

THE PERFECT BOOST AN ECO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ENERGY DRINK ‘STING’ ADVERTISEMENT

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Abstract:

This present study focuses on an eco-linguistic framework for examining advertising and applies it to a widespread range of TV advertisements for the energy drink Sting. This particular product was selected because of well-publicized criticisms of its influence on health and the environment. The framework classifies advertisements into one of five types: classic-type, identity-type, narrative-type, cause-type, and counter-type, with many advertisements being hybrids of more than one type. The analysis uses multi-modal discourse analysis to reveal underlying messages behind the advertisements and explores these according to an ecosophy based on the World Health Organization's concept of One Health. The analysis aims to reveal linguistic and multimodal features that are used to persuade people to purchase products that potentially harm both the consumer and the environment. The results can be practically applied in critical language awareness materials that can promote healthier and more environmentally friendly purchasing.

Keywords: advertising; energy drink Sting; discourse; eco-linguistics; multimodality

1. Introduction

Language is a fundamental aspect of human culture and cognition, playing a central role in our social, intellectual, and emotional lives. It is a dynamic system that evolves and adapts over time, reflecting the culture and society in which it is used. And the other hand, Eco-linguistics is a field of study that examines how language use shapes our interactions with the environment. It is action-oriented, and aimed at making a practical difference in the world. Eco-linguistics is guided by an ecosophy, which is a framework of values around the ideal relationships of humans with other species and the physical environment. The ecosophy used in this study is Health! This

means that health is something to be celebrated, protected, and striven for as far as possible. Health! Applies to humans, other species, and the physical environment.

Eco-linguistics analyzes stories conveyed by particular clusters of linguistic features and examines them as destructive, beneficial, or ambivalent. What counts as 'destructive' or 'beneficial' depends on the analyst's ecosophy and their framework of values around ideal relationships of humans with other species and the physical environment (Stibbe 2021). In the case of the ecosophy Health!, stories are judged as destructive if they promote harm to human or other animal health, or encourage unnecessary use of resources and waste that can harm the health of the environment. Stories are considered beneficial if they do the opposite. Ecolinguistics focuses on the most widespread and destructive discourses that cause the greatest harm to human health, the health of other species, and the environment. These are the primary discourses to resist through encouraging critical awareness and through searching for alternative discourses that can promote human, animal, and environmental health.

There are many possible destructive discourses to analyze, but the discourse of advertising stands out since advertising has a huge global reach and its persuasive techniques can encourage people to purchase unnecessary products that harm themselves, others, and the environment. There are a vast number of harmful products that could be focused on, including those of the animal-product industries, transport industries, or tobacco. However, one product that is particularly notorious in terms of health impact, scale, and harm both to people and the planet is **Sting** or, as it is often known (energy drink). Sting energy drink is a carbonated energy drink from PepsiCo International. Sting was introduced to the market by PepsiCo in 2002. It was launched in Pakistan specifically in 2010 with a widespread advertising campaign. Sting launched for the first time in two flavors "Gold Rush and "Berry Blast" at a reasonable price. The highlighting factors were that it tastes better, it is priced much less than the competition, easily accessible and it provides a timely boost of energy that keeps you going in your busy life in a balanced way. Moreover, the slogan which is already mentioned in the title "The Perfect Boost" means that the concerned drink will provide you with just the right amount of energy and alertness to get through your day, and if you drink Sting cold drink, you can do anything, and your energy will be completed through Sting. "Blue Utha, Toofan Jaga with Sting's electrifying new drink, Blue Thunder!" Furthermore, the sting has been criticized in Pakistan, particularly for, Hypertension in a young boy:

We report the case of a young boy who presented with palpitations and high blood pressure as a result of energy drink usage. He had been consuming a "Sting" energy drink regularly while studying for long hours during his O' level Exams. His medical examination revealed Sinus tachycardia and high blood pressure. The rest of the examination and lab workup were within normal limits. His pulse and blood pressure returned to normal range after discontinuing Sting usage, Asma Usma and Ambreen Jawaid (2012).

