Advertising culture: new challenges for stylistics

Book or Report Section

Accepted Version

Jones, R. H. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9426-727X (2014) Advertising culture: new challenges for stylistics. In: Stockwell, P. and Whiteley, S. (eds.) The Cambridge handbook of stylistics. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 522-537. ISBN 9781107028876 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/66505/

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Advertising Culture: New challenges for stylistics

Rodney H. Jones
City University of Hong Kong

Jones, R. (2014) Advertising culture: New challenges for stylistics. In P. Stockwell and S. Whiteley (eds.) *The Cambridge handbook of stylistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 522-537.

In the summer of 2012, Nike became the first company to have its Twitter campaign banned by the Advertising Standards Authority of the United Kingdom (Sweney 2012). The action came as a result of complaints from the public about two particular tweets from footballers Wayne Rooney and Jack Wilshire. The tweets were part of the sportswear manufacturer's '#makeitcount' campaign launched at the beginning of the year to promote a new range of products which included the Nike+ Fuelband, a device which tracks users' physical activity and automatically sends updates to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. The campaign urged customers to tweet about their New Year's resolutions. Rooney's tweet read:

> My resolution — to start the year as a champion, and finish it as a champion...#makeitcount gonike.me/makeitcount

And Wilshire tweeted:

> In 2012, I will come back for my club — and be ready for my country. #makeitcount gonike.me/makeitcount

The essence of the ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority was that Nike had violated the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (2008) which prohibits 'using editorial content in the media to promote a product where a trader has paid for the promotion without making that clear in the content or by images or sounds clearly identifiable by the consumer.' In other words, because the tweets were not clearly identifiable as advertisements, they violated the law.

Nike countered that although the footballers were sponsored by the company, they were free as part of the campaign to tweet about their New Year's resolutions just like the thousands of customers who had sent similar tweets. Besides, they argued, Nike's sponsorship of Rooney and Wilshire was a well-known fact among their Twitter followers, and the inclusion of the 'hashtag' #makeitcount and the address of the campaign's website made the promotional nature of the tweets obvious. But the ASA disagreed, They contended that the average Twitter user scrolls though many tweets a day and might not make the connection between the hashtag and the campaign. They also pointed out that representatives from Nike had discussed with Rooney and Wilshire the content of their messages before they tweeted them, calling into question their authenticity as spontaneous communications.

This case was not the first time the ASA had investigated a complaint involving promotional tweets. Several months before, the candy maker Mars Corporation hired celebrities Katie Price and Rio Ferdinand to make five tweets. The first four were statements seemingly incongruous with the stars' personalities, Rio Ferdinand, for example, tweeting 'can't wait to get home from training and finish that cardigan', and Price tweeting 'Large scale quantitative easing in 2012 could distort liquidity in the govt. bond market.' These seeming non-sequiturs were followed by both sending the same tweet: 'You're not you when you're hungry @SnickersUK#hungry#spon lockerz.com/s/177408824. Unlike the Nike case, however, the ASA ruled that this use of Twitter was acceptable since Ferdinand and Price had added the hashtag #spon to their last tweets. When critics pointed out that the tweets leading up to them did not bear this hashtag, the Authority argued that most consumers would read the 'stream' of tweets as a single unit.

These two examples dramatically illustrate some of the legal and ethical challenges introduced by new trends in advertising culture brought about by digital media. What is interesting to note for readers of this volume is that, at the heart of these legal and ethical questions are issues which are central to the study of stylistics and discourse analysis, issues having to do with how linguistic features of texts signal things like authorship, 'authenticity', the author's intentions and even what sort of text a text is taken to be, as well as questions about how readers process and understand texts and what kinds of responses they have to them.

This chapter will examine how concepts from stylistics and discourse analysis can shed light on the kinds of texts and communicative situations created by a new generation of advertisers who are rapidly abandoning traditional print and broadcast genres and turning to techniques of social media marketing in which our understanding of what is an advertisement and what is not, and of who is an advertiser and who is a customer, are no longer simple and straightforward.

Stylistics and advertising in the 21st century

Over the years, stylistics has made a significant contribution to our understanding of advertising discourse (Cook, 1992; Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985). Along the way, advertising culture has challenged stylistics to rethink some of its most basic assumptions about things like 'literariness' (Carter & Nash, 1983), and what constitutes a 'text' (Glasser, 1998), and to develop new analytical tools to deal with features of advertising discourse such as multimodal design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The American Marketing Association (2012) defines advertising as 'the placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas.' Different approaches to stylistics and discourse analysis provide insights into different aspects of this definition.

