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Modern Media Text in the Context of Ethical and Linguistic Parameters (Based on Media Advertisement in Sphere of Medicine)

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Abstract

The article deals with modern media space in the context of ethical and linguistic aspects. The purpose of the article is to analyze the ethical component of media texts in modern advertisement of medicines and medical services, to study the conditions for compliance of such media advertising with the principles of ecological thinking and ethical and linguistic standards. The study is based on the popular media, such as *Arguments and Facts*, *Komsomol Truth*, *Arguments of the Week*, etc. The article used a discursive cognitive-pragmatic analysis. It is necessary to adapt professional information to the collective addressee understanding level. The creation of high-quality advertising of goods and services in the field of medicine is determined by the interest of both the producer and consumer. Such advertising should be based as much as possible on ethical and linguistic standards, because their violation (connected with information content and the way and means of presenting information, in particular, the intentional use of manipulative techniques) is destructive. Manipulative medical advertising using incorrect methods, understood as a violation of ethical and linguistic standards, is the most destructive one. The authors identified a correlation between the destructiveness of manipulative techniques and the violation of ethical and linguistic standards mandatory for the analyzed type of advertising media texts. Conditions necessary for the effectiveness of advertising goods and services in the medical field determine the research novelty. The article will be useful in media education sphere: in training media specialists, forming media content and creating media products, media literacy dissemination and as a result media space cultivation are extremely important.

Keywords: media text, medical media advertising, media linguistics, marketing linguistics, speech manipulation, ethical and linguistic standards.

1. Introduction

An advertising media text is involved into the life of society (Kulikova, 2025), and therefore the multifactorial study of specialized, health-oriented product advertising has social significance. Media advertising of medicines and medical equipment in non-medical printed media such as *Komsomol Truth*, *Arguments and facts*, *Arguments of the Week*, etc. is harmful.

It is still not defined at the legislative level in spite of the State Duma initiatives aimed at banning goods, and drugs for medicine and the health sector in non-medical media, as well as the need to describe the methods of medical measures and reflect this process in media space in

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professionally oriented media, oriented only for people with medical training, which should ensure conflict-free interaction between advertisers and consumers. However, this has not been implemented at the legislative level yet. A lot of scholarly works are devoted to ethical issues in the field of media advertising (Altsiel, Grow, 2017; Besley et al., 2021; Davis, 2011; Elste, 2014; Kara-Murza, 2007; Mazikova, 2023; Ovrutsky, 2005; Quesenberry, 2015; Rapaille, 2006; Shapovalov, 2017; Tikhomirova, 2016; Tkachev, 2017; Vituzhnikova, Oleshko, 2013, etc.).

Also marketing issues in the field of medical advertising have long attracted attention (Berdibekova, 2019; Borisova, Frolova, 2017; Catoi et al., 2013; Gaudilliere, 2015; Haas, 2016; Stellefson et al., 2020; Kozharnovich, 2021; Pervukhina, 2019; Sakaeva, Mayerkhali, 2022; Tayupova, Polyakova, 2022; Yang et al., 2023, etc.).

This demonstrates the growing interest of society and researchers in the problems of creating and functioning advertising texts in the field of medicine, however, the specifics of ethical and linguistic normativity in medical advertising are not outlined with the necessary completeness, which determines the relevance and scientific novelty of the research. The purpose of the article is to present advertising in media space and to analyze texts of media advertising, specifics of advertising medical products and devices, marketing strategies and tactics used in this sphere in the context of compliance with ecological thinking, ethical and linguistic normativity.

2. Materials and methods

Media advertising of medical products and devices has been studied on the basis of popular media (*Komsomol Truth, Arguments and facts, Arguments of the Week*, etc.). To identify violations of ethical and linguistic norms in medical advertising a discursive cognitive-pragmatic analysis has been applied.