Moreover, environmentally, the Sting company has also been found to be the largest plastic polluter in Asia, specifically in India, and Pakistan, according to an analysis by Break Free from Plastic (2022). One reason why Sting has such high pollution levels is that the energy drink is the number one soft drink consumed in Asian countries by a long way, something which can be explained by the scale and effectiveness of its transnational advertising campaigns.

In this study, the researcher developed a classification system and tools for analyzing advertisements and applying them to the advertising of the Sting company, focusing specifically on advertisements for the product 'Sting Classic' (the original, high-sugar version). There are two

reasons why the analysis of advertising is important for ecolinguistics. The first is that an understanding of linguistic and visual devices that make advertising persuasive can be used in resisting advertising, primarily through exposing the techniques and promoting critical language awareness. The second reason is that the powerfully persuasive techniques of advertising can be reused in counter-campaigns that encourage people not to buy unnecessary products and instead undertake activities that are life-enhancing, health-enhancing, and environment-enhancing.

The present study, will focus on TV advertisements for Sting, and develop a framework based on five different types of advertising. The five types are the classic type, identity type, narrative type, cause type, and counter-type. Most modern advertising falls into one of these types, and many contain a mixture of types within a single advertisement. The current study is based on research consisting of a multimodal analysis of 60 Sting TV advertisements found through Sting's own web pages, advertising archives, and playlists on the platforms Facebook and YouTube. The advertisements were coded into five categories based on their factual content, identity-forming devices, ethical messaging, explicit communicative goals, and implicit communicative goals. Following this, a search was carried out to discover advertising campaigns from nonprofit organizations that encourage people not to buy Sting because of the harm it causes, as examples of counter-type advertising. The following sections describe each of the five categories in turn and analyze prototypical examples of each category.

2. Classic-type advertising

A classic-type advertisement describes the properties of the product being advertised, represents them in a favorable light, and ends with an explicit statement that calls on the viewer to buy the product.

Classic-type advertising can be seen in some of the slogans that Sting has used to promote Sting over the years. In 2010 the slogan was, 'Life ka Switch On' in Urdu and it can be translated to English as "Switch On Life" – which explicitly calls on the viewer to consume, it implies that the product or brand it represents can energize or activate various aspects of life. It suggests that by using the product or service, you can infuse more energy, excitement, or vitality into your everyday experiences. In 2014, the slogan "Sting: Ignite the Passion", suggests that by consuming Sting, an energy drink, you can fuel and intensify your passion, energy, and enthusiasm. In 2018 the slogan "Sting: Power to Excel" conveys the message that by consuming Sting, an energy drink, you can acquire the energy and strength necessary to excel in various aspects of your life. In 2020 the slogan 'The Sting boost' implies that by consuming Sting, an energy drink, you can experience a significant increase in energy, alertness, and overall vitality.

Various other slogans refer to refreshment, thirst, taste, and deliciousness which all stay close to the act of drinking the product and the sensations it arouses.

Early video Sting advertisements made strong use of classic-type advertising with expressions such as the following:

- After a long day at work, I reach for a Sting energy drink to 'Ignite the Passion' and keep my energy levels up. (2014)
- Let Sting give you the extra push towards greatness! (2019)
- Sting gives me 'The Sting Boost' I need to stay focused and active during my study sessions. (2020)
- Feeling drained after a night out? Grab a Sting and 'Switch On Life' to keep the party going. (2010)

- Launch yourself when Sting kicks in, even gravity won't stop you! (2017).
- Gear up, Lahoris! Sting is on the lookout for the strongest puncher out there. Head to the Packages Mall on 17th June and show the world your punching power! (2018)
- The Sting boost zaps **you** up from AM to PM. (2023).

These sentences illustrate how Sting's slogans are used to convey the product's energy-boosting benefits and appeal to various situations where increased energy and vitality are desired. These expressions focus on the properties of the product itself and convey a positive appraisal pattern through the use of adjectives with positive semantic prosody that modify the product: delicious, refreshing, tempting, natural, lively, and fresh. The second person pronoun 'you' reaches out directly to the viewer in a process of synthetic personalization (Fairclough 2014: 89). Synthetic personalization occurs when a huge global corporation speaks to a mass audience but uses personal terms to make it appear as if it is a conversation between two people.