Traditional literary stylistics, which sees style chiefly as a matter of linguistic choice, takes as its task the description of the uniqueness of a text or kind of text by examining features of lexis, syntax and graphology. Perhaps the most famous example of this approach in the study of advertising is Leech's (1972) *English in Advertising*, in which he argues that advertising has created a special style of English marked by features like the frequent use of adjectives, short sentences and imperative and interrogative clauses. Others, such as Myers (1994), have explored the rhetorical devices used by advertisers from the creative language play of puns and metaphors to the adoption of everyday conversational language.

Other schools of discourse analysis and stylistics have focused on the broader aspects of advertising texts. Genre analysts like Bhatia (1993), for example, have attempted to identify the conventional structure of advertising and promotional discourse, seeing it in terms of 'moves' arranged in certain predictable sequences. Perhaps the most interesting insights of such work are related to what Bhatia calls 'strategic interdiscursivity', the appropriation by advertisers of conventional generic resources from *other* kinds of texts (such as personal letters, literary works, and newspaper articles). Such insights, along with similar points about the generic 'instability' of advertising discourse (see for example Cook, 1992), are especially relevant to cases like those described above in which whether or not an advertisement is legal or not depends on readers being able to identify these conventional features.

Scholars interested in the pragmatic aspects of communication have focused more on how advertisers create meaning indirectly, and how customers make sense of these meanings. Particularly notable is the work of Tanaka (1994), who, drawing on the *relevance theory* of Sperber and Wilson (1986), argues that much of the communication in advertising is *covert* rather than *overt*. In overt communication, the communicator not only wants to convey a message, but also to convey that he or she wants the reader or hearer to recover this message. In covert communication, on the other hand, the communicator wants to convey a message, but at the same time wishes to hide the fact that they wish the reader or hearer to recover the message, thus avoiding being held responsible for it. An example of this can be seen when food manufacturers make health or content claims about their products indirectly so as to avoid being held accountable for making false or questionable claims (Jones et. al. 2011).

Of particular interest when it comes to advertising is work which explores the cognitive dimensions of discourse and style. Advertising, in fact, is often described by marketers themselves in terms of the four functions of the AIDA model (attention, interest, desire and action) (Russell, 1921), the first three of which are essentially cognitive processes. Scholars from the fields of cognitive linguistics and cognitive stylistics have explored a range of ways in which readers process advertising discourse, from the effects of metaphor and metonymy, both verbal (Ungerer, 2000) and pictorial (Forceville, 1996), to the activation by advertisements of cognitive schema (Jefferies 2002, Stockwell 2002), or 'text worlds' (Downing, 2000) in which readers' previous expectations are either reinforced or challenged in some way.

Finally, scholars of stylistics and discourse analysis have considered how advertising texts interact with the wider socio-cultural contexts in which they are produced and consumed, how they construct certain kinds of readers (Bell, 1984) and reinforce certain ideologies and social relationships (Simpson, 1993; Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985). Particular attention has been paid to the construction of gender in advertisements (Mills, 1995), and to the relationship between code choice and social identity (Piller, 2001).

The culture of advertising, however, has changed dramatically since many of these studies were carried out, so much so, in fact, that the definition of advertising I quoted above no longer seems adequate. Many of the texts which function as advertisements in the digital age do not constitute discrete 'announcements' placed 'in time or space', but rather are more like what Dawkins (2006) calls 'memes', ideas, phrases and scraps of text that circulate freely through online networks. Neither are they necessarily 'purchased in the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, (or) government agencies.' Often, in fact, they are spread by customers themselves for free through their social networks. Finally, many advertising texts nowadays do not seem to have the traditional functions of 'inform(ing) and/or persuad(ing)' readers, but instead function more like 'phatic' communication (Malinowski 1923), designed chiefly to facilitate the formation of social ties not just between advertisers and customers but also among customers themselves.

These new forms of advertising include things like social marketing campaigns using platforms like Twitter and Facebook, 'viral marketing', in which provocative content is introduced into the media environment by an unidentified source and then spread from user to user, 'buzz marketing', in which influential individuals are hired to covertly promote products within their social circles, and consumer generated advertising, in which consumers themselves produce promotional messages either intentionally or automatically when they use a certain product. Many of these new forms of advertising have altered traditional participation frameworks (Goffman, 1981) associated with promotional discourse: no longer are advertisements seen as one-way communication; now they are sites of *interaction* between advertisers and customers in which advertisers routinely gather as much information about customers as customers gather about products. In fact, the main purpose of much contemporary advertising is not to encourage potential customers to buy a product but to encourage them to give up more and more information about themselves, making them more efficient targets for future advertising (McStay, 2011).

