The Critical Discourse Analysis in the Persuasive Language of Hotel and Fast-Food Restaurant Advertisements

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Abstract

This research study attempts to analyze persuasive techniques in the hotel and fast-food restaurant advertisements in terms of critical discourse analysis techniques. Research on persuasiveness has been popular for a long time, studied as the art of speaking and features of rhetoric. Linguists have never stopped in their quest to find out what linguistic elements create persuasive effects and impact human brains to convince people about something. The research aimed to reveal what techniques were widely used in advertisements to catch customers' attention and persuade people to purchase the products. The study was conducted based on the qualitative-quantitative method, and the data was collected from the official pages of different famous hotels and fast-food restaurants. For investigation, 50 slogans, 25 from hotels' and 25 from fast food restaurants' advertisements, were analyzed based on "verbal techniques" and "power words techniques." The results of the study point to the comparative analysis of hotel and fast-food slogans, and they are represented with the help of charts and diagrams in statistical numbers. In the conclusion of the research, it became clear that the most frequent verbal technique used was the "we are different and unique" technique, and the most frequent vocabulary types were the "abundance words" and "confidence words" type of words.

Keywords: advertisements, vocabulary types, persuasive techniques, verbal techniques.

Introduction

Language is an inseparable part of human life. Language is a way to express our ideas, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes towards other people worldwide. It affects many aspects of human culture, such as religious, political, social, and economical. These described situations are provocative, especially using certain linguistic features or mandating one over another causes to manipulate people's minds.

Understanding a meaning requires more than understanding the meanings of words. Media discourse and advertisements are one of these situations.

There is a logic behind each conversation. In the language of advertisements, the main reasoning is persuasiveness. Persuasive features of language have been investigated by many linguists and scholars from the fields of linguistics to economics and philosophy. However, analyzing them based on critical discourse analysis using hotel and fast-food restaurants as data still needs due attention. Especially nowadays, the increasing popularity of the internet and online shopping makes companies use slogans intensively to expand their profits and promote their products. It is a fact that the use of effective advertisements and slogans has become very actual now. This work studies persuasive techniques of ads and how they are used to persuade people and reveals linguistic features used to hide the main idea behind words. For this purpose, using "verbal techniques" and "power of words" techniques will be applied to create a link between understanding and language that has not been implemented yet. Therefore, this study is theoretically significant and a new approach. It also deserves to emphasize that hotel and fast-food restaurant advertisements have not been analyzed in detail yet as a means of persuasive techniques.

The practical part of the study will concern the investigation of slogans and advertisements from the hotel and fast-food restaurants to reveal persuasive techniques. This factor represents the importance and practical significance of the thesis work since many companies nowadays are interested in using slogans that make an impact on people and coerce them into buying the product. The increasing popularity of the internet and online shopping makes companies use slogans intensively to expand their profits. This thesis studies persuasive techniques of advertisements and represents how linguistic features are used to hide the main idea behind words; therefore, the magnitude of the effect is more significant among companies, linguists, and business owners.

In this research work, we will try to analyze some features of advertisements. First of all, we will examine advertising as discourse; how advertisements are presented to persuade a viewer to buy a particular product. Secondly, the persuasive techniques and their structure in the content area of popular international hotel and fast food restaurant advertisements will be analyzed. Also, "verbal techniques" in the claim of superiority and effectiveness, how they manipulate people's minds and reveal hidden ideologies through the analysis of linguistic features will be the focal point of the study.

This qualitative-quantitative research study was an attempt to answer the research questions that are given below:

1. How are linguistics features used in advertisements as persuasive techniques?

2. Which techniques are widely used as a medium of persuasion in the language of advertisements for hotels and fast-food restaurants?

3. Which vocabulary types are the most and least used ones among fast food and hotel advertisements?

4. What is the link between understanding and language in slogans?

It is assumed that the thesis work will be a valuable and reliable resource for understanding persuasive techniques in the language of advertisements. Mainly, it will clear up some hidden ideologies behind words in the slogans for readers. It is believed that the thesis work will be helpful for entrepreneurs, business owners, and customers interested in the persuasive features of slogans.

