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## RECENT VIEWPOINTS ON THE LITERARY VALUE OF ADVERTISING TEXTS

### 1. Paper background and aim

Nowadays, due to the open status of markets and the privatization of businesses, advertising has become a domain where ferocious competition and the need of creativity entwine. Thus, advertising creators resort to different innovative "tricks" to turn unknown products/services into popular ones and make them thrive on the market. These creative solutions vary from interlacing publicity with infusions of some forms of art, such as music, dance or literature, up to using persuasion means - to such an extent that people start wondering how they have lived so far without the respective product. The focus of the paper is therefore on reviewing, and sometimes updating view points in the literature approaching the entwine of advertising and literature.

While researching the literature of the domain of confluence between *literary aspects* and the *advertising product qualities*, we are going to discuss a range of interesting viewpoints on this not-too-much-researched topic. Multiple aspects dealing with the interfaces between advertising and literature will be emphasized in the paper, supported by key opinions that are of interest, sometimes complementary, so that eventually, a complex image of the phenomenon could be created.

The connections liaising advertising and literature are reviewed critically. The list of facets includes:

- a. the concept of *interdisciplinarity* - alongside with identifying literary genres within advertising campaigns elements (such as the slogan, the copy or the brand name);
- b. the *advertisement*, approached as a standalone genre, and implicitly, the subtle relationship and similarities between writers and copywriters;
- c. cultural and artistic confluences and syncretic approaches present in advertising;
- d. trends of designing advertising, based on the new technological supports.

We are going to proceed further on to exploring the *advertising construct* in depth, marking:

- I. supporting pillars from the literary theory,
- II. a range of identifiable symbols, and
- III. a brief diachronic perspective over the advertising phenomenon in all its aspects of interest for our topic.

By the ways the literature of the field is selectively commented upon, our goal is to recompose an as comprehensive image as possible with a view to emphasizing mutual interference points.

## **2. Focus on critical approaches regarding the so-called *literariness* of advertising texts**

A very recent study [Zhao, 2021] underlines the fact that a significant component of advertising is the one connected with its *communication function*. The analysis that we take into consideration for several interesting theses, given the fact that this is one of the relatively few titles of reference within the field of the advertising/literary interdisciplinarity (with the title itself being suggestive in this respect – the “marriage” between the advertising text and fiction is mentioned), points out to the advertising text “literariness”.

Although this author approaches the main text/*copy* of an advertisement, one can recover similar ideas as far as the other component parts of the non visual type of an advertisement are concerned. The influences generated by current technologies, the full media, tending for the advanced level of complexity belonging to the technical facilities of generating contemporary ads are explored. Similarly, influences of the *fusion* patterns between the utilitarian aim of advertising and that of the literary one, devoid of any such utilitarian type of function, are presented.

One initial remark at this stage is that advertising could currently be evaluated from the viewpoint of its literary value, as well. As we are going to show below, there are voices that consider the advertising text as a literary genre in itself. This has appeared quite gradually when the advertising type of communication started being imbued with features specific to a form of esthetic construct that actually lacks its utilitarian finality, which has attracted the attention of literary theorists, and also that of advertising researchers, who, both, could remark (and we fully agree with their statement, having analyzed a plethora of adverts from different periods and on various supports) that lately the advertising text has turned into a rich in

literary substance construct, although initially it used to be a simple informative announcement, sometimes repeated or more rarely reformulated in a more or less creative manner.

Thus, the role of the literary element is that of contributing to a *metaphorical transformation* of the respective product/service, by having them instilled with the well-chosen wrapping form at cultural level. In fact, in a period like ours, with all technological possibilities available for ad creators, this aim at - and sometimes they even succeed in, moving the advertising entity quite close to the value of a literary one, lacking utilitarianism, thus positioning it in an area of contact between the two, hard to define in very sharp lines.

The members of the public today, who seem to be overwhelmed by a real *aesthetic fatigue*, as a reaction against too much information and aggressivity in imposing it, even despite certain pleasant ways of wrapping it, generally display an attitude of rapid rejection of advertisements. Therefore, we accept the authors' [Zhao, 2021] conclusion, who propose as a possible rescue the preservation in the ad of the so-called non utilitarian esthetic value of the literary creation.

In a complementary and somehow clarifying manner as to the understanding of the relationships of the communicating vessels type between the two aspects - literary and advertising - stands the contribution of an interesting study [Conradie, 2014] providing a relatively intriguing statement that is worth analyzing.

