



A Memetic Analysis of Advertising Language

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Abstract

With the progress of the times and the prosperity of society, advertising waves seem to spread to every part of our social life. Wherever you go, you have been surrounded by advertising. Nowadays, in this information society, advertising have evolved into a medium of transmission, and they exert a large and indispensable influence on the people's life. The ultimate purpose of advertising is to initially create an impressive image in the consumers and then to persuade them to make a purchase of the goods advertised. From the above consideration, it is of great value to give a detailed analysis of the advertising. Any advertising relies on the transmission of language and therefore its analysis focuses on the advertising language. Lots of linguists have conducted numerous research on the advertising language, its structure and also the relationships between advertising and culture. This paper tried to deal with the issue from the angle of Memetics with the intention that it could offer a novel perspective to study advertising language.

Key words: Advertising language; Meme; Memetics

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the prosperity and development of global economy, many foreign companies are expanding their business into the Chinese market, and the first challenge confronting the companies is to explore more workable ways to design some effective Chinese advertisements to propagate their products; On the contrary, many Chinese products are pouring into the international markets, thus, they are also eager to create the effective English advertisements to establish their images in the world business zone. Based on the above considerations, it is of high value to the linguistic study of advertising language to create the efficient advertisements and the author expresses sincere hopes that the completion of this paper may shed some new light on the study of advertising language and meanwhile provide some useful suggestions to the advertisers for the creation of effective advertisements and also serve the purpose of inspiring more new memetic studies on the advertising language research.

2. MEMES AND LANGUAGE

Advertising language is a variety of language. language and memes correlate and intertwine with one another. Language can serve as a tool or means of spreading memes while the survival and evolution of language is affected by memes to a large extent.

2.1 Language Transmitting Memes

As noticed, language meme takes up the majority of memes, that is to say, most of memes exist in the form of language and its role played by language in the process of meme replication and transmission is very crucial. Language is a perfect way to transmit memes from one host to another, For example: memes are replicated

and reproduced more efficiently on such occasions as conversations, publications and social communications in which language serves as a transmitter of memes. Blackmore (2000) held that: “the human language faculty primarily provided a selective advantage to memes, not genes. The memes then change the environment in which the genes were selected, and so forced them, to better meme-spreading apparatus. In other words, the function of language is to spread memes”. According to her view, it can be concluded that besides the six functions (Emotive, Cognitive, Phatic, Poetic, Referential and Metalinguistic functions), language also has a meme-spreading function. Nowadays, with the development of technology, especially, the advent of the internet enables language to transmit a vast number of memes.

That language is selected as the perfect means for the transmission of memes is due to its own innate advantages since it was originally created. Blackmore (2000) argued memes came into being the minute humans began to imitate, and with the widespread of imitation, it provoked selection pressure on genes little by little and meanwhile forced them to evolve better and better to improve meme-spreading medium; Consequently, as a result of memetic selection, language is gradually born. Just as what Blackmore said language itself was created by memes and for memes.

As for the perfection of language as tool of spreading memes, Dawkins (1989) claims that the language meets the three requirements that a successful replicator needs, that is, fidelity, fecundity and longevity, thus language is inevitably selected as a candidate for meme transmission and replication for the following three reasons. Firstly, sounds can guarantee the high-fecundity in the process of transmission of behavior. Secondly, words are a salient way to reinforce the process and thus largely enhance its fidelity. Thirdly, the strictly-structured grammar is another step for improving fidelity and fecundity again, and all of these lead to the longevity of a meme.

2.2 Meme Influencing Language

It can be seen from the above section that language is the crucial means to transmit and replicate Memes. Conversely, memes have great influence on language, exactly speaking, on the survival and evolution of the language. As Vienna (Li, 2006) put, each meme, each linguistic element whether it is a phoneme, a morpheme, a syntactic structure, a word, a semantic feature, a frame or schema, owes its existence to a replication process by which it has been established as a copy of its ancestor meme(s). Memes created language, and at the same time, meme drove the evolution of language. Just as Blackmore (2000) described the vitality of a certain linguistic unit or a whole language partly relies on the replicating ability of the memes it conveys. Take a slogan of advertising for instance: Impossible is Nothing, when this language meme replicated itself and transmitted to the people’s mind, the language

that goes with it is also replicated. Thus, the survival of the language depends on the transmission of memes.

