



Analysis of Presupposition in Cosmetics Advertisements

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Abstract

Pragmatic presupposition focuses on the study of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer at the time of communication and the language they used. It can effectively serve advertising language from the linguistic field. In other words, pragmatic presupposition can meet some of the requirements of the advertisements. Nowadays people confront a variety of commercial advertisements, such as food advertisements, drink advertisements, digital product and cosmetic advertisements, etc. In fact, advertising language is the core factor which determines the success or failure of one commercial advertisement. Most domestic and overseas scholars have studied advertising language through cooperative principles, rhetoric and systemic-functional grammar, etc. However, they do not pay enough attention to the pragmatic presupposition manifested in both Chinese and English cosmetic advertisements. Therefore, this paper conducts a comparative study based on previous studies of pragmatic presupposition with new data. The data analyzed in this study are taken from some major fashion magazines in America, United Kingdom and China, such as VOGUE, Cosmopolitan, Trends health, etc. These cosmetic advertisements were advertised in the recent 20 years. Through the analysis, it is found that there is no significant difference between Chinese and English cosmetic advertisements in terms of types of pragmatic presupposition manifested. Both Chinese and English advertisers mainly adopt four types of pragmatic presupposition: existential presupposition, factive presupposition, state presupposition and behavior presupposition, and state presupposition takes up the largest proportion. The present study provides a more comprehensive analysis of pragmatic presupposition and classification of it. In addition, the results of this study also could help advertisers and consumers increase their mutual understanding.

Keywords: Chinese and English cosmetics advertisements; Pragmatic presupposition; Advertising language; Function.

1. Introduction

In the information age, various kinds of advertisements are spreading all over. In order to attract consumers' attention, the merchants put a lot of thoughts into advertisements. Under such a social background, in order to achieve better publicity effect, it is necessary to make an in-depth study of advertising language. Many scholars have made great achievements in this field, and their research perspectives are diverse, involving sociolinguistics, semantics, functional grammar and so on. Presupposition is a concept proposed by the German philosopher Frege in 1892. When we say a word, it usually means a specific precondition, and the objective existence of the object it refers to has been assumed by us in advance. This unspoken premise has not been said and does not need to be said, but both speakers and listeners know and acknowledge it. The definition of presupposition in the Dictionary of Language and Linguistics by H. Busmann, a German contemporary scholar, is: "Presupposition is an implicit setting about the meaning of expression or discourse". Presupposition is the hologram of society, while advertisement is the construction of society which determines the application of presupposition in advertising language. The formal characteristics and application characteristics of presupposition are inevitably reflected in advertising language. This paper analyzes the specific application and functions of presupposition in Chinese and English cosmetics advertisements, and all cosmetics advertisements in this paper come from the Internet.

2. Statement of the Problem

In modern society, advertising plays a very important role in people's daily life. The language of advertising is basically persuasive; therefore all possible means, linguistic or non-linguistic, have been adopted by advertisement writers to serve the purposes of advertising. As a very important topic in linguistics, especially in pragmatics, presupposition is frequently employed in order to enhance the effects of persuasion in advertisements because of its own special properties. There exist some relations between presupposition and advertising language.

3. Objectives of the Study

By presenting advertising examples in the process of analysis, this paper aims to be some help of designing advertising language and summarizing the function of pragmatic presupposition in advertising language.

4. Review of Literature

Compared with discourse comprehension, pragmatic presupposition is applicable and universal, but it is unidirectional, subjective and concealed. Advertising is a very strategic communication behavior, and advertising language skillfully uses the three characteristics of pragmatic presupposition to derive the strategy needed for communication (Zhao, 2007). Chinese scholar Chen Xinre (1999) made a deep research on pragmatic presupposition in advertising language. He divided pragmatic presupposition in advertising into factual presupposition, belief presupposition, state presupposition and behavior presupposition from the perspective of sociology. Subsequent scholars who devoted themselves to the study of advertising language further subdivided the pragmatic presupposition of advertising language on the premise of basically retaining Chen Xinren's classification, and added presuppositions such as cultural presupposition, pun presupposition, value presupposition, knowledge presupposition, psychological presupposition and effect presupposition.

4.1. Concept of Pragmatic Presupposition

Presupposition refers to the common sense that both sides already know in verbal communication, or the information that can be inferred according to the context after listening to the discourse. It is not manifested on the surface of discourse, but contained only in discourse. Pragmatic presupposition refers to "the contextual-sensitive presuppositions related to the speaker's beliefs, attitudes and intentions" (He Ziran, 1997). Yule believes that presupposition is a series of assumptions made by the speaker before speaking, and it is a concept that depends on the speaker. The understanding and definition of pragmatic presupposition by Chinese and foreign linguists have one thing in common, that is, pragmatic presupposition refers to the background knowledge shared by both sides.