Underlying most of these approaches is the strategy of advertising through 'non-advertising', a strategy born of the realization that customers are increasingly skeptical of traditional advertising discourse and are more likely to be convinced to buy products based on the experiences of 'real people', preferably people in their own social networks whom they trust (Chaney, 2009). This strategy of dressing up advertising as something else, of course is not new. Perhaps the most famous example occurred as far back as 1929 when the Great American Tobacco Company hired young women to stage a demonstration for 'equal rights' in which they smoked their 'torches of freedom' (Lucky Strike cigarettes), an event which generated widespread newspaper coverage and shifted the terms of the debate about the social acceptability of women smoking (Amos & Haglund, 2000). With the rise of social media and Web 2.0, however, such strategies have become much more widespread and sophisticated, partly because of the resources web based communication make available for spreading messages quickly, for remixing messages, for obscuring the connection between messages and their sources, and for helping to foster the creation of social networks and affinity groups around particular kinds of social practices, lifestyles, products and texts (Jones & Hafner 2012).

The Nike '#makeitcount' campaign, which ran during the first few months of 2012 provides an excellent example of this new type of advertising. The campaign combined traditional marketing elements such as print advertisements, television commercials and celebrity endorsements with less traditional forms of viral marketing, crowd sourcing and customer engagement (Gerard 2012). At the heart of this effort was the generation of advertising texts which, through their source, placement, and linguistic and semiotic features 'impersonated' other kinds of texts. By encouraging its fans to tweet about their New Year's resolutions using the hastag #makeitcount, for example, the company was able to transform a positive, motivational phrase into a 'brand', and, more importantly, to transform people's acts of motivating themselves and others into acts which also marketed their products. Customers themselves did not even have to make much of an effort to become marketers of Nike products. Just by wearing the Nike+ Fuelband or using the Nike+ smartphone app and setting them to automatically generate tweets like 'I just finished a 3.4 KM run with Nike+ GPS #nikeplus #makeitcount', users of the products became 'automatic' marketers'. In other words, Nike managed to produce a product whose function was not only to motivate users to continue to use it, but also to generate a stream of free advertising whenever it was used.

Campaigns like Nike's '#makeitcount' campaign and Snickers's '#hungry' campaign highlight the limitations of more traditional tools of text analysis in understanding how meanings are produced and circulated in new advertising cultures. Discourse analysis and stylistics, however, have, over the years developed a number of broader analytical concepts which can help us to understand how these new kinds of advertising texts work. These concepts are:

> 1) the concept of *genre*, with its questions about what specific features in a text signal that it is a particular *type* of text, and about how different text types interact with one another;
>
> 2) the concept of *authenticity*, with its questions about who is speaking in a particular text, and about the 'truth' or 'sincerity' of the authorial voice

3) the concept of *context*, with its questions about how texts are part of and, in many cases, help to create social occasions and social relationships, and how these social occasions and relationships affect how meanings are produced and understood.

In what follows I will discuss both how these three concepts from stylistics can help us to understand new kinds of advertising texts like those I described above, and also how such texts might challenge scholars in stylistics and discourse analysis to think about and apply these concepts in new ways.

Genre

As I mentioned above, the question of 'what makes an ad and ad' is not a new one. Advertisers have long endeavored to disguise advertisements as something else, not necessarily to deceive customers, but often simply to surprise or amuse them. In fact, in most places like the UK, it is illegal for advertisers to intentionally deceive customers about the nature of the texts they produce. According to the UK Codes of Broadcast and Non-Broadcast Advertising (CAP, 2012), for example, 'Unsolicited… marketing communications must be obviously identifiable as marketing communications without the need to open them (and) … Marketers and publishers must make clear that advertorials are marketing communications; for example, by heading them "advertisement feature".'

Even without explicit labels like 'advertisement feature', most consumers find it easy to spot advertisements in traditional media. One reason for this is the *interruptive* nature of most advertising. It is by their physical placement within texts that are *not* advertising, and their discernable differences in style and content from the surrounding text that people are able to identify most advertisements (Cook, 1992). It is only when these differences are blurred, when, for example, the style and the content of the ad are so close to that of the surrounding text that it becomes difficult to make distinctions, that advertisers must explicitly alert readers that what they are reading is an ad.

This usually works out quite well when it comes to television and print advertising because advertisers, broadcasters, consumers and regulators all share a common understanding of the generic conventions of advertisements *vis-à-vis* other texts like TV dramas, documentaries, news articles and editorials. They also share similar expectations about the conventions of interdiscursivity governing these kinds of text, including things like the degree to which one type of text can borrow features from other types of text before the generically 'cross the line', and the various means texts should use to signal this borrowing through things like style, placement, or the use of explicit labels or disclaimers. Much of our understanding of these conventions is enshrined in laws and regulations like the UK Codes of Broadcast and Non-Broadcast Advertising. Most of our understanding of them, however, is implicit, the product of deeper cultural assumptions about discourse that we are socialized into a members of our societies.

