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The Language of Colour as a Stimulus for Unconscious Hedonistic Associations in Modern Beauty Product Advertising

Abstract: The present paper studies the phenomenon of colour vocabulary as a verbal component of advertisements. Semantic analysis of advertising texts from English-language magazines specialized in the advertising of cosmetic and perfume products seeks to give insight into the emotionally-charged names for colours, which stimulate subconscious associations and specific emotions based on the symbolism of colours. Available empirical data in the advertising discourse clearly suggest that there are hedonistic metaphorical models actualized in the advertising messages. Special attention is paid to the colours relevant to each metaphorical model.

Keywords: language of colour, advertising discourse, beauty products, symbolic potential of colour, unconscious hedonistic associations, metaphorical models.

The rapid development of advertising has become one of the most striking phenomena of social and cultural reality in recent years. The increasing influence of the language of advertising on society has stimulated scientists to study the psychological, philosophical, linguistic, and other peculiarities of advertising texts. A number of linguistic research papers focus on various aspects of modern advertising activities, including strategies for communicative influence [1; 2], manipulative techniques in the media [3; 4], the linguistic representation of reality in the media [5; 6], and others.

Print advertising in magazines as a verbal-visual type of text has a powerful impact on the recipient due to its dual nature. The verbal component is a mandatory part of the content and the composite structure of any advertising text. This component has an influence by using the whole range of linguistic means of expression, but

the visual component of an advertising message, by interacting with the verbal one, makes the advertising message more effective and comprehensible.

The phenomenon of colour, as an essential attribute of modern print advertising, lies in the fact that it is present in advertising as a necessary condition for visual communication between the advertiser and the consumer (the colour of the text, the background, the colour of the advertised goods, and combinations thereof). Furthermore, colour vocabulary, which contributes to the emergence of fixed associations in advertising texts, is a component of verbal communication. The vast majority of studies only analyze colour as an element of visual communication. Colour vocabulary as a verbal component of advertisements has been still insufficiently researched in modern times.

Increasing brand competition in the cosmetic and perfume market has generated a need for the effective use of language techniques in advertising this product group, and the extent to which colours and colour vocabulary play a significant role in advertising. Moreover, the colour itself becomes a kind of merchandise that is difficult to sell without packaging, but which is nothing other than its name. Well-chosen words can be more effective than the actual colour of the product, or even its quality.

The flurry of colour terminology, which currently appears in English, completely supports the arguments regarding the salutatory evolution of language made by Spanish physicists Ramon Ferrer i Cancho and Ricard V. Sole [7]. New terminology for colours can be called, for the purposes of discussion, advertising words. Their main function is to draw attention to the particular colour tone, but not to name it.

In cosmetic and perfume products, advertising with the colour names *red*, *green* or *white* have been used few and far between. Such vocabulary is well known, but non-expressive, especially in the context of cosmetic and perfume advertising, as colour is one of the dominant characteristics of products in this reference group. In addition, it is impossible to convey the desired colour tone of beauty items by using these basic lexemes. That is why eye-catching and powerful word combinations such as *crushed raspberries*, *kiwi* or *marshmallow cake*, *young pink*, *kissed coral*, *pink whisper*, *apricot dazzle*, *merry cherry* are used to attract a potential consumer. Words and phrases of this type become more common in advertising because they do not name a particular colour, but “make a person perceive objects emotionally, enables easy recognition and allows symbolic content to affect the subconscious mind” [8, p. 78]. The exact meaning of a colour name, the idea of a particular colour tone, for

instance, ideally can be understood due to the fact that the product itself is placed nearby (most often in the form of a high-quality printed graphic image). However, this term will only be successful in the case of having a certain associative connection with colour.

