

Use of Figurative Language in Brand Taglines: A Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the use of figurative language in brand taglines, focusing on how stylistic devices like hyperbole, metaphor, personification, parallelism, and symbolism enhance the marketing communication. Through a qualitative analysis of 20 taglines from various product categories, hyperbole and metaphor are identified as the most prevalent forms of figurative language employed to create memorable and impactful brand messages. Hyperbole, exemplified by taglines such as Olay's "Ageless," captures attention through exaggerated claims, while metaphors like Bounty's "A Taste of Paradise" evoke vivid, relatable imagery. Other devices, such as personification in Vaseline's "The Healing Power of Vaseline," parallelism in Lipton's "Drink Better, Live Better," and symbolism in Herbal Essence's "Take your hair to Paradise" further contribute to the persuasive power of taglines by making products more relatable and memorable. This study underscores the effectiveness of figurative language in distinguishing brands in a competitive marketplace and highlights its relevance for marketing professionals and students of stylistics and linguistics. The findings provide practical insights into the strategic use of language in advertising and suggest avenues for future research to expand on these insights across different product categories and stylistic features.

Keywords: brand taglines, figurative language, hyperbole, metaphor, stylistic analysis

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Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in daily life. People are undoubtedly very dependent on it; hence, it is impossible to deny that humans cannot be detached from it. It is connected to nearly every aspect of human life. People cannot engage with one another or convey their meaning without language since it serves as a channel for communication. Keraf (1997) states that language is a symbol of sound produced by the speech organ for communication among community members. People use linguistic tools as one of their methods of communication with others. Every person has a unique style of communication. A particular communication style helps to recognise the personality and proficiency of an individual

in a specific language. Moreover, if a person communicates or conveys any message without using a language style in a monotonous tone, the other person will find it uninteresting. A specific style helps grab readers' or hearers' attention and interest. For instance, in the marketing field of a brand or product, companies use distinctive styles to convey the message or vision of the brand in the form of a tagline.

A tagline is a short phrase that sums up the value a business offers to its clients. A tagline can play a significant role in determining a brand or business. According to Alina Wheeler's definition in *Designing Brand Identity*, a tagline is a succinct statement that encapsulates a company's brand essence, personality, and positioning and sets it apart from its rivals. It is a precise statement with strong persuasion using an unusual sentence structure. The particular use of figurative language in brand taglines makes a brand distinctive from other brands and attracts readers or customers. Very few researchers stylistically analysed brand taglines (Tauqir & Alvi, 2021). This study attempted to explore different brand taglines from a stylistic perspective, and the main focus is on the use of figurative language.

Significance of the Study

The main purpose of the present study is to explore the use of figurative language in brand taglines from a stylistic perspective; therefore, this research is beneficial to understanding the particular meaning that a company or brand tries to convey. It also helps students comprehend the idea of linguistic text style analysis, more specifically, stylistic at the semantic level. Moreover, in the context of Pakistan, only a few studies have stylistically analysed various brand taglines; thus, this study enriches the literature on linguistic and stylistic analysis.

Objectives of the Study

In Pakistan, the stylistic analysis of brand taglines has not been done widely; hence, the main goal of this study is to examine the use of figurative language in different brand taglines by adopting a stylistic analysis approach. Based on this research aim, following are the objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the language style of brand taglines, specifically through the use of figurative language

2. To explore which type of figurative language is mostly used in brand taglines.

Research Questions

The following are the two main research questions to fulfil the purpose of this current research:

1. What type of figurative language is employed to produce a brand tagline?
2. Which kind of figurative language is mostly used in brand taglines?

Literature Review

Every individual has a unique style of expressing themselves with the help of language. This style makes an individual different from others. Style is a way of saying, doing or presenting anything. It is a technique to compose or use words stylistically in a language. Since language and style may coexist, stylistics emerged as the study of both disciplines.

In simple words, stylistics is the study of style. Stylistics is a subfield of linguistics that studies style, especially in literary texts. However, stylistics is not limited to the analysis of the style of the literary text. It can also be employed to analyse non-literary texts in different forms such as video recordings, dramas, films, news reports, advertisements etc. Simpson (2004) also asserted that although literary texts are chosen for stylistic analysis, many other types of discourse, including advertising, journalism, popular music and even daily life conversation frequently exhibits a high level of stylistic scope. Thus, literary and non-literary texts can be analysed using a stylistic approach.