Part of the difficulty in evaluating the generic status of social media advertisements, either legally or linguistically, is that they are integrated within relatively new genres, such as 'tweets' and 'status updates', the generic conventions and canons of interdiscursivity of which are still emergent and unstable, yet to be fully conventionalized (Santini, 2006). In many ways, in fact, the genre of the 'tweet' is very similar to the genre of the advertisement in terms of linguistic features, placement in relation to other texts, and the intention of the authors. Page (2012), in fact, refers to Twitter as a kind of 'linguistic market' in which the chief function of most texts is promotional rather than informational.

Stylistically, the tweet must operate within many of the same kinds of linguistic constraints that most advertising texts must work within, chiefly the demand to attract the greatest amount of attention from readers in the shortest amount of space (Grosser, 1995). This linguistic efficiency is sometimes achieved through the use of abbreviations and the kind of telegraphic style associated with newspaper headlines or the 'simplified register' that scholars like Bruthiaux (1996) have identified in classified advertisements (Zappavigna, 2011). Linguistic efficiency, however, is not enough for either advertisers or 'tweeters'—they must also make their messages 'attention grabbing' and memorable. They often do this through the creative use of prosody, the establishment of associative links with common proverbs or other set phraseological units (Naciscione, 2010), or the use of seeming 'non-sequiturs' that force readers to work to create logical connections, as with the statement:

> You wouldn't take your dog to the prom. Don't take a test without CliffsNotes. (Dziura, 2006)

Non-sequiturs are often treated by critics of advertising as a 'logical fallacy' or deceptive technique. But often advertisers use the obviously fallacious logic or apparent 'randomness' of non-sequiturs for humorous affect. The exploitation of apparent 'randomness' is also an important part of social media communication. In fact, it has been observed that much of the 'art' of Twitter is in mastering the rhetoric of the random (Joel, 2011). This is one reason the Snickers campaign featuring the apparently random comments of Katie Price and Rio Ferdinand fit in so well with the medium of Twitter and functioned so well as promotional discourse. The trick for both advertisers and tweeters is to come up with phrases that are random enough that they create curiosity while at the same time activating knowledge schema that allow readers to make the kinds of logical leaps necessary to make sense of them.

Another important linguistic similarly between tweets and advertisements is grammatical. Analyses of advertisements have revealed a higher proportion of imperative clauses than in other discourse types (Leech 1972, Myers 1994). Given that the main purpose of advisements is to get people to do something (specifically buy a product), the frequent use of imperatives (like 'Just do it.') is not surprising. Despite the fact that the ostensible purpose of 'tweets' is to tell people 'what you are doing' or (as the question was later revised) 'what's happening', a purpose which one would expect to generate declarative clauses, a large number of clauses in tweets are also imperative. In a study of the grammar of tweets by different kinds of Twitter users, Page (2012) found a high proportion of imperative clauses, especially in tweets from celebrities.

This predilection for imperatives can also be seen in the tweets customers contributed to Nike's #makeitcount campaign. Although the instruction given to participants was to tweet about their New Year's resolutions, many tweets carrying this hashtag, rather than describing what the writer was going to do, encourage the reader to take some kind of action:

> Don't cry over the past, it's gone. Don't stress about the future, it hasn't arrived. Live in the present and #makeitcount.
>
> You're only young once, so be bad, break the rules, get caught, & #makeitcount.

Even declarative and interrogative clauses in these tweets often have an imperative function:

> You Have 3 Choices In #Life: Give Up , Give In or Give It Your All...... What is your choice? #MakeItCount

Of course, the fact that the hashtag itself (#makeitcount) is an imperative no doubt contributed to the generation of imperative clauses in the tweets carrying this tag, especially when the hashtag was grammatically embedded in the tweet. The most important thing about this proliferation of imperative clauses is that it served the promotional interests of the company. Rather than telling its customers what to do, Nike managed to create a discursive environment in which customers told one another what to do, and the advice they gave broadly mirrored the goals of the company and the image it desired to promote.

