

IMPLICIT EXPRESSION OF IMPERATIVE MOOD IN ADVERTISING TEXTS

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Annotation: All languages change over time and change is inevitable for any living language. History records that languages change over time at every level of structure which includes vocabulary, phonology, morphology and syntax. For many people, it may not be easily apparent or obvious in a day-to-day communication on a personal level because many individuals are so intimately connected to their language that they may fail to see its changes. However, languages do indeed change and some languages flourish, some expand and some languages even die.

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Advertising language is known for its persuasive techniques that appeal to the consumer's emotions and decision-making process. Among these strategies, the use of imperative moods is pivotal in urging the audience to act or make a decision. However, the imperative is not always expressed in an overt manner. Instead, it can be implicitly embedded within the structure of the advertisement, making it more subtle and, often, more effective in influencing consumer behavior. This article investigates the implicit forms of the imperative mood in advertising texts, analyzing how these constructions impact consumer perception and engagement with brands.

Various scholars have addressed the use of imperatives in advertising and its power to persuade. Cook (2001) highlights that imperatives in ads can create a sense of urgency, compelling consumers to act immediately. However, this overt form can sometimes backfire by creating resistance, as consumers might feel manipulated. On the other hand, implicit imperatives, as noted by Krenn (2014), allow for more subtle persuasion, making the demand feel more like a suggestion rather than a command. This allows the advertisement to guide consumer behavior while maintaining a friendly tone.

Other works, like those by van Leeuwen (2008), focus on the interaction between language and power dynamics in advertisements. The implicit imperative, in this context, subtly asserts authority over the consumer without the heavy-handedness of direct commands. The importance of these linguistic strategies in shaping consumer responses and fostering brand loyalty has also been emphasized in research by Cialdini (2009), who discussed the persuasive power of suggestion and reciprocity in advertising.

The research employed a qualitative approach to examine various advertising materials, such as print ads, television commercials, and online banners. A corpus of advertisements from diverse industries (food, fashion, technology, etc.) was selected to provide a comprehensive view of how implicit imperatives are used

across different sectors. The ads were analyzed for linguistic features indicative of imperatives, focusing specifically on structures where the command is not overt but implied through the choice of words, tone, or visual cues.

The analysis was conducted through content analysis, identifying patterns in the use of modal verbs, direct or indirect address to the consumer, and other linguistic devices that suggest action without an explicit imperative form.

The implicit imperative mood in advertising often manifests in phrases that encourage the consumer to take action or feel a certain way, without directly telling them what to do. For example, phrases like “Feel the difference” or “Experience the thrill” implicitly suggest an action (feeling, experiencing) without using the imperative form directly. These subtle cues create an association with the desired behavior, making the consumer feel in control while still being guided towards a specific action.

The use of implicit imperatives can also be observed in the visual elements of advertisements. For instance, a smiling model or a product displayed in an aspirational context can implicitly urge the viewer to engage with the product, even without overt textual commands[5; 88-90]. This aligns with the concept of "visual imperatives," where images convey the command through symbolic association rather than direct language.

Examples

1. Coca-Cola Commercial (Print)

“*Open Happiness*” This phrase uses an implicit imperative. Instead of directly telling the audience to “open a bottle,” it suggests a broader, more emotional action tied to the product experience. The word “happiness” evokes a desired emotional state, prompting consumers to engage without feeling like they are being ordered.

2. Apple Ad (TV Commercial)

“*Think Different*” This slogan encourages consumers to act or identify themselves in a new way, subtly urging them to embrace the innovation Apple represents. The phrase uses an imperative, but it is framed in a way that feels more like a suggestion or an invitation.

The implicit expression of the imperative mood in advertising is a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior. By avoiding direct commands, advertisers can create a more subtle yet effective appeal, allowing the consumer to feel a sense of agency while still guiding their actions. This linguistic strategy is particularly useful in building brand loyalty and fostering a more positive relationship between the consumer and the brand. Future research could explore the psychological impact of these implicit commands in greater depth and how they differ across cultures and advertising mediums.

References

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