Literature review

From antiquity to modern times, theoretical (contemplative attitude) and practical attitudes (action-oriented position) have been distinguished. However, this view has changed from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and many scholars started to believe that practical research goals determine every theory. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one of the fields that belong to this school of thought.

CDA is related to many fields, such as classical Rhetoric, Text Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, and Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics. The subjects of CDA are variable since different scholars and researchers examined several subjects like issues of racism, media discourses, gender issues, political discourses, organizational discourses, or dimensions of identity. CDA is a new field, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, new trends and approaches appeared in it. For example, corpus linguistics developed in CDA, and linguists and scholars attempt to analyze the corpus linguistic approach in the relationship between language and power.

CDA mainly studies the relation between power and language. CDA does not look into only one specific theory, or it is not related to one single methodology. "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (Deborah &Heidi, 2015: p.466). The main purpose of CDA is to understand and challenge social inequality. The focal point of attention in CDA is social problems and political issues, and CDA tries to explain discourse structures rather than just describe them. Briefly, CDA studies how relations of power abuse (dominance) in society are approved, legitimated, or challenged by discourse structures.

There are different models of critical discourse analysis that are applied to the text analysis. Van Dijk's, Fairclough's, and Ruth Wodak's models are the most famous ones. Van Dijk's model of CDA is a socio-cognitive approach, and discourse is deemed a social practice. In his view, discourse is a communicative event. Van Dijk introduced a three leveled model of text analysis. Texts comprise three levels: macro, super, and microstructure levels.

According to Fairclough (1995), the text should be deemed part of people's communication. Fairclough's model is based on a three-dimensional theory. This three-dimensional framework consists of textual analysis, process analysis, and social analysis. The first dimension is the analysis of visual or verbal texts. The second dimension- process analysis, reflects how meaning is produced and understood by people. The third dimension, social analysis, is related to social, cultural, or historical processes that influence the production and understanding of processes by people.

According to Wodak (2015), all discourses are historical, and therefore, they are concerned synchronically and diachronically with past or present events. Wodak's approach to discourse analysis was based on interdisciplinary perspectives. "That is to say, it integrates the existing knowledge of both the historical context and the social-political backgrounds, with a further exploration of how diachronic changes happen towards particular genres of discourses" (Ke and Fang, 2016: p.1079). Wodak introduced the principle of triangulation, which reflects the connection between discourse, social practices, and structures. This triangulation helps researchers avoid being too subjective because it makes it possible to work on several methods, theories, and background information.

According to Hermerén (1999), we can compare the language of advertisements with the process of persuasion. He also divides the persuasive effects of advertisements into four components: comprehension, acceptance, attitude change, and retention of the message. In advertisements, language should be persuasive, and advertisement writers should use different techniques to achieve their goals. According to Hermerén (1999), the readers of the advertisements sometimes consider them irrelevant because millions of people receive the same ads. Therefore, writers of advertisements use personalization in different forms in slogans to make them more specific for readers. Hermeren (1999) says that "one of the forms is to address the receiver as if he was an old friend; another is to have a celebrity or a stereotype that the viewer will recognize engage with the viewer (Hermerén, 1999: p.40).

While studying literature, many research works were reviewed that have been written so far to understand practical approaches to persuasive techniques. While carrying out paper analysis, it became clear that approaches and attitudes to persuasive techniques were completely different. In some groups, persuasiveness was analyzed as a means of rhetoric, as Irina D. Romanova and Irina V. Smirnova

(2019) wrote in their article "Persuasive techniques in advertising."

According to this study, persuasive techniques are features of rhetoric used to express logos, ethos, and pathos. The collected data were analyzed in terms of the techniques that were classified into three groups: those pertaining to logical reasoning (logos), those presenting a positive image of the company (ethos), and those involving the emotional component (pathos). In another group of researchers, persuasiveness was analyzed based on Leech's meaning classification, such as conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning, as given in the article "Semantic Analysis on Advertisement Slogan's" by Dwi Fita Heriyawati (2019).

