

USE OF LANGUAGE IN DOVE'S REAL BEAUTY CAMPAIGN

HOW DOES THE LANGUAGE USED IN DOVE'S REAL BEAUTY CAMPAIGN INFLUENCE CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOUR?

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Absztrakt

NYELVHASZNÁLAT A DOVE REAL BEAUTY KAMPÁNYÁBAN

Jelen tanulmány három, a Real Beauty Campaign-ből származó hirdetést kíván elemezni, keresve a Drew Eric Withman Cashvertising című könyvében leírt marketingmintákat és technikákat. Az esszé feltárja a kampányhoz kapcsolódó etikai aggályokat is.

Kulcsszavak: reklám, marketing

Szakterület: gazdaság, pszichológia

Abstract

The present study aims to analyze three advertisements taken from the Real Beauty Campaign, looking for the marketing patterns and techniques described in Drew Eric Withman's book called Cashvertising. The essay will also explore the ethical concerns related to this Campaign.

Keywords: advertisement, marketing

Discipline: economy, psychology

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Dove's Real Beauty Campaign is a set of provocative advertisements designed to change the unrealistic, unhealthy and unnatural beauty standards mediated by advertisements and social media, to empower women, and last but not least, to sell their products with the help of well-structured and influential marketing techniques. The driving force behind their revolutionary advertisement is to show women that they are beautiful the way they are, because in the advertisements of other companies, only 'perfect women', with long and healthy hair, skinny body and flawless skin are depicted, so everyday women can feel uncomfortable in their body, since they do not look like these models.

This essay aims to show the persuasive power of language used in three advertisements taken from the Real Beauty Campaign, looking for the marketing patterns and techniques described in Drew Eric Whitman's book called *Cashvertising* (see: Whitman, 2009).

The essay will also explore the ethical concerns related to the Real Beauty Campaign, since using women's insecurities to sell their products is not acceptable for every critic.

This research question is worthy of investigation, because with the change in the conveyed message and the representation of women in the advertisements, the Real Beauty Campaign proved to be revolutionary and set the ground for an improved and healthier way of advertising.

What is marketing and what are the ethical concerns?

Marketing is the action of promoting our products and services to potential customers.

In order to be able to analyze the language of the given advertisements, we have to have a basic understanding of what marketing is, what its purpose, and what are the ethical issues related to the misuse of expressions and depicted pictures.

According to AMAs definition:

"Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." (Oxford University Press, 2016)

According to the definition, advertising's purpose is not to entertain, but to persuade consumers to part with billions of dollars every day in exchange for products and services, so I think this is the right time to state the ethical concerns related to marketing and advertising. The line between the valuable or conducive advertisement and between the exploitation of people's feelings are slight, however as Drew Eric Whitman stated in his book:

“... marketing when used properly to advertise quality products and services, is perfectly legal, ethical and moral. ... Of course, influencing more people to buy a crummy product that typically self-destructs within the first week of ownership is something else.”
(Whitman, 2009, 16).

The existence of ethical/moral codes in advertising proves the company being aware of their customers. Stating false information in an advertisement or asking for unreasonable high prices for a product or service is of course considered to be unethical but there are less recognizable and more guileful ways of manipulating people.

The four most important ethical issues according to the research of dominion-print.com are gender and social equality, advertising to children and politics. My essay builds on the first concern, gender equality, because the target audience of Dove's Real Beauty Campaign is women, so I want to mention the inequalities and exteriorization they have to face.

In earlier advertisements, especially after the Second World War, women were often depicted as tools or did not even show up and the whole cast stood from men actors. The sexualization of women in advertisements peaked in the 1990s for example in the ad campaign of Calvin Klein where Kate Moss the only 18 years old supermodel was exploited, or another case when Eva Herzigova modeled for the

Wonderbra's Hello Boys Campaign. After a time advertisers realized this problem and started to work with more women but the message that they wanted to deliver was still unethical and disgusting. The whole industry moved in a direction where the advertisements showed us that women have to be tall, skinny, have to have perfect skin, long and healthy hair and the beauty standard shifted to an unrealistic look. This is why companies like Dove started to launch campaigns against these beauty standards and 'use' real women in their advertisements, to show them that they are still beautiful and they have to accept and love themselves in the way they are, however, some people still consider this type of advertisement unethical just because they rely on women's insecurities.

The ethical issues related to gender inequality are also important because the target audience of the examined campaign is women and also the purpose of the campaign is to empower them.