4.2. Features of Pragmatic Presupposition

Levinson (1983), proposed that presupposition has the characteristics of appropriateness or felicity and mutual knowledge or common ground. Chen (1998), proposed that the characteristics of presupposition include unidirectionality, subjectivity and invisibility.

Appropriateness emphasizes the close relationship between presupposition and context, and presupposition is the premise of speech act. Mutual knowledge emphasizes common background knowledge of both sides, and takes mutual knowledge as the preset. Subjectivity means that presupposition is related not only to context, but also to the speaker's cognition, such as intention. Invisibility means that the presupposition information is hidden in the speaker's discourse. When understanding advertising language, consumers are easily attracted by advertisements, but often ignore the hidden presupposition in advertising language. Presupposition is often hidden in the speaker's discourse. Presupposition exists in the speaker's cognitive environment only when the audience still understands it.

4.3. Classification of Pragmatic Presupposition

A good cosmetic advertisement should be able to convince consumers, thus generating a desire to buy. Pragmatic presupposition is widely used in cosmetics advertisements. Yule (2000), proposed different types of presupposition including: existential presupposition, structural presupposition, factive presupposition and counterfactual presupposition. Chen Xinre (1999), proposed factive presupposition belief presupposition, state presupposition and behavior presupposition. According to the classification of presupposition by predecessors, combined with the characteristics and specific examples, this paper discusses presupposition in Chinese and English cosmetics advertising language from the perspectives of existential presupposition, factive presupposition, state presupposition and behavior presupposition.

5. Methodology

According to the purpose of this study, both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis are adopted to explore the three research questions. Qualitative analysis, considered as the dominant role, is adopted to systematically explain how pragmatic presupposition is manifested in the Chinese and English cosmetic advertisements. Then the quantitative analysis is applied to demonstrate the frequencies of these five types of pragmatic presupposition manifested in Chinese and English advertisements. Qualitative analysis is used to analyze types and functions of pragmatic presupposition manifested in Chinese and English cosmetic advertisements. It is appropriate to use qualitative analysis in the body part of this study according to the distinguishing features of pragmatic presupposition. This method is exploited to illustrate how pragmatic presupposition is manifested in both Chinese and English cosmetic advertisements.

5.1. Data Collection

This study aims at analyzing how pragmatic presupposition is manifested in advertising language, so as to find out realization of pragmatic presupposition in Chinese and English cosmetic advertisements. In this study 50 famous cosmetic advertisements are collected as data. All of the sample advertisements are taken from some major fashion magazines in Europe and China, such as VOGUE, BAZAAR, ELLE, etc. These sample advertisements were

famous in the past 10 years. Therefore, the data used in this study is valuable. VOGUE is a fashion and lifestyle magazine covering many topics including fashion, beauty, culture, and living. Moreover, British Vogue was the first international edition launched in 1916. As for today, there are twenty-three international editions. Other magazines collected in this study share the same status with VOGUE.

The advertising language is chosen as the research data. The data has covered various brands of diverse specialists of cosmetics, including well-known brands like Estee Lauder, Lancome, OLAY, etc.

5.2. Data Analysis

Through careful search and analysis, we finally collected a total of 50 advertisements that met the selection criteria. Among them, there are 11 advertisements using pragmatic presupposition, accounting for about 11% of the whole sample. From the result, the most common presupposition in advertising language is the state presupposition, accounting for nearly half of all presuppositions. It should be said that it reflects advertisers' understanding and grasping of consumers' psychology. We know that the purpose of advertising is to make consumers buy products or services, so that they can change from dissatisfied or even bad state to an ideal or at least better state. Therefore, it is easy for advertisers or advertising manufacturers to make a fuss about the two states. In the process of statistics, we find that the first state is the preset goal of advertising language. By presupposing dissatisfaction in the past, advertisers are actually showing their disadvantages to consumers, thus inducing them to have the desire to change this state, that is, to accept advertisements and purchase specific products or services.

5.2.1. Existential Presupposition in Cosmetic Advertisement

Existential presupposition implies the real existence of an entity in the world. Proper nouns and other anaphora, such as definite articles and third person pronouns are often used in cosmetics advertisements. Such as the following example (in this paper, the symbol "≥" is used to indicate the preset).

Example 1: An intimate party. The inhibited fragrance from Revlon, (Intimate perfume)

≥There is kind of "inhibited fragrance" in Intimate perfume.

