doi:10.4467/20834624SL.14.015.2323 www.ejournals.eu/Studia-Linguistica

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MANIPULATION IN RUSSIAN ADVERTISING OF NUTRIMENTS AND DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Keywords: advertising, manipulation, persuasion, the Russian language

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyse the phenomenon of linguistic manipulation in the advertising of nutriments and dietary supplements published in Russian body-building magazines. Advertisers use the persuasive capabilities of the language on its various levels in order to create an effective message. Common manipulative methods in slogans include the use of references to the world of sporting values, the recommendation of the product by sports authorities, and the use of evaluative lexis. Also, short expressive syntactic structures loaded with forms of imperatives have the potential for manipulation.

1. Introduction

The constantly growing popularity of bodybuilding, power sports and fitness in Russia and around the world is not surprising, especially since the human pursuit of idealised beauty, desire for a muscular physique, and promoting active lifestyles have become the features of modern times. The publishing market offers more and more periodicals devoted to bodybuilding and related sports, which include, inter alia, valuable advice related to workouts and diet. They also present the profiles of champions, and carry reports from domestic and foreign competitions. Advertisements for nutriments and dietary supplements, which from the linguistic point of view are an interesting object of research, take an important and sometimes even dominant place on the pages of the magazines.

Advertising is a subject of interest for a variety of scientific disciplines. The authors of interesting works in the field of advertising are, among others, Leech (1966), Heath (2001), Pirogova (2001), Kochan (2005), Bralczyk (2004), Fedotova (2005), Lewiński (2008), Zimny (2008), Serdobinceva (2010), Wojtaszek (2011), etc. However, the intensive development of advertising makes this area an endless source of research material and requires additional comment.

The focus of this article is the Russian advertising of nutriments and dietary supplements used by bodybuilders, strongmen and fitness enthusiasts. The empirical material, i.e. advertising slogans, was selected from professional periodicals from the Russian press ("Железный мир", "Мир силы"), as well as the Russian editions of renowned foreign magazines ("FLEX", "Muscle and Fitness", "Iron Man Magazine") issued in 2012–2013. The purpose of the article is to define the role of language in creating relevant advertisements, and to indicate the specific mechanisms and strategies of language manipulation used to create a convincing commercial message.

The first important point to clarify in the context of the article is the terminology used to describe the undertaken studies. The term "manipulation", used in the title of the article, raises some controversy among theorists of language (Lepa 1997; Rumšina 2004; Simons 2001; Tokarz 2006). There is a view of the misuse of the term in the linguistic nomenclature. The word "manipulation" has indisputably pejorative overtones. However, in the minds of many linguists it is the most adequate term to describe the phenomenon. Grzegorczykowa (1991: 11–13) describes manipulation as a type of speech or message whose action is intended to achieve the desired effect by influencing the mental state of the recipient. Habrajska (2007: 117) briefly defines manipulation as influencing the attitudes or action of the recipient in a latent way, without their knowledge. Tokarz (2006: 24) points out that manipulation is the use of dishonest persuasion techniques. In the opinion of Laskowska (2007: 9) manipulation is a type of persuasion. However, the researcher states that, compared with "pure" persuasion, manipulation is an action in which the sender of the message has a subliminal impact on the recipient. Thus, if manipulation is a persuasive action, the terms manipulation/manipulative and persuasion/persuasive are used interchangeably in this paper. Equating these concepts is a risky operation. However, the difference between manipulation and persuasion is subtle and relates mostly to the ethical aspect, as well as the awareness of being manipulated or the lack of such awareness in the recipient, while influencing their views and behaviour. Picking out such differences in the context of this article is pointless, and in fact, even impossible. Murawska and Rzeźnik (2011: 209) point out that while in theory you can more accurately determine the boundary between persuasion and manipulation, in trying to do this in practice the researcher encounters many difficulties with their identification.

In this publication manipulation in the language of advertising is understood as an intentional, tactical, and not always fair use of a wide variety of opportunities in the Russian language in order to create a positive opinion about the advertised product, and consequently inducing the recipient to purchase it.

2. Manipulative language strategies in the advertising of nutriments and dietary supplements

The main tool of manipulation in advertising is the word. The authors of advertisements know this very well, and therefore they use all the possibilities of the language at the levels of lexis, grammar and style. Using the appropriate content, vocabulary, means of expression and specific grammatical forms in the advertising slogan affects the consumer's opinion (Ziółkowski 2011: 26).

