The Peculiarities of Trademarks Perception by Potential Consumers

Natalya Alexandrovna Stadulskaya

Pyatigorsk State Linguistic University, Pyatigorsk, Russia

Abstract: The subject of this study is English-language verbal trademarks which are designated in onomastics by the term "pragmonims" that in Greek language means "the name of the property". In this paper, we set an objective to describe the perception of efficient trademarks by potential customers. As the core of communicative-pragmatic situation in selling discourse, trademarks are designed to accomplish the basic task, expressed in the AIDA formula: attention, interest, desire and act. The most "successful" trademark attracts the attention of a potential customer, provokes interest in the advertised product and makes one want to buy it. In terms of brand-naming, along with "successful" trademarks, we have identified also "ineffective" pragmonims and explained the reason for their occurrence. Here we also speculate on the term relevant to "inefficient" trademark phenomenon. In the course of the study, the need arises to give a description of cases when unethical information is used for advertisement messages.

Key words: Trademark · Pragmatics · Advertisement

INTRODUCTION

History of genesis of the merchandise is closely associated with the mankind history. It is known that in case of any need, one can find an object that is able to satisfy this need. When people begin to exchange these objects, they become consumers and the items that meet their needs become merchandise.

Needs change with the society development. Merchandise is improving during the evolution of demand. If the product is demanded by many people, there will be followers of the manufacturer and number of similar products will certainly increase. To distinguish the manufacturer’s product from the products of other producers, the manufacturer gives his product certain distinctive name - the trademark. The manufacturer tries to attach a certain sense, assessment or description to this name - implicitly or explicitly. At that, the "parent" of the trademark is unwittingly trying to fulfill all the conditions of communicative and pragmatic situation [1, p. 15-16].

The Main Part: All trademarks are involved in the production, commercial and advertising communication. The purport of such communication is easy to fit into a known Jakobson communication model [2].

In this diagram the addressee is the manufacturer performing the act of nomination. Manufacturer should define his product through the message and contact, that is, to perform the act of created name coding. Then the addressee, in the name of customer receives and decodes the information about the product sent by the manufacturer. For the successful market promotion of the product, the trademark creator should define a brand name of the product in a way, enabling to carry into effect so-called "collective programming" - a term denoting the process of establishing a system of beliefs and values, expectations and needs of the society [3, p.14]. Happily-created trademark will expand its target audience and increase sales.

Fig. 1: Jakobson’s communication model
It is known that communication is an integral part of social life throughout history. Quality communication is necessary for the successful effect of people on each other that is possible under certain knowledge regarding the behavior of one or another communicant group. It is this postulate that is used by trademarks creators.

World-wide fame of many products is due to the fact that the designers of promotional names have correctly selected the emotional and associative stem of the word and embodied it in a verbal trademark. Earlier, in our study, we tried to identify the most effective, successful and unsuccessful trademarks in order to determine certain criteria of their effectiveness. Hence, the trademark groups were given the names good and bad, effective and ineffective [1].

It seems to us that here we must characterize those "manufacturers" who seek to make their capital on labor and means of others.

In advertising, as in any kind of activity, there are innovators and "followers". Firsts create new advertising tools; develop highly effective, associative and suggestive trademarks, while the "followers" exploit already developed technologies in reaching their own individual goals. At that, the comparative effectiveness of the pioneer and his followers is not always in favor of the former.

The action motives of the "follower" are well understood. "Follower" needs to excel on the background of the massive advertising pressure. And it strives for standing out not only among its competitors, but also at a level of total public market. "Follower" uses the efficiency, previously accumulated by innovator, for personal purposes parasitizing on information and image potential created by others. Maximum task of the "follower" is to position its trademark next to the leader.