Dove as a company

Dove is best known as a personal care brand owned by Unilever along with several other famous brands like Axe, Cif, Rexona, Ben & Jerry's or Magnum.

In fact Unilever stands from more than 400 brand names and present in over 190 countries and they claim that they are a “global company with global purpose” (Unilever, 2021a). Dove itself started in 1957 with its new revolutionary cleansing

Bar, but today offers a range of other products like, hand and body lotions, facial cleansers, conditioners, shampoos and many others.

Dove's target audience consisted of digitally and socially active women. The brand targeted women between the ages of 18 and 35 who were interested in natural and healthy beauty products. Despite the fact that the national smartphone penetration rate was just 20%, 68 percent of the women in the target category actively shared images shot on their smartphones with their friends via social media. Selfies were, of course, extremely popular among such socially active and image-conscious women.

The information mentioned in this paragraph can be used for the examination of the ethical concerns related to the Real Beauty Campaign, since they are closely related to Dove's sister companies and defining their target audience will help in the analysis of their advertisements.

Ethical issues related to the Real Beauty Campaign

There are several ethical issues and questions related to the nature and purpose of the Real Beauty Campaign which are worth mentioning before starting to analyse their advertisements.

The ethical issues related to this particular campaign, in my opinion, is everybody's own task to decide to what extent it is unethical or not, but I believe

that the message that they try to deliver should be the norm and not a marketing trick to persuade people to buy their products.

Ann Friedman wrote:

"These ads still uphold the notion that, when it comes to evaluating ourselves and other women, beauty is paramount. The goal shouldn't be to get women to focus on how we are all gorgeous in our way. It should be to get women to do for themselves what we wish the broader culture would do: judge each other based on intelligence and wit and ethical sensibility, not just our faces and bodies."
(Friedman, s.a.)

With this statement, Ann Friedman emphasizes that these advertisements still encourage women to pay attention to their appearance instead of working on their knowledge and social intelligence. I can not agree with her point of view entirely because in my opinion to be able to work on yourself and become the better version of yourself at first you have to be able to accept your appearance and not compare it to others. So yes, these advertisements focus on women's physical look and that they should love themselves as they are but this is the first step towards not even caring about our physical bodies.

Another important ethical question related to Dove's Campaign lay behind the company's relationship with Axe. These two brands are sister companies so they are

owned by the same ‘mother’ company, Unilever. The biggest problem is that Axe is well known for exploiting women in their advertisements, they reinforce gender stereotypes, as well as hyper-sexualize women. The fact that the two companies are related to each other raises some questions for the consumers.

Another interesting secret that one can find about them is the Craigslist casting call for the 6 “average” looking women that they sent out before the first phase was launched. In the casting call, they ask for “beautiful arms and legs and face” as well as “must-have flawless skin” and “no tattoos or scars.” (Celebre and Denton, 2014) They're stating that they value everyone's natural beauty and that everyone is attractive, yet this campaign only represents a small portion of our population. What about girls who have large noses, acne-prone skin, scars or tattoos, larger calves, or light skin? What about people who have thin hair, broad shoulders, brittle nails, small lips, and flat butts? Where are they represented?

They also evoke fear in consumers, for example, that their children will start extreme dieting and she won't have any confidence but their product is not a solution for this problem. Using the products of dove won't make you self-confident and won't prevent someone's child from body dysmorphia. By telling it, they stopped focusing on their products and their benefits and they only advertised how great they are to show real women in their ads. Instead of just having real

women and talking about their products. This way they try to have an impact on people's mental and psychical state and encourage them to associate the Dove with confidence and self-esteem. In the book *Cashvertising*, the writer expresses his ethical concerns in connection with using fear to sell a product:

"Can you use it for your products and services? Yes... if your product offers the appropriate solution for a fear situation. But is it ethical? Yes, but only if what you're selling offers a truly effective solution."
(Whitman, 2009, 30).

And one can say that the driving force behind this campaign was to build self-confidence and not to sell their products, but then why is the campaign associated with Dove and not just an independent campaign? Dove's clear purpose is to sell their products by making people associate the brand with growing self-confidence. In other ways, they would just show real women in their advertisements and talk about their products in the body copy.

This paragraph offers an insight into the ethical concerns related to the Real Beauty Campaign, which was worth mentioning because of the nature of advertising and marketing, since they can be easily unethical.

