five nights. Skin looks firmer, plumper with visibly reduced wrinkles. Women who have tried it just can't stop raving about it.

For stunning youthful skin in five nights, search Olay night ritual.

[Olay, Youtube, Sep, 2022]

Olay introduced a night serum designed to decrease aging and repair skin. After stating the general effect of the new product, the advertising discourse shifts to scientific discourse explaining the rationale of its anti-aging effect. The clear distinctions between advertising discourse and scientific discourse are presented in both lexical and grammatical levels.

In the lexical level, regular advertising discourse involves a great use of second-person personal such as 'you' to directly address individual consumer in the advertisement (Kaur, Arumugam & Yunus, 2013). For instance, "did you know skin has a natural repair rhythm", "olay, your best beautiful". In this case, consumers seem to be treated as valuable and unique individuals. It also increases intimacy and constructs a "dialogue" between advertisers and consumers. However, in the scientific register, personalization is seldom used to show neutrality and objectivity. Another feature in scientific language is that long nominal word and abbreviated terminology are used more frequently on the account of precision and shared knowledge respectively. Phrases such as "multi-decade and ethnicity study", "olay regenerist night ritual" and "olay's MDE research" are used to signal the scientific genre.

In the grammatical level, the initiator is often omitted in the scientific text in order to emphasize the process of the research and unbiasedness. For example, "Multi-decade and Ethnicity study analyzed over 20,000 unique genes, revealing breakthrough insights into skin aging". Using the typical sentence structure increases the professionalism in the advertising.

Despite the several scientific discourse features are recontextualized in advertising, it could hardly be regarded as authentic scientific discourse. In the advertisement, scientific findings are treated as a way to claim authority rather than stating facts. For example, in "science has established that...", the verb "establish" indicates a strong sense of assertion rather than an objective statement. The noun "science" overgeneralizes research finding. The statistics and numbers are used only to assert the claim without any scientific basis. Moreover, sentences, such as "skin's DNA repair becomes more active", are more like a metaphorical description rather than a scientific conclusion. Apart from lexical selection, the order of the discourse also implicitly indicates that the scientific research and advertising discourse are logically associated. In general, the discourse is modified to be less explicit, less precise and less rational. Rather than reporting the empirical studies, the scientific findings are employed as another way to support the effectiveness of the new product and enhance the overall serenity and professionalism. In other words, scientific discourse becomes another voice to reinforce the advertisers' persuasive purpose.

The scientific discourses are frequently used in advertising due to our ideological belief in scientific authority. Scientific discourse is, on the whole, valued and respected in social life. Technologies are regarded as the products of education and as part of specialization of a particular area. When a new technological discovery is introduced, people are more willing to accept it as a fact if it is presented by an authoritative voice. Because we assume that we are unable to draw a more valid conclusion. Most consumers would accept the scientific statement without question. However, with a critical look, the scientific discoveries are mixed with advertisers' own interpretation and are different from the regular scientific discourse. People usually regard terminologies as the symbol of scientific knowledge. Incorporating scientific discourse features in advertising would greatly enhance the authority of the product although the scientific text would sound more scientific rather than be truly scientific.

Another possible reason for the intertextuality is that the science creates a distinction between expert and non-expert. The expert has exclusive technological resources which are not accessible to non-expert or common people. Therefore, people would be more willing to pay good money to get the access to the specialized resource.

3.2. Intertextuality and character voices

Cook (1992) points out that the same proposition uttered by different people would have different effects. For example, if "the serum is so amazing" is uttered by a close friend, we tend to believe it is true. While if it is uttered by an advertiser, we would consider it as an over-exaggerated propaganda. Moreover, similar utterances may evoke distinctive emotions and attitudes. For example, "I believe the serum is amazing" and "according to the research, the serum is amazing" have different persuasive

effect in advertising. These variations indicate that where the utterance comes from and how it is spoken may affect the persuasive power in advertising. In order to minimize the advertisers' persuasive voice, the advertisers cover their claims with intertextual voices. In most cases, first person narrator is mixed into the advertisement to convey a particular image or message and the voice of narrator would be in intertextual or dialogic relation with the advertiser (Fairclough, 1989). The following section examines on two kinds of character voices, one is from a celebrity, another is from mass people.

4. CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

Intermingling celebrity's voice into the advertising text can directly present the individual stance in a way advertisers might be unable to do. For example:

Jane Fonda: Fade out? Not for me

Advertiser: New golden age from L'oreal. The first skincare that boosts your natural rosy tone and visibly fight sagging. Jane Fonda: It's healthy, rosy, very flattering Advertiser: With peony polyphenols, the formulas stimulate the epidermis to revive skin's rosy color.

Jane Fonda: It's natural, it just comes from the inside. You'll really notice the difference. Advertiser: The new golden age by L'oreal skin expert Paris, for rosy, radiant, full-of-life skin. Jane Fonda: My golden age is now, and I'm worth it. [L'oreal, Youtube, Oct, 2022] L'oreal introduced a new anti-aging product and endorsed the celebrity, Jane Fonda who is famous for being able to maintain youthful appearance even at her 70s. The first narrative discourse distinguishes herself from the women at the same age who are assumed to look pale and old. The comparison would lower consumers' self-image and gradually enhance it through the introduction the product. The consumers' dissatisfaction with their own images would stimulate them to buy the product. The second sentence shifts to the advertising discourse to formally introduce the product. The order of the discourses may imply a dummy cause-effect relation between the youthful appearance of the celebrity and the effect of the product to persuade consumers. Then the advertisement shifts back to the narrative voice to express individual opinions, "It's healthy, rosy, very flattering", "It's natural, it just comes from the inside". The direct appraisal from a celebrity would be more convincing and more powerful than from advertisers since celebrity ideologically has more authority and power.

