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SOCIAL ANTI-TOBACCO ADVERTISING: SELECTING REPRESENTATIVE TOOLS TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract

The development of the discourses in mass media and the advertising industry has led advertising not only to promoting goods and services on the market, but also to regulating the life of society. Social advertising is currently called to model the behavior of an individual depending on the norms adopted in this collective. In connection with the spread of nicotine addiction in modern society, anti-tobacco social advertising is of particular importance. However, the unification of advertising messages, the replication of images, the lack of diversification of the target audience significantly reduce the effectiveness of print anti-tobacco advertising. The relevance of the study is due to the need for a comprehensive analysis of the target audience, the allocation of non-verbal images and verbalized concepts that are significant for a particular social group, which have a significant emotional effect that motivates smoking cessation. This article presents the results of a study of print anti-tobacco social advertising conducted with the participation of a group of young people aged 18 to 25 years. The choice of this particular age group is due to the fact that the recipients of this group form the core of the target audience of anti-tobacco social advertising. The study was conducted on the material of the English language as part of the study of the theme "Healthy lifestyle". The results obtained are planned to be used in the implementation of an international student project to create and promote anti-tobacco social posters in the youth environment.

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1. Introduction

At the present stage of development of society, advertising permeates all aspects of human life and is a complex sociocultural phenomenon. The presence of an ever-expanding research base, the increasing role of advertising in society, and the diversification of its types make advertising a popular object of linguistic, psychological, and marketing research.

Traditionally, advertising is divided into two classes: commercial and social. This study focuses on social advertising.

The term social advertising is enshrined in law and defined in the Federal Law on Advertising of the Russian Federation No. 38-FZ. According to Article 3 of the said law, social advertising is understood as “information disseminated in any way, in any form and using any means, addressed to an indefinite number of persons and aimed at achieving charitable and other socially useful goals, as well as ensuring the interests of the state”.

In social advertising, the term PSA is used – Public Service Announcement or Public Service Advertising, as well as Public Advertising. For example, there are definitions of Public service announcement such as "Advertisement carried free of charge by mass media to publicize a message in public interest", "An announcement made for the good of the public".

Unlike commercial advertising, the purpose of which is to promote goods and services on the market, the functionality of social advertising is wider and more diverse. Social advertising is an effective leverage, forming the attitudes of mass consciousness, necessary for society, as well as performing humanistic and axiological functions (Yukina, 2017).

Social advertising implies an addressee-oriented approach to the implementation of psychological impact methods, as it can appeal to more complex types of behavior and beliefs. But, based on practical experience, you should pay attention to the fact that due to the fact that social advertising does not bear any material benefits, it is created quickly and is often ill-conceived. While commercial advertising is created through an analysis of the market, consumer audience, etc., the creation of social advertising is thoughtless, which subsequently affects the effectiveness of advertising (Kazakova, 2013).

2. Problem Statement

This study is an attempt to study social anti-tobacco advertising in order to identify the characteristics of the perception of the potential audience, linguistic and non-linguistic means of influence most effective for the target audience; as well as to determine effective strategies and tactics for the analyzed advertising segment.

3. Research Questions

In order for the study of the influence of social anti-tobacco advertising on youth to be effective, it is important to clearly understand its essence. The tobacco problem is often called an epidemic. And the human losses from such an epidemic now really exceed the losses from most infections. In addition, according to studies, 35 % of women of childbearing age are subject to this habit, which is the cause of adverse consequences for offspring (Balachova et al., 2019). So, the main task of anti-tobacco advertising

is to convincingly inform about the dangers of habits, and the ultimate goal is to reduce the number of smokers and thereby preserve the health of the nation (Yukina, 2017).

This is where the question arises: who is the target of social anti-tobacco advertising? The answer at first glance is obvious. The fight against smoking should be focused on all age groups, based on differences in the perception of smokers, non-smokers and quitting smoking. However, there is no anti-smoking advertising that is effective for everyone; each target audience requires an individual approach. In addition to the need to diversify the audience, studies show that smokers, paradoxically, are not included in the core of the target audience of anti-tobacco advertising.

Under the influence of some perceptual effects, especially the effect of intra-group favoritism and the effect of ignoring the non-accidental, smokers perceive such advertising ironically.

Intra-group favoritism is triggered, for example, when a smoker sees an advertisement in which a smoker is depicted as harming someone (something) with his addiction. And if a non-smoking person takes this message correctly, then for a smoker this situation is quite ordinary (he behaves the same or looks like it is shown in the anti-smoking advertisement) and therefore is not critical, negative.

Ignoring is also a very serious perceptual effect, it is a response to standardized, clichéd messages, for example, about the potential occurrence of diseases caused by smoking. Duplication of images leads to a decrease in the effect of emotional influence, so frightening images placed on packs of cigarettes do not affect smokers and are already perceived as part of the graphic design of the pack.

