

摘要

一个广告标题是一则广告的眼睛,它具有提示、评价广告内容和吸引、引导读者的作用。一则广告成功与否,广告标题起着极为重要的作用。因而它是一则广告中最重要的组成部分。许多广告撰写人都为如何创作一个成功的广告标题而绞尽脑汁。许多广告名家如大卫·奥格威也从实践的经验中总结出许多广告标题创作的原则。但他们的创作原则与某些广告标题的语用现象不符。一些他们认为不可取的语用现象如双关、暗喻却在实际的广告标题中取得了巨大成功。

关联理论是日渐引人关注的一种语用学理论。它主要研究信息交际的推理过程,尤其注重探索语言交际的话语解释原则。关联理论以关联性的定义和两条原则,即认知原则和交际原则作为基础,提出了最佳关联性的概念。同时,关联理论指出每一个明示的交际行为都应设想为它具有最佳关联性。

通过运用关联理论对广告标题的分析,可以看出广告标题也是一个推理—明示的过程。因而广告标题也应设想为其具有最佳关联性。这就为广告标题的交际功能提供了科学的解释机制。

本文在现有的关联理论研究的基础上,结合广告标题的具体言语实例,试图从关联理论的角度来阐释广告标题的交际功能,即广告标题是广告内容和读者之间的最佳关联,并把关联性作为广告标题创作的一种评估手段,从而进一步扩大关联理论的高度解释力。在阐述这一理论的语用价值的同时,进而拓展其应用领域,用它来指导实际的广告标题的创作。揭示了关联理论框架对广告标题写作的指导意义,并在关联理论的框架指导下,本文提出了三条广告标题的创作原则,即关联原则、幽默原则和新颖原则,并运用关联理论对各具体的语言策略进行分析,同时运用关联理论与具体实例相结合的方法分析了如何运用各种语言策略来实现广告标题的创作原则。

关键词:关联理论;广告标题;标题创作原则

Abstract

Advertising headline is the first attention-grabbing device for an advertisement. It plays the role of demonstrating the main content of the advertisement, getting attention, and sometimes even persuading and pushing the consumers to buy the advertised product. Attention-gaining and persuasion are the basic functions of advertising headlines. Although sales-generation is the final goal of every advertisement, advertising headline is crucial toward that end.

Because of the significant importance an advertising headline has, many copywriters are trying hard to make a successful headline. David Ogilvy, a very famous advertiser, has concluded from his practice ten principles of how to write advertising headlines. He put forward that some linguistic devices like pun and metaphor should not be used in headline making. However, this is not completely true in reality. Indeed, many successful advertising headlines are attributed to these linguistic devices.

The relevance theory focuses on the degree of relevance and two governing principles—cognitive principle and communicative principle, and proposes the conception of optimal relevance. It puts forward that any ostensive-inferential communication is supposed to be of optimal relevance. Advertising headline is also an ostensive-inferential communication process, and therefore the relevance theory can offer effective explanations for the communicative functions of advertising headlines.

Following the theoretical study, this thesis elaborates and proves the pragmatic values of the relevance theory in advertising headlines by analyzing samples. The relevance theory will be employed as a measure to evaluate the advertising headlines. Meanwhile, on the basis of relevance theory, three principles to guide the headline making are put forward, which are relevance principle, humor principle and novelty principle. The specific applications of the three principles are analyzed in the case study form.

Key words: relevance theory, advertising headline, principles for headline writing

Chapter One

Introduction

Advertising, according to the Definition Committee of the American Marketing Association, is 'any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor.' Because advertising has a significant influence on modern society since its birth, one French advertising critic once said that the air we live in was composed of hydrogen, oxygen and advertising.

Because of its prominent role in society, advertising thus has been a popular subject of study for researchers in various disciplines such as marketing, sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and so on. Among all of these issues raised by advertising, the language seems to have attracted more attention because of its significance. Scholars have long been interested in describing advertising language from the linguistic perspective, which is mainly focused on the linguistic features. But now they have gradually turned their attention to the pragmatic perspective of the advertising language.

A whole copy of advertisement mainly consists of four parts: headline, body, ending, and the supplementary items. However, the headline of advertisement is considered as the first stimulus of the whole advertisement. And it goes that each successful advertisement must have a very attractive headline.

Advertising headlines are classified into three categories: direct headlines, indirect headlines, and the headlines that are combined by headline and sub headline.

Another classification of advertising focuses on the different ends of the advertisement. It divides the headlines into promising headlines, persuading headlines, confirming headlines, and so on.

No matter which way is used to classify the headlines, the focus of this thesis is to make a great headline. In order to make a successful and attractive headline, advertisers are encouraged to follow the AIDMA principle, which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, and Action. In recent years, the SCORE evaluation method proposed by American scholars is also very popular. SCORE is the abbreviation of Simplicity, Credibility, Originality, Relevance, and Empathy. This method has been widely employed at present.

Advertising headlines usually have their unique functions as follows:

Firstly, the main carrier of advertisements is the mass media. However, as well known to all, it is the news that is the hero of every mass media. People read newspapers, magazines, and watch TV usually with the intention of getting news rather than looking at the advertisements. They often neglect advertisements, and some people even complain of their existence. Therefore, an advertisement must have an attractive and easy-to-accept headline if the advertiser does not want his advertisement a waste of money.

Secondly, there are too many advertisements at each media at present. An advertiser can not expect his audience to read his without anything special. Therefore, if he wants to surpass the others, he has to design a better headline than those of the other advertisements.

Thirdly, no matter how delicate the body copy is, if the advertisement does not have a good headline, it is very difficult to say that this advertisement is a success. As what has been mentioned above, if one headline can not get the advertiser's intention across to his audience, it is not very likely to the body part of his advertisement to be read, which means that this advertiser's effort is totally useless. Someone even compares the function of the advertising headline to the function of saying 'hello'. If an advertiser has not held the attention of his people, how can he expect the conversation to go on? Therefore, it is of key importance for an advertiser to devise an attractive headline.

Lastly, besides its main function of attracting audience's attention, a classic headline is

expected to generate sales. If the advertiser, having a good command of the linguistic devices, can also have an insight of both his product and his customers, he may be able to compose such a headline. For example, Ogilvy has such an advertisement headline which goes like this: How to make a woman of 35 younger? This headline is designed for the cosmetics for women above 35; therefore, it has seized the stimulus point exactly—women of 35 plus care more about how to look younger, which, of course, will lead the audience to act quickly. This last function is difficult to realize, but this should become the goal of every advertisement copywriter because selling the advertised product is the only goal of every advertisement and no other else.

Because of the unparalleled functions a headline plays to the success of the whole advertisement, this thesis, therefore, takes the headline as the focus for study. And the author will study it from the pragmatic perspective, mainly by taking Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory as the theoretical foundation to investigate how headline communicates message and how the audience interprets it.

This thesis will deal with the commercial advertisements in the printed media exclusively. Commercial advertising is the most frequent type of ads, and the type on which most money and skill is spent, and the type which affects us most deeply (Vestergaard, 1985: 1). And the reason for choosing advertising headlines in the printed media is that the advertising headlines in the printed media are easy to get and study because printed advertisements can be reproduced as a whole easily.

This thesis will adopt a qualitative research method by means of data collection of advertising headlines in newspapers. With accumulated data, some underlying truths about advertising headline will come out which will prove to be instructive not only for theoretical probe but also for applied practice. I will apply this descriptive method in the case study of this thesis.

This thesis consists of six chapters. The beginning four chapters are to introduce relevance theory and the reason why it can be employed in advertising headlines making. Then chapter

five is dedicated to consumers' psychological analysis. The major part chapter six mainly deals with the writing of headlines from relevance theory.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Advertising Headlines

People don't read advertisements per se.

They read what interests them. And

Sometimes it's an ad.

Copywriter Howard Gossage

Gossage's point is highly appreciated. We see what we want to see, and this is particularly true with print advertisements. An advertisement in print media consists of verbal and non-verbal elements—i.e., words, pictures, colors, graphics, and white space. Often the visualization is added after the copy has been written. But usually the copywriter conceives the whole picture first before he writes the copy. However, when asked which, if any, parts of an advertisement in print media are more important, Alfred Politz, a renowned researcher, gave the following words without hesitation.

Headlines are most important because some people read headlines only. In a campaign all the main sales points should be put into one or another headline in the series of advertisements. The text is important too, of course. It is there that the thought in the headline can be developed in a believable way, established as a unique attribute of your product. And the longer the text, the more important the headline becomes.

But the headline is the vital factor. Associate the product and the main sales point in the headline.

Michael Fortin of The Success Doctor, Inc. has pointed out that of the four factors of AIDA formula, the first part refers to the headline and it is where most ads usually fail. If the headline doesn't command enough attention, then the rest of the formula -- even if the ad is

effective -- fails. And according to Robert D. Boduch, "Headlines are your 'front line' to any market. It's the first thing most prospects see. Writing ads is tough enough and your headline is your one big chance to interest and influence a selected audience with your message."

Therefore, a good advertisement must have an attractive and easy-to-understand headline. One survey by David Ogilvy, world famous advertising executive, best-selling author of the most influential books on advertising *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, and *Ogilvy on Advertising*, and founder of the renowned Ogilvy & Mather advertising agency, even shows that a good headline can generate more sales, and help to establish good corporate image. It displays that there are more than five times of people who read advertisements' headlines than those who read the main body part of advertisements. Therefore, the advertiser will lose 90% of his advertisement fee if the headline of his advertisement can not attract the customers' attention.

That's why so many top copywriters spend far more time writing headlines -- as much as 80% of their time -- than writing the rest of the copy. They write as many possible headlines for an ad as possible, and usually spend hours developing a single headline. Often, dozens of headlines are discarded before the right one is chosen -- all because the success of an ad rests largely on the headline.