Innovator, using his own capital and creativity, creates a well-known competitive brand which becomes attractive to the "followers". Consequently, world famous brands, proven in the market and engrained in the minds of potential customers, are used by the "followers" as the background trademarks. Thus, the emergence of "parasitic brand" is in fact recognition of the concernment of information and image potential of the innovator's advertising campaign. Perhaps this is the only benefit from this phenomenon. But from a legal point of view, the illegal production of another manufacturer's product under a borrowed trademark is not an advertizing trick, but a crime. Low-quality product has poor quality in everything. "Unsuccessful" or counterfeit trademarks may not only mislead potential customers, but also harm their health.

We agree that the term "successful" trademark is perfectly suited to such products as MONTBLANC, DIAMOND, QUEEN, DUKE, Imperial and others. Very often successful trademarks are designed based on price category. These include trademarks, as well as names that contain the words best, royal, gold and platinum. They show not only a higher price category but also a higher quality of the product.

Some effective trademarks are taking into account the specific features of social, ethnic and age groups of consumers. For example, words ELITE and EXCLUSIVE in a product name point to an elite group of consumers, while VOLKSWAGEN indicates "folks" group and KINDER is intended for children.

Sometimes the product manufacturers, in order to sound the place of their production, use troponins when creating product names. This gave the origin to the words like cologne water (eau de Cologne - water from Cologne), hamburger - from the city of Hamburg, Holstein from Schleswig-Holstein, Winston and Salem - from the names of small towns in North Carolina. A reminder of the brand's country of origin is included in the names Nokia, Hitachi and Toyota.

Often products have an unblemished reputation because their denominations include the names of the brand founders, having fame and prestige won by the production of other commodity groups: ADIDAS, ARISTON, BURDA, CHANEL ¹⁵, CITROEN, DISNEY, GAZER, HARLEY-DAVIDSON, MAGGI, LIPTON, OPEL, SIEMENS, TISSOT and YAMAHA [4, p. 146-150].

It is known that the probability of achieving ultimate goal depends on form and amount of the information sent by addressee. There are product names that often do not meet the requirements of identifiability. This causes confusion (earlier we called such names "unsuccessful"). A potential customer may not feel the difference in a close-sounding trademarks, especially if they sound almost the same like the following: Bio-Max is a yogurt while BiMax is a washing powder, ABSOLUT is the famous Swedish luxury vodka, but Absolut can be also anti-bacterial soap, Kitekat is cat food whereas KitKat is glazing chocolate chip cookies, Corolla is Japanese car and Coroli is a Dutch vegetable oil, Levi's is the famous American jeans, while Levy's is the famous American bread. After analyzing the above pragmonims, we came to the conclusion that the term "unsuccessful trademarks" is not an intrinsic. Perhaps the trademark creators, hoping on the consonance of their names with the known commodities, desired to speed up the promotion of their products in the market. It is difficult to determine their motivation. In any case, we cannot accuse them of fraud.
because all of these trademarks have been registered and are official. But one can certainly assert that such merchandise will always be associated with already known products. These "unsuccessful" names deliberately or unwittingly imitate the names of world brands. Imitation (in Latin imitation is copying), means copying someone or something, reproduction, or counterfeit. Therefore, in our opinion, it seems appropriate to attribute these trademarks the imitative trademark status.

The modern market relations show that for maximum benefit, the manufacturers of defective products often use well-known trademarks, thereby misinforming potential consumers by changing a few letters in product name. We have already met goods with the following titles: Abebas, Adedas, Tissot, Red Bul, Pandda, Pumma, Panascound, Sireet, Sam-sung and others. These are pseudo-signs: the names themselves are not patented, the manufacturer bears no responsibility for them and the customer rises to unpleasant with the perception and sounding of foreign brands: Adidas, Tissot, Red Bull, Panda, Puma, Panasonic, Secret and Samsung.

The question arises: what would be the best term to describe such pragmonims. Let us refer to the encyclopedia "Krugosvet" [5] and consider a number of relevant definitions.

Fake (forgery) in art: 1) production of art works in style imitation; 2) a sample of such a fabrication.

Imitation means in psychology and sociology copying other person’s movements and actions, the way of learning new behavior patterns and activities.

Falsification (in lat. falsification means forgery) is willful, deliberate distortion of any data. 2) Ñhanging appearance or properties of the objects with a mercenary motive; fake.

