

テレビコマーシャルの記号論的分析——広告電通賞 ソフトドリンクの場合

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A Semiotic Analysis of TV Commercials —— The Case of the Dentsu Television Advertising Awards, Soft Drink Division

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1. Introduction

In commercials, various techniques are used to ensure that the product appeals to the consumer. Franzen (1995) divided the fundamental techniques used in advertising into eight categories: announcement, display, associative conversion, lesson, drama, pure entertainment, imagination and special effects. Each category was further sub-divided. For example, figurative techniques such as the metaphor and metonymy fall under the category of 'associative conversion'. As the expressions produced by these techniques can be interpreted as signs, semiotics can be used effectively. This paper systematically analyses advertising expressions from a semiotic viewpoint.

First, we shall classify semiotic concepts in advertising expressions. Messages that are symbolically expressed by advertising copy and graphics, and are not coded, are called 'connotation'. Barthes (1964) considered the principle of rhetoric to be at work when copy and graphics represent connotations. Jakobson (1956) suggests metaphor and metonymy to be typical rhetorical techniques. 'Estrangement' is another technique that is also often used in advertising expressions. Estrangement means turning a customary or familiar word or style into an unfamiliar or new expression by putting it in a new context or coining a new word. Typically, in real commercials, a combination of estrangement techniques and various kinds of rhetoric are used. In other words, complex methods are used in many commercial expressions.

Koyasu et al. (1989) conducted research that applies semiotics to analyse expressions in television advertising. This analysis was performed on 862 TV commercials, using the following methods of metaphor expression:

- 1) Carefully maintaining a 'commercial record / analysis sheet' of the name of the company, brand name, image content, title, voice, music, etc.
- 2) Three researchers viewed and listened to each of the 862 commercials, and checked whether there were any errors in the entries in the 'commercial record / analysis sheet'. In addition, they also judged whether the linguistic metaphor, the pictorial metaphor, and the musical metaphors are contained and studied the meaning of these metaphors.

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Although research on metaphors in printed media commercials has been conducted, Koyasu et al. (1989) researched TV commercials ; such research has rarely been carried out. However, their research focused on metaphors and did not analyse metonymy or estrangement expressions. Thus, we examine metaphor, metonymy and estrangement expressions in TV commercials in our paper.

2. Method

2.1 Material for Analysis

Our material for analysis was a selection of the winning commercials in the drinks category of the prestigious Dentsu Television Advertising Awards. The Dentsu Advertising Award comprises two prizes for each section—one section prize and one prize for excellence. Thus, our analysis material consisted of two commercials per year. The target term for analysis was 12 years – 1990 to 2002. We restricted our material to the drinks category, because it is easier to find fixed tendencies in this section as compared to the whole food section which includes many product groups.

Furthermore, the winners of the drinks category can be roughly divided into beer, whiskey and three soft drink product categories. One principle of semiotic analysis is to make comparison easy through division into genres. Okano and Asakawa (2002) analysed the entries in the beer and whiskey category ; this paper, however, examines soft drinks.

2-2 Analysis Procedure

An analysis sheet was created and completed in the same format as that created by Koyasu et al. (1989). The items on the sheet were as follows : (1) Advertising content (sponsor company name, brand name, etc.) (2) Image content (3) Title, (4) Narrative (5) Music and (6) Metaphor, metonymy and estrangement expressions.

After creating a description of the content by repeated slow-speed playback of the videotape, a joint content check was performed by two researchers.

3. Results

Here, we describe the content of the commercials and summarise the metaphors, metonymies and estrangement expressions in each. In addition, the storyboards of all the commercials are provided in Figures 1 to 10 in the appendix.

