

EXPRESSION OF NATIONAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN ADVERTISING TEXTS

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Abstract:

This article examines the expression of national and cultural values in Japanese advertisements, viewing advertising as a multifaceted phenomenon that serves various aspects of social life and has multiple distribution channels. Furthermore, it is crucial to study the distinctive features of advertising through comparative analysis, as these characteristics set it apart from other types of information, particularly announcements. With this goal in mind, the article emphasizes how national and cultural values are reflected in the texts of Japanese advertisements.

Keywords: advertising, advertising content, nationality, cultural values, culture.

In Japanese linguistics, the study of advertising texts from the perspective of national and cultural values is distinctive, as national and cultural characteristics play an important role in the language and imagery of Japanese advertisements. Advertising serves not only to promote a product or service but also to express the values, traditions, worldview, and aesthetic principles of the Japanese people. This enhances sincerity in the interaction between advertisements and consumers and makes it possible to integrate national features into the global advertising industry.

The expression of national and cultural values in advertising texts—in Japanese advertisements, the widespread use of national symbols and traditional motifs is often observed. Japanese advertising texts reflect national and cultural values through various linguistic and semiotic means. The main forms of expressing these values include the following²:

The Japanese writing system (kanji, hiragana, katakana, and romaji) constitutes a fundamental part of advertising texts and emphasizes national identity.

- **Kanji:** Used to convey deeper meaning in advertisements. For example, concepts such as harmony (和) or nature (自然) are presented in contexts appropriate to the advertisement's message.
- **Katakana:** Applied to introduce Western words and modern concepts. This approach reflects cultural adaptability and globalization.
- **Hiragana:** Used to create a warm and friendly tone in advertising texts, especially in advertisements targeted at the domestic market.

Traditional Cultural Symbols – The use of traditional cultural symbols such as sakura (cherry blossoms), Mount Fuji, kimonos, and the Japanese tea ceremony is widespread in advertisements. These elements evoke a sense of national pride and attract consumers' attention³.

Seasonality and Respect for Nature – In Japan, the changing of the seasons plays an important role in advertising. Advertising campaigns promote products or services in accordance with seasonal characteristics. For example, cherry blossoms are featured in spring advertisements, while seaside imagery appears in summer campaigns. This reflects the principle of seasonal sensitivity (*kisetsukan*, 季節感).

Cultural Values and Advertising Content – Cultural stereotypes also frequently appear in advertisements, which in turn reinforce and strengthen national identity. For example,

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² Крылов И.В. Теория и практика рекламы в России. – М. : 1996

³ Formanek S. Traditional Concepts and Images of Old Age in Japan // The Demographic Challenge: A Handbook about Japan. – Leiden : Brill, 2008.

historical figures such as samurai and ninja represent values such as strength, resilience, and loyalty¹, in addition, elements of Japanese cuisine such as sushi and sashimi highlight the unique aspects of the culture. By emphasizing national values, Japanese advertisements seek to demonstrate the role and responsibilities of individuals within society.

a) Collectivism and Harmony – In Japanese society, *wa* (和)—the value of collectivism and harmony—holds great significance. Advertising texts are used to reinforce these values. For example:

- In promoting local products, their benefits to the community are emphasized.
- Through the concept of *omoiyari* (思いやり)—consideration and empathy toward others—the advertising message is conveyed with greater warmth and emotional depth.

b) Minimalism and Appreciation of Aesthetics – In Japanese culture, respect for simplicity and beauty is also reflected in advertising. Advertisements designed in a minimalist style employ short yet meaningful texts, subtle graphics, and harmonious color combinations.

c) Naturalness and a Healthy Lifestyle – Advertising texts promote a healthy and natural way of life as a national value. For example, in food advertisements, natural ingredients, organic qualities, and environmental purity are emphasized².