2.2 Recent Researches on Advertising Headline Writing

John Caples, a veteran copywriter who has practiced writing many well-known headlines such as "They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano—But When I Started to Play", is suggesting the following five rules:

1. First and foremost, and above all else, try to get Self-interest into every headline you write. Make your headline suggest to the reader that here is something he wants. This rule is so fundamental that it would seem obvious. Yet the rule is violated every day by scores of

copywriters.

2. If you have news, such as a new product, or a new use for an old product, be sure to get that news into your headline in a big way.
3. Avoid headlines which are merely curiosity headlines. Curiosity combined with news or self-interest is an excellent aid to the pulling power of your headline. But curiosity itself is seldom enough. This fundamental rule is violated more than any other. Every issue of every magazine and newspaper contains headlines which attempt to sell the reader through curiosity and curiosity alone.
4. Avoid, when possible, headlines which paint the gloomy or negative side of the picture. Take the cheerful, positive angle.
5. Try to suggest in your headline that here is a quick and easy way for the reader to get something he wants.

John Caples has given more serious research attention than anyone in the field of advertising headlines so far from the practical aspect, and his five rules for writing headlines are specific and useful. However, the rules of number 3 and 4 are still in doubt, because they can not explain why sometimes the use of pun for curiosity and the use of negative words like "The Penalty of Leadership" can also achieve great success.

David Ogilvy also holds the same opinion with John Caples in the aspect of using such devices as pun or metaphor. He believes that these devices are difficult for interpreting, and the audience may not try to interpret them at all. However, there are many successful examples of the use of pun and metaphor in the headlines. Some even become classic. The copywriters can not explain these in theory because they lack the theoretical support. Therefore, the task falls upon the linguistic experts.

There are also many researchers studying headlines from the linguistic aspects. Some see this issue from the functional linguistics, showing the prediction function of advertising headlines. Some focus on the word choice and sentence structure and metaphorical devices used in the advertising headlines, pointing out that writer should employ novel, unexpected words and

metaphorical means to get the audience's attention, and further to arouse their action. Based on their studies, they put forward their opinions on the writing rules of advertising headlines, and these are also very helpful and instructive in practice. Next, analyses will be on some theoretical studies on advertising headlines.

2.3 Some Researches on Advertisements from the Linguistic Perspective

How audiences process advertising claims has aroused great interest among scholars. Therefore, this part is going to examine some theories that are developed by advertising researchers, to account for audiences' comprehension of advertising claims. Meanwhile, some of the defects of those theories will be examined from the relevance theory, which has great contribution to this field.

2.3.1 Semiotic Approach

Semiotic approach is based on the assumption that communication is a process of encoding and decoding a message. Barthes and Judith William are two outstanding scholars who have dealt with the advertising language from such a perspective.

Rhetoric of the Image (1964) written by Barthes is claimed by Dyer (1982: 224) to be a major essay on semiotics and its application in the analysis of advertising message. It studies the interrelationship between the image and the advertising message. In this book, Barthes argues that there are three types of message: the linguistic message, the coded iconic message, and the non-coded iconic message. The linguistic message, which consists of captions and labels, according to Barthes, has two levels of interpretation, namely, denotational and connotational. Then, he points out that the pure image can be divided into two categories, which are the iconic equivalents of connotation and denotation as well. The former is also categorized as a coded, symbolic and cultural message, but the latter is said to be the non-coded, perceptual

and literal message.

Barthes' insight is valuable for that one can derive different information from one single advertisement. However, the method by which he sets out to analyze it is a problem. Because the processing of information derived from the senses is affected by many factors, for instance, Fodor has put forward the cultural knowledge. Therefore, there is no clear-cut at either the linguistic level or the iconic level for denotation and connotation for the reason that perceptual information is not independent of factors such as cultural knowledge.

One major defect of semiotics is the notion that different messages are disentangled solely by reading systems of signs during its application in explaining advertising language. Its confliction with the fact that there exist a potentially infinite number of different messages carried by a finite number of signs then occurs. Then the audience is going to choose which message is of great concern. Barthes attempts to resolve this problem by arguing that the linguistic message has a function vis-à-vis the iconic message, a function which he calls "anchorage", which helps the audience to determine the selection of the intended message. However, linguistic messages are polysemous as well. Sperber and Wilson have put forward that linguistic codes are not devoid of ambiguity, and reference assignment, disambiguation and enrichment are part of the normal process of utterance interpretation.

Judith Williamson also attempts to approach the advertising language from the perspective of semiotics. According to Judith, the sign (message) in the advertising is to be understood at two levels, the manifest level and the latent level. The audience, on the other side, is required to make appropriate connection to obtain the intended meaning of the author. One major problem facing Williamson's approach is that there is no clear way for the audience to determine which meaning should be used at what level.

Williamson is also aware of the gap between the message intended by the author and the message obtained by the reader through the process of decoding. She attempts to explain this problem from the perspective of the reader's knowledge. She argues that it is the reader's

knowledge that helps fill the gap. But she does not demonstrate how the reader's preexisting knowledge help to determine the way advertisements are understood and how the gap is filled.

It can be seen from the above analysis that semiotic approach fails to explain the gap between the semantic representations of sentences and the thoughts actually communicated by utterances. According to Sperber and Wilson, this gap is filled not by more decoding, but by inference. Grice has first drawn attention to the importance of inference in communication. Since then, various pragmatists have developed inferential models of communication. Geis is one of the pragmatists who have approached the language of advertising from such a perspective.

2.3.2 Gricean Approach

Geis (1982) focuses on those linguistic devices favored by producers of television commercials. Besides the concern of how advertisers use language, Geis also gives much of his attention to how audiences can be expected to interpret the advertising language. He put forward that the linguistic devices might also be interpreted in a problematic way, and they can be misleading.

The most conspicuous contribution to the language of advertising of Geis is that he builds on the notion, deriving ultimately from Grice, that inference, rather than decoding, is the key to comprehension. He incorporates the notion of cooperation in a conversation which is pointed out by Grice (1975), making use of six 'maxims' adapted from Grice (1975) and from Boer and Lycan (1975):

The Maxim of Strength: Say no less than is necessary;

The Maxim of Parsimony: Say no more than is necessary;

The Maxim of Truth: Do not say what you believe to be false;

The Maxim of Evidence: Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence;

The Maxim of Relevance: Be relevant;

The Maxim of Clarity: Avoid obscurity of expression.

(Geis 1982:31)

Geis holds that in the communication of advertising, both advertisers and audiences are guided by this mutually agreed upon set of rules, or maxims. He suggests advertisers should be held responsible not only for the conventional implicatures of the advertisements, but also for the conversational implicatures. He points out that conversational implicatures are calculated as follows:

A sentence S conversationally implies a proposition P in a given conversation if and only if P can be 'calculated' given

- a. the literal meaning of S
- b. general principles governing conversation
- c. the context of the conversation
- d. background knowledge shared by speaker and hearer.

(Geis 1982:30)

Geis has his reasons in contending that advertisers should be held accountable for conventional and conversational implicatures of their advertisements, but his analysis does not provide a successful basis for implementing such measures, because his approach also suffers from the following defects of Gricean pragmatics.

Firstly, he does not show how the context is determined, nor does he demonstrate how background knowledge shared by the speaker and hearer is established. Because of these defects, it is very hard to hold an advertiser responsible for the implications of what they assert. An advertiser can easily deny the accusation by saying that he does not recognize his addressees share a particular piece of knowledge. This occurs mainly in the area of sex appeal advertisements.

Secondly, Geis's maxims themselves can give rise to quite various implicatures. He is aware of this problem and gives the following example:

Aftate for athlete's foot, with a medication that kills athlete's foot fungus on contact.

(Geis 1982: 55)

Geis argues that the Maxim of Relevance will give rise to the implication that Aftate kills athlete's foot fungus on contact. However, it is known to all that advertisers usually make the strongest claims they can defend, while here, it is not actually claimed that Aftate kills the fungus on contact. Considering the Maxim of Strength, the advertising implies that Aftate may not in fact kill athlete's foot fungus on contact.

In order to solve this problem, Geis tries to set up a hierarchy among his maxims: when the maxim of Relevance conflicts with the Maxim of Strength, people are more likely to go with the Maxim of Relevance than with the Maxim of Strength, for in such cases the latter requires much more sophisticated reasoning than the former. (Geis 1982: 55-6) In effect, Geis is suggesting that the Maxim of Relevance is superior to that of Maxim of Strength in the hierarchy of maxims. Sperber and Wilson have gone much further. They have reduced the different maxims to one single principle, that of relevance.

Thirdly, Geis fails to take account of the nature and role of context in his analysis of relative strength of claims made by advertisers. He argues that suppose John Jones is known by 100 women, it can be claimed that he is liked by many people if and only if he is liked between 50 and 75 percent of the women. But if the context was reduced to two women, it could not be claimed that many women liked John even if 100 percent of them liked him. A scale, which is valid in one imaginary context but not another, is of little use. He ignores the role of context in utterance comprehension.

As has been showed above, Geis deals with the problem of utterance interpretation in advertising within the framework of pragmatics; however, his ultimate analysis still suffers

some defects which should be taken care of.

This chapter first showed how important advertising headlines are, and then reviewed some researches on advertising headlines writing and the major linguistic studies of advertising language. Selected approaches to advertising language have been assessed, and it has been shown that the interpretation of advertisements is not merely a matter of decoding, and it should be best approached from a pragmatic point of view. However, because of the defects of the theories of communication on which they are based, the pragmatists who have analyzed advertisements fail to provide an adequate explanation of how the audience understands advertisements.