Finally, tweets resemble advertisements in terms of the generic 'moves' normally included in them. Nearly all ads, from classified ads to television commercials contain at least three moves: 'messaging', the giving of information about a product; 'branding', the promotion of a the name of the product or the seller, or of a memorable a slogan or a logo associated with the product or seller (such as the phrase 'Just do it' or the Nike 'swoosh'); and 'connecting', the provision of some means by which the seller and the buyer can be connected and the sale can be made (such as information on where the product is available, or the telephone number, address or website of the seller). That is not to say that all ads have to perform these three moves explicitly. In cases where the product is easily and widely attainable, for example, the third move might be left out.

Tweets similarly often consist of three moves: 'messaging', the actual message being sent; 'branding', usually in the form of a 'hashtag' which indicates what the tweet is about and how users are meant to classify it; and 'connecting', performed through the automatic inclusion of the Twitter address of the sender plus sometimes the inclusion of a shortened URL of a webpage recommended (or owned) by the sender. In the tweet below, for example, sent during the Iranian protests of 2009, the Twitter address '@persiankiwi' connects the reader to the sender, the sentence below it about the state of the Iranian Government conveys the 'message', and the hashtag #Iranelections 'brands' the tweet as a certain kind of tweet associated with a particular topic, at the same time promoting other tweets with this hashtag.

> @persiankiwi
> The Gov is colapsing (sic) and the system of control is fast breaking down – #Iranelection

This structure makes tweets particularly suited for promotional discourse. Below is an example of a tweet from British Airways that exploits this three-move structure:

> @British_Airways
> Our ad shows our plane in London. But it can go all over the UK. Enter FY14BJ & see where we are now taxi.ba.com #HomeAdvantage

In this tweet the 'connecting' function is performed by the Twitter address of British Airways and the link ('taxi.ba.com') to a page, which allows visitors to track the flight paths of British Airways planes. The 'branding' function is performed not just by the inclusion in the name of the Airline in the Twitter address, but also by the hashtag #HomeAdvantage, which is the name of the advertising campaign that British Airways ran during the 2012 London Olympics.

This last point highlights the importance of one particular linguistic feature of tweets which make them different from traditional promotional discourse: the hashtag. Above I assigned to the hashtag the function of 'branding', since, especially in promotional tweets, hashtags usually promote either the name of a product or company (e.g. #Nike, #Snickers) or a phrase or slogan that users are meant to associate with the product or company (e.g. #makeitcount, #hungry). Actually, however, the function of hashtags is much more complex, integrating the moves of messaging, branding and connecting.

In her study of the uses of hashtags in tweets by corporations, celebrities and 'ordinary' users, Page (2012) assigns to hashtags a primarily promotional purpose. When used by corporations and celebrities, she notes, they serve to make visible (and *searchable*) company and product names, slogans and messages that seek to engage customers or fans. But even when they are used by 'ordinary' people, she argues, they fulfill an essentially promotional function, serving as a resource for users to promote and amplify their tweets by associating them with particular 'brands' of messages, and to promote themselves as affiliated with particular topics, or social or professional groups.

The best possible outcome for tweeters, whether they are corporations, celebrities, or 'ordinary' people is that the hashtags they use come to be 'hypercharged' with meaning, so strongly associated with certain kinds of social practices and certain kinds of social identities that they come to be considered ‘microgenres’ (Zappavigna 2012). This is what happed with the hashtag #fail, which came to be associated with (often humerous) complaints about mistakes one has made or something that fails to work, as in:

> Vista spent 45 minutes installing updates.. only to say after rebooting that the update has failed and all changes are rolled back. #fail
>
> and
>
> I'm mexican and I have nothing mexican to wear for tomorrow lol #fail

This is also, to some extent what Nike was able to accomplish with the hashtag #makeitcount -- the creation of a ‘microgenre’ associated with the social practice of giving and receiving encouragement. This is in part what was behind Nike’s assertion that by using the hashtag #makeitcount, Rooney and Wilshire were participating in a kind of *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger 1991) rather than in a promotional campaign. Similarly, what was behind the ASA’s ruling *against* Nike was their assertion that the tweets in question actually belonged to a different microgenre, one that should be signaled by the #spon hashtag.

Insofar as hastags work to produce ‘microgenes’, they also work to strengthen connections among those who make use of these genres, and here is where the unique potential of social media marketing becomes particularly evident. Because hashtags both render tweets searchable and serve to signal users’ affiliation with the particular values or attitudes implied by the tag, hashtags help to create what Zappavigna (2011, 2012) calls ‘ambient affiliation networks’. ‘The social function of the hashtag,’ she writes, ‘is to provide an easy means of grouping tweets, and in turn, creating ad hoc social groups or sub-communities.

