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**СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ РЕКЛАМНЫХ
ТЕКСТОВ, ПРИЗНАННЫХ
НЕПОЛИТКОРРЕКТНЫМИ И ОБВИНЕННЫХ
В РАСИЗМЕ**

В статье рассматривается влияние рекламы на развитие современного общества и возможность проследить через современный рекламный дискурс отношение общества к определенным проблемам. В работе сделана попытка на основе семантического анализа показать, что уровень опасных расистских отношений в американском обществе достаточно высок. Мы разобрали наиболее яркие примеры той рекламной продукции, которая является общепризнанно политически некорректной и обвиненной в откровенном расизме.

Ключевые слова: денотативное и коннотативное значение, политкорректность, межкультурная реклама.

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**SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF CULTURALLY INSENSITIVE
ADVERTISEMENTS**

The article presents the advertising influence on the development of modern society and the possibility to trace with the help of ad discourse a society's attitude to some problems. Based on semantic analysis we would like to show that the level of racist attitudes in American society is high. The brightest examples of the culturally insensitive ads are analysed.

Key words: denotative and connotative meanings, political correctness, multicultural advertising.

Introduction

Advertising may be described as the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it. It is thus clear that advertising has played a decisive role in today's business world. The issue of whether advertising languages are offensive and non-politically correct has become the point of attention.

So thorough studies on language features of American advertising helps improve both the understanding and designing of successful advertisements. Semantics, on the other hand, is the study of meaning system of a language and its approaches vary widely. In one view, meaning is the relationship between language and the external world (referential or denotative meaning), between a word and the concept it stands for.

In another, it involves the mental state of the speaker, as reflected in a range of personal, emotive overtones (affective or connotative meaning). Semantic is one of the linguistic forms that propel advertising to the desired height. The uniqueness of the word choice and association makes the language of advertising a specialized field of study.

A close examination is made of the various word manipulations and arrangements, the choice of words, word order, denotative and connotative meanings of advertisement **slots**, and other deviations for grounded on established English language code. The idea is to find out how writers create non-PC ads and to provide fuller understanding and appreciation of the texture, meaning and comprehension of the language employed. In advertisement, the choice of diction involves exceptional skills.

This will surely help in finding the right words combination for a given situation. Wrong lexical choices will either inaccurately mar the purpose of communication or at best

vaguely or partially convey the intended meaning. The most important factor in communication is the attainment of a point of understanding of the meaning.

The USA are not so “united”

More and more, marketers are backing away from the idea of targeted multicultural advertising in favour of a "general market" approach. It's a philosophy that seems to fit the current mood of America.

"We're not as divided as our politics suggest," proclaimed Barack Obama during his victory speech. With Americans split down the middle on seemingly every issue -- from guns to health care, from abortion to the deficit -- we did manage to come together and elect our first African-American president.

But the nation is still hardly as unified as the president's rhetoric would have it. Two recent studies suggest, for example, that it may be a grave mistake for marketers to assume that Americans see eye to eye when it comes to race.

One study by professors at Stanford, the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan found that the proportion of voters answering questions with "explicit anti-black attitudes" increased to 50.9% in 2012 from 47.6% in 2008. They found a corresponding decrease among those expressing "pro-Black attitudes," to 41.9% from 46.7%.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there were large differences by political party. And the chasm widened between 2008 and 2012.

In the other study, political scientists at Brown and UCLA found that voters high on a racial-resentment scale moved closer to identifying with the Republican Party, and concluded that Obama's 2008 election "activated long-dormant old fashioned racism" and caused many white Americans to leave the Democrats.

We are not going to be the one to declare that half of Americans, as the first study implies, have racist tendencies. But racism can be *subtle*. It can be institutionalized.

On one end, we see America hoisting the racism-is-over flag, with many believing that Obama's presidential victory is proof positive that racial equality has been achieved, though several journalists attempt to diffuse this mind-set, explaining that Obama is one man, one example, and not a panacea for fixing the racial problem in America. But this attitude has provided fodder for many marketers to permanently plant Black Americans into the general-market segment as they perceive the Obama win as confirmation that Black America has assimilated 100% into the predominate culture. Former radio executive-turned-media-company owner Zamira Jones explains: "We have seen the devaluation of the African-American segment over time. The better we have done, the more marketers have seen us a homogenized group. In essence, we are White people in waiting." It's amazing that the pundits tell us that in order to fit in, African Americans (and others) have to give up their culture when everything around us tells us that Black culture continues to influence mainstream.

On the other end, there appears to be an interest in Black America and a need to re-educate the public about who African Americans really are as a people, and the effect that the Obama win has had not only on the Black community, but also on mainstream America as well. Zamira Jones adds: "Obama's election has sparked an interest nationally and internationally in terms of not only wanting to understand 'Who is he?' but also, 'Who are they [African Americans]?'"