Synthetic personalization is often achieved through a narrator who is physically present in the advertisement but whose words are a direct commercial message from the corporation. The advertisement starts with "electrifying energy" with, the 'Sting blue Current, Kamaal ka Current' tagline:

The film starts with a young couple sitting under a star-lit sky. The girl hopes to see a shooting star to share her secret wish. The boy, in his quirky Sting style, decides to jolt himself up by getting a bolt of energy as he takes a sip of the new Sting Blue Current. He creatively turns himself into a shooting star as the girl closes her eyes to make her wish. The film concludes with an electrifying note, echoing the brand's tagline 'Sting Blue Current, Kamaal ka Current', igniting a sense of possibilities through Sting Blue Current's 'Can-Do' energy.

Another advertisement from 2011 starts with a woman who is carrying a tray of Sting bottles and says, "Wouldn't this be a good time for you and your guests to have Sting too?". The advertisement then goes on to show the woman hosting a small gathering and stinging the guests, while an off-screen narrator states "Sting is so delicious, so refreshing, so tempting to any guest" (Paskaloka 2021). The synthetic personalization here is achieved not only through the second person pronoun 'you', but the presupposition in 'you and your guests', which assumes that, just like the depicted host, 'you' also have guests in your home that you entertain. Assumptions like this make it appear as if the corporation knows something about the viewer, creating solidarity with them (Fairclough 2003: 58).

Overall, classic-type advertising can be characterized as synthetic personalization where there is an obvious corporate voice that makes a 'direct appeal' to the viewer using positive appraisal patterns to represent the product in a favorable light and makes assumptions that make it seem as if the corporation knows the viewer. The direct appeal uses imperatives and the second person pronoun 'you' to reach out to the viewer. A high facticity pattern is used to present the positive characterization of the product as a certain and indisputable fact.

3. Identity-type advertising

More recent Sting slogans associate the product with positive things that lie outside of the commercial world, and instead exist within the 'Life world' Examples are as follows:

- Life Tastes Good (2001)
- Real (2003)
- Make It Real (2005)

- The Sting Side of Life (2006)
- Open Happiness (2009)
- Taste the Feeling (2016)
- Real Magic (2021)
- Believing is Magic (2022)
- Sting Blue Thunder (2023)

Only two slogans 'The Sting Side of Life', and 'Sting Blue Thunder' explicitly mentions the product, but even in this case, it is a modifier of 'life', allowing 'life' as the head of the phrase to be the main focus. In 'Life Tastes Good' and 'Taste the Feeling' the product is not mentioned explicitly but is alluded to by the word 'taste'. The expression 'Open Happiness' similarly alludes to the opening of a bottle or can, conflating the product with happiness. The other slogans do not mention or allude to the product at all, but since they appear on the screen next to the Sting logo they nonetheless map the elements of the slogan (e.g. magic) to the product. There is, therefore, an erasure (Stibbe 2021: 139) of the product, but of the type 'trace', where a more or less subtle hint of it remains.

Over time, the advertisements increasingly moved from selling a product that had functional benefits such as refreshments to something much more profound: the product as a path to becoming a different and better kind of person. This is what the researcher calls identity-type advertising, where the consumption of the product is associated with becoming a particular kind of person.

The focus on identity in advertisements reflects the increasing importance that identity plays in modernity. The sociologist Anthony Giddens describes how in traditional cultures of the past, people's identities were quite rigidly fixed and controlled by society for example, the son of a Farrukh Asalan would be expected to follow in his father's footsteps. In modernity, however, there are more possibilities for people to shape their own identities and tell their own stories about who they are as people. Giddens writes that:

A person's identity is not to be found in behavior [...] but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography [...] must continually integrate events that occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story about the self'. (Giddens 1991: 54)