In other words, hashtags, when cleverly used by marketers, become labels not just for particular companies or products or campaigns, but for particular kinds of people. Of course, the building of communities of customers bonded together by ‘brand loyalty’ (‘Marlboro smokers’, ‘Mac users’) has long been an important aim of marketing. In social media marketing, however, it has become the *primary* aim. So it matters little whether users of the hashtag #makeitcount are tweeting about exercise and Nike products or about their love lives, their jobs or their plans to write the great American novel. Whenever they use the hashtag, they are affiliating themselves with a group of ‘like-minded’ people whose attitude and lifestyle Nike has co-opted. With the hashtag #makeitcount, Nike has made optimism and perseverance its brand.

Authenticity

Along with the charge that the tweets by Rooney and Wilshire did not sufficiently signal their promotional nature to readers, the ASA also based its ruling on the charge that they were somehow ‘inauthentic’, that they did not represent the ‘true’ and spontaneous thoughts of their authors since their contents were decided upon ‘with the help of a member of the Nike marketing team’

(Advertising Standards Authority, 2012). At the same time, however, many of the tweets bearing the hashtag #makeitcount from users of the Nike+ Fuelband and smartphone app (such as 'I just finished a 5.06 km run with Nike+ GPS. #nikeplus #makeitcount') are *entirely* authored by the company (automatically generated by the product), and yet they are not subject to the same charge of inauthenticity.

The notion of 'authenticity' in texts has long been a preoccupation of stylistics, where it has usually meant the verification of a text's authorship. More recently in media and discourse studies, authenticity has come to be associated with a wider range of attributes of texts such as their credibility, their historical accuracy, and the sincerity of their authors (van Leeuwen, 2001). In everyday parlance, authenticity has come to be used to describe discourse that is 'real', 'uncontrived', 'unscripted'. It has also come to be associated with the discourse of 'ordinary people' rather than that of governments, institutions, corporations or celebrities.

For stylistics the question is how this newer sense of 'authenticity' – meaning 'sincerity' or 'honesty' -- is actually realized in discourse. Coupland (2010:6) claims that authenticity is essentially a kind of discursive 'tactic' 'through which people … make claims about their own or others' statuses as authentic … members of social groups.' In other words, authenticity centrally depends on one's ability to use one's 'speech style as an anchor for solidarity and local affiliation' (Coupland 2003: 420). For others, however, most notably Goffman (1981), authenticity is less a function of ones affiliation with one's audience as it is a function of what he calls 'footing', the position one takes up *vis-à-vis* one's message. For Goffman, there are three possible roles speakers or writers can take up in relation to their words – the role of animator (he who merely speaks or 'animates' the words), the role of author (he who composes the words), and the role of principle (he whose thoughts are represented in the words). What most people regard as 'authentic' talk -- what Goffman calls 'fresh talk' (1981: 172) – occurs when these three roles are see to coincide, when the speaker or writer is perceived as representing his or her 'own thoughts' in his or her 'own words'. For Goffman, however, this is always only a perception—'fresh talk' is never really as 'fresh' as it seems.

Testimonials in advertising are in many ways about *performing* authenticity (even when, for many, just the fact of sponsorship is enough to undermine it). In the past such performances mainly depended on the authority of the speaker – the authenticity of the testimonial had very much to do with the reputation of the person delivering it. More recently, as the public has become increasingly skeptical of authority, the locus of authenticity has shifted to the nature of the talk itself. To be deemed authentic, talk must be 'true to a certain conception of talk in its natural state – not scripted or rehearsed but fresh and spontaneous' (Montgomery, 2001). To be believable, celebrities and authorities must 'be themselves', which often means talking more like 'ordinary people'

Both of these themes– the performance of 'natural' talk and the communication of in-group solidarity as markers of authenticity -- come together in social media campaigns in which stars post status updates and tweets in the same vernacular used by their fans, and often about the same mundane topics. One of the best examples of this form of stylized authenticity can be seen in a component of the Nike campaign that did not use social media per se, but still made use of many of the techniques of social media marketing, namely the component of the '#makeitcount' campaign in which Olympic athletes were asked to write short messages (not unlike tweets) in their own handwriting on black and white photographs of themselves followed by their Twitter addresses and the hashtag #makeitcount. Poster size versions the photos, like the one shown below of runner Mo Farah (Figure 1) were displayed at Nike shops throughout Great Britain.