The correlation between language and meme is also found between meme and the advertising language, which is a kind of memetic phenotype of the linguistic meme. The advertising language and meme interplay with each other, and the survival of one closely depends on the existence of the other. On the one hand, the advertising language can contribute to the replication and transmission of meme, on the other hand, the meme will drive the evolution and vitality of language.

3. MEMETIC STUDY IN ADVERTISING

As stated, memes boast the contagious nature which bears a natural connection with the propagation natural of advertising, so from this characteristics of memes, a vast majority of scholars have devoted themselves to the application of the theory of Memetics to the studies of advertising language. Some noted and influential scholars have conducted many studies to investigate the advertising language from the perspective of Memetics.

3.1 Memes and *Rapid Response Advertising*

The first famous scholar worth our noticing is the Australian ad veteran Geoff Ayling (1998), who is the leading character that conducted research into the advertising from the memetic angle. With the publication of the book *Rapid Response Advertising* in the year 1998, he made the meme concept popularly used in advertising and provided a convincing case for the application of meme in the field of advertising and marketing. In his book, he intended to illustrate to the advertisers and marketers how to convey the advertising messages straight and plant them into the depth of the minds of the consumers by means of the memetic theories. In the first chapter “the Magic of the Meme”, he introduced the concept of meme into the advertising field.

Geoff Ayling (1998) defined Meme as “in the context of advertising, a meme is an idea or concept that has been refined, distilled, stripped down to its bare essentials and then super-simplified in such a way that anybody can grasp its meaning instantly and effortlessly”. From the definition listed above, it can be concluded that a meme has two characteristics: being simple and self-evident. Here “being simple” implies that a meme easily enters people’s mind, and “being self-evident” means it intrigues instant understanding after its entrance into the minds of the people. That is what Geoff Ayling called “*Rapid Response Advertising*”

As for the nature of memes, Geoff Ayling (1998) put it in this way: meme’s contagious nature makes it so powerful. As long as a meme gains the chance to make a copy of it in a host, then it will develop into an infectious, communicable idea, which runs through its growing periods as it transmits through the community. In his

opinion, if a meme is given the following three conditions, it can become infectious: 1) simplicity, 2) emotional impact 3) critical mass.

Memes boast another nature: being unconscious. Geoff Ayling (1998) stated “memes have an enormous impact on our lives. Being instantaneous transmitters of information, they invade our minds without either our knowledge or our permission, and initiate a chain reaction. Acting both above and below the cognitive threshold of awareness, memes create an involuntary shift in perception. This creates a shift in attitude, and then creates a shift in behavior, which is the ultimate goal of all advertising.”

Geoff (1998) thought when memes are applied in the field of advertising, we can qualify, quantify, calibrate, count, layer, stack, bundle, and engineer memes:

- We can qualify memes. With the purpose of checking meme’s workableness, Geoff designs seven questions to check whether the meme can survive or not.

- We can quantify memes. In the interest of evaluating the ability of the meme, Geoff categorizes memes into four groups in terms of potency: A-meme, B-meme, Cliches, and fluff. This classifying system may seem subjective to a certain degree, but it’s useful;

- We can calibrate memes. To calibrate memes means to classify them with the intention of evaluating the degree of effectiveness;

- We can count memes. Counting memes aims to qualify and quantify every newly created advertisement in order that we are clear the total sums of the memes;

- We can layer memes. This process involves that we should sort out those different kinds of memes into a sequence in order to form a unity as a whole;

- We can stack memes. Stacking memes implies we collect different kinds of memes and then combine or compound each other in a certain way to form a memplex, which may possibly be the most powerful technique.

- We can bundle memes. Bundling memes includes figuring out a very attractive meme appearing totally innocent, and putting them in the real memes

- Last, We can engineer memes. Engineering a meme involves some kind of modification, transformation, adaptation, etc.

3.2 Memes and Guerrilla Creativity

Following Geoff Ayling’s step, another famous marketer named Jay Conrad Levinson (1998) introduced the concept “meme” into the advertising area. He published his noted book *Guerrilla Creativity* in 1998, where he conducted a very detailed, professional analysis about the way a successful meme presents a business or a product to the public. And also he defined meme in this way: “a self-explanatory symbol, using words, action, sounds, or pictures that communicate an entire idea” and “Guerrilla Creativity means enlisting the wondrous power of meme in your advertising” (Levinson, 1998)

In his book he put forward the way to create a meme: “in a nutshell, the first step is to list the specific benefits or competitive advantages you can offer to clients, making sure that within two seconds a meme conveys who you are and why someone should buy from you instead of a competitor” (Levinson, 1998). Then the next step is to work out how to elicit these benefits or advantages visually or verbally. Here one point the advertisers should notice is that they should consider the will-be consumer’s characteristics in this process.