Analyzing persuasive techniques in terms of the "verbal techniques" was conducted by Mohammad Reza Shams (2015) in his book - "Reading English Newspaper." However, in the book, no empirical study was conducted. The book only explains the theoretical essence of "verbal techniques." For the first time, these techniques have been used to understand the relationship between different structures and persuasiveness and create a link between understanding and language in the current research. Albeit much has been done on persuasive techniques and strategies, there is a gap in the knowledge. The research works so far are related to the stylistic devices, use of metonymy, metaphor, irony, etc. The theory of the thesis work is a new approach since the main goal will be investigating persuasive techniques in terms of "verbal techniques," which helps to understand the logic and ideology of advertisements and creates a link between understanding and language, which is the second dimension of Fairclough's dimensional framework. It also deserves to emphasize that hotel and fast-food restaurant advertisements as a means of persuasive techniques have not been studied intensely.

Methodology

Corpus:

To analyze persuasive techniques in terms of critical discourse text analyzing methods to reveal hidden ideas behind the text, the data were collected from official websites. In order to obtain the sample, different famous hotels and fast-food restaurants were selected, and their visual (video) and printed advertisements were obtained through their channels on YouTube and Google as the sample source. The purposive qualitative sampling method was applied by selecting the samples intentionally depending on whether they included persuasive nature. For this purpose, 25 most recent fast-food restaurant advertisements of "McDonald's,"
"Burger King," "KFC," "Pizza Hut Delivery," "Chili's," and 25 the most recent advertisements of different hotels "Hilton," "Sheraton," "Burj Al Arab," "Belmond,"

"Danville" and many others were selected. As a result, 50 slogans were collected in total that will be analyzed under "verbal techniques" and "power words" techniques.

Model of analysis

As an analysis model, a mixed type of method will be used. The text analysis type of descriptive qualitative method will be applied to analyze the data, and the quantitative method will be used to show numbers and statistics exactly. The main goal here is to find out what kind of techniques are mainly used as a medium of persuasion in slogans. The data will be analyzed using the content analysis method. The content of 50 slogans of different hotels and food companies will be rigorously examined based on the language of advertising claims and power words that manipulates customers' choices.

First, slogans will be analyzed in terms of "verbal techniques," which can be divided into nine groups: The weasel words. Advertisers use some words in slogans that are often misleading. "Weasels are words that seem to say one thing but are sufficiently vague to offer no proof" (Mohammad R., S., 2015: p.211); The Unfinished Comparison. The "unfinished comparison" claims that the product is better or has more of something, and it does not finish the comparison; The "We are Different and Unique" Claim. The "we are different and unique" technique claims that the product is exceptional and the best one; there is nothing else quite like it; The "water is wet" technique is used to say something about the product that has already been said and valid for other products; The "So What" Claim. The "so what claim" is a technique that evokes "so what?"

reaction in careful readers. In this technique, one feature of the product is emphasized, but that is not an advantage in fact; The Vague Words. The vague words are similar to weasel words. In the case of vague words, some colorful and appealing words are used; however, they are meaningless in essence. The "scientific evidence" technique is mainly based on giving some sort of proof or experiment to prove the quality of the product. The Consumer Complimenting technique is based on praising customers and making them feel valued and respected, their position acknowledged, and their preferences are taken into consideration. The Rhetorical Question demands a response from the reader. The answer is asked so that the reader will affirm the product's goodness. The Problem and Solution. This technique of advertising assumes that the reader is in need of advice. It consists of two parts: raising a problem and giving a solution.

Secondly, the content will be examined on the basis of "power words" - a range of words that are effective at attracting readers' attention and persuading them to purchase. They include ego words ("you & your," "discover," "new"); confidence words("guaranteed," "proven," "safe," "number one," "original"); abundance words

("more," "less," "zero," "fast," "save," "free"); scarcity words ("limited," "exclusive," "only"); empowerment words ("imagine," "magic," "power"); experience ("wonderful," "wonder," "amazing"); emotional appeal ("feel," "feeling," "love," "smile"); dimension (little," "big," "size") and excitement("live," "cool," "wow," "viva") type of words.

Procedure

Considering the size of the article, only a few slogans will be shown in the article as a procedure of the research. However, to get further information about all the examined slogans referring to appendix 1 is possible.