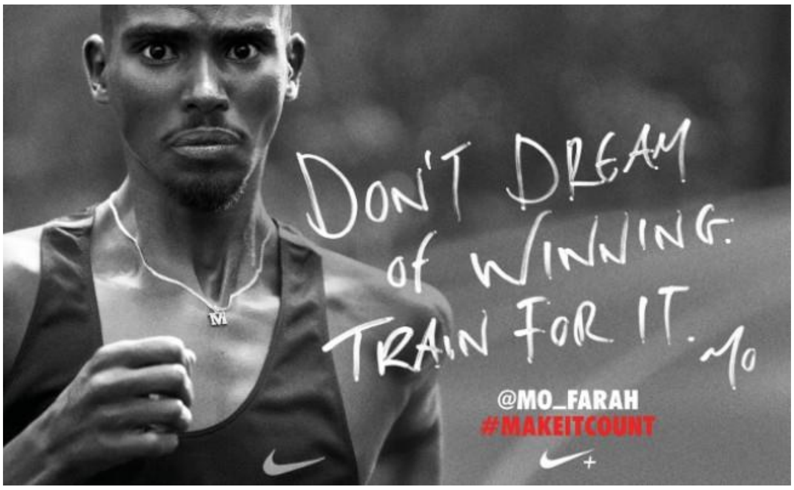

Figure 1 (Mo Farah Nike advertisement)

What gives to these message an air of authenticity is that they are perceived to be the athletes' genuine thoughts about their actual hopes and aspirations (as opposed to the kinds of sportswear they prefer), and this sense of authenticity is increased by the fact that the messages are written in (what is perceived to be) their own handwriting. Perhaps the most clever move, however, came when customers themselves at Nike's flagship London shops in Westfield Stratford City and Oxford Street were photographed and asked to compose their own handwritten pledges. By inviting ordinary people to engage in the same acts of testimonial as the athletes, the company was able not just to make customers feel more like celebrities, but also to make their celebrity spokespeople seem like 'ordinary' people.

A similar strategy was used in the Twitter component of the campaign: by asking both celebrities and customers to produce the same kinds of tweets, the celebrities were able to claim the status of 'authentic' customers. In doing so they successfully blurred the boundaries between promotional discourse and everyday language, allowing them to argue, as Nike did when challenged by the ASA, that the tweets by their spokespeople were no different than those by their customers. As Dan McLaren (2012) blogged for the UK Sports Network, 'with people tweeting about different elements of their lives, including products and services that they are using on a daily basis where is the line to be drawn. If an athlete says "hey, just been to pick up my new XYZ car. It's amazing!!" – and the car company is a sponsor of theirs, does this constitute a marketing message or is it just natural commentary of their life?'

Context

In arguing against the ASA's ruling, Nike said that the tweets from Rooney and Wishire 'should be viewed in the *context* in which they appeared' (ASA, 2012 emphasis mine). Twitter, they contended is not a broadcast channel in the same way television and radio are, but more a means of direct communication between specific parties (like the telephone). Rooney and Wilshire, they argued, were communicating not to the general public, but to their 'followers', and since both footballers were known by their 'followers' to be sponsored by Nike, they would not be misled by the ads.

The notion that context plays an important role in determining textual meanings is not new to stylistics and discourse analysis (see for example Schirato & Yell, 1997; Toolen 1992). By context, what I primarily mean is the 'social occasion' within which a text is used (and which, to some degree, the text itself helps create), which includes the time, place, medium and perceived purpose of the communication as well as the pattern of relationships or the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1983) that it constructs.

Traditional advertising typically follows a one-way interruptive format. That is to say, it relies on a model of interrupting a potential customer's engagement with some other text (a television show, a newspaper, a webpage). Customers accept such disruptions because they see them as 'necessary evils' which allow them to access media content free of charge. The challenge, then, for traditional advertisements, is to attract and hold people's attention within contexts in which (for the most part) they would rather pay attention to something else. Traditional advertising is also 'one-way' communication. The roles of author and reader (or viewer) are relatively fixed, and customers typically do not have the opportunity to engage in conversations with advertisers.

Social media marketing has dramatically changed the context in which advertising communication takes place. First, messages are more integrated into the primary media experiences of users: whether it is a tweet from my favorite athlete about his New Year's resolution, or from my favorite singer about her eating habits, or an update from my cousin telling me how many km he ran today, or a Facebook photo of my friend showing off her new Nike Lunarglide running shoes. In successful social media marketing the boundaries between the advertisement and the surrounding discourse – between the 'text' and the 'context' are erased, and brand engagement occurs as customers begin to subtly and often subconsciously combine the ad's messages with their own media consumption and text-making practices (Tuten, 2008).