As for the function of the meme in advertising, Levinson thought that the advertisers could make use of a meme as an easy approach to break through the confusion of new information. That means the advertisers could convey the most complex message in the easiest and most understandable way in order to impress the consumers and to have an influence on them so much so that they change the consumer’s mind to love or buy the product or service presented to them.

3.3 Memes and Branding Project in Advertising

One more famous memeticist deserving our attention is Paul Marsden (1999), a psychologist in University of Sussex and a devoted follower of the theory of Memetics. He firmly holds to the belief that the introduction of the theory of Memetics into the advertising world can inject new blood for the advertising field.

He developed an evolutionary approach “memetic engineering” in advertising which is superior to the traditional approaches dominated by rational action theory. This new evolutionary approach to understanding social influence aims to provoke non-rational customer responses to advertising stimuli.

Paul Marsden then set up a marketing company, Brand Genetics, working on a new technique named “meme-mapping” to help the companies or individuals improve their brand positioning.

This technique is based upon the fact that memes are units of memory stored in our cognitive system as associations and can be reckoned as “genes of meaning”, thus, to make a meme-map involves in unpacking a concept or brand into the set of key associations. Such as, the concept of “low-carbon life”, when you are presented with this word, what would you associate with “low-carbon life”. You may encounter such words as “saving water” “saving electricity” and “saving gas” “less carbon” “less pollution” if a term is repeatedly coming up then it belongs to the “low-carbon life”, on the contrary, the terms whose frequency of wide use is small becomes the weak associations. Paul describes this as a repetitive “Darwinian’s survival of the fittest’ selection process”: Only those that best accustom themselves to these changing surroundings will stay and survive.

In summary, the scholars mentioned above have made great contributions to the development of advertising industry by employing the meme theory, but their research

is mainly centered on advertising industry and does not focus their attention on the pragmatic perspective guided by the convincing framework.

4. MEME TRANSMISSIONS AND REPLICATION IN ADVERTISING LANGUAGE

A meme is an element of culture that can be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp., imitation, that is to say, the key means in replication and transmission process is imitation. But here is a question: how a meme is transmitted via imitation? It does not simply mean copy or repetition of the original meme, but it is, in fact, a complicated process and involves many things. But do we fail to find the transmission and replication modes of memes? The reply is no. As Blackmore (1999) puts: "The ways memes spread are legion...The usual way to make the distinction of meme replication is by analogy with genes. So a common means is to appeal to the analogy between memes and genes and then to use the concept of the genotype and phenotype. The genotype is "copying-the-product", and the phenotype is "copying-the-instructions". In the eyes of professor He Ziran (2005), He viewed the copying-the-product and copying-the-instructions as genotype and phenotype of genes respectively.

4.1 The Genotype Meme Transmission

In advertising, the advertisers usually repeat or copy the primitive language and use them as the slogans in advertising, such as employing the idioms, sayings, or poems, allusions as advertising slogans. Let's put it simply in this way: if a certain idiom, saying, or poem, allusion is quoted directly without even a little change, then this kind of quotation and usage are called the genotype meme transmission

4.1.1 Transmitting the Same Language Meme Directly

Sometimes the advertisers aim to provoke a special feeling in people, so they usually apply directly some set language memes into their advertising without any modifications of its form or contents to inspire the consumers to have a purchase of the products. This usage of language is categorized as Transmitting the Same Language Meme Directly

This mode of meme transmission is intended to transmit the language meme directly without changing any of the original meme including its form and content. As a matter of fact, this kind of transmission and replication of memes is the usage of quotation used in advertising. Advertisers quote the language meme such as proverbs, poems with the purpose of triggering the special feelings and eventually inducing them to buy the products and service.

A typical example of this transmission is the advertising of American insurance company- Horance Mann.

"Two heads are better than one" "put your head together with a Horace Mann-agent."

As we all know that the insurance business in America is very mature and they quote the sayings directly as their advertising headline to promote their insurance and at the same time they emphasize to their customers that they are wise enough to buy insurance their company provides.