"Nobody does chicken like KFC" (KFC, 2000) – In terms of "verbal techniques," the "we are different and unique" technique is used in the slogan. The advertisement emphasizes that there is nothing else like KFC chicken, and nobody can do it like KFC. The slogan stresses how KFC products stand out from the rest. The type of "scarcity word" is used in terms of vocabulary used in the slogan. The word "nobody" expresses the idea that there is only one who can make chicken delicious, and this is KFC.

"Life tastes better with KFC" (KFC, 2009) – in the slogan "unfinished comparison" technique is used. There is a comparison in the slogan given by the word "better." However, it is an unfinished comparison since the competitors are not named here. In this case, it is possible to ask, "Better than what?" In terms of vocabulary, in the slogan "abundance words" type is used. The word "better" expresses much more in quality. It means that with KFC products, life tastes much more delicious than others.

"The way a sandwich should be" (Subway, 2000) – In this slogan, the "water is wet" technique is used. All sandwiches are in a way that sandwiches should be, and this is not an advantage for a sandwich since almost all sandwich products share the same way. The "confidence word" is used in the slogan as a vocabulary word. The word "should be" has an emotive meaning in the slogan since it emphasizes that everyone can be confident about eating Subway because they know how sandwiches should be.

"Fresh is what we do" (Subway, 2016) – In the slogan "we are different and unique" technique is used since it emphasizes that Subway makes burgers fresh. The word "we" also stresses that the slogan expresses the company's uniqueness. However, in the slogan "water is wet" technique is also used. It is clear that all companies have to make sandwiches or other products fresh, and it is not an advantage in fact. As a vocabulary use, the confidence words technique is used. The word "fresh" has an expressive and confidential meaning.

"Did somebody say, McDonald's?" (2000) – in the slogan "The rhetorical question" type of verbal technique is used. The slogan emphasizes McDonald's importance and its worldwide fame. The slogan refers to the fact that McDonald's exists everywhere in the world and also fast serving, home delivery service makes people call its name (or eat Mc products) frequently. Advertisers use a rhetorical question in order to show that McDonald's is known by everyone.

"We love having you here" (Lakeshore Hotels) – In the slogan the "consumer compliment" technique is used. The primary meaning of the slogan is some form of flattery, and it specializes in customers and expresses how their guests are special to the "Lakeshore Hotels." People feel valued and special when they hear the slogan. Generally, using the word "you" has a complimenting meaning in advertisements. As a vocabulary use, the central emotive meaning is conveyed by using "you." The word belongs to the "ego words" group. The use of "you" makes customers feel valued because not only the advantages of the product are mentioned in the advertisement, instead the customer is specified here.

"34 storeys, all with happy endings" (Fairmont Hotel) – in the slogan the "so what" claim is used. As the main feature, 34 storeys of the hotel is described. However, having 34 storeys is not an advantage for the hotel, and people do not need a 34 storeyed hotel in order to have a happy holiday. As a vocabulary choice, in the slogan, an "emotional appeal" kind of word is used in the case of the word "happy." The slogan has an emotive and abstract meaning. All storeys are described with a happy ending like fairytales.

"So clean. So good!" (Hotel Sogo Philippines) – the "vague words" technique is used in the slogan. The thought, words, or slogan's meaning sound colorful and emotive, but in reality, they do not have colorful meanings. Being good or being clean does not emphasise the advantages of the hotel, and these features are standard almost for each hotel. As a vocabulary use, the word "clean" is used as a kind of "confidence words" in the slogan. One of the concerns of people about restaurants or hotels always is cleaning. When customers read the slogan, they might be confident about the hotel.

Results and Findings

Based on the descriptive qualitative method and content analysis, the obtained data and findings will be explained in this section.

How are linguistics features used in advertisements as persuasive techniques?

Based on the study, it can be claimed that linguistic features are used in advertisements, especially in slogans, as persuasive techniques in many language

styles. Considering the scope and size of the research, only "verbal techniques" and "vocabulary choice" were at the focal point while carrying out content analysis. Rigorous linguistic analysis of these techniques paved the way for understanding how different sentence types are chosen in terms of verbal techniques and how common words convey different meanings in terms of vocabulary choice. As Zuhair Ahmad (2018) mentions, "language use in advertisement offers researchers an excellent opportunity to see for themselves how the characteristics of common language are exploited at its best" (Zuhair Ahmad, 2018: p.470).