The Relevance Theory of Sperber and Wilson offers a principled account of how an utterance is interpreted by the hearer in context, and it provides the most satisfactory answer to the basic question of how communication is achieved in advertising. The following chapters will be devoted to the analysis of the Relevance Theory and how this theory can be specifically associated with headline writing.

Chapter Three

Introduction to Relevance Theory

Since its publication, Relevance Theory has been widely accepted and has affected the study in various disciplines including linguistics, literature, psychology and philosophy. However, it is not uncontroversial. Sperber and Wilson, the two authors themselves admit as such: 'We are well aware that the view developed in Relevance Theory is very speculative' (1987: 709-10). Even so, from the previous analysis in chapter two, we can find that this theory offers the most satisfactory possibilities for exploring the question of the force of language.

Sperber and Wilson developed the Relevance Theory in the book *Relevance: communication and cognition* which is published in 1986. It holds that the guiding principle in the mental energy we expend in the process of communicating is the search for an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance and the principle of relevance is essential to explain human communication.

3.1 Ostensive-inferential Communication

Sperber and Wilson's analysis focuses on the form of communication which they call ostensive-inferential (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 63). According to Sperber and Wilson, there are two models of communication: the code model and the inferential model. Communication may involve these two models, but inference is most fundamental in the process of communication. In other words, a coding-decoding process is subservient to an inferential process. Sperber and Wilson argue that 'communication is successful not when hearers recognize the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but when they infer the speaker's meaning from it' (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 23)

Sperber and Wilson also put forward that there are usually two layers of information to be revealed in most communication activities: the informative intention, which belongs to the

first layer, is the information the communicator intends to communicate to the addressee; the communicative intention, which is the second layer, consists of the speaker indicating that he has intentionally communicated the first piece of information to the hearer. Sperber and Wilson give the definition as follows:

Informative intention: to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions.

Communicative intention: to make it mutually manifest to audience and communicator that the communicator has this informative intention.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 58-61)

Therefore, if the communicator wants the communication to succeed, he must draw the audience's attention to the fact that he has something to inform, which is technically known as ostension.

Sperber and Wilson also point out that the ostensive communication, inferential communication, and the ostensive-inferential communication are the same thing in fact. Actually, ostensive communication and inferential communication are one and the same process, but seen from two different points of view: that of the communicator who is involved in ostension, showing or making manifest his informative intention, and that of the audience who is involved in inference, inferring from the evidence presented the communicator's intention.

Sperber and Wilson give the definition of ostensive-inferential communication as follows:

The communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 63)

3.2 Relevance and Cognition

Sperber and Wilson point out that relevance is the key to human cognition. They believe that the standards which govern inferential communication are based on the nature of human cognition. Usually humans pay attention to those phenomena that are most relevant to them.

Sperber and Wilson categorized the effects of newly input information into three kinds: contextual implication, strengthening of existing assumptions and contradiction and elimination of old assumptions. The contextual implication means that further information which cannot be deduced from either existing assumptions or the new information alone. Here are examples by Sperber and Wilson to illustrate these three contextual effects. Suppose that one wakes up with the following thought:

- a. If it's raining, I'll stay at home.
- b. It's raining.
- c. I'll stay at home.
- d. It is raining.
- e. It's not raining, but there are cats on the roof.

One looks out of the window and discovers b, from the existing assumption a, he can deduce further information c. This is the contextual effect of contextual implication.

If one wakes up, hearing what one thinks is a pattering on the roof, and forms the hypothesis b. Then he goes to the window, looks out, and discovers d. This is the contextual effect of strengthening of existing assumptions.

However, if one wakes up with the thought b, when he goes to the window and looks out but only find e. This is the contextual effect of contradiction and elimination of old assumptions.

Therefore, assumptions that produce no contextual effects are irrelevant. For relevance to

obtain, a stimulus processed in a cognitive environment should have a contextual effect.

In fact, relevance is a matter of degree. The greater the contextual effects of a newly presented item of information, the more relevant it is. Besides contextual effect, there is also another factor that is crucial to compute relevance, which is the processing effort. Other things being equal, if the processing effort is smaller, then the relevance is greater. Therefore, it follows that the processing effort needed to derive contextual effects is crucial, and this leads to the notion of optimal relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986a: 158). Sperber and Wilson also point out that all the audiences are entitled to expect is adequate effects for no unjustifiable effort. The most recent formulation of optimal relevance is as follows:

An utterance, on a given interpretation, is optimally relevant if and only if:

- a) it achieves enough effects to be worthy of the hearer's attention;
- b) it puts the hearer to no gratuitous effort in achieving those effects.

(Smith and Wilson 1992: 5)

This formulation of optimal relevance, thus affects the ostensive-inferential communication and ostensive behavior having been mentioned before. Because it is of significant difference between being exposed to an ostensive stimulus directed at oneself, and being exposed to other kinds of stimuli. People tend to pay their attention when they assume that they can get benefits from complying with the speaker's request. So if a request is made, the speaker must have assumed that the hearer would have some motive for complying with it. In an ostensive stimulus, therefore, the hearer can expect that the stimulus is intended to be relevant to her.

Sperber and Wilson thus agree that an act of ostensive communication automatically communicates what they call a presumption of optimal relevance (1986a: 158). That is to say, in ostensive-inferential communication, the communicator necessarily communicates that the stimulus he uses is relevant to the audience. What is communicated is that the ostensive stimulus is relevant enough to be worth the addressee's attention. The definition of the principle of relevance is as follows by Sperber and Wilson:

Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.

(Sperber and Wilson 1986a: 158)

However, the fact that an ostensive stimulus creates an expectation of optimal relevance does not necessarily mean that it will actually be optimally relevant to the hearer. The speaker may be mistaken or he may be acting in bad faith. For instance, when you ask which day today is, I may tell you it is January 1st, 2007. But you check the calendar and find that today is January 2nd, 2007. In this case, the information offered by me is irrelevant to you. However, it will still be appropriate and comprehensible as long as you can see how I might rationally have expected it to be optimally relevant to you. It will still be, as Smith and Wilson (1992: 6) put it, consistent with the principle of relevance, on the grounds that follow:

Criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance:

An utterance, on a given interpretation, is consistent with the principle of relevance if and only if the speaker might rationally have expected it to be optimally relevant to the hearer on that interpretation.

Therefore, what acts as the sole criterion for evaluating alternative hypothesis about the intended interpretation of an utterance is the consistency with the principle of relevance. An interpretation will be consistent with the principle of relevance as long as the speaker might rationally have expected the interpretation of his utterance to achieve an adequate range of contextual effects, while putting the hearer to no unjustifiable processing effort in achieving these effects. Sperber and Wilson claim that the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance provides an adequate explanation of the role of contextual assumptions in all aspects of utterance interpretation.

For a communication to be successful, however, the responsibility is not equally shared by the communicator and the addressee. It is the communicator who should carry the responsibility

to make correct assumptions about the codes and contextual information that the addressee will have accessible and will be likely to use in the comprehension process. Also, it is the communicator's responsibility to avoid misunderstanding. On the other hand, the entire addressee's job is to recover the interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance. Therefore, it is the advertisers' job to make his intended assumption transferable to his audience, which is especially so for the making of headlines, the first window catching the audience's eyes.

3.3 Implicatures

An utterance, from the above analysis, can communicate a lot of assumptions, but only some are intended by the speaker. Others are accidental. For example, when two people are talking, one can recover assumptions about the other one from his Dalian accent, without the other one's intending to communicate them. If someone talking to you with a sore throat, you may recover assumptions that he may get a cold. However, this is not of his intending to do so. The hearer is induced to derive some cognitive effects, without the speaker making manifest that he intends to communicate them. These stimuli fall outside the realm of ostensive communication. In other cases, the speaker intends to communicate certain assumptions, but does not intend to publicize his intention to do so. This belongs to the covert communication which is employed in some advertisements to reduce the advertiser's responsibility.

In ostensive communication, there is information that is communicated explicitly and information that is implicitly communicated. An assumption obtained by the development of the logical forms encoded by an utterance is called explicature (Sperber and Wilson 1986a: 182). In contrast, assumptions which are derivable from the proposition expressed by the utterance together with the context are called implicatures. Grice has been the first one that employed the notion of implicature. However, Sperber and Wilson's distinction between explicature and implicature does not correspond to Grice's distinction between 'saying' and 'implicating' (Sperber and Wilson 1986). Sperber and Wilson argue that both the contextual

assumption and the conclusion are implications of the utterance, and call the former an implicated premise and the latter implicated conclusion. Implicated premises must be supplied by the hearer, leading to an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance, while implicated conclusions are derived from the explicatures of the utterance and the context (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 195)

Sperber and Wilson point out that the implicatures of an utterance may vary in their strength. The strongest possible implicatures are those fully determinate premises or conclusions, which must actually be supplied if the interpretation is to be consistent with the principle of relevance, and for which the speaker takes full responsibility. Strong implicatures are those premises and conclusions which the hearer is strongly encouraged but not actually forced to supply. The weaker the encouragement, the wider the range of possibilities among which the hearer can choose, the weaker the implicatures. The weaker the implicature, the more responsibilities the addressee will take for the recovery of it.

There are two criteria which the hearer uses in deciding how far she is to investigate. Firstly, in deciding what has been communicated, she uses the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance. Secondly, in deciding how far she should continue providing premises, adding them to the context, and deriving conclusions on her own responsibility, she uses the criterion governing her own cognitive activities, namely, the search for maximal relevance. That is, she goes as far as she finds it relevant to go. She would not go beyond the point where her processing effort outweighs the effects she achieves from the derived conclusions. If the effect obtained from the derived assumptions is weighed against processing effort, there will be a point at which it is not worth going any further.