Role of language

We use language to express our thoughts and feelings, to communicate with others and to delineate our ideas and customs. Language used in ads has an enormous impact on consumers' behaviour since it is not only useful to express our thoughts and communicate but also to form or construct social reality. As Levi-Strauss stated:

"Language symptoms are not only limited to the meaning of written language or oral language, but also all social phenomena of broader culture in society, such as clothes, food menu, ritual and others." (Kasiyan 133)

According to Tarigan the four main purposes of language usage (1993:23) are: oneself expression, exposition, art, and persuasion. By using language in certain ways, especially with the purpose of exposition and persuasion, the ads of the Real Beauty Campaign give a new meaning to beauty and also persuade the customers to buy their products. However the user of the language may have clear purpose with his sentences, since language is ambiguous, and carries different meanings for everyone, the message can be easily misinterpreted.

As the last main purpose of language usage, persuasion, indicates, we can use our words and sentences to convince or persuade somebody about something.

This is the reason why it is so important in advertising and marketing, where people use language to build a connection between the brand and the consumer and to persuade and encourage people to buy their product. It is true that *„visual content and design in advertising have a very great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it.”* (Linguarama London, 2016).

This paper intends to analyze the impact of Dove's advertising language on the consumers, so understanding the role of language is key to accomplishing it accurately, because if an ad applies several linguistic devices then the company is more likely to better communicate with its customers and thus increase its selling.

Analysis of the advertisements' language

In this section, We will analyze the language of three advertisements, from the aspect of their influence on potential customers' mental states and behavior. All the three advertisements will be analyzed by the following structure:

A. lexical level

B. syntactical level

and also in the last advertisement C. other marketing techniques.

As a part of the lexical level, we will evaluate the usage of pronouns and simple/ short words and on the syntactic level, we will examine simple statements and imperative or interrogative sentences.

Advertisement 1

Figure 1 shows the first advertisement.

Figure 1: Advertisement #1. Source: Net1

All this talk about fashion models
and extreme dieting.
How did our idea of beauty
become so distorted?



A. Lexical Level

The Bandwagon effect is a technique to evoke the feeling of belonging which desire is a part of the nature of all human beings. *"Humans are social beings with a powerful psychological need to belong."* (source: Whitman, 2009, 40).

Hundreds of years ago, our ancestors realized that they have the best chances to survive if they live in groups, hunt in groups and protect each other. Our society no longer lives like them, however, the temptation to belong to different social groups is still a part of our nature (like having friends, a partner or children). People nowadays join clubs, attend religious groups or wear the T-shirt of their favourite band or sports team in order to express their belonging to a given group.

In this advertisement, the writer uses the bandwagon effect which means that with well-chosen pronouns and words the reader will feel that he or she belongs somewhere.

The sentence starts with the pronoun "All" which is one of the most commonly used words to express belonging. In this case, however, this belonging is a negative and avoidable one, since this group of people talks about fashion models, extreme dieting and they have a distorted idea of beauty. In the second sentence, the writer again uses a pronoun to strengthen this desire not to join this group, "our". The proof for the usage of this technique is that these sentences would be completely correct and understandable if they would use "People" in the first and "their" in the second sentence, but this way the reader or potential customer would not feel any belonging.

B. Syntactic Level

The Inoculation Theory was introduced by psychologist and Yale professor William J. McGuire. Drew Eric Whitman uses the simile of vaccination for this strategy because it uses a weak attack towards the consumer to seek a defendant from them, just like when people are given the weakened form of a virus and by doing so one's body becomes even stronger. As we can see in this ad copy, the writer attacks the reader with the mistake that she also talks about extreme dieting and fashion models. And the consumer may feel attacked because she realizes that yes, I also said that I want to look like these models and I also tried different techniques to lose weight. This way the potential consumer will feel guilty because after all, somebody told her that what she

is doing is damaging. However, the last part of this technique is to show a solution for this misdoing, which does not come in this advertisement, but the other ones serve as an implementation with the solution.

Rhetorical Questions:

The usage of rhetorical questions is not a new technique, it was even mentioned in Aristotle's classic guide to oratorical skills, *The Art of Rhetoric*, which was written circa 330 BC and first published in 1926. With rhetorical questions, advertisers can create factually sounding, potentially persuasive assertions without needing to back them up with facts or reasoning. According to certain research, rhetorical questions can occasionally shift people's minds and influence their purchasing decisions.