The choice of manipulative language means is closely dependent on the recipient of the advertising message, the fact of which copywriters are perfectly aware. The segmentation of the consumer market, i.e. defining the recipient's profile, preferences and needs, is one of the basic conditions in building effective advertising. The analysed magazines are addressed mainly to bodybuilders, athletes, strongmen and people engaged in fitness. Therefore, the advertising of nutriments and dietary supplements placed in periodicals takes into account the needs and expectations of people involved in specific sports in which the main objective is to obtain adequate physical musculature in a relatively short period of time, and which require huge strength, energy, physical condition and health.

2.1. References to the bodybuilder's values

A popular method used in the studied advertisements is the use of references to the values important in the development of bodybuilding and related sports. Most often they have the nature of a direct message, in which you can extract lexis specifying the particular value, but sometimes the references to the world of values assume a more veiled form. The emphasised themes in the studied promotional advertisements are:

- power, energy, e.g. "Истинная сила, максимальный результат во всем OPTI-MEN" (Real power, the maximal result in everything OPTI-MEN), "DYMA-BURN Xtreme. Жиросжигатель нового поколения. Экстремальная энергия!!!" (DYMA-BURN Xtreme. Fat burning of a new generation. Extreme energy!!!), "GUARANA взрыв энергии!" (GUARANA an explosion of energy!);
- physical condition, e.g. "Будь в форме! Nutrazone" (Be in shape! Nutrazone);
- fast muscle and weight growth, e.g. "Неограниченные перспективы в наращивании мышечной массы. BIOTECHUSA" (Unlimited prospects in building muscle mass. BIOTECHUSA), "Только хардкор! Протеин для экстремального роста мыщи. ANABOLIC Shock" (Only hardcore! Proteins for extreme muscle growth. ANABOLIC Shock), "Серьёзный настрой на массу — Ultimate SPORTS NUTRITION" (Serious weight regulator – Ultimate SPORTS NUTRITION), "Больше массы. Больше мыши. Больше силы." (More weight. More muscle. More power.)
- product quality, e.g. "Качество имеет значение Nanox" (Quality is important Nanox), "Заправляйся перед битвой! Выбирай ISOBOLIC протеин

высшего качества!" (Refuel before the battle! Select ISOBOLIC – proteins of the highest quality!), "Неоспоримое качество — слагаемое успеха! MULTI POWER sportfood" (Undeniable quality – guarantee of success! MULTI POWER sportfood), "WEIDER — Global Nutrition. Убедись — и качество, и вкус просто великолепны! Попробуй прямо сейчас!" (WEIDER – Global Nutrition. See for yourself – both the quality and the taste are excellent! Try it right now!);

- product competitiveness, e.g. "Новые продукты PERFORMANCE SERIES. Лучше чем когда-либо. Лучше конкурентов." (New PERFORMANCE SERIES products. Better than ever before. Better than competitors.), "New Syntha 6 Isolate опережает конкурентов" (New Syntha 6 Isolate ahead of competitors);
- effect, the result of the action of the product, e.g. "Рациональное питание улучшает результаты на 88%" (Rational nutrition, improves results by 88%), "Революционная формула сжигания жира + максимально быстрый результат" (Revolutionary fat-burning formula + maximum fast result), "Где твои кубики? Сверх мощный эффект с ультра-новым протеином" (Where are your cubic centimeters? Super powerful effect with ultra new proteins), "Истинная сила, максимальный результат во всём" (Real power, the maximal result in everything);
- nature and health, e.g. "Натуральная энергия в каждой клетке. Эффективное и безопасное избавление от жира с пользой для здоровья! Vplab nutrition" (Natural energy in every cell. Effective and safe ridding of fat for the benefit of your health! Vplab nutrition), "Идеальный источник натуральной энергии Vplab nutrition" (The ideal source of natural energy Vplab nutrition).

Slogans that contain references to the themes which in the hierarchy of the recipient's value system take the most important place will attract their attention. It is known that the main objective of the bodybuilder and strongman is gaining strength, which will help him win competitions, and "sculpting" the figure, which is the acquisition of almost inhuman-size muscles. If the advertisement offers a product that guarantees the achievement of these objectives, it will certainly not remain unnoticed. Therefore, the wording of the slogan, which as an asset of the product offers the adjuvant effect of rapid muscle growth, providing large deposits of energy and thereby improving the condition, seems reasonable. However, references to health and nature in this context sound slightly paradoxical, and constitute a kind of misuse. It can definitely be defined as typical manipulative action because supplementation for athletes is basically an artificial action that intentionally interferes with the proportions of minerals in the human body and does not have much in common with health. Nevertheless, from the point of view of psycholinguistics the reference in advertising to health and nature is a guarantee of commercial success in modern times. As Lewiński (2008: 150) notes, the theme of nature in advertising is deliberately used as the carrier of a positive connotation. The examples of the above advertisements prove that often one slogan contains references to several of the above-mentioned themes, which in turn increases the power of persuasion of the message.