3. Discussion

Advertisement of medical devices does not differ much from the usual commercial advertising of goods in media. However, in addition to the general “Law on Advertisement” (Federal'nyi Zakon..., 2006), there are additional legislative acts prohibiting, for example, the advertising of strictly prescription drugs. In whole, according to our research (and this will be demonstrated in the examples below), the most frequent advertising in media is not the advertising of drugs themselves, but the advertising of medical devices such as “Nadezhda” (in English – Hope), “Aurora”, “Scenar”, “Almag”, etc.) treating everything. Medical advertising can be embodied in different media forms (Fedorov et al., 2014; Lane, 2020; Macgilchrist et al., 2020; Stoumpos et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023).

Models of generating advertisement text having structural, semantic, and pragmatic obligatory parameters have developed and are regularly used (Langer, Gruber, 2021; Li et al., 2023). The structure is determined by the question-and-answer model, semantics and pragmatics are determined by the choice of a model in which either the tactics of appealing to an authority/specialist or the consumer's reception are actualized.

Advertising media texts related to medical sphere (Fedorov, 2001; Fedorov, 2009; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2015; Kayal, Saha, 2023; Kirchhoff, 2022; Kulikova, 2022; Ozbek et al., 2023; Shin et al., 2022) are often based on standard templates. The first and typical microgenre is so-called “puzzling”. The quality of this media texts in this generally template part varies (Fedorov, 2010; Fedorov, Chelysheva, 2002; Fedorov et al., 2019), sometimes they don't stand up to any criticism. For example, the beginning of the advertisement of the medical device “Nadezhda” (Hope):

“Have you ever seen heads of state or prime ministers walking around with a stick?” (Vy kogda-nibud'..., 2023: 9).

The authors of the advertisement seem to think that they have found convincing facts, but in reality it is an obvious substitution of concepts and a discrepancy between the premise and conclusions: the fact that none of the listed leaders “walks with a stick” does not mean that their joints do not hurt.

“It turns out that joints are treated perfectly with modern medical devices! And the most effective treatment method is high-tone electrotherapy....” (Ibid).

In this media advertising the typical element “puzzling”, which is supposed to perform a perlocative function, is rather puzzling. Advertisers are grossly manipulating, manipulation is easily recognizable, and therefore advertising does not attract potential consumers of products (users of the advertised device), but repels them.

Another typical structural component in medical media advertising is “intimidation”. For example:

“If a person elder 40 looked inside him/herself, he/she would be horrified by what he saw: ... And as for the vessels, imagine water pipes clogged with rust and harsh salts. A third of the cells have aged, they do not carry their function, but only poison the body” (Esli..., 2023: 40); “Traumatology. An ordinary day. Fracture of the femoral neck. One more. One more. And all these patients are people over 60. And only 5 % of people will be able to get back on their feet after such an injury. And many even face a fatal outcome. Can you imagine how scary that is?” (Travmatologiya, 2023: 13).

“Intimidations” often involves statistics, or more precisely, false statistics, without specifying the source of the information:

“One in four people aged 30 has joint problems now! And 90 % of people over 50 have arthritis and osteoarthritis” (Problemy..., 2023: 19); “Every third person in the world dies from parasitic diseases” (Kazhdyi tretii, 2023: 7).

The third component is the promotion of a medical product (device), which will help to get rid of all these problems overnight. The formation of an attractive image of the advertised product is often achieved in incorrect ways, for example:

“The device of high-tone electrotherapy “Nadezhda” (Hope) made a splash. The real perfection of medicine... Happy owners of “Nadezhda” (Hope) are no longer afraid of a heart attack and are quite right. Join the lucky ones! ... “Nadezhda” (Hope) is a real diamond of modern medicine. So let your hands become his frame! ... And the main thing is that you will literally turn back time. You will stop the aging. Do you understand? ... Here they are, modern technologies!” (Furor proizvel..., 2022: 7).

Advertisers in media often appeal to the authority of the manufacturing country: *“Israeli scientists have confirmed that prostatitis is curable in 97 % of men – advertising the drug Salutem-pro” (Izrail'skie uchenye..., 2023: 4); “Traditional German quality” – advertising of the Gelenk narung dietary supplement (Traditsionnoe nemetskoe..., 2023: 13).*

In the media advertisement of medicines and medical equipment (Kulikova et al., 2024), the arguments to the logos are replaced by arguments to pathos, emotional exclamations, intimidation, puzzling and praise of the miraculous remedy, the promise of a speedy cure for all the possible diseases.