With the two sayings, they formed a unity to trigger the special feelings in the deep-heart of the customers and induce them to buy the products and service.

"Good things come in small packages"

The above saying is quoted by a camera company as their advertising slogan. It was perfectly and imaginatively used, because the word "Good things" triggered people's association and made them imagine the beautiful scenery portrayed by the machine, and "packages" illustrates a reel of films which is properly handled.

4.1.2 The Same Language Meme Expressing Different Contents

For this kind of transmission, the advertisers apply the same language meme such as the sayings, and idioms however to express different contents. That illustrates that the advertisers quote the same genotype meme as the advertising of products of another kind. The creators of different products select the same language meme as their advertising slogan which serves their own purposes.

"决胜于千里之外，运筹于帷幄之中。"(Toshiba Corporation)

This advertising is cited from Romance of the Three Kingdoms. This advertising language is a strong meme today, widely known by Chinese people. Originally it was intended to be used in wars and to describe how a person was competent in commanding the soldiers and finally won the war. But here in advertising, by using of such kind of transmission, it can successfully conveys such information to the consumers: If the customers is served by this telecommunication, the matters are done well and quickly.

"海内存知己，天涯若比邻"

A famous poet in China's Dynasty, was written by Wang Bo, in Sending off Magistrate Du upon His Appointment to Sichuan. Meanwhile, China Mobile Corporation quotes this poem as their advertising. It conveys the message that the service of the Mobile Corporation can make them realize their dream of "making the intimate friends in a far away place close". Owing to the Mobile Corporation's good service, they can get in touch with each other and communicate with each other as convenient as being neighbors.

From the above example, it can be concluded that the advertising language has two layers: it not only is used to propagate the product advertised, but also tends to emphasize the cultural factors coded in the products. Thus it is crucial for the advertisers to take the cultural factors involved in the products into accounts when creating advertising.

4.2 The Phenotype Meme Transmission

In terms of the phenotype meme transmission, the advertisers change the original language memes such as the number of characters, words or lines, or their forms of sequence according to the differed pragmatic contexts. The language meme for this type has the same or similar form, but varying contents. The language memes formed by idioms, sayings, allusions, poems and so on are highly fecund, but on some occasions, their existing forms and current contents are inadequate to meet the needs or demands of the situations of the changing contexts and the standards of modern advertising. Thus, there is a necessity to make some modifications on them for the purpose of producing the desired effects.

4.2.1 The Language Meme Same in Form, Sound and Content but Conveying Different Meaning

This type of language meme is transmitted without any change of the form, its sound as well as the content, but when it is combined with a different language pragmatic surroundings, it may evoke different associated meanings and the original meanings of it fades away but provokes new meanings by the similarity between the characters or words and the functions or forms of the product. In this way, it can receive an unexpected effect in promoting the sale.

For example: the advertising language “做女人挺好”, a common sentence originally means that it is exceptionally good to be a woman. But when this language meme is used under some specific context, it may stir some associative meanings. the word “挺” may evoke the feminine associations—a women being hourglass or being “S” in figure. While another similar advertising language “做男人挺好” can also bring out a different meaning when used in another context, the key word “挺” here implies the masculine characteristics that he is competent in sex. So the advertising language, employed in this way, can obtain the unexpected effects.

4.2.2 The Language Meme Similar in Form and Sound but Conveying Different Meanings

This kind of transmission process refers to the phenomenon that the language meme remains its original form, but some characters in it may be altered. That means it takes advantage of the homophony to have a replacement of the original characters or words. Consequently, this kind of newly changed characters or words may bear a close relationship with the products and thus inspire people’s imagination about the products.

Examples falling in this category are abundant and ample: the language meme “有痔(恃)无恐” is the advertising for a medicine of curing the Hemorrhoids (痔疮). The advertisers changed the word “恃”to “痔” with the purpose of making some connections between the medicine they offer and the illness the patients suffer. And also after the modification, the four-lettered phrase can express a feeling to the patients that suffering the

Hemorrhoids (痔疮) is not so frightening and can be cured easily.