Nowadays, the structure and composition of the lexical means of colour naming have changed dramatically. The natural source of words and word combinations denoting colour and its shades are the names of objects that are able to evoke associations in the potential consumer's consciousness. These associations are based on the symbolism of colours. In other words, associations differ depending on the national and cultural peculiarities of each language. Besides, the range of names of objects which are used for colour vocabulary is due to different linguistic views of the world. Analysis of English-language magazines specialized in the advertising of cosmetic and perfume products, such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Girlfriend*, *Glamour*, *Harper's BAZAR*, *InStyle*, *Marie Claire*, *TeenVogue*, *Vogue*, allows the division of colour names into groups according to the following objects:

✓ inanimate nature (sky, water, earth, sun, minerals, except metals and precious stones): *sky colour, sunset orange, sun-kissed summer colour, sunburn colour, sun coral colour, colour of moondust, moonlit magenta, purple rain, snow colour, deep ocean, ocean breeze, warm breeze, pacific, seashell, coral reef, desert currant, sand beige, rocky mountain green, ground shades, autumn hues;*

✓ the world of flowers and plants: *colour of crystal rose, rose tea, green tea, crystal orchid, orchid charm, chili, white lotus, lavender, vanilla, wild ginger, fuchsia fever, vivid fuchsia, lilac love, cool walnut;*

✓ fruits, berries and vegetables: *colour of peach, rich plum, rich raspberry, mango, mango tango, pink grapefruit, stolen cherry, red current, tangerine, spicy tomato, pretty peas, red pomegranate, pink pepper, papaya punch, berrylike colour, cherry jubilee, cherry passion, apricot sun;*

✓ foods, mainly sweet: *colour of brown sugar, sugar honey, crystal honey, honey lust, summer honey, candy, lollipop, salted caramel, chocolate, chocolate soufflé, cocoa bean, lemon tart, vanilla truffle, bright toffee, vanilla bean, spiced raisins, cottage cheese, ginger, melon, guava, tangerine, chilled latte, papaya punch, pink lemonade, liquor, amaretto, condensed milk, rose wine, champagne;*

✓ metals and precious stones: *gold / golden, gold orange, golden honey, silver, bronze, cooper, pewter blue, brilliant blue, crystal honey, aquamarine red, ruby*

red, topaz orange, emerald green, amethyst, pearl, pearlescent, purple rain, vanilla diamond.

Emotionally-charged names for colours are a means of manipulating the consciousness of a consumer, because such a vocabulary is a stimulus, which wakens a large variety of associations in the mind of a native speaker and hence contributes to the main purpose of advertising – to sell the advertised product. Thus, a new advertising function is attached to the name of the colour.

Therefore, each colour stimulates subconscious associations and specific emotions, which are based on the symbolism of colours. According to the Swiss scientist Max Lusher [9], over the centuries different colours have created certain sensations in the minds of human beings, which have been fixed as archetypes. The colour blue has come to represent dusk and appeasement, the colour yellow – activity and daily worries, the colour red – fire and blood.

The analysis of modern advertising texts for perfumes and cosmetics, which actively use the symbolic potential of a colour, finds metaphorical models implemented directly into these texts. These metaphorical models are based on associations, which have resulted from the colour vocabulary included in advertising messages. This can be shown in the following sequence: colour → colour symbolism → associations → metaphorical model.

Hedonism, which presents pleasure as the highest purpose and the main motive of human behavior, is widely used to provoke buyers into emotional resonance. The analysis of beauty products lets us place an increased focus on certain hedonistic metaphorical models connected with the symbolism of colour.

1. The metaphorical model “PERFUMES AND COSMETICS ARE THE ELIXIR OF LIFE, ENERGY AND GOOD SPIRITS” is principally actualized in the texts of beauty product advertising due to the colour red, being “one of the most salient and semantically productive basic colours for human beings” [10, p. 363]. According to Jean Berko Gleason, the colour pink can be identified as a shade of red, as “The presence of colour terms like *pink* in the lexicon of a language presupposes the prior existence of hierarchically more basic term like *red*” [11, p. 205]. Hence, the colour red and its shades, such as *scarlet, cherry, rouge, fuchsia, coral, blush, pink* and others, being symbols of fire and blood, are very emotional. They represent vigor, excitement, energy, happiness, joy, and are used as parts of compound adjectives in the names of lipsticks, lacquers and the packaging of beauty products to create the

