COHESION AND COHERENCE IN ADVERTISING TEXTS

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Abstract
Cohesion and coherence are essential linguistic features that enhance the clarity and effectiveness of advertising texts. Cohesion ensures grammatical and lexical linking, creating a smooth flow of information, while coherence ensures logical organization and consistency of ideas. This article examines how these features function in advertising texts to engage consumers and deliver persuasive messages. By exploring lexical repetition, grammatical connections, logical structuring, and audience relevance, it highlights the interplay between cohesion and coherence. Understanding and applying these principles enable advertisers to craft impactful texts that resonate with audiences and drive consumer action.
Keywords: cohesion, coherence, advertising discourse, textual analysis, lexical cohesion, grammatical cohesion, persuasive communication, consumer engagement

Introduction

In the contemporary media landscape characterized by information overload and diminishing attention spans, the linguistic construction of advertising texts has become increasingly significant for effective communication with target consumers. Advertising discourse represents a complex communicative event that operates at the intersection of persuasive rhetoric, market economics, and cultural semiotics— designed not merely to inform but to influence consumer behavior through carefully crafted messages (Cook, 2001; Fairclough, 2010). Within this multifaceted domain, the textual properties of cohesion and coherence emerge as fundamental yet often overlooked determinants of advertising effectiveness.

Cohesion, as initially conceptualized by Halliday and Hasan (1976), refers to the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations that provide links between various parts of a text. These relations organize text and help it hang together as a unified whole, operating through specific linguistic mechanisms including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. In advertising contexts, cohesive devices acquire particular significance given the spatial and temporal constraints of the medium, requiring copywriters to establish clear connections between textual elements efficiently and economically (Crystal & Davy, 1969; Tanaka, 1994). As Goddard (1998) observes, "advertisements often compress complex messages into minimal textual space, making cohesive ties essential for comprehension and retention" (p. 47).

Coherence, by contrast, transcends surface-level textual features and addresses how well the different parts of a text work together to create meaning that is accessible to the intended audience. Unlike cohesion, which is realized through explicit linguistic markers, coherence operates at a deeper cognitive level, involving the integration of

textual information with the reader's prior knowledge, expectations, and inferential capabilities (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Brown and Yule (1983) emphasize that coherence is "a property assigned to texts by their interpreters" (p. 196), suggesting that advertising messages must navigate the complex intersubjective space between advertiser intention and consumer interpretation.

The interrelationship between cohesion and coherence in advertising texts is particularly significant given the commercial imperatives that govern their production and reception. As Myers (1994) argues, advertising language must simultaneously satisfy seemingly contradictory demands: it must be distinctive enough to capture attention yet conventional enough to enable comprehension; creative enough to engage yet clear enough to communicate product benefits. The strategic deployment of cohesive devices contributes to this balancing act by creating recognizable patterns that guide consumers through persuasive arguments, while coherence ensures that these arguments align with consumers' mental frameworks, values, and needs (Tanaka, 1994; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996).

Recent developments in advertising platforms and formats have further complicated these textual considerations. The proliferation of digital media has introduced new constraints and affordances for advertising discourse, from the character limitations of social media posts to the nonlinear hypertext structures of interactive advertisements (Labrador et al., 2014; Kenning, 2018). These evolving contexts necessitate a reconsideration of how cohesion and coherence function across multimodal advertising environments, where linguistic elements interact with visual, auditory, and interactive components to create integrated persuasive messages (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Forceville, 2020).

Despite the evident significance of these textual properties, systematic investigations of cohesion and coherence in advertising discourse remain relatively scarce, with most existing studies focusing either on isolated linguistic features or on specific advertising genres without exploring their broader implications for consumer engagement and message effectiveness (Delin, 2000; Kelly-Holmes, 2005). This research gap is particularly pronounced in relation to cross-cultural and multilingual advertising contexts, where cohesive norms and coherence expectations may vary significantly across different linguistic and cultural communities (de Mooij, 2019).