Which techniques are widely used as a medium of persuasion in the language of advertisements of hotel and fast-food restaurants?

The data results based on "verbal techniques" are introduced in the chart below, which depicts the comparative results of the techniques used in hotel and fast-food restaurant advertisements. This chart is used to represent the statistical numbers of the analysis.
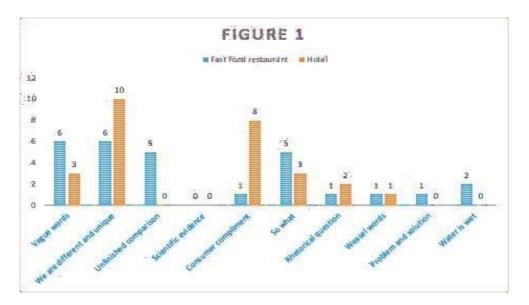

Figure 1. *The comparison of the advertisements in terms of verbal techniques*

As seen from the chart in the fast-food restaurant slogans, mostly used techniques are the "vague words" and "we are different and unique" techniques that have been used in 6 out of 25 slogans. The comparative analysis of hotel slogans clearly shows that the most used technique is the "we are different and unique" technique, which has been used in 10 out of 25 slogans. Also, this technique is one of the primarily utilized techniques in fast food slogans with 24% of use. The following mostly used technique is the "consumer compliment" technique. It has been used in 8 out of 25 hotel slogans, and as a percentage, it is 32% of 100% of total hotel advertisements.

However, it is one of the least used techniques in fast food slogans. The "so what" and "vague words" have been used in 3 out of 25 or 12% of all hotel slogans. These techniques also have the same medium percentage of use in fast food advertisements. As we see from the chart, there is no use of the "scientific evidence" in both hotel and fast food slogans. Also, there is no use of "water is wet," "problem and solution," and "unfinished comparison" among hotel slogans. However, the "water is wet" and "problem and solution" techniques are among the least used slogans in fast food advertisements.

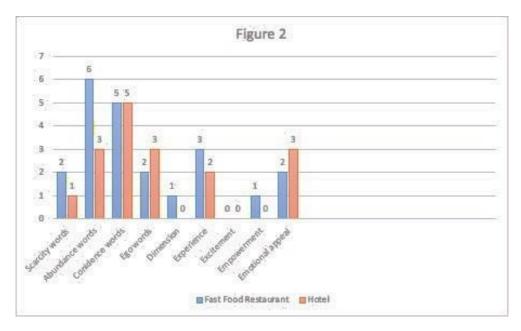***Which vocabulary types are the most and least used one among fast food and hotel advertisements?***

Figure 2. *The comparison of advertisements in terms of power words*

Figure 2 shows the general statistic of the vocabulary used in hotel and fast-food restaurant advertisements. The chart shows that the most used vocabulary type in fast food slogans is the "abundance word." It has been used in 6 out of 25 advertisements or 24% out of 100% of fast food slogans. The rest "scarcity words," "ego words," and "emotional appeal" types of vocabulary have been used in 2 out of 25 or 8% of all advertisements. The least used vocabulary type is the "dimension." It has been used in only one advertisement and 4% of all. There is only one type of vocabulary used that has not been used among hotel and fast-food slogans, and it is the "excitement" type of vocabulary use.

Discussion of the Findings

We already know how persuasive techniques are the crucial elements of advertisements. All these techniques share a common purpose. They are used in advertising to convey a certain ideology - persuade people to purchase the product. Linguistics features in advertisements have been used to create a positive attitude toward people. They can be used in a way to change people's attitude towards the products or persuade them to buy the product or use the service that even they have no prior information about. As seen from the charts in the previous section, some techniques have been used widely; however, some have no use in analyzed data. Alternatively, some techniques have been used chiefly in fast food slogans.