2.2. The usage of evaluative vocabulary

Another way to create effective advertisements for dietary supplements by using the lexical resources of the Russian language is the use of evaluative vocabulary. Bralczyk (2004: 62) emphasises that marked words have persuasive predispositions and act as a kind of impulse, causing the desired reaction in the recipient.

An overview of the studied text showed that adjectives, which are basic mandatory components of most slogans, have the biggest axiological potential. This is not surprising, because while being urged to buy the product one subconsciously refers to the words naming its values.

The selection of the appropriate evaluative adjectives is sometimes dependent on the advertised product and on the potential recipient of the message. Since the promoted product is directed at athletes, whose ideology is focused on extreme actions requiring huge amounts of energy and almost inhuman capabilities, the language used by advertisers is full of expressions referring to that ideology. The following adjectives are frequently employed: максимальный (maximal), e.g. "Истинная сила, максимальный результат во всём" (Real power, the maximal result in everything), "Революционная формула сжигания жира + максимальный результат" (Revolutionary fat-burning formula + maximum fast result); массивный (solid), мощный (powerful), e.g. "Массивный импульс. Мощный тренинг" (Solid impulse. Powerful training), "Стимуляция синтеза мышечного белка — новая мощная формула" (Stimulation of muscle protein synthesis – a powerful new formula); **реактивный** (reactive), e.g. "Мультифункциональный **реактивный** комплекс" (Multifunctional reactive complex). However, it turns out that the favourite keyword in the analysed texts is the adjective экстремальный (extreme), e.g. "Только хардкор! Протеин для экстремального роста мышц" (Only hardcore! Proteins for extreme muscle growth), "Жиросжигатель нового поколения. Экстремальная энергия!!!" (Fat-burning of a new generation. Extreme energy!!!), "Экстремальный рост массы — рекомендует Мариуш Пудзяновский" (Extreme weight gain - recommended by Mariusz Pudzianowski). This lexeme indicates almost inhuman power, and classifying the product on a scale of values, places it at the top. The above-mentioned words perfectly reflect the style of bodybuilding, where everything has to be extreme.

In the group of evaluative adjectives words with positive valorisation, which are universal, also take an important place, because they are characterised by wide connectivity, so they are used to advertise various products and services. This group includes the following expressions: **неоспоримый** (undeniable), e.g. "Неоспоримое качество — слагаемое успеха!" (Undeniable quality — guarantee of success); **идеальный** (ideal), e.g. "Идеальный источник натуральной энергии" (The ideal source of natural energy); **великолепный** (excellent), e.g. "Убедись — и качество, и вкус просто великолепны! Попробуй прямо сейчас!" (See for yourself — both the quality and the taste are excellent! Try it right now!); **совершенный** (perfect), e.g. "Высококачественный протеин для совершенных тел!" (High quality proteins for perfect bodies!). Sometimes one has the impression

that advertisements cannot do without these words, so it would be appropriate to define them as a standard element of the advertising message used in various sectors of the consumer market.

In order to convince people to purchase nutriments and dietary supplements the ad makers use specific enhancers in the form of elements: мульти- (multi), сверх- (super), ультра- (ultra). The cited examples in the semantic structure of the word, with which they derive the adjective, add a new classifying seme called the signified item at the top of the value. If something is referred to as мультифункциональный (multifunctional), сверхмощный (super powerful), ультраконцентрированный (ultra concentrated), it means that the product is unrivaled, and there is nothing better than it.

Also, the adjectives новый (new), новейший (the newest), ультра-новый (ultra new) are characterised by high frequency in the analysed texts. Emphasising the feature indicating the novelty of the product on the consumer market is an excellent persuasive trick which creates the suggestion that whatever is new must be better, and this intrigues and arouses the desire to test. Taking into account the fact that modern competitive pharmaceutical companies are trying to compete with lots of offers of nutriments and dietary supplements, the emphasis on the novelty of the product raises the recipient's hopes for new opportunities and thus the more effective action. Although the lexeme новый (new) in an isolated situation is axiologically neutral, when used in a particular communication situation it evokes positive connotations.

