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## Some Stylistic Aspects of Social Advertising in Russia

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### Abstract

The article considers some stylistic aspects of advertising database in Russia. It examines linguistic and stylistic properties and peculiarities of social advertising and the impact it has on public consciousness. It determines that social advertisements in Russia are characteristic of the vocabulary belonging to the low language norms which reflects cultural and ethical context. Figurative language and stylistic devices aim at appealing to emotions and make the advertisement more memorable. The authors deem it necessary to create a common database on social advertising in Russia in order to facilitate the analysis of economic impact and evaluate the capacity to exert effect on mainstream audience as well as determine strategies to build advertising campaigns.

**Keywords:** Social advertising, Public consciousness, Stylistic devices, Linguistic means, Language norms.

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## Introduction

Social advertising in contemporary world is an important element of shaping social attitude and moral values. Having an effect on public consciousness social advertising employs the same impact techniques as the commercial advertising. In this regard it should be particularly emphasized that social advertising has a specific impact character inextricably associated with its subject matter. As a rule, social advertising stands for advertising aimed at conveying the public socially important information that is supposed to shape and turn around public opinion, social norms and behavior models. The genuine interest to the social advertising research is conditioned in the first place by the fact that social advertising has come into being quite recently in Russia and consequently has come a long way in the last decade.

For now, there is no database on commercial advertising in Russia as it is, on TV and social advertising in particular. The English advertising has a database with convenient navigation system: *Welovead*, *Advertolog*. The database *Socintel360* contains accounts on advertising expenses in social media in different countries including Russia and represents topic sections of advertising in social media comprising Public Sector. The database *Mysocialdatabase* embraces a huge amount of data on social advertising that will facilitate the target group search in the desired or required social network. The most common subjects of social advertising in Russia are those against violence (which includes the family), abortion prevention, alcoholism, road safety, ecology, etc.

The significance of advertising database is beyond doubt; J. Winston says: Trump's presidential election victory is the most successful digital voter suppression operation in American history. The secret weapons in Trump's digital arsenal were Project Alamo, his database of 220 million people in the United States, and the Facebook Advertising Platform. By leveraging Facebook's sophisticated advertising tools, including Facebook Dark Posts, Facebook Audience-Targeting, and Facebook Custom Audiences from Customer Lists, the Trump campaign was able to secretly target Hillary Clinton's supporters and covertly discourage them from going to the polls to vote (2016).

V.Yu. Gomelskaya (2012) analyzes the phenomenon of "politicization" of social advertising and she notes that social advertising used for political purposes has become a political technology that undermines its original value as the source of promotion of humanistic values and ideas.

As I. Gregurec et al. stress (2011) without quality database marketers would not be able to appropriately exploit social networking as an advertising medium and send personalized messages to individuals.

The necessity of building the Russian advertising database is determined by the fact that advertising classification is as crucial for advertisers as it is for the wide range of specialists in the Humanities: translators, sociologists, psychologists, lawyers, economists, etc. Social advertising in Russia developed only in the 90s of the 20th century and is notably different from foreign social advertising in its linguistic and sociolinguistic nature. The database would undoubtedly enable the specialists to trace the tendencies of social advertising in Russia, streamline it and help to exert the potent effect on the mainstream audiences. As for commercial advertising the database would definitely contribute to the analysis of economic impact and determining the strategies to reach the target audience.

## Methods

The factual material for the research is represented by creolized texts of social advertising in Russia derived by continuous sampling method from “Google” Internet resource in grand total of 192 texts, what constitutes 100% of factual material.

As the authors of “Social communication in Advertising: Consumption in the Mediated Marketplace” Leiss et al. point out: “Most notable has been the expansion of advertising’s social role; it has become one of the bases for governmental, political and corporate efforts at persuasive influence through communication” (2005: 96).

The sociolinguistic aspect of social advertising consists in the explication of the language norm and variation, the use of specific types of lexical units and syntactical constructions.

## Results and Discussion

Social advertising texts betray low language norms, which is expressed through jargon words, vulgarisms and slang:

1. Brosil musor na obochinu, znaj ty **ChMO**.

Once you threw litter on the shoulder, make sure you are **a piece of shit**.

2. Priznaki **bydla**. Musor iz mashiny vybrosil v okno.

The distinctive feature of **scum**. You threw the litter out of the car window.