mood and a positive attitude to life: *crazy red, revolution red, pink insanity, vivid fuchsia, cherry jubilee, rosy happiness*. In the following advertisements of red shampoo, rouge lipstick and fuchsia eyeshadow there is a motivation for a potential buyer to possess these products because they are keys to a cheerful mind and festive mood: *“Obsessed with colour. Stay vibrant with the red one”*; *“Rouge in love. Love your lips! This collection of radiant, high-potency colours, with up to six hours of wear, is surprisingly feather light, offering delightful comfort. Discover the lip colour that describes you best, and let your lip colour speak to uncover your mood, any time of the day”*; *“ELIXERY has your go-to fuchsia for the summer! This lovely shade with iridescent violet micro shimmer will add a pop to your summer holiday look”*.

Red and pink colours are also associated with passion, desire, romance and love. Sexual motivation in advertising has a significant impact on behavior and can be a powerful buying incentive. Advanced studies show that explicit sexual motivation can be effective when the goods themselves are naturally connected with it. In cosmetic and perfume advertising the feelings which are more common between sexes are deemphasized to the goods themselves: *“VOLUPTUOUS SENSUALITY. The signature bottle is infused with a unique shade of blush that alludes to the sensuality of skin and encapsulates the seductive nature of Narciso Eau De Parfume Poudree”*. The scripts of advertisements using the potential of red and pink colours are full of the word combinations of the kind: *hot red, forbidden red, cherry passion, scarlet siren, coral kiss, hot pink, fuchsia fever, sexy pink*.

2. The metaphorical model “PERFUMES AND COSMETICS ARE SWEET TREATS” are represented in the texts of advertisements due to the display of beauty products in the context of the brown colour spectrum related to sweet treats (*chocolate, chocolate soufflé, coffee, brown sugar, caramel, gingerbread, wild ginger, syrup, vanilla truffle, golden honey, crystal honey*), which are well-known as mood boosting stuff. Chocolate, for example, is the best anti-depressant which stimulates the feel-good areas of brain. Therefore, “sweet and appetite” cosmetics and perfumes not only un wrinkle or decorate face, but lift the spirits as well. This motive is used in the following advertisement of eyeshadows: *“CANDILICIOUS. A gel base for longer stay. Wet the brush and fill it with candilicious eye shadow... Take the warm Chocolate colour... Take the Ivory shade...”*.

3. The metaphorical model “PERFUMES AND COSMETICS ARE PRECIOUS OBJECTS AND WEALTH” appears because of the dominance of the blue colour and

its shades in the texts of advertisements. Chanel's make-up advertising, for example, is presented in the article under the title "ALL AT SEA". The main idea of the advertising text is that perfumes and cosmetics are not just the goods, the acquisition of which is motivated pragmatically, but above all, they are the items of great value for a potential buyer: *"Chanel's international make-up artist Dominique Papadopoulos takes us into the fantasy world of oceanic jewel tones – specially all the blues and greens you need this season"*.

The most popular and widely used colour in beauty product advertising metaphorically associated with precious metal is gold. It is received wisdom that gold as a metal is a symbol of wealth and financial independence. The gold colour, in its turn, is the colour of precious metal, luxury, superiority; this colour has become a synonym for power, prosperity, person's excellence, and perfection. In the nail lacquers advertising of gold colours the comparison of gold with precious objects is obvious: *"Gold fingers. No need for statement jewels when reaching this trendy metallic mani"*. The article "THE GOLDEN RULE", advertising facial cream for women, implies the idea that in order to be perfect, happy and wealthy a consumer should follow the "golden rule" using the only of its kind and thus valuable product: *"My golden rule for perfectly fused, long-lasting foundation and complexion perfection? My Auto Pilot Pre-Foundation Skin Primer Skin soother ... will keep your skin happy and hydrated and your makeup looking fabulous from am to pm. That sought-after fresh foundation ... can now be yours with my number one product"*. The purpose of the following advertising text is to show a correlation between *gold* and *wealth* through the concept *health* (it is an obvious point that *healthy* means *wealthy* because being free from illness and pain has a richness of its own): *"GOLD STANDARD". The new generation of tanning cosmetics has been carefully calibrated to make your look healthy rather than fake"*.