Due to sociocultural and psychological characteristics, middle-aged and elderly people also cannot be perceived as the core of the target audience of anti-tobacco advertising. This category of recipients has prevailing attitudes and behaviors that require a high level of motivation to change, due, for example, to serious health problems.

The basis of the target audience of anti-tobacco social advertising are teenagers, young people who determine at this stage their attitude to smoking; or young people already smoking, but not having a serious psychological and physiological dependence on nicotine.

Defining the boundaries of the target audience of social anti-tobacco advertising leads to the following level of problems: when creating commercial advertising, an idealized image of the advertised object is used, which affects the selection of visual aids and the verbal content of the advertisement. Social posters are not unambiguous in the choice of linguistic and graphic means: from receptions designed for humorous perception, to shocking and causing horror and disgust. Which of the feelings creates a more sustainable motivation, and is it worth it to count on shock and shocking public? Some researchers are of the opinion that shock exposure, an appeal to fear are most effective in combating smoking.

One of the reports of the Commission of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation states that "the most effective in terms of preventing and stopping smoking are strong, tough images that cause strong negative feelings such as fear, anger, disgust, feelings of guilt and loss," and "negative feelings and discomfort immediately prompt smokers to try to quit smoking; humor, complicated ideas, celebrity appeals, positive messages showing smoking cessation in a positive light do not have a proper impact on behavior, even if viewers like the video itself". Nikolayshvili (2008) believes that fear is an effective tool only to a certain limit. He arguing that the cruelty of the information environment has a negative impact

on the psychological state of society. Terskikh (2015), in turn, is convinced that the main factor is the perception of the degree of threat, depending on which a protective reaction arises (or does not arise), and, consequently, a change in behavior.

Thus, such a method of influence as an appeal to fear is ambiguous in terms of effectiveness, however, it exists (within the framework of the ethical principles of society). Humorous and sarcastic posters find a greater emotional response among the recipients, however, their dominance in this segment is impossible due to the high social significance of the problem.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to highlight strategies that are linguistic and extralinguistic that motivate smoking cessation. In connection with the special social significance of the problem of nicotine addiction, based on the results obtained, it is planned, in the future, to develop recommendations for creating posters of social anti-tobacco advertising. The data obtained in the framework of this study can be used to create a real advertising product as part of an interdisciplinary student project.

5. Research Methods

During the study, a survey of a group of recipients was conducted; statistical methods were used to process the results; semiotic analysis, semantic analysis, contextual analysis, linguocultural interpretation of the units under study were used to describe linguistic and graphic material.

6. Findings

Turning to the question of linguistic and non-linguistic means of representation used in social advertising, it should be noted that the text of social advertising is creolized, i.e. combining various combinations of images, characters and textual accompaniment (Zintsova & Ryabkova, 2017). A printed advertising message usually consists of non-verbal components (visual image, fonts, color highlighting, use of a monochrome image, etc.) and a verbal message. Although there are posters containing either verbal or non-verbal means. However, it should be noted that in this case a decrease in the effectiveness of the message is possible. Social advertising, as a rule, is a concise structured expressive message with a pronounced evaluativity (Kirillova, 2017).

- When analyzing advertising posters on social advertising about the dangers of smoking, five thematic categories were identified that relate to certain areas of life that harm smoking:
- appearance: this category includes mainly female beauty, bad breath;
- health: a series of these posters focuses on the fact that smoking is harmful to health and causes many serious diseases, especially lung cancer, and also destroys gums and teeth, affects the circulatory system, causes impotence and many other disorders;
- success: this group includes posters appealing to the fact that smoking entails a decrease in financial and social success; smokers spend a considerable part of their income on cigarettes, in addition, smoking leads to a decrease in physical and mental activity, and, as a result, to a lower status in society;

- children's health: this category makes you think not about your health and well-being, but about the health of children. This type of poster contains information that smoking is harmful to their children;
- death: this series of posters suggests that smoking ultimately leads to the death of a person.

It is worth noting that not all posters can be attributed to a certain category. Often, a single poster of social advertising contains references to the various consequences caused by cigarettes.

In order to determine which thematic category has the greatest impact on youth, a survey was conducted in which 163 students aged 18 to 25 took part. Respondents were offered several rows of social posters on the dangers of smoking, including all 5 categories, and each row was asked to choose a poster that, in their opinion, had the most effective anti-tobacco effect. The survey data are presented in Figure 01. According to the data obtained, posters belonging to the category of health have the greatest impact. The percentage of those who voted for this category was 37.7 %. Another important incentive to quit smoking for young people is appearance and success, which make up 20.2 and 17.3 %, respectively. The problems of children's health (14.8 %) and premature death from tobacco (9.9 %) are less significant for young people. It is worth suggesting that, due to age, these categories are considered by young people as something distant, not related to them.