Sperber and Wilson make their conclusion that there is no clear cut-off point between assumptions strongly backed by the communicator, and assumptions derived from the utterance on the addressee's sole responsibility. Nevertheless, both strong and weak implicatures are ostensibly communicated, and therefore both are consistent with the principle of relevance.

3.4 Context

In the previous literature review, the nature and role of context is not explained adequately. Here, more analysis will be given to this point.

Sperber and Wilson, who are not satisfied with the commonly held assumption, which in effect regarded relevance as a by-product of the comprehension process, argue that this is highly plausible. To begin with, any of the hearer's assumptions could be used in the interpretation of an utterance. Moreover, human beings are not in the business of simply assessing the relevance of new information. Their interest is to identify the information and process it as efficiently as possible. The assessment of relevance is not the goal of the comprehension process, but rather a means to the end of comprehension.

Therefore, they contend that the selection of an adequate context is a vital part of the interpretation process, which must be accounted for by pragmatic theory. The hearer of an utterance has available a set of potential contexts, from which an actual context needs to be chosen. A context consists of assumptions drawn from different sources, like long-term memory, short-term memory, and perception. This does not mean that any arbitrary subset of the total set of assumptions available might become a context. Sperber and Wilson claim that the organization of the hearer's encyclopedic memory, and mental activity in which she is engaged, limit the class of potential contexts from which an actual context can be chosen at any given time. This can be illustrated as follows.

Let us assume that there is a small immediately accessible context, fixed in advance, consisting of the proposition which has most recently been processed, together with its contextual implications. When new information is received, it will be processed in this immediate context. In the following examples, some degree of relevance is immediately achieved if the initial context is a) and the proposition expressed by the utterance is b).

- a) If the singer is Zhou Jielun, Jane will go.
- b) The singer is Zhou Jielun.

However, if the proposition expressed is c), d), or e), the results are different:

- c) The singer is whom you have just mentioned.
- d) The song is Juhua Tai.
- e) The song is this (the song that is being sung at the time of the utterance).

No degree of relevance can be achieved in the cases of c) to e) unless the initial context is extended in some way.

If the goal of processing is to find an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance, the hearer will be forced to add further information to the initial context a). This information will be remembered from earlier exchanges, as in the case of c), or recovered from encyclopedic memory, as in the case of d), or derived from perception, as in the case of e). Therefore, the accessibility of potential contexts is partly determined by the content of the proposition being processed. The goal will be to find premises which will combine with the old assumptions and yield adequate contextual implications in return for minimal processing effort.

There are practical rather than theoretical limitations to the extent of the processing effort. The number and complexity of extensions involved from communication to be successful will be limited by the hearer's capacity for extending the context, and by the constraints on the effort side of comprehension. But there is no other restriction on the number of extensions that may be used to establish the relevance of a given proposition.

What's more, the speaker can actually direct his hearer towards an appropriate context, given that he holds specific expectations about how his utterance will be relevant. The following

example can illustrate this process.

- 1) Henry: Would you like to go to *San He*?
- 2) Mary: I'm not keen on Korean food.

Mary has not answered Henry's question directly, however, she has implied an answer. Henry has to recover the intended effects of the utterance. He must supply certain premises, either by retrieving them from his memory or by deriving them in some way from what he knows. The criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance provides him with an adequate guide. One of the premises that Henry should be able to supply is:

- 3) *San He* provides Korean food.

By processing Mary's reply 2) against a context which contains assumption 3), Henry should derive the contextual implication:

- 4) Mary would not like to go to *San He*.

This example shows that mutual knowledge is not a prerequisite for successful communication. Even if Henry did not possess the information in 3) prior to the exchange in 1) and 2), he may come to acquire 3) as a result of the exchange. All he has to do is to supply premises which rational speaker might have thought would lead to an interpretation which is optimally relevant. The same goes for Mary. She does not need to know if Henry already has the information in 3). He would be expected to come to have this knowledge as a result of interpreting her utterance. By applying the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance, he would have to supply premise 3), and then deduce conclusion 4). Mary may expect Henry to supply this premise, not because she has ground for thinking that it is already highly accessible to him, but rather because her utterance has made it accessible to him. In other words, by producing the implicit answer 2), she has constrained his choice of context and directed him towards a particular interpretation.

In short, this chapter gives a brief introduction to the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson, which provides the most comprehensive account of utterance interpretation. The framework of this theory is based on ostension, the communicator's intention to communicate and to publicize his intention, and the principle that an ostensive stimulus creates a presumption of optimal relevance. The task of the audience in ostensive communication is to process the communicator's utterance against background information and derive an interpretation which is consistent with the principle of relevance. Relevance theory will be applied to the analysis of advertising headlines in the following chapters.

Chapter Four

Characteristics of Advertising Headlines as Communication

4.1 Advertising Headlines and Ostensive Communication

The relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson is developed based on the analysis of ostensive-inferential communication. Sperber and Wilson point out that the principle of relevance is not applicable to all forms of communication, but only to ostensive communication. Therefore, before analyzing advertising headlines from the aspect of relevance theory, one thing should be made clear, that is, advertisement headline is also a kind of ostensive communication, which can be explained by relevance theory.

Davidson has pointed out that advertising is par excellence the 'act of ostensive communication', seeking to change how we behave both cognitively and physically (Davidson, 1992:147). Sperber and Wilson have put forward that 'ostention' consists of the revelation of informative intention and communicative intention, these two layers of information. The advertiser makes an advertisement headline for the purpose of attracting the audience's attention, which can be said that the advertiser is engaged in an ostensive act. Therefore, the advertisement headline is with a communicative intention. Meanwhile, the audience can recognize the informative intention if he or she does look at and process the advertisement headline. But as it is known to all, the advertiser's informative intention is always confined with the goal of selling a product and service, thus the headline plays a crucial role to minimize this resistance.

4.2 Relevance in Advertising Headlines

Crystal and Davy have pointed out that there are two main functions of advertising language:

informing and persuading. The advertiser's goal is to sell his product and service. He does not inform for the sake of adding his audience's knowledge of the world. So it is the persuading function that should be given more attention. The advertiser, therefore, must provide the relevant information that can persuade consumers to buy his product. That is the ultimate goal for every advertiser.

Once knowing this rule, the advertiser must try to present his advertisement with a type of language persuasive in nature. As Peter Trudgill has said, the wording of advertisements is, in most cases, carefully crafted to meet particular ends. The end is to persuade. But before achieving the end of persuasion, the advertiser has to first provide a stimulus to activate certain assumptions from the cognitive environment of the prospects. Toffler in his *Future Shock* has mentioned that the language of advertising is a language of finely engineered, ruthlessly purposeful messages, aiming at triggering a special response from the consumers. But how does the whole copy play the role of such a trigger, and which is the first stimulus? The answer is the headline, while achieving the successful stimulus effect of headline relies on relevance.

Relevance is a linguistic theory that attaches much importance to the communication process of context, inference, the disposition and cognition of the audience. This is well recognized by all who are working in the media, especially in advertising. To make a successful advertisement with a big sale, an advertiser should make more efforts. For instance, in addition to the writing skills, he should carefully analyze his audience, their preferred writing style, their reading habits, and so on. From the copywriters and art designers, the market researchers and planners, the real product of the advertising agency is its understanding of consumer relevance; not just what they think of the products, but what is more crucial is that what they think of advertising.

The conditions of relevance that advertising has to recognize, and then to exploit, are specific to advertising. The relevance of advertisements, especially the headlines, not only determines how ads are written, but also is an indispensable part of how audience read them. Therefore,

what all good ads have in common is that they all make great efforts to search for audience complicity and the presumption that the effort needed to decipher the ad had better be less than was used in writing it.

4.3 The Communicative Situation in Advertising Headlines

Communication is marked by different degrees of trust and social cooperation. However, one merit of ostensive communication is that it may encourage the fixation of belief. If the speaker's intention to inform his reader of something is recognized by the reader, this can help make him believe it. Sperber and Wilson has pointed out that it is not hard to see why making the speaker's intention to inform something overt may help his reader believe it: 'the realization that a trustworthy communicator intends to make you believe something is an excellent reason for believing it' (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 163).

Therefore, even though communication is marked by different degrees of trust and social cooperation, lack of trust does not stop ostensive communication taking place. The success of ostensive communication is defined as the hearer recovering the speaker's informative intention, not as the speaker making the hearer believe something. Therefore, the hearer may successfully recover the assumptions intended by the speaker without actually believing him. Moreover, trust, in itself, is not necessary for belief to occur. It is possible for a belief to be formed without trust between the speaker and hearer. So cooperation at the cognitive level is the essential prerequisite for ostensive communication, not cooperation at the social level. Advertising is a typical situation where trust is lacking. Therefore, the advertiser's task is to make his hearer believe something about his product or service without his trusting in him, or, despite his distrusting indeed.

4.4 The Importance of Attention Drawing of Advertising Headlines

As what has been discussed above, advertising is typical of a situation in which the speaker is

not trust worthy and the hearer is not trusting. It is mutually manifest that the advertiser says something because he wants his hearer to buy his product or service. Therefore, there is conscious resistance to the influence of the advertisement in the hearer's mind. Davidson has put it like this: advertisers are taught to assume the worst about those who will read and decode their ads that they are writing for people cynical and apathetic about advertising, people, in other words, who have to be dissuaded from thinking ads ill-founded and made in bad faith.

One more fact needs to be mentioned is that advertisements often exist on the periphery of receivers' attention. Advertisements usually are added information below news and column articles in the newspaper and magazines, and people usually don't pay much attention to them. Because advertisements are not intentional focal points, there is a crucial need to make it attractive, and effective in the end.