However, in crafting a story of self, people are influenced by the texts that surround them and advertisements are ubiquitous. Unsurprisingly, advertisers try to shape identities in ways that include the consumption of their products. Giddens describes what can happen when advertisers conflate who we are with what we own:

To a greater or lesser degree, the project of the self becomes translated into one of possession of desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life. [...] The consumption of ever novel goods becomes in some part a substitute for the genuine development of self; appearance replaces essence as the visible signs of successful consumption outweigh the use-values of the goods and services themselves. (Giddens 1991: 198)

Early Sting video advertisements had elements of identity mixed in with their primarily classic-type advertising, such as being a good host, a committed family member, or someone who engages in an enjoyable wholesome activity like ice skating. '*Noman Jabaarkhail shows us how to run like the wind and save the day with Sting!*' This slogan of Sting fragmented the identity of Noman who is running in a tagline. It represents that Noman identity is not important but the identity of Sting is crucial. However, in 2011 the TV advertisement 'Have a Sting and a Smile' came out, with more subtle synthetic personalization and a primary focus on lifestyle rather than

product. In the advertisement, the corporate voice is still present but backgrounded by being placed within the lyrics of a song, which is played over images of families enjoying themselves outside. The families play sports, fly kites, eat picnics, hold balloons, and dance. Everyone is active, bonding with each other, smiling, and, unsurprisingly, drinking Sting. The lyrics are “The whole world is smiling with me. Sting adds life. Have a Sting and a smile”. Although this does contain the typical classic-type imperative ‘have a Sting’, the primary focus is on life and feelings (of happiness) rather than particular qualities of the product – the life world rather than the corporate world.

The 2013 TV advertisement ‘Life ka Switch On’. This advertisement is full of images of young, energetic, attractive people drinking Sting while surfing, skateboarding, swimming, and dancing. The lyrics of the accompanying song are: “Life tastes good, Sting. You know how it feels with a Sting in your hand”. The phrase ‘a Sting in your hand’ occurs as a woman dances with a Sting in her hand, mapping ‘you’, the consumer, onto the woman, who is active, attractive, and enjoying life. The ending of the advertisement has the words ‘THE BOOST YOU NEED’ written above the Sting logo, metaphorically mapping the enjoyable life led by the characters in the advertisement onto the product. The implication is that when you purchase a Sting your life will be transformed to be like the lives of those people depicted in the boost – that consuming the product will lead to a change in identity. The advertisement is therefore selling something more than a momentary feeling of refreshment; instead, it is selling a ‘new and better you’ that the viewer can become through consumption of the product. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 12) describe how commodification, the treatment of someone or something as a mere commodity or product, is a process that has had a profound influence on the way identities are conceptualized [...]. Some explanations treat people and their identity positions as passively controlled by economic conditions and the power and rhetoric of advertising. In contrast, other theories suggest that people actively construct their identities by deriving their meanings for the things they buy or resisting the positions offered by advertising texts. (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 12)

However, there is no need to split it into a black-and-white ‘passively controlled’ and ‘actively constructed’ since there can be a spectrum between these depending on the viewer. Advertisements by their nature are shown to very large numbers of people. Some viewers will make a subconscious connection between the identities in the advertisement and the product, which may result in them purchasing the product. However, for many, the advertisement will just wash over them without a thought, like the hundreds of other advertisements they have seen that week. Others will respond critically, recognizing the false connection between an attractive lifestyle and a product, and will passively resist the message by not purchasing the product or actively resist it by encouraging others to avoid it too. So it is possible to say that with a large audience, advertisements are likely to convey their message to some viewers who will absorb them uncritically – that is, after all, why the advertisers spend billions on advertising their products? The aim of analyzing advertisements and raising awareness of the strategies advertisers use to manipulate viewers into buying unnecessary products is to increase the number of people in the more critical end of the range.