In the following examples indecent language serves as a technique to attract attention and a peculiar shocking stylistic device on the problem of alcoholism and motherhood:

3. Mama, pochemu ja **debil**? V 8 iz 10 sluchaev rozhdenie umstvenno-otstalogo rebenka – rezul'tat upotreblenija spirtnogo, v tom chisle slaboalkogol'nyh napitkov.

Mummy, why am I a **jer**k? In 8 out of 10 cases the birth of a mentally challenged child is the result of alcohol consumption including low-alcohol beverages.

4. Kuri. **Buhaj**. Rozhaj **urodov**.

Smoke. **Booze**. Give birth to **freaks**.

The use of colloquial substandard lexical units, in our opinion, is necessary to achieve a particular psychological effect: vulgarisms reflect the poor cultural context, upbringing and education of advertisement addressees. Thus the authors of the messages emphasize the correlation between the social behavior and the cultural context and education.

However from our perspective the absence of language norm in the Russian language in mass media contributes to the decline in this norm with most native speakers of the Russian language. The given circumstance is connected with the revolution of 1917 and the political regime change at the beginning of the 90s. As I.A. Sternin aptly notes: “the reconsideration of political censorship resulted in decline of linguistic censorship which in its turn triggered the influx of substandard, jargon, vulgar and obscene vocabulary on television, radio, in cinematography and literature”. It is also connected with the blurring in public consciousness of the notions “the liberty of utterance” (say what you want) and “the freedom of speech” (say the way you want), which is obviously not the same. The similar blurring that exists nowadays in the consciousness of many native language speakers leads to a noticeable and unreasonable permissive attitude to the language norms and above all things in the field of speech culture and communication standards” (Socintel360, 2017). Though contrary to this we discovered advertisements that had a tendency to enhance linguistic norms:

5. **Mat** – jazyk primata. A ty na kakoj stupeni jevoljucii?

**Swearing** is the language of the primate. Which evolution level are you on?

The discrepancy that arises out of the situation understates to our eye the effect of social advertising of its kind. Until advertisers abandon indecent vocabulary and show by example “the level of evolution”, our persuasion is that the propaganda of the Russian language free from obscene vocabulary is pointless.

Of special note is lexical means and stylistic devices used to attract attention, cajole the public interest and convince the addressee in social advertisement. A play on words is a characteristic feature used by advertisers:

6. **Rodite li?** Kurenje vyzyvaet besplodie.

Will you be able to **give birth to a child**? Smoking causes infertility.

Rodite li - Will you be able to give birth to a child; Roditeli – parents

7. **Zebra** glavnee vseh **loshadej**. S Bav' skorost' na doroge.

**The zebra** is the prime among **horses**. Slow down at the crosswalk.

The horse is the reference to the horse power – a unit for measuring the power of an engine.

8. My hotim byt' **v forme**. **V svoej forme**

We want to be **in the shape**. **In our shape**. (the idiom- to be in a good shape)

9. **Sem'ja iz 2h banok snimet musornyj bak**. Chistotu i porjadok garantiruem.

**The family of two cans will rent a trash-can**. Vouch for cleanness and order.

10. Moja mama menja **ub'et**. Moja mama menja **ub'et**

My mom **will kill me**. My mom **will kill me**. (literally and metaphorically about miscarriage)

11. Stalin – on **kak VKontakte: plenil milliony**. Otpravil' telegrammu. Dobavit' v tovarishhi. Ob#javil' vragom naroda. 1548366 chelovek bylo arestovano po obvineniju v antisovetskoj dejatel'nosti. Bol'shoj terror 1937-1938. 75 let – ne vremja, chtoby zabyvat'. Rossijskaja Associacija zhertv nezakonnyh politicheskikh repressij.

Stalin is **like VKontakte** – he **captivated millions of people**. To send a message. To add to your comrades. To declare the public enemy. 1548366 people were arrested on a charge of anti-Soviet activity. Great Terror of 1937-1938. 75-year span is not to be forgotten. The Russian Association of the victims of unlawful political repressions.

A play on set idiomatic expressions acquires a new meaning in social advertising messages which bring up to date its direct meaning apart from the metaphorical one.

12. **Den'gi utekajut kak voda**. Zakroj kran, ustanovi schetchik.