Furthermore, the vocabulary and grammatical structures are easy to understand. Together with the pause in the sentence, the whole utterance is a close approximation to the real daily communication rather than well-rehearsed lines, which increases the overall intimacy and credibility of the advertisement. The intimacy and the sense of involvement are further enhanced by using second person personal pronoun "you" to create a dialogue between the sender and the recipient ("you will really see the difference"). In the end, the narrator's voice resonates with the prior advertising text and the slogan "because you are worth it". Considering the fixed expression is well known to many consumers, the persuasive power would be lessened. Therefore, bringing celebrity's own voice would create another media to add the advertiser's confirmation of their view. The more powerful and believable celebrity who summarizes the advertiser's view would make the advertisement more reliable.

The celebrity endorsement also constructs a dummy correlation between the product and the successful image. The celebrity's image seems to indicate that the product is able to not only maintain one's youthful look but to make consumers as successful as the celebrity. Since

research reports that attractive people have more advantages over less attractive people. Consumers would be made to think that be youthful and beautiful is very important. Echoing

with this ideology, the celebrity-endorsed advertisements seem to sell an illusion that the product will change a person to be more attractive and successful one.

4.1. Voices from mass people

Although the celebrity endorsement is persuasive, its widespread use in the beauty product advertisement lessens their credibility and diminishes the power and authority of celebrities because they would always say the advantages of the product then their voices are intermingled with the advertiser's voice. In order to minimize the advertiser's voice, advertisements mention the product in a more implicitly and rely more on the intertextuality and mutual knowledge. For example: Advertiser: Does life get better with age?

Woman A: I'm much more open today to other people's opinions and thoughts.

Woman B: I'm a better daughter, I'm a better sister, I'm a better co-worker, I'm a better leader. Woman C: You have more time for yourself, you're confident, and life is just a lot more interesting. Woman D: I'm smart enough and I have enough energy and I have enough experience and I have perspective, but I also have the future.

Advertiser: philosophy: the best is yet to come [Philosophy, Youtube, Aug, 2022]

The advertisement from Philosophy introduced a new cream which is characterized by more advanced anti-aging technology. However, the advertisers minimize their own voice and add voices from common middle-aged women with various backgrounds. The whole text is constructed into a dialogue, talking about aging without mentioning any detail information

about the product. The women shared their personal experience about the advantages of aging and summarized it with a common wisdom "the best is yet to come". Since the cosmetic brand is also called Philosophy, it creates a pun to indicate that the new product is the best ever. The advertiser's persuasive intention is significantly mitigated. Moreover, the use of narrator "I" and conjunctive items (such as and, but) present the informal language structure. The whole text is intended to enhance the involvement of consumers and show social proximity, friendly attitude and intimacy.

The insertion of common people's voices makes the advertisement more effective because it associates the product with emotions and social-values which would make the product more memorable. In contrast to the lowered self-esteem in the celebrity-endorsed

advertisements, the voice from mass people heightens consumers' self-esteem because the advertisement highlights the value of each individual. The intertextuality not only further increase the intimacy but also enhance the persuasive power since the voices come from the 'ingroup'.

The shift in power from advertisers to consumers, which is also inferred as "consumerism" (Li, 2008). Advertisers tend to advertise the product from consumers perspective in order to be "in-group" instead of informing consumers the effectiveness of the product with voices from more powerful groups such as scientific evidence and celebrity endorsement. With the development of Internet and globalization, the power and authority of mass people is increasing dramatically. We now tend to believe that what everyone believes is true. However, the incorporation of the socially accepted ideology and emotional appeal from mass people is simply a new method to express advertiser's voice which reinforces the persuasive power of the advertisement.

5. CONCLUSION

The small sample study has investigated the intertextuality in the construction of beauty product advertisement as hybrid discourse. To be more specific, the study has examined the functions of different genres and voices inserted in the advertising texts and their contribution to the overall persuasive purpose. Through examining the three advertisements, we would find that intertextuality is fully exploited in advertising discourses. How the different discourses and voices intertwine with each other is related to certain aim of the advertisements. Each kind of voices and discourses is the representation of a certain group or a social class, which has its own unique features and reflects its specific power and ideology (Xin, 2000). Through intermingling different discourse styles and voices with the advertising text, advertisers can add various media to reinforce its own ideology.

Despite the different ideologies embedded in intertextuality, the most commonly accepted and repeatedly reinforced ideology in the beauty product advertisement is that physical attractiveness is portrayed as desirable and admired. For mid-aged women, to prevent themselves from aging seems to be normalized. This ideology has become one of the main driving forces in the cosmetic market. The beauty product advertising has built an ultimate standard according to which women are judged.

Since different advertisements have their specific target consumers, the persuasive strategies and ideologies employed may differ. Considering the small sample size in this study, future studies may include bigger sample size and investigate other ideologies embedded in beauty product advertisements. In addition, other features in TV advertisements such as intonation, facial expression and motion should also be considered when analyzing the intertextuality. Future studies may investigate the multimodal construction of intertextual voices in advertising.

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