2.3. References to authorities

A common persuasive procedure used by the creators of the studied advertisements is the reference to authorities from the world of power sports. This strategy is based on citing in the advertisement the opinion of a person who enjoys popularity and influence in a particular area of activity (Moskvin 2007: 61). Product recommendation by a famous athlete can also be expressed in other ways, for example, by signing their name on the promoted product. The verbal way, aimed at persuading the consumer to purchase goods, has been recorded in many promotional ads, for example: "У совершенства нет границ, но иногда оно приобретает форму. САН — спортивное Питание Ваших Побед. Яна Кащеева — Чемпионка России и Европы по фитнессу" (Perfection has no limits, but sometimes takes the form of SAN – sport nutriments for your victories. Jana Kaščejeva – Champion of Russia and Europe in fitness), "Спорт для нас — это жизнь... Межсезонья не существует. Чейк Конго — суперзвезда UFC" (Sport is life for us... The period between seasons does not exist for us. Chake Kongo – UFC superstar), "Экстремальный рост массы — Gain bolic 6000. Рекомендует Мариуш Пудзяновский" (Extreme weight gain – Gain bolic 6000. Recommended by Mariusz Pudzianowski), "Сумасшедшие тренировки, настоящая концентрация! MAGNUM Мой выбор Mike O'Hearn" (Crazy workouts, real concentration! Magnum - my choice Mike O'Hearn), "Серьёзный мастрой на массу — Ultimate SPORT NUTRITION поддерживает

Troy Alves — профессионал IFBB" (Serious weight regulator — Ultimate SPORT NUTRITION maintains Troy Alves — IFBB professional), "Vplab nutrition. Неудержимый источник роста. Николай Соловьёв, вице-чемпион мира по жиму лёжа, персональный тренер сети" (Vplab nutrition. Irresistible source of growth. Nikolai Solovyov, vice-world champion in weightlifting lying down, network personal trainer), "Выбирай ISOBOLIC — протеин высшего качества! Френк Мир Чемпион ММА" (Choose ISABOLIC — proteins of the highest quality! Frank Mir — MMA champion).

References to sports authorities in the structure of these advertisements are inconsistent in form. In some texts only the name of the champion appears at the end of the slogan, and sometimes next to the name there is an addition indicating titles and achievements. This formula of advertising shows that the sender is trying to deliver the message not only to professionals and experts in bodybuilding and fitness, who of course know the characters from their world of sport, but also to ordinary sport amateurs. This type of "promotional gimmick" has a lot of persuasive potential, because from a psychological point of view the advertiser, using the image and opinion of the champions, activates one of the strongest incentives forcing a person to act, that is the desire to be like their idol. Kušnieruk (2007: 79) concludes rightly: "Он (рекламист) использует типаж человека-модели, делая ставку на то, что потенциальный покупатель в подсознательном стремлении стать ближе к своему кумиру приобретёт рекламируемый товар или воспользуется услугой" (The advertiser uses the image of a model man, knowing that the potential customer, subconsciously striving to get closer to his idol, will buy the product advertised by them or will take advantage of their service). The recommendation of a person who has succeeded in sport affects the positive reception of the product, perceived as the tested guarantee of success. Besides, advertisements using references to authorities also include a photo of the participating champion presenting his impeccable muscular physique. The integration of visual and verbal strategic elements in promotional advertisements strengthens the power of the message.

2.4. The environmental styling of the language

An interesting procedure used by copywriters is the environmental styling of the advertising language. Choosing the right vocabulary, mostly colloquial, used in the jargon of athletes, aims to create a reliable situation which is more emotional and natural for participants in the discourse. The following slogans are examples of this type of styling: "Заправляйся перед битвой! ISOBOLIC" (Fuel up before the battle! ISOBOLIC), "Рабочее топливо для атлетов" (Daily fuel for athletes). The use of dietary supplements, referred to as "refueling", and supplements themselves called "fuel", function in the jargon of bodybuilders and strongmen. Connecting the slogan to the language which is used by athletes every day brings the potential consumer closer to their world, which makes the communication situation more convincing.

2.5. The role of imperatives in slogans

The characteristic procedure applied, in principle, in any advertisement, regardless of the promoted goods or services, is designing slogans that contain verbs in the imperative. As noted by Bralczyk (2004: 108), the imperative works in a more suggestive way than the statement, and it is the most natural form of influencing the recipient.