This is the advertising slogan of Revlon, an internationally renowned brand cosmetics group company. According to the presupposition triggers "the" and "Revlon", it shows the application of existential presupposition in the cosmetic advertising language. Although the form of this advertising language is very simple, it leaves a deep impression on consumers by using the existential presupposition. That is to say, making Revlon perfume associated with the party, which will inevitably lead to an idea in consumers' minds, Revlon perfume is the first choice when attending the party.

Example 2: A daily radiance boost for your skin. This revitalizing blend of nourishing oils includes pomegranate extract plus Vitamin E. Absorbs instantly, feels silky-light, leaves skin soft and smooth. Comforting natural lipids fortify and help protect skin against environmental assaults. (Estee Lauder, Radiant Vitality Essence Oil)

≥There exists pomegranate extract and Vitamin E in the oil, which is helpful for skin.

As we all know, pomegranate essence and vitamin E are helpful to anti-aging and wrinkle removal, while essential oil containing these components can restore vitality and luster to skin. Therefore, consumers will accept this product and have a strong desire to buy.

5.2.2. Factive Presupposition in Cosmetic Advertisement

The factive presupposition is based on the premise that facts have occurred or exist and are well known to the public, so as to convince customers. In real life, consumers are surrounded by a variety of advertisements. In this case, consumers will take a skeptical or even vigilant attitude towards the content of advertisements. How to persuade consumers to buy their own products is a difficult challenge for all manufacturers. With this in mind, manufacturers rarely ask consumers to buy their own products directly, but speak with facts. As the saying goes, "Facts speak louder than words." Manufacturers only need to show facts to influence consumers' consumption psychology in advertising, so as to achieve the purpose of making profits. Therefore, in advertising, factive presupposition is often an effective means of publicity. As in the following example

Example 3: Who dares to challenge the Almighty King when protecting, beautifying and preserving heat at one time? (Protection, decoration, moisture at the same time, who would dare to challenge the Almighty king.) (L'Oreal)

≥L'Oreal Almighty king is the best at protecting, decorating and moisturizing skin.

By asking questions, the advertisement presupposes that L'Oreal's skin care efficacy is the best, so as to convince consumers that the efficacy of L'Oreal is true. It is attractive for the consumers to buy and try at once. It can be seen that the use of factive presupposition not only eliminates the worries of consumers, but also helps to promote the brand effect.

Example 4: French Clarins presents clear whitening sunscreen lotion, which contains the "natural scavenger". It has always been a classic of European plant skin care for over fifteen years. (Clarins)

This is the slogan of a French cosmetic advertisement. In this advertisement, the fact presupposes that "the European plant skin care classics for more than 15 years", which means that the brand cosmetics have had 15 years' reputation and 15 years' experience in making cosmetics. Therefore, it can be trusted. Another factive presupposes reflected in this sentence that is the cosmetics of this brand are made by extracting plant essence which meets the requirements of modern women for environmental protection, health and low chemical substances. Therefore, it is also worthy of trust. Especially for some women who are naturally allergic to skin, plant skin care products can effectively resist allergies. Although cosmetics really has the effect of "natural scavenger" as described, consumers can only experience it after using it themselves. However, its advertising language itself has an irresistible force for

women. Female consumers are easily attracted by this advertising language. Therefore, the designers of cosmetics advertisements have achieved their goals.

5.2.3. State Presupposition in Cosmetic Advertising

State presupposition can be divided into two types, which are mainly the different psychological states of cognitive subjects before and after understanding a certain fact or phenomenon. Firstly, to awaken consumers' unsatisfied buying experience in an indirect way so that they can have more consumption options. The second, highlighting the special effect so that consumers have confidence in the products.

Example 5: If you used Estee Lauder's skin care products 16 years ago, your skin will be as delicate as it was 16 years ago. (Estee Lauder)

The use of state presupposition reminds consumers of the unpleasant experience of not using Estee Lauder before, and reveals to consumers that if Estee Lauder is used now, people's skin will become fragile. Through the comparison before and after, consumers' demand state for the product has changed. In this way, Estee Lauder caters to the psychological needs of consumers to a certain extent, and achieves success.

Example 6: Say goodbye to dry skin immediately. Nice! (Mentholatum men Skin Care Series)

The pragmatic presupposition of this advertisement is that the skin is dry before using the product. By using the advertising products, it is possible to change the previous unsatisfactory dry skin condition. In addition, this advertisement also directly describes the ideal state after use so as to achieve the purpose of further convince consumers.

5.2.4. Behavior Presupposition in Cosmetic Advertising

Behavior presupposition is mainly based on consumers' past consumption behavior. By using this presupposition, advertisers use consumers' psychology to insinuate their unreasonable consumption behavior in the past, and give purposeful suggestions to make their mind changed. For example, the advertisement below.