Evidence of this interest is seen post election in major mainstream print media for example. Harvard professor Orlando Patterson writes about the Black influence and exclusion in "The New Mainstream" and provides a contrasting point of view to White America's perception about Black assimilation: "While Blacks have made absolute gains in income and education since the 1960s, their relative position has not changed. ... Socially, blacks are more separate now than at the end of the 1960s."

The Chicago Tribune's cover story in the Nov. 10 issue featured an article about diversity in the workplace, and primarily focused on African-American authority in the workplace. Luke Visconti, partner and co-founder of Diversity, which publishes a magazine on workplace diversity, said this in the article: "Obama's visibility on the national and world stage is an important step toward changing perceptions and cementing the idea that it's normal to have minority leaders. ... As we become very used to an authority figure who's Black, we're going to be much more comfortable with authority figures who are Black." Visconti called this overcoming the "the expectation of the exceptional."

But for those stereotypes to be knocked down, for the education to happen, White America in general -- and marketers in particular -- will have to pay attention and be willing students.

How can we prove it?

Increasingly, advertising examples are being analyzed and used as yet another form of communication, on account of their ubiquity (e.g. billboards, Internet, television, magazines). Designed to *compel* us to purchase products, advertisements have the potential to greatly impact our lives. They show current trends in social preferences, they reveal cultural values and norms of the target audience and, finally, they can be the mirror of the times people live in. We would like to suggest looking at this mirror in order to see the real attitudes toward people that generation after generation try to become a part of the American culture. In our case it will be the semantic mirror.

The U.S. is a culturally diverse society. However, there is also a dominant culture and Asians, Middle-Easterners, and African Americans give up their differences so that they could fit into the mainstream of the society. A more historically accurate metaphor is that the U.S. has had a cultural "cookie-cutter" with a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, *male mould* or shape.

There is another argument that needs to be made. Blacks and

whites, on many measures, see the world in quite different ways. And this has direct implications on how we advertise.

What colour the money is

We are ready to present the necessity of the component semantic analyse of advertisement. It could help to avoid the mistakes that can lead to the harmful consequence for your company reputation and jeopardise its further existence on the modern marketplace. Nowadays we have to control language we use. For working in this industry we have to realise what time it is. We have to see the handwriting on the wall. We have to know what colour the money is. It's black and yellow, brown *and* white.

Semantics is the study of meaning system of a language and its approaches vary widely. In one view, meaning is the relationship between language and the external world (referential or denotative meaning), between a word and the concept it stands for. In another, it involves the mental state of the speaker, as reflected in a range of personal, emotive overtones (affective or connotative meaning). The uniqueness of the choice of words makes the language of advertising a specialized field of study.

This paper presents an analytical study of *the language features of some American advertisements at a semantic level*. Through the detailed survey the semantic features of the language of advertising we can provide with the list of recommendations that could escape non-PC mistakes.

In the analysis, the use of connotative meaning of words, adjectives, coined words, repetition, metaphoric use of words, punning, non-existing words, the use of ambiguous statements are discussed to reveal fuzzy nature that are used by advertisers to achieve their persuasive ends.

Cultural role of advertising

The right question would ask about the cultural role of advertising, not its marketing role. Culture is the place and space where a society tells stories about itself, where values are articulated and expressed, where notions of good and evil, of

morality and immorality, are defined. In our culture it is the stories of advertising that dominate the spaces that mediate this function. If human beings are essentially a storytelling species, then to study advertising is to examine the central storytelling mechanism of our society. The correct question to ask from this perspective, is not whether particular ads sell the products they are hawking, but what are the consistent stories that advertising spins as a whole about what is important in the world, about how to behave, about what is good and bad. Indeed, it is to ask what values does advertising consistently push.

What is racism?

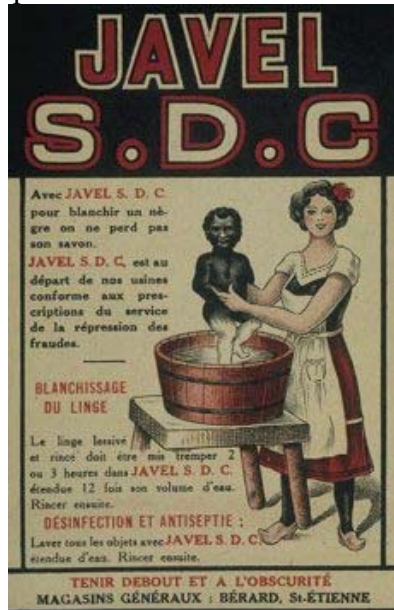
Typically, Asians, Middle-Easterners, and Africa Americans had been victims of racism for a long time. Unfortunately, racism is still an unsolved problem in the present time. The term is the belief that people of some races are inferior to others; it comes from diverse ethnic backgrounds, cultural values, and the physical appearance, especially the colour of the skin. As long as racism is existed in a society, the statement, “All men are created equal,” is not true.