Nevertheless, it has been used as the least one or has no use among hotel slogans or vice versa. It means the use of persuasive techniques may also vary according to the advertised products. One technique may be effective for certain product advertisements but not compelling enough for others. Therefore, advertisers consider what the product is, who the audience is, and even in which country it will be advertised. Even the exact product has different slogans or has been advertised differently in different countries.

In brief, the central ideology behind words and techniques is luring rather than giving true information about the product. By emphasizing the product's advantages or using some colorful words and expressions that seem meaningful, however, in essence meaningless, advertisers attract people's attention and make them unconsciously purchase the product even if they do not need it.

According to the findings, the most used technique is the "we are different and unique" technique in terms of verbal techniques. Advertisers in both hotel and fastfood restaurant slogans preferred using this technique mainly. It is the fact that advertisers try to praise the products and show that their company and products are unique. Showing advantages of the product and praising the product might be an effective method as a way of persuasion. However, praising consumers and complimenting them is also an effective method of persuasion. It is a fact that sometimes advertisers use excessive praising and flattering techniques. It is also one of the most used and old techniques advertisers use. As seen in Figure 1, the "consumer compliment" technique is also primarily used in hotel advertisements. It is also interesting that fast food advertisers do not tend to use this technique more. This fact shows the different use of techniques according to the advertised products as well. The "scientific evidence" technique has no use among 50 slogans in the research study. This technique was mainly used in the advertisements before 2000th, and the slogans for this research study were chosen among the recent ones. Therefore, there was no example of the technique. In the post-modern world, thoughts, ideas, and decision-making have changed significantly compared to ancient times. Now irrational thinking is dominant rather than rational decisionmaking, and these

peculiar features of time are also represented in the slogans. Customers decide on buying the product in terms of populistic thinking. If everyone or celebrities purchase the product, it will be a good one, there is no need to know its scientific evidences.

When it comes to discussing the findings in terms of vocabulary type, as known from Figure 2, mostly used vocabulary types among both fast food and hotel advertisements are the "abundance words" and "confidence words" type of vocabulary use. These kinds of words make people feel upbeat, excited, and confident about the products. Using confidence words, advertisers want to persuade customers to believe in the products and the company. Quality of the products is crucial for everyone, and therefore, advertisers use confidence words to build confidence in customers. As Emodi & Livina (2011) mention, "the audience cannot believe the copywriter unless he convinces them of the truth in his copy" (Emodi & Livina N., 2011: p.325). Using abundance words, advertisers persuade people to feel excited and interested in purchasing the product since almost everyone desires to get more. However, the "excitement" type of vocabulary has no use among 50 slogans in the research study. Even if advertisers want to make consumers feel excited about the products, they do not use this group of words. They achieve this purpose by using "emotional appeal" or "ego words."

One of the primary research purposes of the study was to find the relation between understanding and language. According to the result of examining slogans, it can be claimed that understanding the meaning of the slogans is sometimes different than the real meaning of slogans. We examined this feature, especially in the case of the "unfinished comparison," "so what" and "water is wet" models. Although the real meaning behind these models was not based on the products' complete and real positive features, this meaning is understood as real features of products. For example, the slogan "Life tastes better with KFC" (KFC, 2009) does not fully compare life and another positive thing. This question can be asked: "Life tastes better than what?" The second compared element can be a negative thing which will not ensure the positive meaning of the slogan in that case. However, this type of slogans is widely used and attracts customer attention.

Conclusion

In brief, according to the result of the study, it is possible to claim that the main idea behind words in the advertisements is luring people and psychologically persuading them to buy the product. By emphasizing the product's advantages or using colorful words and expressions that seem meaningful, however, in essence meaningless, advertisers attract people's attention and make them unconsciously purchase the product they do not need. Generally, advertisements might use different techniques to persuade people to buy the product; however, according to the study's conclusion, mostly used technique is the "we are different and unique" technique, and not used

one is the "scientific evidence." It shows that consumers prefer purchasing the product that is praised instead that has scientific evidence. In terms of vocabulary used as a way of persuasion, the most used types are the "confidence words" and "abundance words," which express respectively that people can be confident about the quality of the product, and they will even get more than they desire.

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