Different stylistic categories are used to analyse text from a stylistic perspective. According to Leech and Short (2007), there are four levels of study: the lexical level, which mainly focuses on words found in the text; the grammatical level, the study of the structure of the sentence and cohesion and context. Cohesion means logical relation between words and sentences, while context implies the situation in which a particular text is produced. Both of these elements are important in stylistic analysis. Further, the last important level of analysis is figurative language. It is a varied form of language that is used in daily conversation. Khan and Jabeen (2015) described different levels of analysis at the discourse level, such as graphological, phonological, lexical, grammatical and stylistic levels.

The stylistic analysis also analyses non-fictional text; many researchers have explored advertisement discourse on different levels. For example, various researchers, including Leech (1972), Foster (2001), Ding (2007), and Kohli et al. (2007), highlight various linguistics and rhetorical devices typical of advertising slogans such as rhyme, alliteration, capitalisation, pun, metaphor etc. They also analyse the slogans at phonological, lexical, graphical syntactic and semantic levels.

In the context of Pakistan, Tauqir and Alvi (2021) conducted one of the most significant research projects in linguistic analysis. They analysed brand taglines from a stylistic perspective and investigated their impact on customers' perceptions. The focus of the study was the rhetorical devices within that they investigated the effect of taglines on consumers' perceptions with the help of a questionnaire. The results indicated that all taglines have a persuasive impact on consumers. Their short but captivating phrases attract the attention of readers. This present research is also concerned with the analysis of the language of brand taglines, but the main focus is on the use of figurative language at the semantic level. This research enriches the linguistic and stylistic analysis literature, as few researchers have analysed the style of brand taglines. The theoretical framework used in this research has been fetched from the stylistic analysis proposed by Leech and Short (2007).

Figurative language is a broad category that encompasses sound devices, imagery, and figures of speech. Words or sets of words that must be understood in a context other than their literal meaning are known as the figure of speech. Another interpretation of figurative language is simplified by the fact that it incorporates visuals into the lesson. For effect, clarity and intrigue purposes, the author or speaker uses unexpected comparisons to describe the subject at hand. Hyperbole, understatement, personification, metaphor, simile, pun, irony, and synecdoche are a few examples of figures of speech. All of them employ language in a figurative or nonliteral manner.

Research Methodology

The current study attempts to investigate the use of figurative language in brand taglines by employing a stylistic approach. For this purpose, this study has adopted a qualitative research approach. The sample of taglines for the analysis is limited to 20. The taglines are related to food, clothing, accessories and electrical appliances brands. The taglines have been randomly selected from different online sources as secondary data.

Leech and Shorts' (2007) framework of stylistics has been utilised for the analysis of the language of taglines. According to this framework, there are different levels of analysis, such as lexical, syntactic, phonological, figurative language and context. In this study, the analysis is limited to metaphorical language. The figurative language includes hyperbole, personification, metonymy, simile, symbol, paradox, pun, apostrophe, sound devices, allusion, parallelism, epithets, zeugma and antithesis. There is a brief introduction of the brands or products, identified figures of speech used in the specific taglines and their functions for the relevant brand for the purpose of their analysis.

Data Analysis

The content analysis tool is used to conduct a stylistic analysis of taglines. The use of figurative language in the tagline of different advertisements is the primary area. All taglines are from different categories, such as clothes, food, beauty products, accessories and appliances. The taglines that are selected for this study include international as well as national brands.

Beauty Products Brands' Taglines

1. Vaseline: "The Healing Power of Vaseline"

Vaseline is an international skincare brand. The products of this brand are used in millions of homes across the globe. The figurative language features used in this brand's tagline, "*The Healing Power of Vaseline*", are personification and hyperbole. Vaseline is a non-living object but personified as someone who can heal others. However, the qualities of Vaseline are also exaggerated. The term "healing power" gives the impression that it has some magical power which can heal people's skin problems. It is just used for persuasive purposes.