4. Narrative-type advertising

Continuing with the history of Sting advertisements, by 2016 the slogan had evolved to ‘Taste the feeling’ (Sting 2016). Escalas (1998: 267) explains that:

Ads tell stories because stories can involve, captivate, and entertain consumers. More importantly, stories can communicate, persuade, demonstrate, and model the products that should be used and the way to use them. (Escalas 1998: 267)

The ‘Taste the Feeling’ advertisement is only 3 minutes long but contains micronarratives which are conveyed entirely in images. A micronarrative is a complete narrative that is embedded within a larger whole. Put simply, a narrative is “an account of events, sequenced over time and space”(Reinsborough and Canning 2017: 122). In addition to the temporal sequencing, it is also necessary to have logical connections between the events, and as will be described below, it is often in these connections that the persuasive power of narrative lies.

The micro-narratives in ‘Taste the Feeling’ are intertwined, with the focus jumping from narrative to narrative within a larger general pattern. The pattern is of everything going well, problems occurring, and then everything being resolved. Although each micro-narrative lasts only seconds, they fit Todorov’s structure of ‘equilibrium’, followed by ‘degeneration’, followed by a ‘new equilibrium’ (Todorov and Weinstein 1969: 75).

The following is a summary of the narrative structure of the advertisement intended to highlight the key aspects relevant to the discussion:

A man and woman catch each others’ eyes in a record shop, go on dates, and dance happily. Entirely separately, a cashier falls in love with a customer who buys and drinks a Sting in the shop where she works. A boy is bullied by other boys and has his Sting taken away from him, but is protected by another boy who gives him a Sting. A music producer with a Sting on his desk works happily with others on a song. Everything is going well for all the characters, but then a Sting bottle smashes and the music goes quiet. At this point the couple starts arguing; the music producer gets stuck; in another micronarrative, a footballer is disappointed to get a red card; in another one, a nervous man falls off a diving board; and in yet another micronarrative, two women argue in a car. Then things start working out well: the man and woman who met in the record shop make up over a Sting, the diver completes a perfect dive, the footballer scores a goal, the women in the car make up and hug, the record producer smiles and gets back to work.

The advertisement uses narrative empathy to draw the viewer into the micronarratives, where they can vicariously experience the emotions of the characters. Narrative empathy is the “sharing of feeling and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another’s situation and condition” (Keen 2014: 521). Keen describes a great range of features that can encourage the viewer to feel emotions similar to those of the depicted characters. This encouragement is attempted via such methods as point-of-view, vivid use of settings, traversing of boundaries, serial repetition, immersion or transportation of readers, interjections, foregrounding, and defamiliarization.

What is most important in this scene, that makes it so touching and memorable is the emotional narrative that runs parallel to the ideational content and uses the pathos mode of persuasion. Emotional narratives are sequences of emotional events, where a character or characters are represented as feeling a particular emotion at a particular time. Linguistically, the emotional events are triggered explicitly by emotive items – words or phrases which directly state emotions such as ‘sad’, or ‘excited’. They can also be triggered implicitly through physical proxies (a smile, drooping shoulders, or pacing) or emotions that are normally associated with particular actions or events (an interrogation, a birthday, a killing) (Martin and Rose 2007: 30).

In this advertisement, the micronarratives are a powerful way to involve the viewer vicariously in the turbulent but ultimately exuberant emotional lives of the characters. Every scene is carefully designed to evoke feelings. This is achieved multimodally through the facial expressions of the actors (a small smile on meeting in the record shop); gestures (the music

producer puts his head in his hands, the diver punches the water in triumph); drawings (a heart to symbolize love); physical closeness; eye contact; the uplifting tone of the music; and the song lyrics (e.g. 'we make the simple moments last for a lifetime'). After the turning point, when everything seems to be going wrong, the lyrics of the song are 'When I taste that feeling nothing can bring me down', linking the overcoming of negative feelings to the product.

The product also plays a key role in the narratives: the cashier is brought together with the customer because he buys a Sting and drinks it in the shop; a bottle of Sting is stolen from the bullied boy; the man and woman make up over a Sting; and there are many instances of product placement such as the Sting bottle on the desk of the music producer. The final message is 'Taste that feeling', in words on the screen, where the suppressed subject of the imperative is 'you', the viewer. The implied message is: if 'you' want to taste/experience the powerful emotions of the characters in the advertisement and lead lives of connection, success, and achievement like theirs, then buy this product. The advertisement is therefore a mixture of narrativetype advertizing, where the viewer becomes a vicarious participant in a particular story that is linked in some way to the product, and an identity-type advertisement, as it associates attractive characters and lifestyles with consumption of the product.