Example 7: The myth of the best seller praised by women all over the world. (Lancome)

This slogan is very simple, it uses some words like "global", "respected", "popular" and "myth". No matter which word is removed, it has a fatal attraction to female consumers, and their comprehensive effect can affect the eyes of audience or attention of consumers. This cosmetic crystal has been "respected", became "popular and popular", and also became a kind of myth which is famous in the world. Advertisers are smart and fully understand women's thoughts. It could not be a bad thing for the public to pursue their favorite cosmetics.

Example 8: Say goodbye to sensitivity, and reshape the natural barrier of skin. (Avene)

From the word "reshape", the behavior presupposition here can be inferred as follows, "If customers want to reshape their skin, just use the Avene." This product advertisement of Avene emphasizes the need of consumers to improve their skin. By providing such a product, consumers only need to buy and use it to achieve this goal.

6. Findings

No matter what kind of advertisement it is, the purpose is to attract consumers to buy products. Advertisers should not only combine the characteristics of products, but also strengthen the choice of language strategies to highlight the publicity effect when writing advertisements. The main function of cosmetics advertisement is to maximize the product information to the broad audience, so as to achieve its purpose of persuading the audience to buy.

By analyzing the application of presupposition in advertising language, this paper concludes that presupposition language has the following three functions.

6.1. Presupposition and Simplicity of Advertising Language

Advertisers need simple language. On the one hand, advertisers need to bear the cost of advertising. The time and space required for advertising and the wording of advertising all mean expenses. Therefore, simple language can save money for advertisers. On the other hand, simple advertisements are easier to attract consumers' attention, easier to remember and more efficient. Presupposition can make language concise. First of all, it is a kind of pragmatic inference, which is considered as known or existing knowledge, needless to say, so the corresponding language can be omitted.

Example 9: Where beauty begins. (Chanel)

≥Using Chanel makes you be beautiful.

This advertisement has only three short words, but it conveys abundant information to consumers. Beauty doesn't seem to have anything to do with Chanel, but the use of presupposition will naturally make consumers think that using Chanel cosmetics can make they more beautiful.

6.2. Presupposition and Advertising Information

Presupposition information is always accompanied by assertion information. Advertisements containing presupposition not only convey assertion information, but also convey one or more presupposition information. For advertising languages that require a lot of information, presupposition can be used to increase the density of information. As the the following example.

Example 10: Bright colors, from Shiseido! (Shiseido)

This advertisement presupposes the audience's psychological needs for solving the dull skin, and tells the audience that Shiseido can solve these problems. This advertisement is not clear, but it implies the product information to be conveyed in the discourse, thus saving space and ensuring the transmission of product information.

6.3. Presupposition and the Interest of Advertising Language

Vivid and beautiful language form is one of important factors to attract consumers' attention. On the contrary, inflexible language not only does not have this function, but also make people dislike it. In cosmetic advertisements, the use of presupposition often makes advertising language interesting, thus enhancing the influence of advertisements. As shown the following example.

Example 11: Bouncing!Bouncing!Bouncing! Bouncing off the crow's feet! (Marubi)

≥ Using Marubi brand eye cream will make crow's feet disappear.

As people get older, many women worry that the crow's feet around their eyes will reveal their true age. This advertisement uses humorous language to let female audience know that Marubi can solve the problem of crow's feet. In this way, the female audience will be so happy that they choose Marubi brand products.

7. Conclusion

Presupposition is widely used in advertising language, which greatly improves the publicity effect. Based on the characteristics and classification of presupposition, this paper analyzes the application of four different presuppositions in cosmetics advertisement through examples. The application of presupposition can achieve the purpose of advertising persuasion from different angles, and at the same time it reflect its function in cosmetics advertising. What's more, simple language forms convey rich advertising information, an advertisement containing presupposition can convey rich information and interesting language enhances the communication effect of advertising.

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Appendix

1. An intimate party. The inhibited fragrance from Revlon. (Intimate perfume)
2. A daily radiance boost for your skin. This revitalizing blend of nourishing oils includes pomegranate extract plus Vitamin E. Absorbs instantly, feels silky-light, leaves skin soft and smooth. Comforting natural lipids fortify and help protect skin against environmental assaults. (Estee Lauder, Radiant Vitality Essence Oil)
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8. Say goodbye to sensitivity, and reshape the natural barrier of skin. (Avene)
9. Where beauty begins. (Chanel)
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11. Bouncing!Bouncing!Bouncing! Bouncing off the crow's feet!(Marubi)