The advertising language of the nation-wide-known Fen Liquor brewed in Shanxi Province (山西汾酒), the slogan for this liquor is“汾酒必喝，喝酒必汾”which is borrowed from the famous saying “分久必合，合久必分”，in *Romance of Three Kingdoms* 《三国演义》). This famous language meme expresses out that whenever and wherever people meet Fen Liquor, they will definitely select to drink this kind liquor rather than other liquors and demonstrates how important the role Fen Liquor played in daily life. The advertising meme “治(志)在四方” is a slogan for curing the abdomen, the changing of the original word into “治”can best illustrate the functions of the product and also its expression is rather novel which serves its purpose effectively.

4.2.3 The Same Form but Different Contents Conveying Different Meanings

The last mode of meme transmission is to employ the same meme form with different content to convey different meanings. This kind of transmission is widely applied to transform memes into the ones that are closely related with their products. The advertisers altered the sayings, poems, idioms and allusions people are comparatively conversant with into a slogan by changing one of its characters, words, or phrases with another character, word, or phrase with the aim that the transformed one can effectively express their products functions or some special usages. Being different from the above kind, this replaced characters, words, or phrases do not have the same sound as the original one, thus leaving much room for the creation and imagination and getting more chances to meet the demands of the advertisers’. This kind of transformation of memes is also called “Reorganization” which refers to the means to create a new expression by adding a word to a saying, cutting a phase, or reorganizing the saying according to the need of the advertising on the basis of some familiar sayings, idioms, allusions, poems.

The advertising for the Mercedes-Benz SL500: when they intended to develop their market into America in 2000, they used to apply the advertising language “Whoever said it’s better to give than to receive was obviously never on the receiving end of a Mercedes-Benz SL500. Sleek. Sophisticated. Powerful. What more could you hope for this season? The SL500.

This advertising is derived from the saying “It’s better to give than to receive”. The Benz company reorganized it into “it will never be better to give than to receive when you receive the SL500.”

From the words of this advertising, it aims to express the good quality, its excellent designs so as to impress the will-be-customers to have a purchase of their cars.

Another advertising for Mars (the slogan for Vitamins): A Mars a day keeps you work, rest, and play (—

天一马斯，工作体闲更潇洒)。This slogan is composed of the following two sayings: “An apple a day keeps the doctors away” and “All work and no play make Jack a dull boy”. Besides the direct quotation, the advertisers changed the contents by changing “the doctors away” into “you work, rest, and play” according to the need of the advertising.

Among the two types of meme replication and transmission: phenotype is used more frequently than the genotype. The former is compared to the parody, while the latter is compared to the repetition in the views of Xie Zhaoqun and He Ziran. (2007).

5. SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISING LANGUAGE MEME

As mentioned previously, any meme must undergo or suffer the natural selection in the process of meme transmission and replication. That means only a certain proportion of memes manage to pass on or survive. Because each meme intends to occupy the limited host's brain, there inevitably exists competition between memes, that is what Dennett (1990) stated, the disparity between the limited hosts and the large number of memes makes it a fact that there is a fierce competition among memes. In combination with the prior memetic study of advertising and the above analysis of the transmission modes of the advertising language memes, the author put forward the following three selection criteria for successful advertising language memes.

5.1 Briefness

We all have the same experience that we tend to memorize simple things easier compared with the more complex ones as is the case with memes. If the meme is short, brief or simple both in form or content, it will be easier for them to deal with and will be more competitive to survive those complicated ones. In the view of Dawkins (1989), one way of achieving high copying fidelity rate which is one of the significant factors of successful meme is briefness. A brief meme is less likely to be changed, and would provide easy understanding for the host as well as an easier adaptation in the mind of the potential host (Chielens, 2003). From the above accounts, it can be seen that a short, brief or simple meme on the one hand conforms to the norm of fidelity, one of the important criteria for meme selection, on the other hand, it contributes to assimilation and retention, two indispensable parts for stages of a meme replication and transmission.

In the advertising world, there is no lack of such examples that apply the short and simple sentence structures into advertising. Briefness exerts a great influence on the transmission and replication of

advertising language memes.

A) Brief and short phrase or sentences as advertising language

好吃看得见 (Master Kong):

就是这一刻 (Kodak)

飞越无限 (Motorola)

The new digital era. (Sony Group Corporation)

The relentless pursuit of perfection. (Lexus)

The advertising has a purpose that is to convey the information concerning the products and persuade the hosts to buy the products or service. The people who encounter the advertising are common people and they seldom get much time to have a close look at the advertising therefore if the advertising aims to capture their attentions, the advertising language must be short, simple and even easy to understand for the people.