Basically, it is considered that if, in the proposed text, the advertising creator approaches a certain literary species, with a structure which is already well-known to the general public (given their previous exposure to examples of literary works already included in what can be called the pre-existing receptive cultural background of such readers), then there are good chances that the receivers could instantaneously realize what species exactly underlies the advert, even if from the point of view of its duration the advertising product will always be much shorter. This can obviously happen only if the respective advertising creation follows the typical features that are characteristic to the species, or at least to the genre that had been taken over.

The authors' demonstration is carried out based on the literary genres such as: lyric, dramatic, as well as on folklore etc. It is a different discussion, also of interest, that of clarifying, in an exhaustive manner, a possible

taxonomy of genres, since opinions in this respect are multiple and quite different.

Suffice to retain the starting hypothesis, claiming that the presence of literary type takeovers in advertising is meant to act as a method of engaging the public. The necessary conditions for this positivation to take place, in view of attaining success of the advertising ideas, cover the creation of an advertising construct with elements observing the conventions of a certain recognized, and recognizable, literary genre.

The obvious advantages are re-calling in the receivers of the expectations from that specific genre, which can facilitate the transmissions of the advertising message, even if by means of a very short advert. The advertising creator would thus, apparently though, have the mere duty of attentively study the reactions and range of expectations from advised receivers, to which they will have to adequately answer, pointing in the advertisement to the respective genre hints, for instance characters, and a plot, specific for a fairy tale and so on.

Moreover, the link with the source-literary genre is not limited only to contributing to a rapid activation of the audience's knowledge and feelings. A second function would be, as maintained in the study, with full justification, in our opinion, that of contributing to sketching a certain *personality* of the product brand mark. A list is provided of literary genres / species that can fulfil both aims, for example: poetry, literature for children, historical novels, biographies, drama etc.

Conceptually connected with the above, but a point that identifies other reasons for the complementarity between literary and advertising elements can be identified in an interesting study [Stern, 1994]. She starts from dissecting into specific traits certain literary genres present in the patterns proposed for ads, stating that advertising can provide data to the literary theorist by the formal analysis of various such species – in the case cited, it is in the area of drama, since the the advert had incorporated the specific elements of that genre.

The listing of the elements that are compulsorily present in two such literary creations, the classical play, and that called a *vignette drama*, respectively, characterized by a reduced format and minimal duration, on which the author carries out by analyzing dozens of TV commercials, can facilitate / support further analytical approaches of the literary theory focused on the respective types of drama.

In fact, a form of mutual utility is thus created, within which models typical for the modern dramaturgy are adapted as a theoretical basis, with a view to studying the symbolic significances which can be found in a plethora of contexts of the advertising type.

### 3. Slogan and brand names under focus

Other advertising elements to be put under focus regarding relevant opinions on their literary values are the *slogan* and *brand name* – in fact the very first components noticed by the public. For a complete and accurate analysis, both the slogan and brand name have to be taken into account when approaching the entwine between literature and advertising.

Focusing on the effect generated by certain expressions or words, when creating a slogan or choosing a brand name, advertisers rely on characteristics that make them memorable. These characteristics may include the presence of capital letters, rhyme, alliteration, addressing the second person and/or keeping the sentences simple and short and adding word games.

As the literature suggests, these stylistic solutions, that embed poetical language, fundamentally improve the campaigns overall impact, and any remarkable slogan or brand name can be improved by their use.

It would be unfair, and even incomplete, if we did not refer, in our journey meant to underline meanings of the literary paths in the zone of advertising of the other two possible components of any ad, from the viewpoint of the verbal content, under any form this might occur, viz. *slogan* and *brand name*.

Necessarily built based on the effect produced by short but impactful words or sometimes phrases, with impressive force and, implicitly, memorable, such elements of the advertisement have two main goals [Ding, 2022]:

- (i) ensuring the continuity of a series of ads in a campaign based on episodes, and
- (ii) reducing the strategy used by the creator to just a proposal of a short, repeated phrase/sentence, which thus becomes memorable.

In implementing such aims, several stylistic elements of these not too easy to achieve advertising creations should be mentioned, as follows:

- at graphemic level, the frequent use of block capitals
- at phonological level – the use of rhyming and alliterations,

- on a lexical level, originally created words, second person in addressing the receiver, and adverbial generalizations of the *always* type,
- syntactically, the use of short simple sentences, of the usual kind, expressions, questions, imperative sentences, interesting puns based on idiomatic expressions or proverbs,
- and, finally, on a semantic level, semantic ambiguity and use of puns. An example could be the famous slogan by the car manufacturer Mazda: *The perfect car for a long drive – Mazda car*, where the adjective *long* can refer to both the *drive* and the *car*.