In Japanese advertisements, the use of language—especially linguistic elements that express levels of respect, such as *keigo* (honorific language)—plays an important role in conveying social hierarchy and cultural values. For example, the term *oyakusoku* (“we promise”) used for a product emphasizes the quality of service³. This system ensures respect toward elders or teachers in Japanese culture and is also widely employed in advertising texts. Japanese advertisements make use of the language’s distinctive linguistic features, including:

- **Metaphors and Aphorisms:** Metaphors are widely used to reflect national values. For example, phrases like “Every encounter is unique” (*Ichigo ichie*), “Flow of life” (命の流れ), or “Full moon” (満月) give advertisements a poetic atmosphere.
- **Onomatopoeia:** Words that represent sounds in Japanese are used in advertisements to influence consumers’ emotions. For instance, *fuwa-fuwa* conveys softness, while *pika-pika* or *kira-kira* express shininess or sparkle.

Advertisements also reflect social values and cultural perspectives in Japan. For example, the language, style, and content used to appeal to both young and older audiences in presenting products and services demonstrate respect for different generations within Japanese society. Additionally, Japanese advertisements often feature corporate social responsibility initiatives, showcasing companies’ commitment and responsibility toward society⁴.

National and Cultural Values:

1. **Emancipatory Values:** In Japanese advertisements, the values of equality among individuals and personal freedom are highly significant. These values are reflected in advertising texts by emphasizing individuals’ self-awareness and opportunities for self-expression.

¹ 蒙韞 (2008) 「中国人日本語上級学習者の語用論的転移の一考察—依頼に対する断り表現のポライトネスの表し方から—」 『国際開発研究フォーラム』

² 増田太次郎は「口上広告」という表現を用いる増田 2011

³ В.В. Историярекламы / В.В. Учёнова, Н.В. Старых.– М., 2002.

⁴ Formanek S. Traditional Concepts and Images of Old Age in Japan // The Demographic Challenge: A Handbook about Japan. – Leiden : Brill, 2008.

2. *Adaptability*: In Japanese culture, the value of adaptability emphasizes adjusting to changes and self-improvement. In advertising texts, this value is conveyed through simple and clear language, visual elements, and cultural references.

3. *Cultural Values*: Japanese culture encompasses various focal cultural values. For example, harmony, respect, and family-oriented values are expressed in advertising texts. These values shape both the content and style of the advertisements.

In the context of globalization, Japanese advertisements also aim to influence international audiences, which requires examining the unique aspects of intercultural communication and impact. Linguistic studies focus on issues such as how Japanese culture affects and is perceived by global cultures. Japanese advertisements integrate elements of global culture with national values. For example:

- Even in Western-style advertisements, elements of Japanese culture are preserved.
- The use of the Latin alphabet seeks to attract foreign consumers while striving to maintain distinct Japanese characteristics.

The study of advertising texts in Japanese linguistics helps to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between language and culture, thereby providing better insight into the cultural characteristics of Japanese society and its place in the global context. Tom McNamara (2005): *Japanese Ads: How the Japanese Advertise to Themselves* – This study examines how Japanese advertisements are created and received. Ian Condry (2013): *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story* – This book provides detailed information on Japan's media and advertising industries. Nancy Snow (1998): *Japan's Information War* – This work discusses Japan's advertising and media strategies.

In Japanese linguistics, the study of texts in Japanese advertisements is a multifaceted and in-depth academic field, aimed at analyzing the complex interconnections between language, culture, and communication. Advertising texts allow us to understand how language is used not only to promote products or services but also to shape cultural values and social norms.

Therefore, the study of advertising texts in Japanese linguistics provides a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cultural development processes within society. Japanese advertisements stand out for their multifaceted expression of national and cultural distinctiveness. They connect consumers with national values and cultural heritage. The skillful incorporation of cultural elements in advertising not only promotes products or services but also contributes to the wider dissemination of culture on the global stage. In Japanese advertisements, national and cultural characteristics are deeply reflected in the semantic, visual, and emotional layers of the text. They serve not only to attract consumers but also to showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Japanese people. By harmonizing modernity with tradition, Japanese advertising maintains its uniqueness as a means of cultural communication.

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