B) Imperative sentences as advertising language

Sometimes, the advertisers employ the use of imperative sentences as advertising language to directly recommend to the consumers their products. It is said that there is at least one imperative sentence in every four in advertising texts. Therefore, imperative sentences have played a very crucial role in advertising language.

坐红旗车，走中国路。(Hongqi Car)

Take TOSHIBA, take the world. 拥有东芝，拥有世界。(Toshiba Corporation)

Just do it. 只管去做。(Nike)

Obey your thirst 服从你的渴望。(Sprite)

C) Elliptical sentences as advertising language

When the advertisers create the advertising, they must consider the economical factors, that is to say, using the concise and brief sentence to express as much information as possible, thus, they usually make full use of the elliptical sentences as advertising language in advertising.

海尔，中国造 (Haier)

Good to the last drop. 滴滴香浓，意犹未尽。(Maxwell House)

Impossible made possible. 使不可能变为可能。(Canon)

Make yourself heard. 理解就是沟通。(Ericsson)

D) Double simple sentences as advertising language

喝孔府宴酒，做天下文章。(孔府宴酒)

爱生活，爱拉芳! (Lafang Shampoo)

人头马一开，好事自然来。(Rémy Martin)

Take TOSHIBA, take the world. 拥有东芝，拥有世界。(Toshiba Corporation)

No business too small, no problem too big. 没有不做的小生意，没有解决不了的大问题。(IBM公司)

The above advertisements all conform to Briefness. If used skillfully, they will become strong memes in the transmission and replication process and live up to the standard set by the advertisers. The simpler the memes are, the more powerful they will be. Thus, when designing the advertising, be sure to make your slogans brief, simple and easy to understand and remember.

5.2 Uniqueness

With the development and thriving of modern society, more and more products of the similar kind flow into the market. Thus, making the products distinct from the others bothered the advertisers, so they must find a way out to arouse and attract the consumers' attention. Uniqueness provides the advertisers such an easy approach to fire people's curiosity and interests. About uniqueness Chielens (2003) holds when a collection of homogeneous slogans emerge together, many of them will fail because of the same contents or forms. But suppose a new sort of meme arises among them, the things will be different and the newly-designed one will be a great success to step into the markets and at the same time win the favor of the consumers.

In the previous sections, the advertisers usually employ some poems, sayings, and so on in the creation of advertising on the grounds that theses have strong language meme forms or contents with strong ability of self-propagating. They have deeply planted a root in Chinese people's hearts for long duration. Therefore, it is a common thing for them to quote the old sayings, famous poems or classical remarks into the advertising field.

一夫当关，万夫莫开 (Safety Door)

欲穷千里目，更上一层楼 (Real Estate)

Love me tender, love me true. (Ludanlan Cosmetics)

A friend in need is a friend indeed. (Quick Heartache Reliever)

Seeing is believing. (AIB Bank)

But in practical use, most of them will be readjusted or recognized according to the needs of the products by altering some words or phrases and etc. to make the advertising language more impressive and vivid-looking.

“闲”妻良母 (Washing Machine)

百闻不如一印 (Canon Copier)

All roads lead to Holiday Inn.

Impossible made possible. 使不可能变为可能。
(Canon Printer)

The above examples all apply the same rules to place some news words or phrases to the already existing sayings, poems, or classical remarks in order to make the advertising language novel, unique and more effective to stimulate the consumers' attention.

5.3 Attractiveness

Among the three criteria, attractiveness is one of the most important ones for advertising language meme selection. The feature of advertising communication is that it is a single-way communication without feedback, so a strong advertising language meme must boast the power to attract its consumers' attention, besides being brief and unique, that is, it must grasp the consumers hearts within two seconds and convey to the consumers why and in which way your products is superior to the others. Then here comes a question: How to attract consumers' attention?

This question can be solved by employing various figures of speech to intrigue the consumers' attention. According to Leigh (1994), he conducted an investigation and found that within 2400 samples of the advertisements, three fourths employed at least one figure of speech. The reason for this is provided by two other researchers McQuarrie and Mick (1996), who found that the figurative use of language is easy to remember than those advertising language is not used figuratively.

Another reason why the advertisers are inclined to use the figures of speech is that good figures of speech have the three conventional features: exactness, visualization and vividness. Coincidentally, these three features are in accord with the basic requirements for the strong phenotype memes. The exactness can guarantee the fidelity of language memes, and the other two can contribute to the reinforcement of the fecundity and longevity.