On the other hand, consumers are non-responsive and fickle. Advertisers can not take the consumers' response for granted. What's more, they can not even assume there will be such response. The big challenge facing the advertisers is to overcome the boundless apathy and miniscule attention span of the average audience. Therefore, the advertisers can not rely on the audience's cooperation at the social level; he has to aim to achieve his intended effects by means of an artfully crafted stimulus. The first and perhaps the most important thing to do is to employ some devices to attract and hold the consumers' attention, which is also the first task of the AIDA—Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between advertising headlines and ostensive communication, and it has pointed out that relevance theory can be applied to the explanation of the force of the language in advertising headlines. This chapter also demonstrates the importance of relevance in advertising headlines. Furthermore, it explores the communicative

situation of the advertising headlines, and proposes that lack of trust and cooperation between the advertiser and the audience does not prevent the occurrence of ostensive communication in advertising, because it is cooperation at the cognitive level not at the social level that is involved in ostensive communication. Therefore, in order to overcome the distrust and apathy of the audience, the advertiser has to take some devices to attract the attention of the audience and leads them towards optimal relevance. Before showing the devices of attention-drawing devices in the writing of advertising headlines, the author is going to analyze the factors that affect the response of the audience in the next chapter; after that, the devices for writing will be discussed and analyzed with case study.

Chapter Five

Factors Affecting Responses to Advertising Headlines

Nancy Benson, a famous researcher, has claimed that what advertisements do to people is only half a question. The remainder is what people do to advertisements.

Because advertising does not work in vacuum, it is influenced by factors beyond the control of advertisers, like social and economic factors in the society, and internal factors such as personal selling, packaging, distribution, and so on. But in this thesis, the author confines the influencing factors facing the advertisers into individuals, and the aim is to see how individuals process the information of advertising headlines. It is expected that, by analyzing these influencing factors, the author can find a better way to have an insight into the audience, which in the end, may help to the writing to be discussed in the next chapter.

5.1 The Frame of Reference

The idea of the frame of reference is: "Psychological processing is patterned, as jointly determined by operating internal and external factors, whether consciously experienced or not."

To understand this, let us start with behavior, specifically the type of behavior that can be observed, the overt behavior (OB).

People wink, look at an ad, stand up and so on. These are behaviors that occur at a given moment in time. These are not of our concern in this thesis. Our focus is the overt behavior, which is interpreted by the Sherifs as one proceeds from psychological processing (PP) taking place within the individual at that given moment in time. This processing is patterned as what is stated by the proposition; that is, it represents an order for that individual processing a particular set of stimuli at that particular moment.

PP → OB

There are two variables that determine the psychological processing at any moment: external factors and internal factors. External factors are those things going on outside of you at any moment, such as the environment you are in, the people around you, the kind of thing there attracting your attention, etc. Internal factors are all those things going on inside you at the same moment, for instance, your health, your experience, your attitude and knowledge, etc. The two factors are processed by you from moment to moment, resulting in different behaviors depending on the psychological pattern—the order of yours.

External factors



PP → OB



Internal factors

Therefore, if you are in the supermarket trying to buy a bottle of shampoo, you are very likely to be influenced by the advertisements on the spot, and you are also influenced by your memory of the past shampoo advertisements you have seen before. If you have seen the advertisement of Pantene on TV before, and at the same time, there is a sale in the supermarket of Pantene Shampoo, you are much more likely to buy the shampoo of this brand than those of the other brands.

5.2 Selectivity—the Ongoing Psychological Activity

The answer to the question “why I see things is different from others” is quite simple—because they are not you! Every person is engulfed in a virtually infinite number of both external and internal stimuli, but one can not pay equal attention to all of them. As a

result, one is constantly selecting certain things out of these external and internal factors to attend to and act upon, and ignoring the others, both consciously and unconsciously.

As the frame of reference concept suggests, people's screening may vary from time to time because of operating external and internal factors. We choose to look at this advertisement because it is interesting and another because it is sexy. We ignore the next may be for the reason of a distraction by a conversation. Over some time, our selectivity begins to form patterns, which means, we are more likely to select some things rather than the others, although it is possible that at given moment our normal selectivity may be aborted. The selectivity of people's ongoing psychological activity, therefore, is a key to understand consumers' responses to advertising headlines.

Advertisements are, by most consumers, an involuntary exposure. So how the psychological selectivity works to screen out much of the advertising we could see? One research has showed that people who already use an advertised product are more likely to perceive an advertisement for that brand than those who do not use it. Especially in high-risk products like cars, this is very true. This may suggest a way of seeking the confirmation for the purchasing decision, and may also be simply an expression of feeling comfortable with the product in general, including its advertisements. This reinforced selectivity affects consumers in relation to product classes, too. So alcohol drinkers are much more likely to read alcohol ads than non-drinkers. This phenomenon, obviously, is of great interest to advertisers. Each of us perceives and acts differently from others, and this screening affects the potential response to the advertisements. Just as what Howard Gossage has observed, "People don't read advertising per se. They read what interests them. And sometimes it's an ad."

5.3 Patterning of Experience

As what has been discussed in psychological selectivity, the patterns play a crucial part in the types of stimuli people are likely to select—often the familiar, the comfortable, and the nonthreatening. That's why many advertisers strive to establish brand images or mental

patterns of their potential consumers about a specific brand of product or service.

Hirschman and Wallendorf have noted that variety of seeking within the general patterns of consumer behavior seems to have two components:

Stimulus variation seeking involves varying the type of stimulation received by rotating one's usage among stimulus objects. Novelty seeking involves varying the type of stimulation received by seeking stimulus objects which are new and different.

Therefore, the advertiser's problem is to determine how much variety seeking is present and how firm are the patterns. However, the action of consumers is under the tendency of following the preference of the surety to the uncertainty, just as they prefer the "old and reliable" to the "new but unfamiliar". The frame of reference may be influenced by the tendency toward patterning of experience, which may be a blessing or a bane for advertising response.

5.4 Structured and Unstructured Stimuli

The ideas of the psychological selectivity and the tendency toward patterning are internal factors that play an important part in how advertising is perceived and acted upon. While, the structured and unstructured stimuli are external factors that need examining. A structured stimulus situation may be defined as one that has a definite pattern, clear-cut, and unambiguous. For example, a ring is more structured than a point. From its definition and this example, one can see that once the external stimulus situation is relatively structured, the influence of internal factors, like our ability to hear what we want to hear, will be lessened. Here is another example. A novel usually has six factors—time, place, characters, the beginning, development, and the ending of the story. No matter we like it or not, this is the rule, the structure. So if the external factors in our frame of reference at any given time are highly structured, the likely contribution of internal patterning is diminished.

The implications for advertising response are significant. Once an ad is highly structured, the opportunity for consumers to interpret it via their internal factors is limited. That is, a relatively structured advertisement would convey a clear and unambiguous message. It can explicitly state the characteristics of the product or service, and get the expected result. Then, the possibility of distortion via internal factors is presumably minimized.

The advantages of this approach are obvious. The advertisement with a headline like "Now, A Profitable Line of Women Dresses for the Small Retailers" clearly signals a particular target. However, the straightforward message may prevent us from misinterpreting it, but it can also limit its appeal. Thus, when utilize a relatively structured message, the advertiser may run the risk of losing the potential audience.

An unstructured stimulus, on the other hand, is a different situation. For example, when exposed to Picasso's painting, different people may have different ideas of the appropriate pattern. So given the psychological tendency toward patterning of experience discussed earlier, and given a not clearly structured external stimulus situation, it follows that the patterning will tend to be added by internal factors. Therefore, different people may interpret a relatively unstructured advertisement in different ways.

The advantages of this approach are that the advertiser can increase the possibility of a wide range of consumers, and that the audience may have a sense of involvement and achievement. However, just as what has been pointed out in relevance theory, the efforts required by processing the message of this approach are difficult to control. If the consumers do not think the message worth their effort, they will not process it. Another pitfall of this approach is that misinterpretation of message may waste advertiser's money.

Thus, the response to advertising messages may be influenced by the degree of structure of the advertising message. If the message is relatively structured, the pattern is already imposed and the chances for interpretation and patterning are lessened. This approach is often employed by the hard-sell school. By contrast, the relatively unstructured stimulus approach

is associated with the soft-sell school. This approach implies a frame of reference with internal factors intended to fill in the gaps left in the message structure.

As agency executive Jeremy Bullmore put it to his fellow practitioners, “We tend to believe that words are very explicit, but I’m not sure they are. I think they are stimuli with the audience filling the gaps.”

In short, this chapter analyzed the factors that affect responses to advertisement, especially the headlines, and by introducing the frame of relevance we examined the interworkings of internal and external stimuli included advertising. The challenge of all is actually people. Because of different experiences on the part of the sender and receiver, the verbal and nonverbal symbols can mean differently to different people at different moments under different frames of reference. The frame of reference concept offers a starting point to understand audiences’ response to advertising, and lays a foundation for the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Making of Advertising Headlines from Relevance Theory

The previous chapters have showed that it is of key significance that a successful advertisement must have an attractive headline. What's more, the advertisement, as a way of communication, is also an ostensive-inferential one. The headline is the first stimulus during this communication process. Sperber and Wilson also claim that a piece of new information is of relevance only if it can achieve contextual effects. The bigger contextual effects are, the more relevant this information is to the context. However, the contextual effects can not be achieved without any effort. After the effort is paid, whether the contextual effect can be achieved is decided by three factors: the complexity of the sentence, the clearness of the context, and how much effort will be taken if one wants to achieve his intended contextual effects.