2. MAC Cosmetics: "All Ages, All Races, All Sexes"

MAC (Makeup Art Company) cosmetics is an international and national brand of cosmetic products. This brand offers a variety of cosmetics products liked by a vast majority globally. This brand's tagline, "All Ages, All Races, All Sexes", uses parallelism as figurative language. The repetition of the word "all" indicates the idea of this brand that the products of this brand are for everyone. This feature also makes the tagline memorable and gives a forceful impact.

3. Herbal Essence: "Take Your Hair to Paradise"

Herbal Essence is a brand of hair care products. It is also one of the renowned beauty brands around the world. The figurative language that is used in its tagline is hyperbole. The use of the term "paradise" creates the effect of exaggeration. The literal meaning of this tagline implies the use of hair products from this company makes your hair a heavenly entity. But in reality, it cannot happen. Hyperbole creates an effect on readers and brings their attention to the brand. Moreover, the word Paradise has a symbolic meaning. Paradise means a place which brings peace, calm and safety for eternity, a place of delight; so, the tagline tries to convince the consumers that their hair products are a safe haven for the hair.

4. Olay: "Ageless"

Olay is a multinational beauty brand that sells different skin care products. Its one-word tagline has a significant impact on common people. The term 'ageless' means not displaying any sign of ageing, something which is eternal or everlasting. This tagline indicates that there will not be any ageing when using their products. The use of the product will help cease the effects of ageing—this exaggeration used by the sellers is made to grab people's attention towards their products. Thus, hyperbole is employed in this tagline.

Food Brands

1. Lipton: "Drink Better, Live Better"

Lipton is one of the most famous brands of tea. People from all over the world use this brand. The tool of lexical parallelism is used in the tagline of the Lipton tea. The repetition of words in a phrase makes it catchy and easy for the reader to process. This tagline is also utilised to compare tea with a better life: if someone drinks Lipton, it may improve health life style.

2. Mezan Group: "Balance Diet, Balance Life"

Mezan Group is an emerging brand of food related products in Pakistan. One of their mostly advertised product is the cooking oil. In this tagline, the brand uses the technique of parallelism to draw a relation between diet and life. It signifies that if someone uses Mezan

cooking oils, he will have a balanced life.

3. Bounty: "A Taste of Paradise"

Bounty is a chocolate brand recognised all over the world. Its tagline uses a metaphor. The taste of the chocolate is compared with that of heaven. With the help of this direct comparison, the company tries to grab the consumers' attention. Further, symbolism is also used as 'paradise' is a place of delight and prosperity, where everything is delicious and heavenly. Thus, this tagline illustrates that the taste of Bounty is like the taste of any heavenly object.

4. Nestle water: "Water is Our Life's Work"

Nestle is an internationally recognised brand. In this tagline, water is used as a metaphor for life. It indicates the importance of water as humans cannot survive without water. Thus, this particular brand uses water as a metaphor in the tagline after the advertisement; in this way, the consumer may think that the water of this particular company is better than any other.

5. Murree Brewery: "Have Murree and be Merry"

Murree Brewery is a Pakistani multinational beverage company. The tagline of this brand has an expression of exaggeration as it means that if someone drinks a beverage from Murree brewery, it will make them bcheerful or high-spirited. However, it is not necessary for everyone to become happy or lively after drinking it.

Clothes' Brands

1. Modish: "For Real Life"

Modish is a comprehensive Pakistani brand that offers clothes, home décor, make-up and event planning. However, their main product of selling is clothing. A kind of figurative language used in this tagline is hyperbole. Thus, the saying gives the impression that if someone wants to live a real life, then he should buy products of the "Modish" brand. In reality, it is not always the case. Moreover, an element of ellipsis is also found, i.e. the thing or work can give an essence of real life; this information is missing in the tagline.

2. Louis Vuitton: "Respect Yourself"

Louis Vuitton is one of the world's leading fashion companies. Its tagline falls under the category of paradox. This statement, "Respect yourself", signifies the importance of respecting oneself by self-care and prioritising own comfort and luxury.

3. H&M: "The Makers of Happy and Merry"

H&M (Hennes & Mauritz AB) is a global clothing retailer headquartered in Sweden. In the tagline of this brand, a designer is described as someone who spreads happiness. This is a direct comparison; thus, the device of metaphor is employed.