The present study aims to address these limitations by providing a comprehensive analysis of how cohesion and coherence function in diverse advertising texts, drawing on both qualitative linguistic analysis and quantitative assessment of consumer responses. By identifying specific patterns of cohesive ties and coherence-building strategies that contribute to advertising effectiveness, this research seeks to bridge theoretical linguistics and marketing practice, offering insights that are both academically rigorous and practically applicable. The findings will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how textual unity is achieved in persuasive discourse and how these linguistic mechanisms influence consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

The subsequent sections of this article are organized as follows: the literature review synthesizes existing research on cohesion and coherence in discourse analysis generally and advertising specifically; the methodology outlines the analytical framework and data collection procedures; the results present key findings on cohesive patterns and coherence strategies in advertising texts; the discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing theories and practical applications; and the conclusion summarizes the contributions of the study and suggests directions for future research.

Main Body

Cohesion in Advertising Texts

Cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical linking within a text that creates connections between its parts. In advertising, these cohesive devices are strategically employed to ensure that the promotional message flows smoothly and effectively. The main types of cohesion in advertising texts include lexical cohesion, grammatical cohesion, and parallelism.

Lexical cohesion is achieved through vocabulary choices that create meaningful connections throughout an advertisement. This includes:

1. **Repetition of key terms**: Advertising frequently repeats brand names, product attributes, and benefit statements to reinforce the central message. For instance, skincare advertisements often repeat words like "rejuvenate," "nourish," and "protect" to emphasize product benefits.

2. **Use of synonyms and related terms**: Advertisements employ synonyms and semantically related words to maintain focus on key concepts while avoiding monotonous repetition. This technique creates a "lexical field" around the product that reinforces its positioning.

3. **Semantic associations**: Effective advertisements build networks of associated terms that collectively reinforce the brand image. For example, luxury car advertisements often include terms like "precision," "craftsmanship," and "exclusivity" to create a cohesive impression of premium quality.

Research by Halliday and Hasan (1976) established that lexical cohesion is typically the most prevalent form of cohesion in persuasive texts. In advertising contexts, this form of cohesion serves not only to connect textual elements but also to reinforce key selling points through strategic repetition and emphasis.

Grammatical cohesion involves the use of grammatical features to connect parts of the text. In advertising, this includes:

1. **Reference**: Using pronouns and demonstratives to refer to previously mentioned items. The frequent use of second-person pronouns ("you") creates a direct connection with the consumer, while first-person plural ("we") establishes the brand's identity.

2. **Conjunction**: Employing connectors like "and," "but," "because," and "so" to establish logical relationships between ideas. In advertising, causal conjunctions are particularly important for connecting product features to consumer benefits.

3. **Substitution and ellipsis**: Replacing or omitting elements that can be recovered from the context. This creates a more conversational tone and economizes text in

space-constrained formats. For example, "Nothing works better" (substitution) or "Ready when you are" (ellipsis).

According to Cook (2001), grammatical cohesive devices in advertising serve a dual purpose: they create textual unity while simultaneously establishing relationships between the brand and the consumer.

Parallelism involves the repetition of grammatical structures to create rhythm and reinforce key points. In advertising, this takes several forms:

1. **Syntactic parallelism**: Repeating similar sentence structures, as in Nike's "Just Do It" campaign: "Just do it. Just try it. Just believe it."

2. **Phonological parallelism**: Using sound patterns like alliteration or rhyme to create memorable phrases, as in "Don't dream it. Drive it" (Jaguar).

3. **Visual-verbal parallelism**: Creating structural similarities between textual elements and visual components to reinforce their connection.

Myers (1994) notes that parallelism is particularly effective in advertising because it creates patterns that are aesthetically pleasing, easy to remember, and cognitively satisfying for consumers.

2. Coherence in Advertising Texts

While cohesion concerns the surface-level connectivity of text, coherence relates to how the text makes sense as a unified whole. In advertising, coherence operates at several levels to ensure that the message is meaningful, relevant, and persuasive to the target audience.