In the gathered factual material there are a lot of advertisements in which urging the recipient to purchase the product is expressed in the imperative, for example: "Увеличивайте выносливость и полностью восстанавливайтесь после нагрузок вместе с X-FUSION AMINO!" (Increase your strength and completely regenerate after effort with X-FUSION AMINO!), "Широко мыслишь? Открой для себя широчайший диапазон ингредиентов нашего новейшего и передового протеина! BIOTECHUSA" (Discover for yourself the wide range of ingredients of our latest leading proteins! BIOTECHUSA), "Попробуй Anabolic Shock и настрой свой обмен веществ на рост!" (Try Anabolic Shock and adjust your metabolism to increase!), "Сделай свой спорт ярче! HARDLABZ" (Make your sport more expressive! HARDLABZ), "Выгляди так же хорошо, как ты себя чувствуешь! DETO-NATE термогеник-усилитель" (Look as good as you feel! DETONATE – amplifierthermogenic), "Тренируйся усерднее. Восстанавливайся быстрее. Заправляйся топливом! Новинка AmmoJET" (Train diligently. Regenerate faster. Fill up with fuel! New AmmoJET), "WEIDER — Global Nutrition. Попробуй прямо сейчас!" (WEIDER – Global Nutrition. Try it right now!), "Возьми вверх над человечеством c MUTANT MASS!" (Soar above humanity with MUTANT MASS). Despite the fact that the form of the imperative itself is associated with orders and forcing someone to perform a certain action, in the cited examples the imperative expresses other types of speech acts, such as encouragement, allusion or suggestion. In this way the message is not perceived as an intrusive operation. None of the cited examples of slogans contains direct coercion to purchase the advertised item, but instead presents a mild form of persuasion.

2.6. The manipulative power of syntax

So far, the analysis of the collected material proves that the tampering with language in advertising is manifested most clearly at the level of vocabulary and morphology. However, syntax also provides the ability to "control" human behaviour through promotional announcements. As is well known, advertising's effectiveness largely depends on its expressiveness, and therefore the selection of the appropriate syntactic structure of the slogan is one of the most important aspects to be taken into account in the process of creating the message. It was found that in the structure of the studied advertising texts short elliptical and simple sentences are dominant. Often they create a kind of repetition in the form of dyads and triads, which give the utterance specific rhythm and dynamics, which in turn makes the advertisement more attractive, and so it becomes more memorable. The following slogans are examples of such persuasive statements: "MAGNUM — это сила. MAGNUM — это

скорость. MAGNUM — на каждый день" (MAGNUM is force. MAGNUM is speed. MAGNUM for every day), "Тренируйся усерднее. Восстанавливайся быстрее. Заправляйся топливом! Новинка АттоЈЕТ" (Train diligently. Regenerate faster. Fill up with fuel! New AmmoJET), "Больше массы. Больше мышц. Больше силы. Vplab nutrition" (More weight! More muscle! More power! Vplab nutrition), "Массивный импульс. Мощный тренинг. REDWEILER" (Solid impulse. Powerful training. REDWEILER). Short messages in advertising act more emphatically, and they are more accurate and expressive. In the minimised utterance the most important feature of the product is highlighted, or some understatements and suggestions are used to create the recipient's images about the product.

The vast majority of the collected slogans take the form of exclamatory syntactic structures which increase the power of expression of the message and are used for the emotional connotation of advertising. The exclamation mark, being an inseparable element in the studied texts, not only encourages specific behaviours, but also emphasises the strength of the emotions of the sender, such as admiration, emotional excitement, sometimes taking the form of exaltation. In the case of a desire to express extremely strong emotions the authors of the advertisements use triple exclamation marks.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that the creators of nutriment and dietary supplement advertising intended for power sports enthusiasts use a lot of manipulative language strategies. The studied advertisements, based on the stereotypical perception of bodybuilding circles, use a variety of the verbal capabilities of the language on its different levels in order to simulate the illusion of the perfect world desired by the recipient. The main objective of the advertising message is to generate in a potential client some relevant opinions on the offered product, which in turn has to lead to its sale. Achieving commercial success is guaranteed, inter alia, by a skillfully constructed slogan. As demonstrated in this study, the largest manipulative potential belongs to the word itself. Therefore, the analysed advertisements abound in evaluative vocabulary (mainly adjectives) related to the athletes' world of value. In addition, a common procedure designed to convince the customer to purchase the product is to refer to the recommendations of sports champions, or to style the advertising language through the use of professional jargon widespread in the strongmen's community. Moreover, persuasive power also belongs to the very expressive syntactic structures, mainly in the form of elliptical or simple sentences with imperative forms. It should also be noted that all the identified language strategies are usually used in an integrated way, which in turn increases the power of persuasion of advertising.

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