In a similar manner, the investigated literature [Munjal, 2017] proposes, with a view to creating a remarkable powerful brand name, evocative for the public, certain poetical devices (alliteration, assonance, rhyming, metaphors, coinage of new words, suggesting an image in the minds of the receivers). One can find here again the double functionality of such options based on the force of the literary, for example:

- (i) adding of a pleasant sonorous form to the brand name itself, such as in the cases of *PayPal*, *Krispy Kreme* and *StubHub*, and also
- (ii) attaching evocative force and special meanings to the name, which thus becomes easily memorable by the audience on the long run.

#### **4. A new literary species? – a discussion of recent theoretical claims**

An interesting problem can be found as early as the eighth decade of the previous century in the literature of the domain, covering a new perspective, i.e. that of trying to include the advertisement among the literary species.

Arguments and viewpoints are quite different. We are going to discuss the key ones, retaining the respective demos, should they be relevant for our own investigation. Thus, a study [Esslin, 1979] claiming in a clear way from its very title that a TV commercial could be considered among the dramatic genre species, since it presents such specific features, really deserves the attention of literary critics.

Bex [1993] starts from the idea that the genre theory presupposes that texts meant to fulfil similar functions do have similar linguistic elements. However, the advertisement, although it obviously has the main *social function*, is characterized by the existence of a range of different text types. Such differences consist in the *complementary functions* of an advert: creating a feeling of identification of the receiver with the product, of approaching the potential client, who is undecided yet, as well as providing details to the

one wishing to purchase the product. Thus, certain elements in the advert format occur, and, implicitly, they belong to a certain genre. The author maintains that such aims will demand for different advertising campaign strategies, but which are to operate inside the construct that makes the ad be considered an ad - and not something else.

In his turn, Bellman [1999] maintains that a format of the type *image plus text*, appearing in the printed media for instance, can be seen as a *form of art*. Examples are given, from the lyrical and epic genres, as well as criteria according to which one can state it is a distinct literary genre:

1. an image with symbolic force is proposed,
2. something is missing from the global image, but this something is compensated by the viewer's imagination, who can provide an extended interpretation, and
3. the advert raises a whole range of ideas beyond whatever can be immediately perceived.

In a famous speech, dating from the years immediately after WW2, Leo Spitzer [1962], once arrived in America, would launch the idea that the American publicity is a form of art of the popular type, meaning wide accessibility. Such a statement can be seen as a postulate in itself.

It was thus shown that, in reality, the literary devices had already begun to have a powerful influence over the creative advertising vein. By extending the idea, one can state, quite righteously, we hope, that the advertising element has been influenced by the presence of the literary one at various moments and stages of its development.

## **5. Some open conclusions**

In approaching the different attempts at defining the advertisement as a genre, one can start from Holmes' [2022] work, not necessarily because the author did manage to provide final clarifications, but, on the contrary, since his approach emphasizes the complexity of the problem.

In our opinion, what would matter is the choice of valid criteria, comprehensive, unanimously accepted by as many actors of the field as possible - that is why we have to mention this study as a possible review of the majority of the issues addressing the connections between advertising and literary aspects.

At this time, final answers are quite difficult to give, as the description of the multiple facets we propose should be enriched by means of a presentation of recent time elements, appearing on the new media, mainly in an *online* manner. As Labinskyi [2022] would put it, the change is already here, so big multinationals wishing to reach success by online advertising should adopt certain new strategies:

- (i) to implement a so-called online advertising ecosystem, to compensate possible technical problems that can always occur in the IT zone,
- (ii) to increase the texting type of advertising, with direct client addressability,
- (iii) to use an informal type of language with the client, personalizing it, adding touches of humour, thus relieving any pressure,
- (iv) to use cheap popular platforms, such as TikTok, thus obtaining immediate success, especially by means of short ads,
- (v) to be prepared to adopt new elements on the big social media platforms.

In a *mirror like* type of relationship, it is worth mentioning here Monroe's [1991] viewpoint, claiming that the current American literature is influenced by advertising. This dates back as early as the period after WW2, and examples of brand names are provided, mentioned in various domains, from popular novels and songs to plays, or press quotations.

If we arrive at the current period, it is not devoid of relevance to mention a shift of emphasis in the literary criticisms and theory, with studies approaching this aspect enriching constantly the literature of the field, given the fact that there are numerous new species that keep being created.