《1. Suntory, *Pepsi Cola*, 'Ichiro 60 seconds' 》

Ichiro plays an active role in major league baseball. He appears in the batter's box and hits and runs in the midst of cheering enthusiasts in a baseball field. Simultaneously, people in a town are shown dancing to rock music. Their dance movements are choreographed to resemble Ichiro's actions, i. e. sliding, jumping and diving. Even the newscaster who delivers the news on 'Ichiro Fever' starts dancing. Furthermore, the people, a street-corner newscaster and Ichiro drink *Pepsi* in synchrony. The jingle is playing in the background : 'Ichiro

number 51, star comes alive and swingin' a bat full of dynamite, it's a base hit, if you hit right. We're gonna drink up pep-pep-Pepsi, we 're gonna rock it up, pep-pep-Pepsi !' This is a typical jingle. An estrangement effect is created by using a fresh combination of two heterogeneous items-in this case, baseball and rock music. The context is consistently that of the U. S., and the commercial has overtones of U. S. youth culture. Baseball is a sport of American origin. The freshness and sportiness of Ichiro, who is making rapid progress in this sport, is similar to that of *Pepsi*.

《 2. Coca-Cola Japan, *Georgia*, 'There is tomorrow' 》

A man is standing on the roof of a building under the blue sky. Another man is washing his hands in a washroom. Two ladies are sitting at the reception desk of a company. A middle-aged man is working at a personal computer. A taxi driver is driving a man, who looks like a top-level executive. The passenger is sitting in the back seat, reading a newspaper. Two men in suits are kneeling on the ground. These images are displayed in succession. The jingle plays in the background: 'There is tomorrow. There is tomorrow. I am young, I have a dream. People will understand me some day.' There is a scene in which an employee of a company is standing on the roof of a building under the blue sky, drinking *Georgia*. The characters in this commercial are smiling although they are not satisfied with their present condition. 'Tomorrow' is a metaphor for a better state than the present one. *Georgia* represents a means to relax and dream of tomorrow.

《 3. The National Dairy Promotion and Research Association, Improving the image of milk campaign, 'Why can't you wait for school lunch time ?' 》

While two women are preparing food at the school lunch canteen facility, a bottle of milk is transformed into a skeleton. The face of one of the women is shown, and she shouts, 'That child !' The women and a man chase the skeleton as it tries to escape. The skeleton looks around restlessly and then takes refuge in the science room. It camouflages itself by standing with the other skeletons. However, he has an attack of hiccoughs. The woman says, 'Why can't you wait for the school lunch time ?' While other children begin to eat, the skeleton stands in the corridor holding two buckets in its hands. The skeleton can be considered to be a metonymy for calcium, and it has been animated as a character in a funny story.

《 4. Suntory, *Boss Seven*, 'Talk' 》

An employee of a company (Masayuki Ito, 37 years old) puts on a necktie, opens a steamed towel package and talks with a friend in a bar. He puts his spectacles on his head and wipes his face with a steamed towel. He says, 'People talk about globalisation, but they cannot say it directly (to the USA). I can say it directly.' Then, he wipes his face with the towel again and tosses it with a smile. The towel falls on President Clinton's knee. Clinton shakes it off. Ito is surprised and looks around. Clinton says, 'I'd like to hear your opinion', and an interpreter translates it into Japanese. Clinton says, 'Tell me directly.' Ito puts his hand into his pocket, takes out a can of 'Boss Seven', takes a sip, and looks up at an angle. Then, a can of Boss Seven is shown. The image of a man on the can of Boss Seven grins. Wiping one's face with a steamed towel is the metonymy for relaxation, which is used in the first half. On the other hand, the metonymy for stress is used for the second half. Boss Seven is drunk during times of stress. The man's grinning face on the can is a meta-

message of humour.

« 5. Suntory, *Pepsi Cola*, 'Wild goose' »

A man skydives with a skateboard, wearing goggles like a pilot and extending his arms like wings. A wild goose, which has strayed from its flock, flies near him. The man does a somersault and returns to his initial position. The goose follows him, not too far behind. The man grins. He drinks from the can of *Pepsi* that he was carrying around his waist. The *Pepsi* flows from the can into the mouth of the wild goose. The goose shows its gratitude by honking and returns to its flock. The goggles are a metonymy for a pilot, and the man who extends both arms like wings is a metaphor for an airplane or a bird. *Pepsi* is a metaphor for fuel.