The new information age has sped up the pace of life and work. Time is precious and thus people usually would not like to spend much time on one thing. As what has been discussed before, advertisements are often considered as the by-products of news in the newspapers, magazines, and TV; therefore, in order to make sure that the money of the advertiser is not wasted, the writer of advertisements has to provide headlines which can achieve the optimal relevance to attract the attention of its intended audience. He has to provide easy-to-understand headlines with novel words that may change the cognitive environment of his audience as a stimulus, so that the processing effort can be less and thus the optimal relevance can be achieved.

This chapter will be devoted to the examination and analysis of some cases of advertising headlines based on the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson.

From the relevance theory discussed in the previous chapters, the author has concluded three

guiding principles for the making of advertising headlines: relevance principle, humor principle, and novelty principle. These three principles will now be explained and examined both theoretically and practically.

6.1 Relevance Principle

Relevance principle focuses on the optimal relevance of the advertising headline between the audience and the advertised product. One can see from the relevance theory that relevance is determined by two factors: contextual effect and processing effort. Therefore, when making the headline, to achieve the contextual effect, advertiser has to find the optimal relevant point which the audience would like to make their processing effort. If the headline is too difficult or not-easy-to-follow, the audience may give up their effort for they do not think the contextual effect deserves their effort.

Following are some examples to show how this principle works.

1. Think different!

This is the well-known advertisement for Apple, one famous computer company of America. Accompanying this headline are some pictures of many outstanding people: Einstein, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Picasso, Turner of the press media, and so on. Under the background of this context, it is very easy to associate these celebrities with the company. Therefore, people get the information by processing the headline that this company, Apple, is also like those famous people that is different in thinking. And the company must be outstanding, too. Though this headline consists of only two words, it has precisely transferred its intended information to the audience, and the audience, on the other hand, can easily get the contextual effect without much effort. Therefore, the headline can be said that it has achieved the optimal relevance and it is a successful one.

2. Quality never goes out of style.

This is the advertisement of Levis'. It directly points out that it is the quality that the Levis' is pursuing constantly. And the audience can also get the contextual effect that Levis' is a brand that is of good quality. This direct way of making quick relevance between the advertising headline and the advertised product can help audience get through quickly. This direct way is employed very often among advertisers. And the advantage, of course, is the quick understanding and response.

3. The choice of a new generation.

This is a very successful advertising headline for Pepsi Cola. Because of the significant position of Coca Cola in America, it is of great difficulty for Pepsi Cola to enter the cola market. Coca Cola is considered as an epitome of the American culture, and it also has been evaluated as the most valuable brand in the world. Under this background, how to make an advertisement that can arouse the interest of the audience is really a task. But the advertiser is smart enough to find a new relevant point. He has fully understood the customers, and thus finds out that they need something new. People like new things. This is a stimulus. Also, by employing the 'new generation', it also implies that those who still drink Coca Cola may be out of date. They belong to the 'old generation'. So if you want to stay in line with the young people, drink Pepsi, then. Because of this psychological implication of the headline and a series of big promotions followed, Pepsi Cola has got his share both at home and abroad.

The above analyses of the three successful advertising headlines have showed that relevance principle is of significant use in the making of advertising headlines. Because relevance principle, based on the relevance theory, focuses on finding the optimal relevance that can help the audience get the contextual effect through the justified processing effort, it will be of great application in the headline writing.

6.2 Humor Principle

Sperber and Wilson argue that from the style of communication it is possible to infer such things as what the speaker takes to be the hearer's cognitive capacities and level of attention, how much help or guidance she is prepared to give him in processing her utterance, the degree of complicity between them, their emotional closeness or distance. Besides, it has been noted that there exists a problem of trust and social cooperation lacking between the advertisers and the consumers. Therefore, the main task of advertisers should be to find a way to improve the social relations with his consumers and let his style acceptable to his audience.

The Independent (1 July 1992) quotes Simon Anholt, one of the multilingual copy-writing service Translators in Advertising: 'The British like humor, especially irony and puns...' This goes as well in China. Therefore, humor may be one way to solve the distrust problem of the audience in these two countries.

The humor principle is, therefore, focusing on employing such linguistic devices like pun and irony, to advertise their products while at the same time lessen the distrust of their audience.

6.2.1 Pun

Pun, as what has been mentioned by Crompton "One of the main advertising strategies is 'Make 'em laugh'", may be of some help to overcome the distrust of the advertisers. So pun is a very important device to employ in writing the advertising headlines.

Pun is defined as 'a use of words that have more than one meaning, or words that have the same sound but different meanings, so that what you say has two different meanings and makes people laugh' by *Collins English Language Dictionary* (1987: 1164). It consists of homonyms—one word with several meanings and homophones—one same sound can be recalled by several words. Homophones and homonyms can be whole phrases rather than

single words, and similarities between words and phrases do not have to be absolute to have the ambiguous effect of a pun (Nash 1985: 137-47).

As what is put forward by Sperber and Wilson, the success of communication depends on the hearer's recovery of the speaker's intended interpretation, and not merely on her recognition of its linguistic meaning. Therefore, as long as the speaker's intended interpretation is recoverable, communication can be successful when there is more than one possible interpretation of an utterance. In fact, it is difficult to find any utterance that does not require some degree of disambiguation, reference assignment or enrichment in ordinary communication. But this problem can be invariably resolved in context. However, there are cases when the hearer can not identify the interpretation intended by the speaker, which is called equivocation. When the hearer is unable to assign an utterance a single intended interpretation, this utterance becomes equivocal. Such utterance is then interpreted as ambiguous, and the hearer has to seek clarification to recover the speaker's intention. If the hearer can not determine the speaker's intention because of the unsolvable ambiguity, then communication fails.

From the aspect of relevance theory, a pun has the following functions: the speaker by employing a pun can intentionally trigger two or more interpretations, but the hearer will reject the most accessible interpretations in search of a more acceptable interpretation. It is manifest to both speaker and hearer that the speaker intends his hearer to notice more than one interpretation by a pun. In most cases, it is mutually manifest that only one interpretation can be retained because other interpretations are to be rejected in favor of the one intended by the speaker. When a speaker intends two meanings to be recovered, they reinforce one another in some way.

In conclusion, the essence of a pun lies in its multiple interpretations. It is necessary to the hearer to access more than one interpretation of a given utterance if the speaker wants his pun to achieve his intended effect.

In addition, as Dyer has discovered, advertisers often deliberately cause their audience extra processing effort by employing puns. This is because the first and perhaps the most important requirement of an advertisement is that it should attract and hold an audience's attention. Extra processing effort may therefore be said to be the price which the advertiser has to pay to get his message noticed at all. Without an 'attention-grabbing' device such as a pun, an audience might pay no attention to an advertisement, which would thus achieve no effects at all. Moreover, solving a pun can help to retain attention, so that an opinion which the addressee might scarcely notice is strengthened because of the extra processing effort involved.

Therefore, relevance theory has provided the best framework for analyzing the role of puns in advertising, especially in regard to the question of processing effort. Even though puns require greater processing effort than straightforward utterances, extra contextual effects are yielded which outweigh the greater effort. In other words, puns achieve optimal relevance despite extra processing effort, because this is the most economical way to achieve a full range of intended contextual effects.

The following are some examples of the use of pun in advertising headlines.

1. I am More satisfied!

It is More you!

More is a brand for cigarettes. Meanwhile, it has become the modifiers for the adjective satisfied and the pronoun you. The advertiser clearly takes advantage of the same sound of the brand name of the cigarette with the comparative degree in linguistics, therefore, making a surprisingly successful effect. By processing this headline, the audience can get the contextual effect that the brand of More cigarette, can make him satisfied. Meanwhile, he can also get the contextual effect that More cigarette can make him more satisfied than the other brand of cigarettes. This is exactly an example of a pun with two communicated meanings. Even though it requires greater processing effort than the straightforward utterance, More brand

cigarette makes me more satisfied, the extra contextual effects are yielded which outweigh the greater effort. Besides, the audience, after the processing progress, will feel more satisfied in achieving the information intended by the advertiser than the processing of the direct information. Also, by this process, the advertiser can establish a friendly image among his audiences, so the distrust problem may be lessened.

2. The unique spirit of Canada: We bottled it.

This is an advertising headline for a Canadian whiskey. The pun lies in the usage of two words: spirit and bottle. The audience knows that there are two meanings of spirit. First, it stands for the spirit of the Canadian country; second, it can also mean a kind of strong alcohol. To bottle also has two meanings: first, it means to put alcohol into a bottle; second, it means to preserve Canadian's national spirit just like putting alcohol into a bottle. By deliberately choosing these two words, the advertiser therefore forms a pun in the headline. Though some of the audience may not get the whole message due to their understanding of the words, this kind of wordplay is really attractive at the first sight. And to those who have got the whole meaning, may feel very proud, and they may even tell it to their friends to see if they can or not interpret it. By this way, the advertising headline has finished its job as attention-getting, and has also played an important role in publicity of its advertised product. That is also a reason why pun is liked by many advertisers in making a headline.

From the above examples we can see that a pun is essentially a device to attract and retain the audience's attention. For advertisers, more than for almost any other kind of communicators, it is crucial to attract the attention of audiences, and the pun is one of the linguistic devices most frequently exploited to this end. The extra processing effort needed to solve the pun helps to sustain the audience's attention for a longer period of time and makes the advertisement more memorable.

The audience gains extra contextual effects based on the pleasure and satisfaction of having solved the pun. These effects may affect the audience's attitude to the advertisement, and

ultimately, the product advertised (Tanaka 1992).

6.2.2 Irony

According to Feng Cuihua in *English Rhetorical Options*, irony is a figure of speech that achieves emphasis by saying the opposite of what is meant, the intended meaning of the words being the opposite of their usual sense. This form of irony is called verbal irony.