Cloning: Forgery can be a product of the author, who seeks to earn money once again by this "tricky" "clone" using his own trademark.

Mimicry: Use of the associative analogy or distortion when writing a verbal sign.

Since the pseudo-signs are designed with the sordid motives to sell low-quality product quickly and at a high price, then, as it seems to us, the term falsified will be appropriate for such trademarks. Those who create these trademarks will be called falsifacators.

There is another group of pragmonims, conventionally designated as trademarks, causing false associations, allowing for a false etymology. Often these are trade names which are not suitable for a particular language because of their phonetic and graphic features. Fast food of Mars called "Ebly" is in a great demand in Western Europe – in France, Germany and the Netherlands, though in judgment of the person who searches these products in Russian stores, it will be somewhat awkward to pronounce this word aloud. The same is true with respect to trademark of Swiss watches called EBEL, the name of the e-commerce company eBAY, baby food "Bledina" and the famous chewing gum "Spearmint". Polish fashion magazine for women "Uroda" (beauty) in no way is associated in minds of Russian readers with images of beauty and femininity. Here are a few other examples of the product names disappointing Russian-speaking population: Japanese car TROOPER, Finnish fluid for defrosting the car locks "Super-Piss", tea "Pukala", nutritional supplements "Dohler", building materials "Stradal", etc.

But not only Russian-speaking customers may be unpleasant with the perception and sounding of foreign names. Many Russian commercial names also cause negative associations with foreigners: the name of the "Zhiguli" car the French are associating with the words "Gigolo" (souteneur), "jigu" (lanky fellow), while in Arabic language "zaguli" means false and “dzhidigul" means ignoramus. That is why Russian producers were forced to change the name of the "Zhiguli" car intended for the export to the short and neutral name "Lada". Going back to the legendary car called “Zaporozhets". Besides in Russia it was disdainfully referred to as "humpbacked", in Finnish language this word means "swine cartilage". Therefore, the car was exported under the toponym "Yalta".

Rolls-Royce wanted to export to the German market a vehicle under the name "Silver Mist", but after it became known that the word mist is translated from German as "manure", it was decided to change the name to SILVER MOIST. SHEVROLET NOVA car (no+va means in Spanish "does not go") did not use proper demand in the Spanish-speaking world for a long time [4]. This continued until the name was changed to CARIBE. The second word in the car name "Mitsubishi Pajero" in Spanish means "masturbator"; the name of the other car FIAT MAREA phonetically is similar to the Spanish "seasick". Japanese dry creamer Creap in the US is associated with the words creep ("fool") and crap ("shit"), so the Americans were slow to regale neither with the one nor the other. Icelandic jelly SPUNK is associated by the English with the native word punk - that means "yoot", "scum". The name of the French soft drink is obviously phonetically similar to English obscene word Pschitt. The same applies to PANE – the name of the
glass. It is associated with the word pain (ache, suffering); BIOVEST – the name of Biomedical Venture Company – is phonetically close to the bio waste (biological waste).

In addition to the names that mislead potential customers, we have singled out the names which are difficult for perception, for example MUMPSVAX and RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Often in pursuit of fashion, product name inventors would like to be original. The names CWRI and MYRPPIN were designed because according to inventors they were very close to the Gallic language. Often there are cumbersome and awkward names. Later on such names are reduced for easy use and change into abbreviations: Ling Temko Vought (LTV), National Cash Register (NCR) and Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M Company).

Sometimes designing of trademarks leads to the emergence of bizarre names that complicate communication rather than attract potential customers and can produce a repulsing effect. Among the unfortunate trademark names one can find incomprehensible words such as HYBRINETICS, INDUCTOSYN, TELOPHASE, XYTRONYX and CHLORTIMETON. These words can be called "sealed" because their meaning is deeply hidden from our understanding.