« 6. Suntory, *Kyobancha*, 'A marriage meeting' »

A slim young lady is sullenly looking at a picture of a man. An elderly lady says, 'I have no intention of recommending (a marriage meeting) forcefully. However, you are not so beautiful that you can afford to talk big.' The young lady becomes much more sullen. The young lady takes a sip of *Kyobancha*. The picture of a man with a flat nose is shown on the screen. The elderly lady says, 'His nose is as flat as your bust.' The young lady becomes still more sullen. An elderly lady says in a low voice, 'Although his nose is flat, his salary is high.' A young lady turns her face to the elderly ladies, looks in the distance, and says, 'He is my favorite type.' Two butterflies are flying outside the house in the yard. A Shirakawame (woman in Shirakawa-style clothes) says, 'Don't you buy flowers? Don't you buy either flower or coarse tea?' The two butterflies can be interpreted as a metaphor for a husband and wife. The flower and coarse tea might be metaphors for a young lady and an elderly lady, respectively. All characters are female and the humour in this commercial is drawn from an everyday female viewpoint and criterion. *Kyobancha* is depicted as a means to calm down for a while, when in a bad mood. As for the setting, Kyoto has the image of being traditional, Japanese and feminine.

« 7. Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., *Pocari Sweat*, '2nd. Challenge' »

A young woman is trying to ride an ostrich in a prairie in Africa but falls to the ground and rolls over. She is covered with dust and dirt. However, at last, she succeeds in mounting the ostrich and rides it for a while. At the sight of this, an African boy, who had laughed at her earlier attempt, yells with delight. The woman and the boy struck a high-five in celebration of the success. They stand by a river and drink *Pocari Sweat*. The narrative is, 'There is a time when plain water just won't do. Water charge, Pocari Sweat.' In this commercial, the refreshing effect of the drink is emphasized by contrasting it with a hard struggle in dry land. A semantic contrast of 'effort' and 'success' is also used here. As for the subject matter, an unusual vehicle, i. e. an ostrich, creates an estrangement effect for the audience.

« 8. Japan Dairy Council, Milk campaign of Japan, 'Karateist vs. mosquito' »

A mosquito attacks a karateist, in a white karate suit, in the middle of his meditation. The karateist shouts and repeatedly tries to swat the mosquito, but only ends up swishing his arms in the air. His hand is swung in vain, and it hits something hard. An X-ray image shows several cracks in his bone. The narrative is, 'You are

lacking in calcium.’ In contrast, a small child, also wearing a white karate suit, swats the mosquito and it falls with one blow. A title appears : ‘Milk strengthens bones.’ In this commercial, a metonymic relation between bone and milk is used, and milk is advertised as a drink that is rich in calcium. An estrangement effect or humour is induced through a paradox – that a karateist who appears to be strong is not effective against a small mosquito, but that a small child can kill the mosquito with a swat. The commercial shows milk as a ‘healthy’ drink, utilising properties that have metonymic relations with medicine, such as X-ray, bone, blood (which, in turn, is associated with the mosquito – a blood-sucking insect.)