"The idea is if consumers aren't thinking carefully about an advertiser's message, slipping in a rhetorical question grabs their attention and encourages them to fire up some brain cells and think about the message." (Whitman, 2009, 71).

The question: "How did our idea of beauty become so distorted?" achieve the same purpose, because individuals will begin to evaluate the reasons and make a conscious effort to consider the advertiser's message. However communication researchers do not agree completely

on the effectiveness of this strategy, some say, 'Yes, it works' (Burnkrant and Howard, 1984; Enzle and Harvey, 1982; Howard, 1990; Howard and Kerin, 1994; Cacioppo and Heesaker, 1981; Swasy and Munch, 1985; Zillmann, 1972; Zillmann and Cantor, 1974). Results from other studies say, 'Nope, it is not particularly effective in all situations.' (Cantor, 1979; Munch, Boller, and Swasy, 1993; Munch and Swasy, 1988; Pentony, 1990.)

Advertisement 2

The second advertisement is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Advertisement #2. Source: Net2



A. Lexical Level

3 out of the 8 Life forces: In this advertisement, the writers use the technique where they tell people how they should feel after buying their products. They state that they help their consumers to free themselves up from beauty stereotypes and build con-

fidence in themselves. Several pieces of research showed that the two most powerful life forces are sexual companionship and self-improvement, and this advertisement uses both human desire to persuade people about buying their products. A more realistic beauty image would indicate that they are more appealing to their partner and growth in their confidence would be significant self-improvement. With the part of "next-generation", they also tap into the seventh life force "Care and protection of loved ones". Of course, none of the parents wants their children to grow up with low self-esteem and in a world where there are distorted stereotypes, so with this part of the sentence, the ad also encourages the moms to do it for their children and not only for themselves. And in most cases, this is more powerful than anything.

B. Syntactic Level

The Means-End Chain: People not only buy a product to have immediate gratification but also for its further, secondary benefits. With the expression "next-generation" the copywriter wants to evoke the exact same feeling, that buying this product and helping to change the distorted body image not only makes their life more convenient but also their children and grandchildren one. In the possession of this knowledge, they feel it way more important to act and help others. According to this principle, the advertisers highlight the benefits of their products in

the long run, and they tell you that you should not buy this product "*for what it does for you today- buy it for what it will do for you tomorrow!*". (Whitman, 2009, 44).

The author carefully writes: "we want to free ourselves and the next generation from beauty stereotypes", so it highlights the core benefit of supporting Dove. Not only your generation could live in a world without distorted beauty ideas but also your daughter, which for several mothers is even more important.

Advertisement 3

Figure 3 contains the third advertisement for this examination.

Figure 3: Advertisement #3. Source: Net3



A. Lexical Level

Pile on the Personal Pronoun Personality: Pronouns give the copy a warm, human flavor that people notice instantly. In this ad we can see that the "you" pronoun was used two times and also the her once which is a relatively big amount of pronouns compared to the length of the ad copy. With this the advertisers could

turn the ad into a more personal conversation instead of a mass communication. By making the advertisements more personal, the writers can associate the brand with good and friendly feelings and this way consumers will turn to their products more easily.

C. Syntactic Level

Call to action: The headline of this advertisement is a short two-word phrase: “Rethink Beauty”. The copywriters want the reader or customer to do a certain action, so rethink beauty. These well-structured ad campaigns have ads in themselves which are loosely connected to each other and when somebody has seen the previous two advertisements they will understand what is what we have to rethink. They don’t have to clarify the misconceptions within beauty because they assume that we already understand that they are thinking about the unrealistic model bodies that women nowadays consider ideal.

Ego Morphing: The body of this ad uses the second principle in Drew’s book which is called Ego Morphing or Instant Identification. This phenomenon was introduced by Pratkanis and Aronson in 1991 (Age of Propaganda) and they said that “*By purchasing the ‘right stuff’ we [the consumer] enhance our own egos and rationalize away our inadequacies.*” (Whitman, 2009, 34).

The first part of the sentence “believe in your own unique beauty” will impress many women with low self-esteem and

confidence. With these words they can “rationalize away their inadequacies” and most of them feel that they can be improved by it. Without being completely aware of it, women will associate beauty and increased self-esteem with the brand and they will consider it to be more appealing.

7st Life Force and the Means-End Chain-The Critical Core: As mentioned before, there are 8 Life Forces that are especially important in advertising.