4. Results

Restrictions for advertisers are fixed in the “Law on Advertisement” (Federal'nyi Zakon..., 2006). The “Law on Advertisement” prohibits the mixing of medicines and dietary supplements. This is implemented in special instructions such as “Dietary supplement”. For example in the media advertisement of bioformula cardio: *“It is not a medicine” (Bioformula..., 2023: 23).*

In media medical advertising may relate to those functions of a human body which were not talked about out loud until recently. In modern media, remedies for constipation, diarrhea, or urinary incontinence are advertised on the same page with serious analytical materials. In “Arguments of the Week”, on the same page with the interview given to the newspaper's correspondent by the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician G. Krasnikov, we read: *“Restore bowel movements after years of constipation with the effective remedy Piloris!” (Vosstanovite stul, 2023: 7).*

And in the newspaper *Arguments and Facts*, immediately after analytical article by V. Kostikov on the situation of the Russian language in the modern world, it is written with capital letters: *“Urinary incontinence is curable!”*. And then there is an advertisement for the device “Nanoprost” (Nanoprost, 2023: 4).

The very existence of advertisement in media, which used to be famous for political analytics (*Arguments and Facts, Arguments of the Week*) is puzzling.

If advertising books may be acceptable to some extent, because it corresponds to the type of edition, then advertising thermal socks “Alyaska” (Termonoski “Alyaska”, 2023: 12), trousers with elastic band “Arrow” (Bryuki..., 2023: 12), knee pads “Move easily” (Knee..., 2023: 12) and hairpieces “Intrigue” (Shin'ony “Intriga”, 2023: 12) evoke memories about the satires by M. Zoshchenko, I. Ilf and E. Petrov.

Although the Federal Law on Advertisement (Federal'nyi Zakon..., 2006) clearly defines unacceptable advertising techniques, they are often used in modern media.

These are:

– indications on the limited time during which it is possible to purchase the product. For example: *“Call right now, today, do not delay. And if you hurry up, you will also have time to*

order the device at the old price!” (Zvonite pryamo..., 2023: 19); “Do not delay your order! A total of 720 devices Glaznik” (in Russian the word formation of this lexeme is connected with “eye socket”) at a special price! (Ne otkladyvaite..., 2023: 9);

– the involvement of media persons for advertising (despite the fact that the advertising legislation explicitly states: the reputation of a person should not be used in advertising information). For example, singer O. Gazmanov is actively involved in advertising medical products.

For example, a creolized advertisement for the device “Almag”, including Oleg Gazmanov holding the advertised device in his hands (Almag, 2023: 7);

– unconfirmed data about efficacy based on an incorrect comparison. For example: “Scientific approach to prostate health. A major study on the benefits of herbs and extracts for prostate health has been completed in Russia. It involved 38 clinical centers and 820 men. The results are encouraging – in some cases, the positive effect was 2 times faster and 2 times more clear” (Nauchnyi podkhod, 2023: 9). As we can see, advertisers make a logical mistake: the second component is not named in comparison – 2 times faster than what? Twice the clear effect compared to what? Comparison as a kind of trope, regardless of its semantic complexity or accuracy of correlation with the object of reality, ensures the actualization of the specifics of the advertised product, first of all on the basis of uniqueness. The topos of comparison (in other terminology, the trope of similarity) can be both a powerful persuasive tool and a typical manipulative technique. Thus, the manipulative method of comparing the advertised product “with conventional drugs” is typical:

“The important advantages of this mineral complex, in comparison with conventional drugs, are that they remove excess tissue fluid from the body” (Vazhnye preimushchestva, 2023: 40).

Then advertisers list the numerous useful properties of the advertised complex, so it seems: this is a revolution in pharmacology, however, advertisers report that the complex is not a medicine and is not a dietary supplement. This technique is well known from commercial advertising of goods (“this is an ordinary detergent, and this is Ariel, Tide”, etc.). “It is well known that such a technique is used when it is not possible to indicate the real advantages. Such comparisons can misinform consumers and give them an idea of a drug that is at odds with reality, which translates the problem into the field of ethical and linguistic normativity and law” (Brusenskaya, Belyaeva, 2022: 595).

