

Advertising Features

In any given ad these features can appear clearly or be largely absent. However these features are typical of advertising in general. Even adverts which do not use the traditional features to attract inform and persuade may be described as being in *contrast* to the traditional features. Some modern advertisements appear to be almost pushing consumers away from their product - but this is a technique used as a determined way of *not* conforming to tradition. See Marmite™.



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Advertising Language is characterised by the following features.

Hyperbole - exaggeration, often by use of adjectives and adverbs.

Frequent use of **adjectives** and **adverbs**

A limited range of **evaluative adjectives** includes new, clean, white, real, fresh, right, natural, big, great, slim, soft, wholesome, improved

Neologisms may have novelty impact, eg Beanz Meanz
Heinz, Cookability, Schweppervescence, Tangoed, Wonderfuel ...

Short sentences for impact on the reader. This impact is especially clear at the beginning of a text, often using bold or large type for the "Headline" or "slogan" to capture the attention of the reader.

Ambiguity is common. This may make a phrase memorable and re-readable. Ambiguity may be syntactic (the grammatical structure) or semantic (puns for example).

Weasel words are often used. These are words which suggest a meaning without actually being specific. One type is the open comparative: "Brown's Boots Are Better" (posing the question "better than what?"); another type is the bogus superlative: "Brown's Boots are Best" (posing the question "rated alongside what?")

Look out for the following Weasel words:

helps	like	virtually
enriched	worth	fresh
tested	guaranteed	scientific
traditional	home-made	organic

Use of **Imperatives**: "Buy Brown's Boots Now!"

Euphemisms: "Clean Round the Bend" for a toilet cleaner avoids comment on "unpleasant" things. The classic example is "B.O" for "body odour" (in itself a euphemism for "smelly person")

Avoidance of negatives (advertising normally emphasises the positive side of a product - though see Marmite, Tango, Benetton, for whom it seems that all publicity is good)

Simple and Colloquial language: "It ain't half good" to appeal to ordinary people, though it is in fact often complex and deliberately ambiguous.

Familiar language: use of second person pronouns to address an audience and suggest a friendly attitude.

Present tense is used most commonly, though nostalgia is summoned by the simple past

Simple vocabulary is most common, **my mate Marmite**, with the exception of technical vocabulary to emphasise the scientific aspects of a product (computers medicines and cars but also hair and cleaning products) which often comes as a complex noun phrase, **the new four wheel servo-assisted disc brakes**.

Repetition of the brand name and the slogan, both of which are usually memorable by virtue of
alliteration, finger of fudge, the best four by four by far; **rhyme**, mean machine, the cleanest clean it's ever been; **rhythm**, drinka pinta milka day
syntactic parallelism, stay dry, stay happy
association, fresh as a mountain stream

Humour. This can be verbal or visual, but aims to show the product positively. Verbal Puns **wonderfuel** and graphic juxtapositions are common.

Glamorisation is probably the most common technique of all. "Old" houses become **charming**, **characterful**, **olde worlde** or **unique**. "Small" houses become **compact**, **bijou**, **snug** or **manageable**. Houses on a busy road become **convenient for transport**.

A **café** with a pavement table becomes a **trattoria**, moving up market aspires to be a **restaurant**, too cramped it becomes a **bistro**. Not enough room to serve it becomes a **fast food servery**. If the menu is English food it is likely to be **traditional**, **home-baked** or **home made**; if the menu is French the cake will be **gateau**, the potted meat **paté**, bits of toast in your soup will be **croutons**. The **decor** will be probably **chic**, possibly **Provençal**.

Finally **potency**.

David Ogilvy identifies the following words as giving **news value**, **novelty** and **immediacy** to a piece of copy.

free	now	how to
suddenly	announcing	introducing
it's here	just arrived	important development
improvement	amazing	sensational
remarkable	revolutionary	startling
miracle	magic	offer
quick	easy	wanted
challenge	advice to	compare
bargain	hurry	last chance

Vance Packard (1960) memorably said:

"The cosmetic manufacturers are not selling lanolin, they are selling hope ... we no longer buy oranges, we buy vitality. We do not just buy an auto, we buy prestige."