《 9. Snow Brand Milk Products Co., *Dole 100% juice*, ‘Fruit billiards’ 》

A grapefruit labelled ‘*Dole*’ is shot like a billiard ball. The grapefruit flies and hits other fruits. These fruits collide with one another and break into pieces, their juice spurting out. Then, the grapefruit goes into a dark hole and juice comes out of a pineapple. The juice from each of the fruits pours into glasses arranged in a line. A smiling girl slightly raises the glass of orange juice to make a toast. Cartons of *Dole* juice are shown. A round slice of pineapple transforms into the letter ‘O’. The letter bursts and then becomes a part of the word ‘*Dole*’. In this commercial, fruits are compared to billiard balls. Through this visual metaphor, juice is shown as if it is not made in a factory, but from the collision of fruits, suggesting the genuineness of ‘natural fruit juice’. Also, the visual similarity between the character ‘O’, which is a part of the brand name, and a slice of a pineapple is also utilised. Moreover, the visual of fruits being used as billiard balls, which is non-natural, is extremely entertaining and has an estrangement effect.

《 10. Coca-Cola Japan, *Coca-Cola*, ‘Homecoming’ 》

A young lady and her younger brother take a ferry to visit a relative in a coastal country. There are scenes of the lady having a pleasant chat, flipping through an album, massaging an old woman’s shoulders, dragging a seine, chatting on the beach with a boy and enjoying herself with Japanese toy fireworks. *Coca-Cola* is always present in these scenes. She drinks the *Coca-Cola* directly from the bottle and smiles. The title is displayed : ‘Fresh, tasty, I feel Coke.’ In this commercial, a positive connotation of traditional Japanese countryside and hometown is used. *Coca-Cola* is shown as being in harmony with Japanese culture.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above results, we now summarise the common characteristics observed in the winning entries of the television commercials in the soft drinks division of the Dentsu Awards.

First, it becomes clear that a semantic opposite of ‘stress or irritation’ and ‘comfort’ is often seen in the commercials, as is the contrast of ‘failure and success’, or ‘difficulties and comforts’. For example, in the *Boss Seven* commercial, coffee is drunk as a breather in a situation of stress, namely, facing President Clinton. Similarly, in the *Kyobancha* commercial, the lady, whose looks are being undermined, drinks tea and regains her temper and listens to the good aspects of her match. Because the syntagmatic structure of the narrative arranges this semantic antithesis as a progression from ‘stress’ to ‘comfort’ or from ‘difficulties’ to ‘comforts’, it leaves the audience with a feeling of pleasure in the end.

With the background of such a semantic antithesis, the metaphor of 'fuel' is sometimes used in soft drink commercials. A typical example is that of *Pepsi* in 'Wild goose', in which the drink was shown to refuel a tired goose that got separated from its flock. The same idea can be applied to 'Ichiro 60 seconds', in which the drink can be seen as a fuel that makes Ichiro perform an explosive activity.

But there are also cases which bring 'freshness' to the front. For example, in 'Homecoming', there is no negative scene at all, and all the scenes are filled with feeling that is joyful and cool. Similarly, Ichiro's cool feeling is drawn out in 'Ichiro 60 seconds'. It can be said that the 'freshness' of the main character (or other settings) in such commercials is a metaphor for that of the product and is transferred to the product image.

On the other hand, metonymy is used as an effective device to appeal to the freshness of the ingredients of the drink. For example, in the case of 'Fruit billiards', images of fruits, which are ingredients of the product, are emphasized.

In addition, some of the commercials also use humour effectively. Health drinks such as milk and isotonic drinks are the salient illustrations. As Stewart and Furse (1986) note, 'Information on nutrition and health had a negative effect on three commercial performances – Recall, Comprehension, Persuasion' (p. 55). In order to avoid such a disadvantage, it seems that there is a tendency to use humour as a means by which information on nutrition and health can be presented indirectly. As a semiotic mechanism for inducing laughter, estrangement is used in many cases. For example, an unreal set-up in which the skeleton drinks milk in 'Why can't you wait for school lunch time?' induces laughter, suggesting milk to be a drink that builds bones.

Finally, for future study, it appears to be necessary to extend the range of commercials to include those from genres other than soft drinks. Moreover, it would also be interesting to identify the relationship between the main semiotic characteristics found in this paper and the affective responses that the audience experience as they are exposed to each commercial.

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Appendix



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