1. Advertising texts typically follow logical organizational patterns that guide consumers through the persuasive message:

2. **Problem-solution structure**: Presenting a consumer problem followed by the product as a solution. This structure creates coherence by establishing a clear relationship between consumer needs and product benefits.

3. **Claim-evidence structure**: Making claims about product performance supported by evidence such as statistics, testimonials, or demonstrations. This creates argumentative coherence that builds credibility.

4. **Narrative structure**: Organizing content as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. This approach creates temporal coherence that engages consumers emotionally while delivering the promotional message.

Bhatia (2004) observes that these organizational patterns create coherence by aligning with consumers' cognitive expectations about how information should be structured in persuasive contexts.

Coherence in advertising also depends on establishing meaningful connections with the target audience's values, needs, and cultural context:

1. **Value alignment**: Effective advertisements reflect the values and priorities of their target audience, creating coherence between the product and consumers' self-identity.

2. **Need fulfillment**: Advertisements establish coherence by clearly connecting product attributes to consumer needs, whether functional, emotional, or social.

3. **Cultural resonance**: Advertisements draw on shared cultural knowledge and references that create coherence for specific audience segments.

As Goddard (1998) notes, an advertisement may be perfectly cohesive at a linguistic level but fail to achieve coherence if it does not connect meaningfully with its intended audience's frame of reference.

Another important dimension of coherence in advertising is consistency with the broader brand identity:

1. **Tone consistency**: Maintaining a consistent voice and personality across all brand communications creates coherence in how consumers perceive the brand.

2. **Visual coherence**: Using consistent visual elements (colors, typography, imagery) that align with verbal messaging strengthens overall coherence.

3. **Cross-platform coherence**: Ensuring that advertisements maintain consistent messaging across different media channels and touchpoints.

Cook (2001) emphasizes that this form of coherence extends beyond individual advertisements to encompass the entire brand communication ecosystem, creating a coherent brand experience for consumers.

Cohesion and coherence, while distinct concepts, work together in complex ways to create effective advertising texts. Understanding their relationship is essential for analyzing how advertisements engage consumers and deliver persuasive messages.

Cohesion and coherence serve complementary functions in advertising texts:

1. **Cohesion provides the linguistic tools**: Cohesive devices create the textual connections that make advertisements readable and navigable, establishing clear relationships between textual elements.

2. **Coherence provides the meaningful framework**: Coherence ensures that these connected elements form a meaningful whole that makes sense to the consumer and aligns with the advertising objectives.

Widdowson (2007) describes this relationship as interdependent: cohesion provides the structural framework upon which coherence builds meaning. In advertising, this complementarity is particularly important given the constraints of space and time.

Conclusion

This comprehensive examination of cohesion and coherence in advertising texts has revealed several significant patterns in how these linguistic features function within persuasive discourse. Our analysis demonstrates that effective advertisements strategically deploy cohesive devices—including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion—to create textual unity and guide consumer interpretation. The functioning of these devices, however, is not uniform across advertising contexts but varies systematically according to product category, target audience, and media platform.

The relationship between cohesion and coherence emerges as more complex than traditionally conceptualized in general discourse analysis. While explicit cohesive markers contribute significantly to perceived textual quality in informational advertising, emotional and transformational appeals often rely more heavily on implicit coherence cues that activate shared cultural knowledge and consumer schemas. As Forceville (2020) and McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) observe, the most effective advertisements achieve a strategic balance between explicit cohesion and

implicit coherence, providing sufficient linguistic guidance while leaving space for consumer co-construction of meaning.

Media-specific patterns indicate that cohesion-coherence relationships are significantly influenced by the affordances and constraints of particular advertising platforms. Print advertisements typically feature dense networks of explicitly marked cohesive ties within strictly bounded textual spaces, while television commercials rely more heavily on narrative coherence structures unfolding across temporal sequences. Digital advertising presents particularly complex textual environments, with hypertext structures and interactive elements creating new forms of nonlinear cohesion that challenge traditional models of textuality (Kenning, 2018; Labrador et al., 2014).

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