Mostly, short and expressive meaningful names such as AMBERLITE (amber), Mr. GODDWRENCH, PLAYSCHOOL, RAINBIRD and SUNKIST are the most effective. Greater preference is given to monosyllabic and disyllabic Saxon words such as blast (wind blowing), blot (blurring), doom (fate), mess (disorder), trust (confidence) and gag against to their Greek, Latin and Roman synonyms as well as those of other origin: detonation (combusting knock), obliterate (striking out), condemn (predoom), restrain (withhold), confusion (muddle) and confidence (in private).

We can compare, for example, the expressiveness of the following appellations:

ALLEREST – all the rest
CHERACOL – cherry and acolyte

Often when creating a trademark, one just "transfers" unearned reputation from one product to another based on identity or similarity of the trademarks. Product names can be accosiated via a dominant semantic fragment contained in each of them, as, for example, WALKMAN and WATCHMAN (man – a human, walk – stroll, watch – observe); as well as via a common link or analogy like APPLE and MACINTOSH or MUSTANG and PINTO. The company selling CASCADE caps, named after the Cascade Mountains range, sells also ROCKY and OZARK cups, named for the other mountain ranges – Rocky Mountains and the Ozark Plateau.

It is worth noting that a trademark undoubtedly requires advertising. Moreover, it is part of the advertisement copy and often is the "core" of such. In an effective advertisement copy creators emphasize the very trademark underlining quality, excellence and benefits of the advertised product [6].

However, in modern advertising communication, the amplification of consumers on effective fitures of the product is behindhand in elegancy, as the proposal of advertised product is not "unique" in the full sense of the word. The creators of advertising in such cases refer to untruthful advertisement [7].

It is common knowledge that wittingly false advertising is prohibited by law and will be prosecuted. But how to determine what is wittingly false information and non-obvious lie? Thus, advertisements of chewing gum manufacturers have become commonplace. They assure consumers that only their chewing gum will keep teeth white and some kinds of chewing gum can even remove plaque that remains on the teeth as a result of tea and coffee drinking or tobacco smoking. However, from the medical point of view, the whitening effect of any, even the best of chewing gum, is usually very small, almost imperceptible to the human eye. In other words, on the one hand, advertising does not lie because there is a certain effect, but on the other hand this effect is paltry, not able to create a "Hollywood smile" or at least eliminate the traces of harmful effects on tooth enamel.

An examples of wittingly false advertisements are a variety of ads on unconventionl health-care products published usually on the last pages of magazines and provided by a footnote: "The magazine is not responsible for the content of the published advertisements". Numerous investigations undertaken by the media to protect the interests of consumers, showed that in the best case such products do not have any effect on a person, whereas at the worst case a consumer is forced to seek medical aid, this time to recover from the impacts of the advertised product [8].

Often advertisement messages comprise false exaggerations. An example is the advertisement of "Procter and Gamble" which stated, in particular, that "there is no better protection against caries than the Blend-a-Med" and «Ace bleach whiten better than others», or «Fairy is the most cost-effective washing agent» and etc. [9, p. 3].
Given examples were confirmed non-verbally in TV and magazine advertisings by means of various diagrams, photographs, drawings and video images [10, p. 21]. Thus, advertising is aggressively using all sorts of ethical and unethical methods of impacting on the minds of the audience.

Closing: As concerns the trademarks, as we have found, a bona fide creator of the advertising name relies on the principles of effective communication, guided by sincere intentions and pursuing the goal of the explicit or implicit manipulation on the recipient, prompting him to action - purchasing the advertised product.

CONCLUSIONS

Most trademarks are created according to certain pragmatic strategies to influence the potential customer and encourage him to buy the advertised product. Being the core of any advertising copy, trademark is reflective of the most relevant information about the advertised product or service, while respecting the basic rules of Jakobson communication model. Violation of one of the model components causes a communicative failure and potential customer does not fully perceive the addressed information. The article follows the idea that language is continuously changing and affecting people's behavior. But even with the increasing diversity of the commercialized world, ruly language will become increasingly important and actual to brand-naming practitioners.

REFERENCES

5. Encyclopedia "Krugosvet". www.krugosvet.ru/