Some fragments of medical advertising in media give the impression of unprofessionalism. Is it possible to take seriously an advertisement that starts like this?: “The mystery is solved. Scientists have found the answer to our diseases” – the advertisement of the medical device “Scenar” (Taina raskryta, 2023: 40).

Many media texts of medical advertisement demonstrate the lack of linguistic flair, linguistic taste: “A diamond of modern medicine” (about the device: ultrasound physiotherapy “Aurora”) (Brilliant..., 2023: 19); “A discovery worthy of the Nobel Prize” (about the device “Glaznik” – in Russian the word formation of this lexeme is connected with “eye socket”) (Otkrytie..., 2023: 37); “Incredible high-precision therapy, amazing medical device “Nadezhda” (Hope)” (Neveroyatnaya vysokotonovaya, 2023: 33). In our view this is elementary illiteracy and not only advertising but also media in a whole will lose readers’ trust: “The fact that the device “Aurora” is special became clear from the moment of its appearance” (Pro to..., 2023: 7); “To see the effect of Chinch, you do not need to spend 2-3 thousand rubles and wait 6 months” (Chtoby ubedit'sya, 2023: 9).

In many media texts of medical advertising, manipulative “two-dimensional communication behavior is easily detected: on the one hand, there is a demonstrated intention to benefit recipients, and on the other hand, there is a hidden but easily readable intention to get benefits” (Karasik, 2015: 232). Media advertising in sphere of medicine “should be formed on a detailed evidence base, convey the maximum amount of basic marketing information, and at the same time be accurate, significant, and reasoned” (Baranov, 2024: 644). In advertising, it has become common to condemn the technique when not a product with its specific characteristics is being sold, but a certain image (“with this dishwasher, you are the queen of the kitchen”). Moreover, products for health should be protected from such speculations. Since the promotion of medical products is directly related to human health, the responsibility of advertisers is especially high. Manipulations, such as gross violations of ethical and speech standards, are destructive to the maximum extent here.

A well-known and described in detail manipulative technique of adjustment (in TV advertising: Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin. May tea. We have much to be proud of) is also used by the creators of medical advertising:

“On April 12, 1961, the first space flight of a human being took place. It was a real breakthrough! An event that left a mark not only in world history, but also in the soul of every Soviet citizen. People were overwhelmed with pride for their country. After all, we were the first to succeed! A real miracle! What seemed impossible just 100 years ago (and in the context of the history of the whole country, believe us, it's not so much) has at last happened! Similar feelings (delight, amazement, excitement, shock) were experienced by our contemporaries when they first tried a new super development by Russian scientists from St. Petersburg – the medical magnetic applicator Ladium” (12 aprelya..., 2023: 28).

This adjustment in which the Gagarin's flight into cosmos is compared with some (even having useful properties magnetic applicator) device can only make a comical impression.

5. Conclusion

It is necessary in medical advertising to avoid promises and emotional exclamations, such as *a cosmic discovery*, *a miracle of medicine*, etc. in advertising medical products, which should be as informative and reasoned as possible. The advertisement using manipulative techniques such as “adjustment” and incorrect comparisons (where the objects being compared and the comparison parameters are not directly named) is unethical.

We believe that the study of advertising in the context of the ideas of ethical and linguistic normativity and ecological thinking can really contribute to the cultivation of the advertising media space. Creating media products and media content formation for media space cultivation and media literacy dissemination should be in accordance with ecological thinking. Ecological thinking should be emphasized in media literacy education, because for media literacy education it is important to study not only specialized disciplines and professional standards, but also to form a person with a deep sense of personal responsibility for the spoken (written) word to another person. In the curriculum for the training of media specialists, not only the disciplines of the special part, but also the disciplines included into the basic part, should consider the ethical problems of advertising. It must be admitted that a special course on advertising medical products and equipment should be introduced in the curriculum as well as fundamentals of medical knowledge.

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