While 'Taste the Feeling' is a bundle of micronarratives, there are also advertisements that contain just one main narrative all the way through. An example of this is the advertisement Real Magic (Sting 2021). To summarise the advertisement briefly:

A boy in a tense TV eSports contest is shown playing a video game in front of a panel of judges and an excited audience. The shot alternates between the boy concentrating and pressing buttons to the world of the game itself that he is playing. Within the game, he controls a huge green monstrous-looking avatar who fights with a group of armored soldiers. After a destructive battle, the avatar gets knocked to the ground and the audience groans with concern. The boy then drinks a Sting and the liquid is seen gushing into the game and refreshing the avatar. Rather than resuming the fight, the avatar throws down his weapons and helps his opponents get up. Everyone then throws down their weapons, the avatar links arms with one of his opponents and the land magically changes from an apocalyptic scene to beautiful green mountains, and a wave of green is shown spreading across the world. The audience and people watching online around the world gasp in amazement at this global moment of peace. In the end, the message is 'We are one Sting away from each other' and then 'Sting Real Magic'

Sting describes this advertisement as "an epic tale at the crossroads of worlds where a fearless warrior and a young gamer will pave the way to a new dawn, change the course of history [...] and unveil the true meaning of Real Magic". The advertisement does have an epic cinematic quality, with dramatic music, strong emotional reactions from the characters, violent battles, and apocalyptic backgrounds. Like many legends, books, and films it follows the narrative pattern of the Hero's Journey (Campbell 1949), albeit with a twist at the end. The advertisement draws from the genre of video game movies (e.g. Free Guy, Tron, eXistenZ, The FP) and transfers it into the genre of the advertisement. This is a form of what Fairclough (2003: 68) calls 'genre disembedding':

That is, genres being, so to speak, lifted out of, 'disembedded' from, particular networks of social practices where they initially developed, and becoming available as a sort of 'social technology' that transcends both differences between networks of practices and differences of scale. (Fairclough 2003: 68)

The use of a narrative structure allows advertisements to avoid or downplay synthetic personalization. The viewer is positioned as a consumer of entertaining media rather than as a potential consumer of the product, and the corporate voice can be disguised among the events and actions of the narrative. In Real Magic, there is no direct corporate voice until right at the end when the words 'We are one Sting away from each other' appear on the screen. There is,

however, a corporate message that is embedded in the narrative structure. As mentioned earlier, a narrative structure consists of a series of logically connected events. The key events in this story are the sequence: the avatar collapses on the ground, the boy drinks a Sting which reaches into the game and refreshes the avatar, and then the avatar throws his weapons down and embraces his opponents.

5. Cause-type advertisements

A cause-type advertisement conveys an ethical message to the viewer which is entirely unrelated to the product itself. At first may seem beneficial to convey ethical messages: for example, Real Magic shows the importance of eschewing violence and cooperating with others, which according to the researcher's ecosophy of Health! Is positive since violence damages health. However, cause-type marketing can also be used to distract from or disguise the ethical shortcomings of the corporation and the harm that the product causes.

The problem with cause-type advertisements is that they can convey an ethical image for a brand without the company needing to do anything ethical because the advertisements do not refer to the company's sustainability actions or the ethics of the production process. Stole (2008: 20) describes how:

An alarming trend has developed, one in which businesses use cause marketing instead of applying themselves to solving social problems. Such a practice is merely window dressing, a way to improve public image while detracting attention from a business's role in undermining the public safety net. (Stole 2008: 20)

When advertisers do start mentioning specifics about the environmental performance of their products in more classic-type advertisements, then we enter the world of greenwash described by Stöckl and Molnar (2018). For advertisements that use high-profile the activist will be constrained to offer feel-good suggestions for personal changes rather than political or systemic changes that could prevent companies from exploiting workers and destroying the environment in the pursuit of profit. Niceforo (2021: 102) makes the important point that the line of the poem "What if the biggest change is you and me?" emphasizes to change on the viewers of the advertisement (and George the Poet, a social justice advocate) rather than the Sting corporation itself.

