

Rational appeal techniques in dentistry commercial advertisement (dentists as consumers)

Kostenko V. H.

*Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages,
Latin and Medical Terminology
Poltava State Medical University
Poltava, Ukraine*

Znamenska I. V.

*Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages,
Latin and Medical Terminology
Poltava State Medical University
Poltava, Ukraine*

Given the fact that professional communication is becoming more critical in social interaction worldwide than ever before, professional discourse has been recently put in the focus of global interdisciplinary research generating considerable interest in applied linguistics, discourse studies, sociology, psychology, marketing and information systems. Medical and healthcare discourse encompasses a ramified system of genres for a wide variety of purposes within the areas of intra-professional, inter-professional, and doctor-lay person communication; and each genre reflects discourse community standards and conventions in a particular socio-cultural context.

Despite the plethora of studies dedicated to various aspects of medical texts, genres and discourse, there has been very little research closely scrutinizing linguistic, stylistic, pragmatic peculiarities of the genre of dentistry professional advertisement, i.e. any material related to dental practice which is published, displayed, distributed or used by dental professionals [3; 4].

The material can include journal or magazine advertisement, flyers, websites, newsletters, business cards, stationery, logos, signage, announcements, or other information related to the dentist/dental practice, regardless of the form or the manner of distribution. Understanding the mechanisms engendered in the advertising language within the professional context and the participants' roles in the context

enables not only to create more sophisticated and persuading professional advertisements in terms of commerce, but to protect and support the public interest of dental community and to ensure that advertisements within this community does not demean the integrity and dignity of the profession. The purpose of this study is to find out and analyze the rational appeal techniques used in professional commercial advertisement in dentistry.

We investigated 50 written advertisement samples from highly reputable special journals (both printed and e-format on the journal websites) “The Journal of American Dental Association” (JADA), under the heading *Professional Product Review*, “British Dental Journal” (BDJ), heading *Product News*, “Dentistry Today” (DT) under the heading *Industry News, Product Highlights* for 2017 – 2020. A qualitative method was used for this study, with the ultimate goal to examine the language used for persuasive purpose in advertising discourse.

Advertising focuses on the way the message passes from the provider to the receiver, thus, advertising means communication [1, p. 808], i. e. a process that is carried out between at least two sides: the addresser, who conveys the message (address), and the addressee, or receiver. In terms of intra-corporate advertising, addressor-addressee relationship implies common educational and professional background between the parties, i.e. the addressor (companies, corporations producing certain products or services (the name of the manufacturer of the advertised object may be part of its name) clearly understands the professional identity of the addressee, a particular subject area of dentistry, etc. At the same time, is it important to emphasize that addressors of dentistry commercial and real message producers are two different subjects, and the last is usually a team of sophisticated copywriters.

Clear understanding of professional values, needs and conventional communication models of target audience, dentistry professional, or in other words, the shared knowledge of the interlocutors, underlies the creation of effective advertisement messages. Our previous studies demonstrated that both rational and emotional appeals are applied in order to generate professional interest and to inspire

dental professionals in making a purchasing decision, though rational appeal techniques prevail over emotional ones.

The rational appeal, also known as informational advertising appeals is considered as “Ad execution designed to appeal to the rationality of the receiver by using objective information describing a brand’s attributes or benefits” [5, p. 1397]. It is one of many advertising strategies used by marketers to persuade people to buy products, pay for services, donate, or be persuaded. This appeal aims to win over the target audiences into taking a certain action by addressing their rational side and logical thinking. This strategy is especially effective for advertisement in a printed medium within a particular professional community. Rational advertising appeals convey basic functions and advantages of products by presenting factual information that is accepted by the target audience as true.

Quality dental care, better treatment and preventative care for patients are ensured by using the state-of-the-art dental technologies and high-tech tools, which allow dentists to work faster with better precision and help reduce the recovery time and costs. One of the commonest rational appeal techniques revealed in the studies advertisement is the emphasis on the specific details about product or service benefits. This information is mainly provided by statistics, numbers, facts, pointing out the uniqueness of the products: *The new HyFlex EDM root canal file from Coltene represents the very latest in root canal shaping systems. Exhibiting up to 700% higher fracture resistance than previous NiTi files, the HyFlex EDM's specially hardened surface is due to the innovative manufacturing process that Coltene uses (BDJ, V. 222 (9), May, 2017).*

Visuals including images, graphics, and videos in e-format advertisements are often used to demonstrate the object of advertisement, to stress on its operational qualities, ergonomics, etc.

Appealing to authority is another commonly exploited rational appeal technique in professional dentistry commercial advertisement. Though the experts and top professionals in this field are not as recognizable as TV or sport celebrities, singers, artists, the value of their expertise is highly appreciated: “*Two Striper®*

brand diamonds have always been my choice for fast and accurate crown and bridge.” Dr. Robert B. Mongrain, DMD (JADA, September, 2017, Vol .151, Issue 2).

In this sample, the rational appeal is boosted by using the name of a highly reputable dentistry professional, Dr. Mongrain, who is a member of Berkshire Dental Group, a member of the American Dental Association, the Oklahoma Dental Association, and the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine.

Dentistry professional advertisement also generates and promotes the professional values, because it represents certain traits, builds relation to develop professional identity, thus forming a favourable image of dentistry as a field of science and practice: *Engineered with a sophisticated design to meet the evolving needs of dentistry, Pro-Matrix will simplify Class II restorations through easier placement and visibility (JADA, September, 2017, Vol .148, Issue 8).*

Thus, information, which highlights the uniqueness of the product by using fact description, statistics, visuals, logical arguments, presented by the opinions of the field experts, and appeal to professional values, which strengthen professional identity, are the means by which rational appeal advertisement on dentistry motivate the customers to make right decision.

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