Advertisers sometimes resort to irony to attract people's attention and arouse their interest. Also, because of the humorous effect of irony, it has also been employed as one linguistic device in making the advertising headlines.

6.2.2.1 Echo and Irony

In the view of Sperber and Wilson, the traditional consideration of irony as a device of communicating the opposite of what is literally said is theoretically inadequate because saying the opposite of what one means is patently irrational, and on this approach, it is hard to explain why verbal irony is universal and appears to rise spontaneously, without being taught or learned (Sperber and Wilson 1992).

According to the explanation by the relevance theory, verbal irony involves no special machinery or procedures not already needed to account for a basic use of language, interpretive use, and a specific form of interpretive use, echoic use. An utterance may be interpretively used to represent another utterance or thought that it resembles in content. The best-known type of interpretive use is reported speech. An utterance is echoic when it achieves most of its relevance not by expressing the speaker's own views, nor by reporting someone else's utterances or thoughts, but by expressing the speaker's attitude to views he tacitly attributes to someone else.

Ironical utterances are cases of echoic interpretation. The notion of echo in analyzing irony is

a technical one; it is deliberately broad, and goes beyond what would generally be understood by the ordinary language word 'echo'. It covers not only cases of direct and immediate echoes, but also echoes of real or imaginary attributed thoughts, and echoes of norms or standard expectations.

Verbal irony invariably involves the implicit expression of an attitude, and that the relevance of an ironical utterance invariably depends, at least in part, on the information it conveys about the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed. The attitude expressed by an ironical utterance is invariably of the rejecting or disapproving kind. The speaker dissociates himself from the opinion echoed and indicates that he does not hold it himself. Indeed, it may be obvious in the circumstances that he believes the opposite of the opinion echoed. Irony rests on the perception of a discrepancy between a presentation and the state of affairs it purports to represent.

Following is an example of the successful application of irony in advertising headlines.

The penalty of leadership

(Cadillac)

This is an advertising headline for Cadillac, one world's famous car brand. In this headline, the advertiser echoes the uniforms on what can be counted as a penalty. To own a luxurious car such as a Cadillac can in no way be regarded as a punishment to the owner. The advertiser is obviously dissociating himself from the literal meaning of the utterance. The ironical effect is achieved by the perception of the discrepancy between the representative and the state of affairs it purports to represent. What the advertiser intends to communicate is in fact the following information:

Cadillac is an award to those with leadership.

This is the information of optimal relevance to the audience. The irony in this headline makes the advertisement contrary to people's usual expectation of what an advertisement is like, that is, advertisements usually carry positive comments on the products or services they advertised. Therefore, the headline will immediately catch the audience's eyes and lead him to process it until he acquires the optimal relevance. Irony is a very effective eye-catching linguistic device.

In addition to the eye-catching effect, irony can also lessen the innate refusing of the audience. For instance, if the headline of the above example of Cadillac is not 'The penalty of leadership', rather, it is 'Cadillac is an award to those with leadership', the people may feel not good at it. They may think this advertisement is only with the aim of selling Cadillac car to them, and they are not very likely to take it. However, by this headline—The penalty of leadership, people can feel better because of its humorous and ironical effects. Therefore, the irony in the headline can not only grab the audience's attention, but also can help the advertiser build goodwill with the audience.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that irony, as an attention-getting device, is very effective even though it is not very commonly used in advertisements. That is for the reason that it is of great difficulty to control the ironical degree. However, a good irony can leave deep impression on the audience with its contradiction with people's usual expectations. If it has been employed in a right way, it will achieve very good results just like the Cadillac case.

6.2.3 Conclusion

Advertising headline needs humor in many circumstances. As Crompton (1987: 36) puts it: 'When you have nothing to say, use showmanship'. Creating a puzzle is one way of trying to make a stale message more appealing.

It is especially important for advertisers to divert an audience's attention away from a message which is either expected or boring (Crompton 1987: 172-4). Thus the headlines of

More would certainly be more successful in attracting attention than the direct one a) below.

a) More cigarettes make you more satisfied!

Some headlines may also succeed in attracting attention because they seem negative, whereas advertisements are expected to promise an abundance of good things, just like the Cadillac example. Thus Cook (1992: 222) says: 'if an ad departs from expectation it will attract attention'. And in most cases, advertisements are expected to say nice things to the audience, and not to call them names or rebuke harshly. This is a point by many advertising researchers, for example, the famous advertiser Ogilvy. However, as analyzed above, the headline of Cadillac strikes the audiences by talking about desirable things in a negative way, setting up a challenge which the audience is tacitly invited to solve. Therefore, it also achieves very successful results.

According to Dyer, once attention has been attracted, the advertiser's main desire is that his audience should consider, like, and remember the advertisement (Dyer 1982: 139-40). Because devices like pun and irony takes longer to process, it sustains the audience's attention over a long period of time, and once comprehended, it is often remembered. The audience may congratulate himself and may think of the product in congenial terms as a result. He may also tell others about the headline which he thinks is clever or unusual, thereby spreading information about the advertisement.

The humorous side of pun and irony is especially important in achieving the advertiser's goals in certain situations. By offering an amusing and humorous pun or irony, the advertiser provides his audience with the desired entertainment, and thus makes them congenial towards the product which he is promoting. He simultaneously overcomes some of the distrust which the audience feels towards him.

Besides pun and irony as linguistic devices, there are also other humorous means by which headlines are made. However, it is not true that everyone likes humor. Just as what Simon

Anholt said: 'The British like humor, especially irony and puns. But you have to change this for the Germans and Swedes, who say that they don't buy from clowns'.

Thus, the humor principle should be used in a careful way which must involve considering the preference of culture and your target audience.

6.3 Novelty Principle

Novel means new. Therefore, this principle deals with the problem of new. In other words, you have to assign your advertising headline a new feature that can be distinguished from other headlines. However, how to make the headline distinctive? The answer may rely on the linguistic devices and word choice. The following part will explain this in detail.

6.3.1 Metaphor

Collins English Language Dictionary gives the definition of metaphor as: a metaphor is an imaginative way of describing something, by referring to something else which has the qualities that you are trying to express. (*Collins English Language Dictionary* 1987: 910)

Metaphor is regarded as the fundamental figure of speech, and it has been widely used in advertising. The reason for advertisers' preference of metaphor is just as what Crompton has said that it is especially important for advertisers to divert an audience's attention away from a message that is either expected or boring. Thus advertising with metaphors would almost certainly be successful in attracting attention with its vivid and unusual description. The audience will be invited to process the metaphorical utterance and be made to see resemblances between the promoted product or service and the object or property featured in the metaphor.

6.3.1.1 Loose Talk in Relevance Theory

Sperber and Wilson (1896: 228-9) claim that an utterance can be used to represent things in two ways. On the one hand, it can be used to represent a state of affairs in virtue of being a true description of that state of affairs. This is called the descriptive use. On the other hand, an utterance can represent another utterance in virtue of some resemblance in content, in that they share logical and contextual implications. This is called the interpretive use or interpretive resemblance.

Interpretive resemblance is context-dependent and a matter of degree. When the proposition expressed by the utterance is identical with the thought it represents, the utterance is described as 'literal'. When the proposition expressed by an utterance resembles the thought it represents only to some degree, the utterance is called loose talk by Sperber and Wilson.

Sperber and Wilson argue that a loose use of language is rife in ordinary communication, and that strictly literal use is rare. From the standpoint of relevance theory, there is no reason to think that the optimally relevant interpretive expression of a thought is always the most literal one. The speaker is presumed to aim at optimal relevance, not at literal truth. The optimal interpretive expression of a thought should give the hearer information about that thought which is relevant enough to be worth processing, and should require as little processing effort as possible. The search for optimal relevance leads the speaker to adopt, on different occasions, a more or less faithful interpretation of his thoughts. Often the most economical means of communicating the speaker's thought is to speak not literally but loosely. As for the hearer, unless there is a specific reason to believe that the utterance is literal, it should be assumed that there is some degree of looseness in the utterance.

6.3.1.2 Metaphor and Relevance Theory

Metaphor is a variety of loose talk. Metaphorical utterances reflect a different degree in the scale of 'resemblance' between the utterances used and the thought communicated. The addressee, in his search for the optimal relevance, is forced to see a resemblance between the

object featured in the metaphor and the object to which the metaphorical utterance refers.

The speaker intends to communicate a range of implicatures by a metaphor. The relevance of the metaphor to the hearer is established by recovering those implicatures. There are two types of metaphor: standardized metaphor, in which the addressee is encouraged to recover a narrow range of strong implicatures, and creative metaphor, in which the addressee is forced to look for a wide range of weak implicatures.

In the interpretation of a metaphor, the addressee does not have to undergo the process of considering the literal interpretation, then rejecting it and looking for a non-literal interpretation. The context in which the metaphor is processed will determine that the first accessible interpretation should be the less than literal one.

In the next part of this section, some cases about the use of metaphors in advertising headlines will be analyzed from the perspective of relevance theory.

1. NEWSWEEK—Tomorrow's High Tech Office

This is a headline for Newsweek. On reading the headline, the audience will immediately form the image of a High Tech office in his mind: a modern office with high tech facilities. And in this office there are charming people with intelligence. The audience will associate this image with the high efficiency and intelligence of the Newsweek. Therefore, they can derive the following strong implicature:

(1a). NEWSWEEK is of high efficiency and intelligence.

However, the audience will not stop here. He may be encouraged to drive some weak implicatures:

(1b). NEWSWEEK is for people who are in High Tech Office to read.

(1c). NEWSWEEK is for people who want to work in High Tech Office.