The commonly used figures of speech are as follows: hyperbole, simile, metaphor, metonymy, rhetorical question, etc.

A). Hyperbole & Understatement:

The advertisers sometimes overstate something according to the needs of their products in order to express the advertisers' attitudes and thus arouse the consumers' echoes. By applying hyperbole, the advertisement can achieve the humor or a sense of emphasis effects and eventually arouses the consumers' attention successfully.

1) Nobody even tries to compete with Sara Lee Cheese

2) WE DELIVER ONE PLACE. “Global” is our middle name for a very good reason. NO one on Earth does a better job of delivering your shipment anywhere in the world. We go to the ends of the Earth for you (Roadway Global Air) (Wang, 2009).

B) Simile, Metaphor & Metonymy

A simile itself belongs to the strong phenotype language meme. It compares two unlike elements with at least one trait in common. The use of simile enables the advertising to describe the more abstract and complicated objects in an easier, more concrete way, making the objects advertised vivid and impressive. The words “like, as, as...as” are seen as the indicators of a simile and are often used to transfer the characteristics associated with another.

The following example is a typical use of simile:

Its sound is as unique as its shape; its brakes are as unique as its engine. (PORSCHE) (它有独特的声音与外形。它有独特的制动与引擎。—保时捷) (Wang, 2009)

The above advertisement aims to stress that its sound is as good as its shape and its brakes is as safe as the engine. Seeing this advertisement, the consumers can spring up or visualize a sense of trust and safety.

As for metaphor, it bears a similarity with simile but differs to some extent. Like simile, metaphor is a strong phenotype language meme comparing the two unlike elements but it is different from simile in that the

words such as “like, as, as...as” don not emerge in the process of comparisons leaving room for the consumers’ imagination:

Life is better twisted—Tropicana Twister (a kind of drinks)

Obey your thirst—sprite

Come Alive! You’ re in the Pepsi Generation—Pepsi 1967

Unlike the above two figures of speech, in the use of the metonymy, the name of the objects it wants to describe is absent, but it borrows another name to refer to the things depicted, for example, to use “the pentagon” for “the UN” and “the 10 Downing Street” for “the Residence of the Prim Minister”.

I’d move mountains for her, but today I’ll start with one extraordinary stone. (De Beers) (我愿为她搬掉大山, 但今天我却要从一块特殊的石头开始。—德比尔斯) (Wang, 2009)

This is an advertising of De Beers diamond, unlike simile and metaphor, the name “diamond” doesn’t appear. Instead, “diamond” is replaced by “the stone” and “the mountains”, here the stone and mountain form a sharp contrast, which leaves a deep impression on people

C) Rhetorical Question

The rhetorical question is also frequently used in the advertising. It is a figure of speech in the form of a question posed for its persuasive effect without the expectation of a reply. Through using this strong phenotype meme, the advertisement can produce a persuasive effect.

你知道吗? (Mass Rapid Transit-)

世界在你眼中? (Sina)

The advertisements listed above are all created in the form of rhetorical questions. These expressive forms of advertising language memes are more powerful than direct appeal.

To sum up, figures of speech are very strong language meme forms to transmit ideas which are frequently applied in the creation of advertisements and produce the satisfactory effects. By the application of them in the field of advertising, the advertisers manage to make their products more likely to be noticed by the consumers, thus, enticing the consumers to change their minds and to have a purchase. But in reality, more than one figure of speech is used together so as to reinforce the persuasive effects of the advertising.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper made a tentative attempt to research the process of advertising language replication and transmission from the perspective of Memetics in hopes of figuring out more internal factors that contribute to the successful creation of advertising languages. Based on the selection criteria of meme propagation by Dawkins, the

four stages of memes transmission by Heylighen (1998), the distinctive characteristics of advertising language and the memetic studies in the field of advertising language, the paper finally came up with the three selection criteria specific for successful advertising language creation, namely 1) Briefness. When designing the advertising, be sure to make the slogans brief, simple and easy to understand and remember. The simpler the memes are, the more powerful they will be. 2) Uniqueness. The design of advertising language should be different in form and contents, thus providing the advertisers an easy approach to fire people’s curiosity and interests. 3) Attractiveness. Successful advertising as strong meme should embrace the power to attract the consumers’ attention the moment they see the goods advertised.

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