In case of United States of America, African-Americans are the main target of racism in the field of occupations, sports, and advertisings of mass media.

The following examples support how blacks are miserably treated as an inferior class of people in advertisings. In particular, their physique, appearances, the skin of colour, and inferior status are used.

Even though racial discrimination against black people has dramatically decreased in modern times, black people were extremely discriminated in advertisings in the past. In other words, it was very prevalent that black Americans were inferior class to white Americans in the past time. Black people were treated differently because of the colour of skin in advertisings. For instance, most of soap advertisements delivered an extreme message; black people also can be clean and

white if they wash by the soap. In addition, sensational phrases, “the soap makes me white or you can bleach a Negro” used in the soap advertisements.



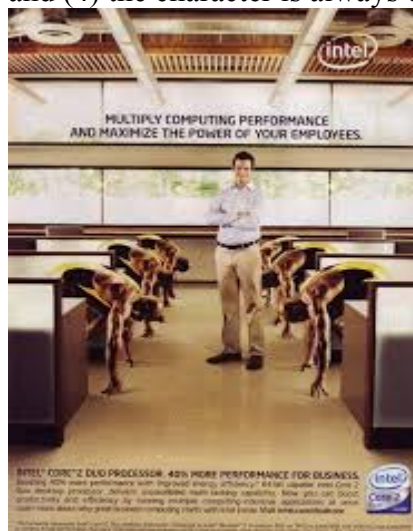
Next, white Americans were portrayed as the strong like wealthy and sophisticated people; however, black Americans were depicted as the weak like servants or waiters in advertisings. As a matter of fact, different social status between whites and blacks was prevalently seen in restaurant advertisements:



In detail, white people who were socially superior ordered food to a black servant. Have you ever seen White people were being subservient to black people? Never did it happen in any advertisement. Always, African Americans have been considered less desirable.

To sum up, in today's, as mentioned before, racism in advertisings is not as severe as in the past, but the social problem of racism is still existed. Especially, black people have been used ridiculously in advertisings:

- 1) their appearances are exaggerated like big lips and skull;
 - (2) a face is frequently used for comedic effect;
 - (3) the black skin colour is considered dirty;
- and (4) the character is always either a servant or poor person.



Nivea's controversial Ad "Give a Damn Campaign" created quite a grumble on Twitter claiming racism was the backbone supporting this marketing outlet together. Displaying a presentable black man preparing to start his day by throwing away his caveman head including the words "Re-Civilize Yourself." Countless websites have questioned if this ad is racist.



Many sites have exhibited another ad featuring a white man doing the exact same thing with the words "Sin City isn't an excuse to look like hell." The ad was trying to display cavemen, not afros, but according to some people it was racist. On Twitter, one tweet emphasized that "Nivea claims that black people aren't civilized." Eventually the debate came to a close after the uproar forced Nivea to put down the ads.

In the wake of nationwide protests over the lack of an indictment for the death of Eric Garner, Walmart is editing a commercial showing a black man saying "I can't breathe" as he's hugged by his daughter.



Waves of protests over the chokehold death of Eric Garner by the NYPD are forcing a major US business to adapt, with

Walmart taking down and changing a commercial after people said it was insensitive for featuring the phrase, "I can't breathe."

Those words, of course, were Garner's last before he died during a confrontation with police that escalated over the sale of untaxed cigarettes in Staten Island.

The same phrase was adopted by protesters nationwide after a grand jury on Dec. 3 declined to indict police officer Daniel Pantaleo for the death of Eric Garner, who uttered the phrase in a video aired in news reports following his July arrest.

We have to admit that one of the most unprofessional and absolutely cultural insensitive ad was presented by Russian agency Voskhod. It promises a new flavour of the week: "Black in White" and has a picture of cartoon Obama standing in front of the Capitol grinning wildly.

This isn't the first time President Barack Obama's image has been exploited in international advertising, but it might be the most bizarre. The idea behind this ad, from Voskhod, for the ice cream bar Duet, is obvious, as are the racial overtones. But do we detect a bit of a sneer in the copy? The line "Flavor of the Week" does suggest that Mr. Obama's popularity was based on little more than fashion. And in these stormy days it's difficult not to read those rainbows in the background as ironic.

The ad is via Ads of the World, where there's a vibrant debate going on in the comments section. Sample: "[T]his is the worst ad ever made, supposed to be funny but turned out to be just racist!"



Truly, black people and white people are completely different from the colour of the skin and physical appearances. As a result, blacks have been considered socially inferior. We are not sure whether or not there is a way to escape from the vicious cycle of racism in advertisings. It is no exaggeration to say that a great number of social minorities suffer from severe racism in a society.

One of the fundamental points we managed to make is that the social causes and effects of using provocative racial imagery in ads images are extremely complex and multilateral. Any consideration of their "meanings" must take into account not only our own personal investments in them and the lifestyles they depict, but also the political economic milieu of which they are an inextricable part.

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