Modern youth is characterized by the ability to multitask, which leads to distracted attention and ignoring the details. Young people are subject to a constant flow of information on which they focus for no more than 6 seconds, which affects their visual susceptibility. This leads to the fact that most students can be attributed to the visual type of perception (Arkhipova et al., 2019). Part of our study was to determine which factors (linguistic and extralinguistic) have the greatest impact on youth. The next stage of the survey was that young people were asked to choose what exactly in the poster influenced their choice. They were offered three categories: image, text, graphics. The data are presented in Figure 02.

As the study showed, more than half of the respondents (66.6%) paid attention to the image. Such results were expected, since in most advertising posters the image is located in the central part and takes up much more space. According to various sources, up to 80% of information about the surrounding world enters the human brain visually (Syrova & Chikishev, 2018).

All images popular with recipients are full-color, which confirms the thesis of a greater impact and memorability of color advertising compared to two-color and monochrome. However, on the other hand, in full-color images, there are not too bright shades (or they are present in an insignificant amount), which does not overload the visual perception and does not repel the potential recipient.

It is worth noting that most of the selected images are something unpleasant, for example, dirt, blood, affected parts of the body and organs, thereby invoking the emotional sphere of the recipients. It has been proved that in emotional situations there is a modification of behavioral activity and mobilization of emotional and personal resources (Shabanova & Tarabakina, 2018). However, the images chosen by the respondents do not have shocking content, which confirms the above position on the inefficiency and even antipathy of shock advertising.

The “before/after” strategy works especially well for this type of advertising, however, not in its classic form with two separate images, but with the integration/overlay of part of the image on another.

For example, a poster is a photo of a beautiful young girl whose part of her face is viewed through tobacco smoke, upon subsequent examination, the recipient sees that this part of the face is wrinkled, skin color has changed, etc. Such image processing helps to achieve the desired effect without over-filling the visual range. In this case, the addressee of the advertising message is easier to make a comparison.

As for the background of the image, it is uniform, neutral white, dark grey or almost black. Such a background is not in conflict and favorably emphasizes the main palette of images.

The next category that influenced students' perception is text. 24.7 % of respondents say that it was the text that prompted them to choose this poster. The texts of anti-smoking advertising posters are usually simple and contain a small amount of expression. Grammatically, they are simple common sentences, for example: Every time you smoke your blood gets thick and dirty with toxins. The lexical side of this type of texts is more interesting. In 3 of the 5 most popular posters among students, adverbs of frequency or other parts of speech are found that matter in the regularity or duration of a given habit (every time, always, keep, a year). In addition, in 80% of posters there are words with a negative connotation (dirty, suicide, losing end, lung cancer).

As the results of the survey showed, graphic means affect a smaller number of recipients, their percentage ratio was 8.7 %. The strength of the influence of fonts on the perception of message is certainly inferior to the influence of the image. And it is unlikely that the font can be used as an independent means of influence. But it can still increase memorability and delay the gaze of the addressee on the message for reading and analysis.

During the analysis of selected examples, it was noted that on the posters of anti-tobacco social advertising mostly straight elongated fonts are used. Such graphic content, on the one hand, is typical and concise, but, on the other hand, it helps to read the text easily, which takes less time compared to, for example, oblique fonts with vignettes, handwritten fonts. Rounded fonts are not used in social anti-tobacco advertising, as it was noted that such graphic design is positively accepted by a recipient, but reduces the credibility of the transmitted information, which is unacceptable for anti-tobacco advertising.

During the survey, it was noted that the drawback of the graphic design of the message is the size and font color. The authors of the poster choose a font size that is too small and a font color that is low in contrast to the background or image, making it difficult to read. The recipient, having failed to parse the text, refuses further viewing of the image and switches to the next. In this situation, the poster does not achieve its goal, because the recipient processes only the image, in addition, the recipient has a negative impression caused by the failure of interpretation.

7. Conclusion

So, in the course of the study, a core group of recipients of anti-tobacco social advertising was identified. A survey was conducted and further statistical processing of the results showed the importance of the basic cultural concepts of "health", "beauty (appearance)", "success" for visual and verbal advertising content while forming a negative attitude to smoking in the youth environment. The importance of visualization for broadcasting a message was also noted.

Effective strategies for working with images were recognized as the presentation of the “before/after” photo, images that literally broadcast the harm caused by smoking to the body, as well as original creative humorous sketches, which, however, represent single instances.

Effective linguistic strategies are recognized as short simple sentences, the content of the lexical elements from the semantic field “regularity”/“duration”, allusively sending the recipient to the concept of “dependence”. A negative rating is also transmitted through tokens with negative connotative semes.

The importance of graphic means of text transmission is noted. Their incorrect selection can significantly reduce perception efficiency or even encourage the recipient to refuse to continue viewing advertising content.

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