**Money is like discharge water**. Turn off the tap, mount the counter.

The semantic link *the thing-the child* is played upon in advertisements touching upon the childhood problem as well as other social issues. Thus the effect of pun is achieved:

13. **Nekotorye veshhi** luchshe poluchajutsja v temnote. **Naprimer, deti**. Vkljuchajte svet tol'ko kogda on neobhodim.

**Some things** come off well in the dark. **For example, the kids**. Turn on the light when necessary only.

14. A vy **gladite** tol'ko **veshhi**? V Rossii milliony **detej** nuzhdajutsja v ljubvi i vnimanii svoih roditelej.

Do you **take care of things** only? In Russia millions of **children** need parental love and attention.

Social advertising that promotes reading habits is nearly always based on the pun effect:

15. **3 podhoda po 7 stranic ezhednevno** i rezul'tat zameten cherez nedelju. Zanimajtsja chteniem.

**Three sets 7 pages each** every day and the result is visible in a week. Do reading. (A.P. Chekhov's image).

16. Ne sdavajtsja. **Na 500 stranice** otkroetsja vtoroe dyhanie. Zanimajtsja chteniem

Don't give in. You'll get a second wind when you crack **500 pages**. Do reading. (L.N. Tolstoy's image).

17. Podaril zhene «**Shinel'**» vmesto «**Shanel'**». Ne ocenila.

I presented the wife with “**Shinel'**” (The book of N.V. Gogol “Overcoat”) instead of “**Shanel'**”. She didn't appreciate it.

18. Ljublju prilech' s «**Gospozhoj Bovari**». Chitaj knigi – bud' Lichnost'ju!

I like lying down with “**Madam Bovary**”. Read books – be a personality.

19. Noch' s «**Martinom Idenom**» byla nezabyvaema! Chitaj knigi – bud' Lichnost'ju!

The night with “**Martin Iden**” was unforgettable. Read books – be a personality.

20. **Lichno znakoma s «Geroem nashego vremeni»**. Rekomenduju. Chitaj knigi – bud' Lichnost'ju!

**I'm personally familiar with “A Hero of Our Time”**. I do recommend it. Read books – be a personality.

M. Li (2009) places an emphasis that in advertising the use of rhetorical questions is quite common, since the rhetorical questions make the advertisement more vivid, the language more beautiful and elevated and finally add aesthetic appreciation to the advertisement.

Moreover, rhetorical questions in social advertising serve the purpose to present the information laterally, imposing the idea unobtrusively, convincing the addressee and enabling him to make his own conclusions rather than using orders and commands:

## 21. **Gde seichas igraet vash malysh?**

Where is your child playing now?

A rhetorical question is also a technique to set up a problem and offer the solution later:

## 22. **Ves v njanu?** Provodite bolshe vremeni s detmi!

Does he take after your babysitter? Spend more time with your children.

Thus the indirect policy to convince the mainstream audience accompanied by the concise language form achieved with the help of short interrogative sentences contributes to expressiveness through the simplicity of its message.

The attempts to analyze slogans in social advertising from the linguistic point of view have been made by some of the scholars. Thus, the authors of the work “Linguistic characteristics of commercial and social advertising slogans” compare social advertising and commercial advertising and come to the conclusion that social advertising as opposed to commercial doesn’t abound in figurative language and sound techniques. These research results suggest linguistic nature of social advertising is to be investigated thoroughly.

The play on words can be represented in lessons of Russian as a foreign language both in Russia and abroad since it will help the learners not only to enhance the level of their linguistic competence but will promote social inheritance and broaden their horizons.

As A. Naciscione notes, figurative language has become a powerful tool in marketing where semantic, stylistic, social and psychological criteria are at work to achieve an economic end. The advertiser expects the potential buyer to have some imagination and creativity to be able to conceive an advertising idea expressed by figurative means. Figurative language makes the advertisement much easier to remember; therefore, figurative use of language is one of the most striking features of advertising style (2010).

## **Conclusion**

The classification of promotional products and building a common database of Russian advertising is imperative primarily in order to analyze economic impact and evaluate capacity of having an influence on mainstream audience. The database would enable to create questionnaires in different respects and pinpoint target audience for a certain promotional product. Psychological, sociolinguistic and linguistic analyses will provide the opportunity to detect relevant strategies to build a successful advertising campaign that would be a social and economic benefit (Skorupa & Dubovičienė, 2015).

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