Thus, a recent study [Janovsky, 2022] identifies sub-genres such as *sci-fi*, *romance*, *mystery*, but also *weird fiction*, Cli-Fi (*climate fiction*), and even *Bizarro* – and their authors have already reached fame. The list is much developed by means of the site Brainly [2022], where the literary genres of the 21st century are seen as *modules*, the associated denominations including the less known: *hypertext*, *speculative fiction*, *experimental fiction* or *autofiction*.

It could be useful to mention also the species of Japanese origin, presented by Subero [2021] where the *anime* form has many distinct versions, for the connoisseurs.

If we open the gates of the future, a not very remote one though, we will have to mention the possibilities offered to the advertising by what is already called *metaverse* [Today Digital, 2021], a new form of environment to build ads in, with new technical possibilities, based on which telling a story



in an advertisement shall be redefined, becoming an *immersion* type of experience.

There are voices today in the current research of the field that are doing their best to describe the new trends in advertising, and, implicitly, to define their consequences over the included literary elements. Thus, Howarth [2022] refers to the tendency of: (i) creating ultra-short ads, and (ii) simplifying them, either by the absence of the sound, replaced by text captions, by animations that are easily digested or by graphic forms.

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## LA VALEUR LITTÉRAIRE DES TEXTES PUBLICITAIRES - PERSPECTIVES RÉCENTES

**Résumé:** Dans un marché mondialisé, caractérisé par des phénomènes de concurrence féroce pour l'imposition réussie de ses propres produits ou services, la professionnalisation des équipes qui proposent des stratégies marketing et publicitaires devient essentielle. En ce sens, dans les conditions dans lesquelles nous assistons à l'internationalisation rapide des marchés de consommation, la concurrence entre entités opérant dans le même domaine, offrant à différentes catégories de consommateurs des produits et/ou des services de qualité très similaire, fait l'énumération des avantages de les marchandises proposées ne suffisent plus. En raison de cette concurrence féroce, la nécessité pour les entreprises de se démarquer est une condition primordiale pour assurer leur succès. L'une des méthodes les plus percutantes, vérifiée au fil du temps par les réactions des consommateurs, est l'approche interdisciplinaire du concept qui sous-tend les campagnes publicitaires produites. Les solutions créatives fréquemment utilisées aujourd'hui varient de l'insertion de diverses formes d'art dans la publicité, comme la musique, la littérature ou la danse, à l'exploitation de différentes fonctions du champ publicitaire, comme la force de persuasion. Ainsi, en passant en revue la multitude de méthodes abordées par les créateurs publicitaires, l'article se concentre sur l'analyse de l'utilisation d'éléments littéraires dans la construction publicitaire. Le but de l'étude est d'explorer de manière critique les opinions pertinentes des dernières décennies concernant l'existence de formes littéraires dans le but d'augmenter la qualité du discours publicitaire. Les avis spécialisés qui font référence aux confluences et/ou fusions littéraires-publicitaires sont retenus et discutés, visant ainsi à la recomposition d'une image globale de type interdisciplinaire, dans laquelle se retrouve la théorie selon laquelle le texte publicitaire peut être considéré comme un genre. sa place littéraire en soi.

**Mots-clés:** *création publicitaire, éléments littéraires, opinions critiques, genre littéraire, syncrétisme des arts.*

**Abstract:** In a globalized market, characterized by fierce competition for the successful imposition of their own products or services, the professionalization of the teams proposing marketing and advertising strategies becomes essential. With the rapid internationalization of consumer markets, the competition between entities operating in the same field, offering products and/or services of very similar quality to different categories of consumers, means that it is no longer sufficient to list the benefits of the goods on offer. Because of this fierce competition, the need for companies to stand out from the crowd is a prerequisite for success. One of the methods with a strong impact, verified over time by consumer reactions, is the interdisciplinary approach to the concept behind the advertising campaigns produced. The creative solutions that are now commonly used range from inserting various forms of art into advertising, such as music, literature or dance, to exploiting the various functions of advertising, such as persuasion. Therefore, by reviewing the multitude of methods approached by advertising creators, the paper focuses on analyzing the use of literary elements in the advertising construct. The aim of the study is to critically explore the pertinent opinions of the last decades on the existence of literary forms with the aim of increasing the quality of public discourse. The aim of the study is to critically explore the pertinent opinions of the last decades on the existence of literary forms with the aim of increasing the quality of advertising discourse. Those specialized opinions that refer to literary-advertising confluences and/or fusions are retained and discussed, thus aiming at recomposing an interdisciplinary global picture, in which the theory that the advertising text can be considered as a literary genre in itself finds its place.

**Keywords:** *advertising creation, literary elements, critical opinions, literary genre, syncretism of the arts.*