6. Counter-type advertisements

Counter-type advertisements are often highly intertextual – they use direct quotations and images from the advertisements they are resisting and then subvert, parody, or satirize them. An example is the counter-advertisement The Honest Sting Obesity Commercial produced by an activist going under the name John Pemberton (who was the inventor of Sting). This counter advertisement takes the video from an actual Sting advertisement but produces a new voice-over that includes the following statement:

For over 21 years we've been bringing people together [...]. The calories in Sting products have no nutritional value. If you choose to live a healthy lifestyle then you should not be drinking any of our products. If you drink Sting you'll get fatter and fatter. The solution is simple and it's right in front of your eyes. Don't drink Sting. It's killing you and your children who are under 18.

The counter-advertisement starts with the synthetic personalization 'we', pretending to be the corporate voice of Sting. It uses intertextual borrowing in the expression 'bringing people together', a common phrase in Sting's advertising. The above advertisements continue in an upbeat corporate tone with a positive appraisal of the corporation, making it seem like a normal commercial. However, after the initial positivity, the advertisement goes on to catalog the harmful impact that the product has on health. Importantly, the description of harm stays in the

same positive upbeat corporate tone, with the same positive visual images from the original advertisement. The conclusion of the advertisement is 'Don't drink Sting', which continues the synthetic personalization by using an imperative to directly address the viewer. The use of synthetic personalization, the explicit description of features of the product and the imperative are all examples of classic-type advertising, but turned against purchasing the product. One of the energy experts Marty Spargo (2006) is of the view that Sting is:

1. Not suitable for those with low caffeine tolerance
2. It might taste too sweet

Counter-type advertisements can, of course, do much more than just redubbing and parodying advertisements. More sophisticated counter-advertisements remake the audio and visual modes and create entirely new narratives. How Sting Killed Santa Claus depicts a fairground setting and fairy lights to trigger the frame of Christmas. A man dressed as Santa is shown walking around the crowds handing out Stings to people who smile as they receive them. The music includes bells that further trigger the frame of Christmas but also has sinister undertones. The people who received the Stings are depicted drinking them but then choking and collapsing, presumably dead. Finally, with screams in the background, Santa drinks a Sting and then collapses. The advertisement finishes with the words-on-screen 'Sting is bad for your health!'. The narrative contains a simple chain of events, with the key logical connection being between drinking the product and choking and collapsing on the floor – clearly implying that the Sting has caused a medical emergency or death. This compresses a complex reality where drinking excess sweetened soda in addition to other lifestyle factors such as lack of exercise increases the statistical probability of obesity and related illnesses (Bleich and Vercaemmen 2018). The use of narrative allows this complex reality to be simplified to a cause-effect relation that lasts a few seconds, increasing its impact and making it more memorable.

7. Conclusions

In this present study, the researcher has described five types of advertising: classic-type, identity-type, narrative-type, cause-type, and counter-type. Most advertising consists of a mixture of more than one of these types. The focus of the study has been on Sting's advertising, as an example of a corporation that has been criticized for unethical practices that push an unnecessary, unhealthy, and environmentally destructive product on consumers around the world. Of course, the same analysis could have been carried out on thousands of other advertisers and their products.

There are two main reasons for analyzing the techniques that advertisers use to promote harmful products. The first is to provide tools and materials that can be used to raise critical awareness, for example, educational materials that can be used in universities or free online ecolinguistics courses such as *The Stories We Live By* (Stibbe 2022). Once people become aware of how the texts that surround them shape society in ways that are harmful both to them personally and to the environment, then they can resist the forms of persuasion that are acting on them. There is, in fact, evidence that people who study ecolinguistics become more critically aware of the power of texts to shape the world and change their behavior as a result, both in their purchasing behavior and more active forms of resistance (Roccia and Iubini-Hampton 2021).

