

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The field of advertising is extremely broad and diverse. In general terms, an advertisement is simply a public notice meant to convey information and invite patronage or other response. As that suggests, advertising has two basic purposes: to inform and to persuade, and while these purposes are distinguishable, both very often are simultaneously present.

Advertising can be as simple as a local or even neighborhood phenomenon or it can be very complex, involving sophisticated research and multimedia campaigns that span the globe. Its purpose differs according to its intended audience.

Many different media and techniques are employed in advertising, which consist of several different kinds: commercial advertising for products and services; public service advertising on behalf of various institutions, programs and causes, which is an observable fact of growing importance today.

The phenomenon of advertising has long been a subject of research in several disciplines such as mass communication, marketing, sociology, cultural anthropology, social psychology, semiotics and cultural studies.

One area that has attracted a great deal of attention in several disciplines during the last two decades is the analysis of advertising content to gain insights into how cultural factors affect advertising strategies and expressions; how cultural values, norms and stereotypes are reflected in advertising; how advertising creates meanings and affects the audience and the larger society over time.

1.1 Background of Study

With the general growth of feminist work in many academic fields, it is hardly surprising that the relationship between language and gender has attracted considerable attention in recent years including this project paper. The studies that have been carried out in this area have focused on anything from different syntactical, phonological or lexical uses of language to aspects of conversation analysis, such as topic nomination and control, interruptions and other interactional features.

While some research has focused only on the description of differences, other work has sought to show how linguistic differences both reflect and reproduce social differences. Although language and gender have been studied for several decades, the language used in personal advertisements is an area that is not often explored.

Whether from a quantitative, qualitative or interpretative perspective, analysis of advertising and other media content is of growing importance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The area to be investigated in this study is gender and the language of advertisement. This study will look at personal advertisements in a local daily to see whether men and women advertise differently for potential partners, which is whether they describe themselves differently in terms of ethnicity, age, occupation and attributes. Besides that, the researcher will also look at the categories preferred, which again include ethnicity, age, occupation and attributes. This study hopes to investigate the gender differences found in personal advertisements.

1.3 Objective of Study

The main goals of this study are:

1. To study the language used by men and women in personal advertisements.
2. To examine the categories used by writers to identify potential partners.
3. To look at the differences between genders, as reflected in the personal advertisements.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do personal advertisement writers use social identity markers to describe themselves?
2. How writers use categories, which include ethnicity, age, occupation and attributes to advertise for potential partners?
3. What are the differences in gender as portrayed by personal advertisements?

1.4 Significance of Study

The importance of this research is foreseeable and by looking at the present study, the researcher would like to see the differences in choices of lexical terms used by men and women and also the categories deemed important when they write their personal advertisements.

Prospective personal advertisement writers are able to gain knowledge on how to write a more effective personal advertisement. The categories that they should include about themselves are gender, ethnicity, age, occupation and attributes. It is more sensible to let the person reading the advertisement decide if they might be a match.

Probably, honesty is also the best policy in advertising for potential partners, as no matter who they are or what kind of person they are seeking, they have a better chance of finding that person and with less disappointment along the way if they are honest from the beginning.

This study is significant as well in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) particularly in the area of advertising. The importance of the present corpus is magnified because as we enter the new millennium, advertising and advertisements become increasingly important and at times even urgent to ensure the continuity of support for a certain product. Hence, this study can be used as an example to compliment the field of advertising.