The delicate shade of gold that is associated with J'Adore company has its hypnotizing effect in advertising texts of perfumes and cosmetics. Gold embodies pleasure, luxury, loyalty and sustainability which are components of the concept *wealth*: *"The past can be beautiful, a memory, a dream, but it's no place to live. And now it's the time, the only way out, is up. It's not heaven. It's a new world. The future is gold. J'adore Dior"*. The intention of this text is to offer hope for the best future that is possible with good investments. Once Vance Packard memorably said, "The cosmetic manufacturers are not selling lanolin, they are selling hope". According to

J'ador Dior the only thing to be invested is gold. Therefore, there is a strong equivalence of gold and richness which is a synonym to wealth.

Gold and *golden* are extremely used as part of compound adjectives to name the colours of beauty products to emphasize their uniqueness and value: *bold gold, sunflower gold, metallic gilded gold, gothic gold, glimmer gold, shimmering gold, copper-gold, bronze-gold, golden beige, golden rose, golden wine, golden honey, golden bronze, sun-kissed gold, golden bronze, gold orange, gold dust*.

The realization of the metaphorical model "PERFUMES AND COSMETICS ARE PRECIOUS OBJECTS AND WEALTH" is drawn from the references to the palette of precious stones in advertising texts. The comparison of the colour of a lipstick or eye shadow with the colour of a precious stone leads to an associative connection between them. The colour names of beauty products *mauve diamond, pink diamond, vanilla diamond, black diamond, brilliant blue, deep purple amethyst, ruby red, plum sapphire, red aquamarine, topaz orange, emerald green, black opal, purple pearl, grey pearl, natural pearl* allow to treat cosmetics as jewelry.

4. Advertising texts contain the motives of transition from one world location to another one, the motives of mental blindness for optimistic perception of reality which is right with accelerated flow of buyer's thoughts and advance imaginative dream work. These motives are reflected in the semantics of the metaphorical model "PERFUMES AND COSMETICS ARE MYSTERY, FANTASY AND FAERY". The advertising texts analysis reveals that the colours pink, green and blue are used in the scripts that transfer a potential customer to some unreal worlds, for example, to a tropical paradise or to a dollhouse: "*OPI Nail Lacquer in Elephantastic Pink. Don't let the colder months scare you into nude polish. This punch of pink will transport you straight to a tropical paradise*"; "*Colour Theory Blush in Dollhouse. It's pretty? It's pink and although it looks intense, it delivers the perfect wash of colour*".

Being the colour of ocean and sky, which represents mystery and depth, blue is associated with a fantastic world with beautiful mermaids and diamonds: "*Under the SEA. Channel your inner mermaid with splashes of the coolest hues. Full Metal Shadow in № 12 Blue Clyde, Colour Mascara Blue, ... Blue Diamond Resurfacing Peel*". A combination of blue and green as a dominant colour of nature, used in the following eye shadows advertisement, turns a potential buyer into a fantastic bird with a colourful plumage, what is more, the title of this article contains information about what a concept this combination of colours should be associated with: "*Peacock*

Peepers. Update the smoky eyes with the striking combination of icy green mixed with peacock blue. The dramatic colour palette, inspired by peacock plumage, is fit for when you want to let your eyes do all the talking”.

Now therefore, the choice of colour as the verbal component of advertising texts is an important stage of the process of manufacturing messages for the development of promotional products. “Colour is used as a means to attract the consumer’s attention to a product that then influences buying behavior” [12, p. 301]. The creators and psychologists of advertisements use their knowledge about the potential options of different colours in order to present the product in a favorable light, and to create symbolic and emotional connotations. The colour as the verbal component of advertising texts has a strong influence on a potential buyer, because it appeals to the senses rather than the logic of a consumer. By selecting a specific colour and creating unique colour environment in the advertising texts, it is possible to manage consumer’s attitudes towards advertising and evoke particular associations which promote favorable perception of product and persuade to purchase it.

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