Accessories Brands

1. David Yurman: "The Fiery Beauty of Diamonds"

David Yurman is an international jewellery brand based in New York. It is well-known for its unique style. The type of figurative language observed in this brand's tagline is hyperbole. The beauty of a diamond is exaggerated by calling it "fiery beauty". The word is used to define someone who is wild and high-spirited, and this tagline asserts that the beauty of diamonds is wild.

2. Rolex: "A Crown of Every Achievement"

Rolex is a global brand and one of the leading names in luxury wristwatches. In this brand's tagline, the metaphor device is used to attribute quality to watches. A crown is usually worn by kings or queens, symbolising authority and power, or may be worn as a reward after victory. In this tagline, the crown signifies that Rolex's wristwatches exemplify power and authority. The brand itself is considered as a symbol of class, royalty and power.

3. Rado: "Unlimited Spirit"

Rado is also a well-known brand of wristwatches. It is a pioneering company in luxury watchmaking. This brand has employed personification as a figure of speech to share the quality of its products. A wristwatch is personified as an everlasting spirit. It conveys the meaning that wearing the wristwatch of this brand gives strength and spirit that never fades away.

4. Omega: "Exact Time for Life"

Omega is a luxury watchmaker brand based in Switzerland. It has a clear and to-the-point brand tagline. The device of metonymy is employed to advertise this brand. The word wristwatch is replaced by 'time'. Moreover, this tagline is also giving the impression of an overstatement. One cannot claim that the wristwatch of this brand is only the best. Thus, the device of hyperbole is also utilised to emphasise and have a kind of impact and influence on people.

Louis Cartier: "Never Imitate, Always Innovate"

Louis Cartier is a French luxury goods corporation that creates, produces, advertises and sells wristwatches, leather products and jewellery. The figurative device observed in the tagline of this brand is 'pun'. The words "imitate" and "innovate" are similar in sound and convey contradictory meanings. It is a message to customers that this brand does not copy any other brand. Instead, the brand always comes up with innovation according to the latest times.

Brand of Appliances

1. Panasonic: "A Better Life, a Better World"

This company is known for manufacturing and marketing electrical appliances. At present, electrical appliances are an essential part of life. This tagline indicates that after using the appliance Panasonic brand, life becomes better and convenient and, as a result, gives a better sense of the world. It contains parallelism as a device to convey this specific meaning. The repetition emphasises the idea that the consumers will have a better life.

2. Samsung: "Inspire the World, Create the Future"

Samsung is a South Korean company that started its journey as a grocery trading store, but now it is an internationally recognised electric appliances brand. In the tagline of this brand, hyperbole is used as a persuasive device for marketing purposes. It gives the impression that using Samsung's appliances is a source of motivation, and in return, one can create the future. The brand inspires the world by manufacturing latest electrical appliances thus paving a way to create a better and advanced future.

3. Cisco: "The Bridge to Possible"

Cisco is a worldwide firm with an American base that deals with technology. It develops, produces and markets networking tools, computer softwares, telecommunication gears, and other high-tech services and goods. In this tagline, "bridge" is used as a metaphor to signify that networking tools are like bridges or connectors that help make any work possible.

Results

The main intent of the current study is to examine the stylistic use of figurative language in brand taglines.

Table 1

Taglines of Various Brands

Type of figurative language	No. of appearance
Hyperbole	8 times
Metaphor	5 times
Personification	3 times
Parallelism	4 times
Symbolism	2 times
Ellipsis	1 time
Paradox	1 time
Metonymy	1 time
Pun	1 time

For this purpose, 20 different taglines of various brands have been analysed. The analysis shows that brands have used figurative language in their taglines, such as hyperbole, personification, parallelism, metaphor, symbolism, ellipsis, paradox, metonymy, and pun. The figurative language most frequently used in taglines is hyperbole and metaphor, while ellipses, paradoxes and puns are rarely used.

All these figures of speech mentioned above are important in advertising products and persuading customers. The use of these features in the language of taglines grabs the attention of the customers. The brands incorporate the needs, desires, issues and emotions

of the consumers through the language of taglines. Their attention is captured by the use of compelling words and the simplicity with which they are written. For example, the tagline used by Olay brand is just a one-word tagline. It is simple and easy to understand, but the only single word, 'ageless,' significantly impacts the target population.