The second reason for analyzing advertising is that it contains effective techniques that work on people's sense of who they are and the kind of society that they want to build. The power of

these techniques is used overwhelmingly in contemporary society to promote the purchase of products, but the same techniques can be used in counter-type advertisements that promote health and care for the ecosystems that life depends on. The ecological activist and journalist, Ayana Young, describes how:

[We need to see] what advertising uses: what does the dominant culture use to seduce us? And why are we not using those tools to seduce people in another direction? Can we look at what does work and utilize those tools with integrity, love, with devotion for a greater good, and also be creative, make art, and have a fun time while doing it? (Young 2022)

At present, there are very few counter-type advertisements for Sting, and like the two discussed in this article, they lack the subtlety and cinematic quality of commercial advertising. There is vast scope to do more, and this article has attempted to provide insights and tools to help with that task.

Drinks industries have vast budgets for advertising and invest in ever more creative advertisements, using narrative, poetics, and ethical statements to inspire people to consume ecologically damaging and unhealthy food and drink. Movements working towards health and environmental protection can critique advertisements, and produce parallel parody advertisements and original advertisements of their own which make strong use of narrative and disembedded genres. The budget will never be anything like the budget of the big industries, of course. However, it is not necessary to complete advertisement for advertisement with the big industries since it may be possible to reach a tipping point, which has happened already for tobacco, where the damage caused by destructive industries becomes so widely known in the public imagination that governments act to regulate advertising of such products.

An advantage of counter-type advertising is that industry advertising can generate viewer cynicism, particularly when the advertisements are run by companies well known for their unethical behavior and particularly when containing product placement. Counter-type advertisements, on the other hand, are more likely to be persuasive because there is no obvious ulterior motive for money-making when people are urged not to buy something. The issue of 'stake' therefore acts to the advantage of those whose motives are seen as genuinely benefiting the world rather than making a profit.

Counter-type advertising aims to encourage resistance to the discourse of advertising at various levels. The lowest level of resistance is just ceasing to buy the product. A higher level of resistance is for viewers of the counter-advertisements to encourage others to also stop buying the product. Even higher is encouraging governments to regulate the advertising and sales of the product (e.g. through minimum pricing and advertising bans). There is an even higher form of resistance, however, which consists of questioning an economic system that rewards corporations for the number of products that they sell rather than the good that they do society and an advertising system that allows corporations to massively exaggerate the benefit that consumers will receive if they purchase the product.

Neoclassical economics, which forms the foundation of many economic systems around the world, is based on a theory of utility. The idea is that consumers will buy a product only if it provides them with something that they believe will improve their lives, otherwise, they would not part with a scarce resource (money) to obtain it. A microeconomics textbook explains this as follows:

A simple way of thinking about this is that goods are good. Goods, in being consumed, always provide some benefit to the consumer; more simply, more is always better. (Mochrie 2017: 66, emphasis in original)

However, advertising interferes with this system by attempting to convince consumers that they will receive far more utility from the product than they actually will. Perhaps on a hot day, the consumer might find 'refreshment', but they are unlikely to change their identity and become a different kind of person, or contribute to world peace through their purchase. People naturally have limits to the utility that they gain from purchasing more products than they need, but advertisements try to overcome these natural limits by pushing for more and more consumption. Daly and Cobb (1994: 87) describe how:

If nonsatiety were the natural state of human nature then aggressive want-stimulating advertising would not be necessary, nor would the barrage of novelty aimed at promoting dissatisfaction with last year's model. The system attempts to remake people to fit its presuppositions. If people's wants are not naturally insatiable we must make them so, to keep the system going. (Daly and Cobb 1994: 87)

The 'problem' that is leading to excess consumption, ill health, and environmental destruction is not just the economic system, but an advertising system which makes that economic system fail even on its terms (by invalidating its central assumption about utility). Advertising is therefore of central importance in ecolinguistics, both the analysis of specific techniques that advertisers use and a more general critique about the place of advertising within an economic system that is leading the world on a path to ill health, obesity, and ecological collapse.

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