(1d). NEWSWEEK is for people who are highly efficient and intelligent.

(1e). NEWSWEEK is for people who want to be highly efficient and intelligent.

In this example, (1a) is a fairly strongly communicated, whereas (1b), (1c) and (1d) are somewhat weakly communicated, thus leaving the audience to take a larger responsibility for recovering the interpretation, which is a further advantage for the advertiser.

2. CRC Department Store offers you “a whole bag of satisfaction”.

This is a headline for CRC Department Store. The audience, on reading the headline, will search through his encyclopedic knowledge of words such as ‘bag’ and ‘satisfaction’. Therefore, he will probably get the strong implicature that CRC Department Store is a place that can make you very satisfied.

However, he will not feel satisfied for this. He may associate the word ‘bag’ with ‘money’, thus getting a weak implicature that CRC Department Store is ready for those who have money, and by spending money in CRC Department Store, you will surely feel satisfied. The advertiser purposely employ the word ‘bag’ and form a metaphor, thus create some weak implicatures. Meanwhile, the optimal relevance is established by inferring implicatures which are derived from the encyclopedic information about words and phrases such as the word ‘bag’.

From the above analyses, it can be seen that metaphor is very effective for it helps people acquire optimal relevance. Metaphor can invite the audience to process the headline with its creativity in depicting things, and through the interpretation process, it makes the audience see some resemblance between things he may not have seen before. Thus, it is a widely used figure of speech in the making of advertising headline.

6.3.2 Repetition

Repetition is usually adopted to add force and emphasis to the statement. It is obvious that the repetition of a word, a phrase, or a sentence can invariably catch the audience's eyes. Therefore, it is also an effective device that is often employed by advertisers to make the headlines.

6.3.2.1 Repetition and Relevance Theory

The effects of repetition on utterance interpretation are by no means constant, but the interpretations follow automatically from the principle of relevance.

Within the framework of relevance theory, the task of the audience faced with utterances containing repetition is to reconcile the fact that a certain expression has been repeated with the assumption that optimal relevance has been aimed at. Clearly, the extra linguistic processing effort incurred by the repetition must be outweighed by some increase in contextual effects triggered by the repetition itself. Following is an example of the successful use of repetition in advertising headlines.

When you're sipping Lipton, you're sipping something special.

This is a headline for Lipton. The repetition of 'you're sipping' has a deep impression on the audience, which can easily make the audience associates Lipton with something special. Therefore, it has achieved optimal relevance.

6.3.3 Hyperbole

According to *Longman Modern English Dictionary* by Owen Watson, hyperbole is a figure of speech which gently exaggerates the truth. It is usually used for emphasizing. The definition itself clearly explains why advertiser favors this device in advertising: the advertisements with hyperbole will immediately catch the readers' eyes with its conscious exaggeration once they are exposed to them.

6.3.3.1 Hyperbole and Relevance Theory

Hyperbole, like the metaphor, is also a loose use of language. It has been mentioned in the last section how audience acquires optimal relevance from metaphor. This section will focus on hyperbole.

In the interpretation of a hyperbole from relevance theory, as in that of a metaphor, there is no reason for the audience to treat the utterance as literal. He just uses the idea expressed in the utterance as a source of cognitive effects. The context in which the utterance is processed will lead the reader to recover the weaker interpretation intended by the speaker.

1. Aurore owner heading to Washington to lobby for more twisty roads

This is a headline for Aurore of GM. It will greatly catch the audience's attention and arouse their interest because it is usually impossible for people to like twisty roads. Then the audience may use the idea as a source of cognitive effects to justify the presumption of relevance. He will remember that if a driver does not hate twisty roads, he must have a car that can let him flow effortlessly through tight curves. When this headline is processed against this context, and together with the written text which emphasizes the enhanced agility system, the audience will derive this implicature:

(1a) The agility system of the new Aurore is so amazing that it can make you flow effortlessly through tight curves.

Another example from Toshiba goes like this:

2. Take Toshiba, take the world.

This exaggeration has a strong reflection of the confidence of the Toshiba Company. The

audience can feel this confidence, and thus may get the implicature that the product is of high quality and that by owning it, you will have the whole world.

As what has shown above, a good use of hyperbole can effectively arouse the audience's interest and draw their attention. However, this device should be used carefully because if advertiser has exaggerated something that it can not actually do too much, he will get into trouble. Besides, it is also against the benefits of the audiences.

6.3.4 Other Devices in Making Advertising Headlines

There are also other figures of speech that deserve to be taken care of, such as alliteration. For instance, one headline of a car goes like this:

Sea, Sun, Sand, Seclusion—Spain

The use of alliteration in the ad produces a very powerful effect. Reading the advertisement, people will promptly call to mind the beautiful scenery of sunshine, sandy beach and sea, as well as the comfort and peacefulness it brings about. A very positive image of the car stands out in people's mind.

Besides the above mentioned figures of speech, there are also some devices that can make the headlines look fresh, for example, the use of rhymes. English is a language with rhymes. Thus, advertisers can make good use of it when making the headlines. Like this headline shoes:

Workout without Wearout

This headline is about sneakers, showing how durable the sneakers are. It has both the Alliteration and the Consonance, and therefore it reads very fluent and is very easy to repeat and remember. This headline is one example of the excellent use of English rhymes.

In order to make the headline fresh and attractive, advertisers also purposely change the spelling of words to get the attention grabbing effect, like the following example:

Swing into McDonald's and –Swing out with that Treeeeat!

In this headline, the spelling of treat has been changed to Treeeeat for a special effect. The repetition of “e” immediately attracts the attention of the audience to the word “treat” that implies good food, drink and entertainment in McDonald's.

In conclusion, the novelty principle focuses on the “new” factors in making advertising headlines. Advertisers, when making the headline, can consider the different figures of speech that have been mentioned, and make good use of them to make their headlines more afresh and attractive.

6.4 Conclusions

Based on the relevance theory, this chapter put forward the three principles of making advertising headlines: relevance principle, humor principle, and novelty principle. These three principles are introduced from the perspective of how to achieve the optimal relevance.

Besides, this chapter analyzed the different figures of speech relating to the three principles in headline making from the relevance theory. It can be seen that from these linguistic devices such as pun, metaphor, and so on, there appear to be some assumptions which advertisers hold about their audiences, especially their level of attention, knowledge of the world and processing abilities. Also, advertisers treat their audiences as potentially creative and resourceful, once they have managed to gain their attention. Thus, some puns and metaphors, and so on require a search through the audience's encyclopedic knowledge, extension of context, and considerable imaginative effort. The audience can also feel the humor effect and aesthetic pleasure of advertiser's use of such devices.

However, as what has been mentioned in chapter five, advertisers should also take the audience's response into consideration when making the headlines. If they don't like the humorous style, for example, the German people, an advertiser should not use the humor principle like the use of pun or irony. The style of the headline should be in tune with the preferences of the audience.

All in all, when making advertising headlines, advertisers should take all the factors into consideration, and provide an optimal relevance in his headline. Meanwhile, he should choose an appropriate style according to the preferences of his promising customers.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

On the basis of the relevance theory, this thesis focuses on the analyses of how the audience acquires optimal relevance from advertising headlines, and meanwhile, proposes three principles as to how to make the advertising headlines.

According to Sperber and Wilson, the style which the speaker employs reveals the kind of relationship which he envisages between himself and his audience. Advertising headline is a special kind of communication, and the trust and cooperation between advertiser and his audience of advertising headline is limited or lacking. What's more, advertising headline is always at the periphery of the audience's attention, and the audience is assumed to have low attention level to it. Therefore, in order to overcome these barriers and difficulties, and achieve the goal of attention-grabbing, persuading, and influencing, advertiser should put more efforts in making a good headline.

The three principles in making advertising headlines: relevance principle, humor principle, and novelty principle put forward in this thesis focus on the optimal relevance of the relevance theory. They are examined in cases. Such linguistic devices as pun, metaphor, irony, and so on have also been analyzed in the perspective of relevance theory, like how the audience interprets them and how they play an eye-catching role in a headline.

It can be seen from the relevance theory and the practical experience examined in the cases that the use of linguistic figures of speech can help the audience acquire optimal relevance, and understand the headlines, and thus they play an important role in attention-getting. As it has been mentioned before that Ogilvy is against the use of such devices as pun or metaphor, in practice, however, they do work.

But advertisers should also pay attention to the preferences of the audience because some

people would not like the humorous style formed by pun or irony. And some audience may not like the metaphor in the headline because it is not worth their processing efforts. They prefer the simple and direct way of advertising headline which is the focus of Ogilvy's method. Therefore, an advertiser has to fully understand his audience before he makes his final headline. As Ogilvy said that advertiser should make at least 16 different headlines before he decides on the final one, advertisers, when making headlines, should try different styles in tune with the prospect audiences, and foresee their responses due to their education and other background.

However, despite the efforts made, due to the time-limit and research competence, the thesis has some imperfections.

Firstly, according to relevance theory, the interpretation of an utterance may vary depending on the different individuals, and they may see different relevance. Thus, the interpretations of the advertising headlines provided as cases may be subjective and they are open to discussions.

Secondly, the thesis mainly analyzed the interpretation process of the audience in understanding somewhat difficult devices like puns, but do not pay much attention to the simple and direct headlines. That's because the author believes no matter whether the headlines are difficult or easy to make, the point is to find an optimal relevance, and of course direct ones can be made with less effort. Due to the limited space, the study focuses more on the sophisticated headlines; therefore, the study is not very comprehensive in this respect.

It is hoped that people who are interested in this subject may continue to do the study, and improve the inadequacies to be found in this thesis. Hopefully, advertisers in practice can benefit from these studies, and make more effective headlines

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