Discussion

The present study provides a detailed analysis of the use of figurative language in brand taglines, highlighting its significance and effectiveness in marketing communication. The results indicate that figurative language is a crucial stylistic tool employed in brand taglines to capture consumer's attention and convey brand identity. This section discusses the implications of these findings and their relevance to both marketing professionals and students studying stylistic and linguistic analysis.

Frequency and Impact of Figurative Language

The analysis revealed that hyperbole and metaphor are the most frequently used types of figurative language in brand taglines. Hyperbole, used in taglines like Olay's "Ageless," creates dramatic and memorable impressions by exaggerating the product's effects. This aligns with Aitchison's (2012) assertion that hyperbolic expressions can significantly impact consumer perception by creating an exaggerated yet appealing product image. Similarly, metaphors found in taglines like Bounty's "A Taste of Paradise" facilitate direct and vivid comparisons that enhance brand image and resonate with consumers on a deeper level (Yu, 2009).

The Role of Other Figurative Devices

While hyperbole and metaphor dominate, other figurative devices such as personification, parallelism, and symbolism also play a significant role in brand taglines. As seen in Vaseline's tagline, "The Healing Power of Vaseline," personification imbues products with human-like qualities, making them more relatable to consumers (Ekoyono, 2019). Parallelism, used in taglines like Lipton's "Drink better, live better," creates a rhythmic and memorable phrase that reinforces the brand's message through repetition (Sekhar, 2017). As Herbal Essence's "Take Your Hair to Paradise" illustrates, symbolism uses symbolic language to evoke idealised scenarios that attract consumer interest (Dubovičienė & Skorupa, 2014).

Persuasive Power of Figurative Language

The persuasive power of figurative language in brand taglines is evident in its ability to evoke emotions and create a lasting impact. This persuasive element is crucial for marketers aiming to differentiate their brands in a crowded marketplace. Emodi (2011) emphasises that the strategic use of figurative language in advertising enhances the aesthetic appeal of taglines and reinforces the brand's message, making it more compelling and memorable. The use of concise and impactful phrases, such as Olay's "Ageless," demonstrates how single words or short phrases can effectively encapsulate and communicate a brand's core values and promises.

Educational Implications

For students and researchers in the field of stylistics and linguistics, this study underscores the importance of understanding and analysing figurative language in non-literary texts. The findings provide a practical example of how stylistic analysis can be applied beyond literary texts, offering insights into the intersection of language, marketing, and consumer behaviour (Simpson, 2004). This study also enriches the literature on linguistic and stylistic analysis, particularly in the context of advertising, where the use of figurative language plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours (Tauqir & Alvi, 2021).

Limitations of the Study

The present research study explains what type of figurative language has been used in the brand tagline to convey the message of a particular brand or company. This study has only analyzed 20 taglines due to time and energy constraints, which may not capture the full spectrum of figurative language use across all types of brand taglines. The subject of analysis is only figurative language, not phonology, graphology, syntax or morphological aspects of taglines. The sample of brand taglines only includes food, clothes, accessories, beauty brands, and electrical appliances brand taglines. Moreover, the researcher did not analyse the brand taglines, which had no use of figurative language, thus making it difficult to evaluate the impact of marketing through the use of non-figurative language.

Conclusion

The present study deals with the analysis of the style of the brand tagline. The main focus of the research is the use of figurative language. This study has analysed the types of figurative language that have been used in brand taglines. The taglines were selected from categories such as food, clothing, accessories, and electrical appliances. The analysis concluded that nine different types of figurative language had been used in creating brand taglines such as hyperbole, personification, metaphor, parallelism, symbolism, pun, paradox, metonymy and ellipsis. Hyperbole and metaphor are the most frequently used figures of speech. Hyperbole gives an impression of exaggeration, which is not true in reality. It is used to create a great impact on consumers by creating a dramatic situation, while metaphor is used to symbolise things. It directly compares things with each other, which is not true, but this comparison persuades people to think about that particular product. This particular research has analysed the language of taglines only at the word level and the use of figurative language. Future researchers can analyze various taglines at all levels of stylistic analysis.

Recommendations

Future research could expand the sample size and include a wider range of product categories to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Additionally, examining other levels of stylistic analysis, such as phonological and syntactic features, could offer further insights into the stylistic strategies employed in brand taglines (Leech & Short, 2007).

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