The writer of the body copy also uses the power of the seventh Life-Force which is “Care and protection of loved ones”. In this advertisement, the author encourages the reader to change their beauty standards and believe in their beauty not for themselves but for their children, which creates a stronger desire for the change.

With the phrase “guide your daughter” the writers want to have the same effect on the readers as in the previous advertisement, because they will feel that with this product they not only make their lives better but also their daughter’s.

This technique is founded on the idea that many customer decisions are made not to meet a pressing need, but to achieve a longer-term objective.

Results of advertisements

According to different statistics, we can see that in the past 17 years, since the Real Beauty Campaign started, Dove has experienced a relatively big growth in its revenue. As the analytics of Mintel shows

there was a 30% increase in liquid soap sales between 2003 and 2013 which is very significant, however it is hard to estimate the real growth. In the last diagram we can see that Dove is still the most preferred company amongst its competitors, so it also can show us the company's success (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

If we consider that the main aim of the campaign was to build self-esteem, its success may be harder to measure. However different statistics indicate that thousands of people interacted with the campaign, it does not necessarily mean that their body image changed.

The campaign produced a digital ROI of 200 percent, the greatest of any Unilever campaign in Vietnam in 2013. Furthermore:

- More than one million individuals viewed the campaign's branded video material.
- Dove's app was downloaded by 40,000 consumers in Vietnam, making it the most popular beauty app.
- In Vietnam, the brand recaptured the top spot on the market.

As expressed in the nine learned human wants, humans also have a desire to buy products in order to achieve the cleanliness of their bodies and surroundings and to express their beauty and style. However, the first motivative force is not included in the advertisement's texts; it sources from the nature of the product. This is why we

have to be careful while analysing the successes of this campaign.

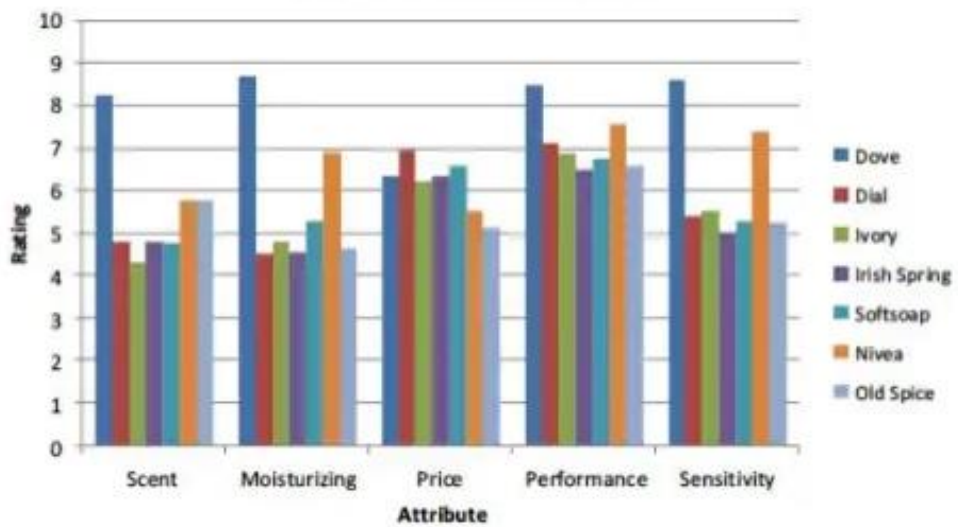
Conclusion

In conclusion, the language used in Dove's Real Beauty campaign influences consumers' behaviour with the help of different marketing techniques like the Bandwagon Effect, the Inoculation Theory or the Means End Chain. The language of these advertisements tries to create a personal attachment between the consumer and the brand with the usage of well structured expressions and sentences in both lexical and syntactic levels and with rhetorical devices. The evidence for the success of language usage for persuasion is indicated by the diagrams above, which show that the Dove Company experienced a significant growth in sales since the start of the Real Beauty campaign, however the extent of the success of their other aim, to empower women, is not unambiguously measurable. Regardless of the results, the analysis of these three advertisements by Dove clearly indicated that our language has a strong persuasive power. No matter which structure and what words are used in an advertisement, they all serve the purpose of attracting the audience, conveying necessary information to them in order to increase the effectiveness of the advertisement, and urging them to purchase the product or to use the service, which would increase its sales.

Figure 4: Unilever weekly statistic. Source: Net4



Figure 5: Dove vs. Competition. Source: Net5



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