Social media advertisement is less about 'passive consumption of packaged content' and more about 'conversations, connections, and shared control' (Tuten 2008: 30). This two way communication even occurs when customers are not conscious of it when, for example, the products they use (like the Nike+ Fuelband) send out automated advertisements, or when the information they share with friends on social networking sites is used the determine which products to market to them and which strategies will be most effective. Within these new the participation structures (Goffman, 1981), not only are the boundaries between texts and contexts breaking down, but so are the boundaries between marketers and customers. One of the key pillars of the Advertising Standards Code in the UK and elsewhere is that this boundary must be maintained. 'Marketing communications,' the code stipulates, 'must not falsely claim or imply that the marketer is acting as a consumer' (CAP, 2012). What the code does not address is the situation created in social media marketing in which customers come to act (sometimes unawares) as marketers.

In many ways, the internet and social media have fundamentally altered the relationship between messages and contexts, with messages and the ways we interact with them taking a unprecedented role in constructing and constraining context. In his book *The Filter Bubble*: *What the internet is hiding form you*, Eli Pariser discusses how things like cookies, personalized search algorithms, and selective information feeds have conspired to make everybody's experience of the internet intensely personal – and disturbingly limited. Search engines return results based on the pervious behavior and 'interests' of their users, and weblogs and Twitter feeds become 'echo chambers' for the opinions of like-minded people. Social media sites like Facebook allow users to create 'discursive worlds' complete with people, stories, and values, and then feed back these worlds to users. As Rettberg (2009:451) puts it, 'social media represent our lives by filtering the data we feed into them through templates and by displaying simplified patterns, visualizations and narratives back to us.'

What this means for advertising culture is that advertisers are no longer in the business of peddling messages to customers in the form of 'identities' and 'narratives', but rather in the business of providing tools (like hashtags and automatic updates and opportunities for 'ambient affiliation') through which customers create their own identities and write their own narratives. In this regard, the Nike+ Fuelband is the prototypical marketing tool of the future, a device which customers wear on their bodies which, every time they use it, automatically creates a new 'episode' in their life stories as told on their Twitter feeds or Facebook timelines, life stories which themselves carry the Nike brand.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to outline some of the ways advertising culture has changed from the days when scholars like Leech (1972) and Cook (1992) undertook their seminal studies, and to show how concepts from stylistics and discourse analysis can be applied to understand new forms of advertising in which what constitutes an 'ad' is no longer straightforward and the relationship between advertisers and customers has become, to use the terminology of Facebook, 'complicated'.

I began the chapter by bringing up some of the legal and ethical issues surrounding social media marketing, illustrated by recent rulings by the Advertising Standards Authority of the UK, and then proceeded to demonstrate how tools from stylistics and discourse analysis can help shed light on these issues. What I have also demonstrated, I hope, is how a critical stylistic analysis raises even further ethical issues which advertisers, regulators, customers and scholars will need to grapple with in the coming years: issues about the authorship and ownership of texts, issues about the erosion of the line between the public and the private, and issues about the degree of control people have over the texts they generate in their daily lives.

References

Advertising Standards Authority. (2012). ASA Ajudication on Nike (UK) Ltd. Retrieved September 11, 2012, from http://www.asa.org.uk/Rulings/Adjudications/2012/6/Nike-(UK)-Ltd/SHP_ADJ_183247.aspx

Amos, A., & Haglund, M. (2000). From social taboo to 'torch of freedon': The marketing of cigarettes to women. *Texal obacco Control, 9*, 3-8.

American Marketing Association (2012). Dictionary of marketing terms. Retrieved September 14, 2012, from http://www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/Dictionary.aspx

Bell, A. (1984). Language style as audience design. *Langauge in Society, 13*, 145-204.

Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. London: Longman.

Bruthiaux, P. (1996). *The discourse of classified advertising: Exploring the nature of linguistic simplicity*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

CAP (2012). UK Codes of Broadcast and Non-Broadcast Advertising. Retrieved September 12, 2012, from http://www.cap.org.uk/Advertising-Codes.aspx

Carter, R., & Nash, W. (1983). Language and literariness. *Prose Studies, 6*(2), 124-141.

Chaney, P. (2009). *The digital handshake: Seven proven strategies to grow your business using social media*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Cook, G. (1992). *The discourse of advertising*. London: Routledge.

Coupland, N. (2006). Sociolinguistic authenticities. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 7*(3), 417-431.

Coupland, N. (2010). The authentic speaker and the speech community. In C. Llamas & D. Watts (Eds.), *Language and identities* (pp. 99-112). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dawkins, R. (2006). *The selfish gene: 30th anniversary edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Downing, L. H. (2000). Text world creation in advertising discourse. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingeles, 13*, 67-88.

Dziura, J. (2006, March 10). non-sequitur advertising masquerading as analogous reasoning. http://www.jenisfamous.com/2006/04/non-sequitur-advertising-masquerading.html

Forceville, C. (1996). *Pictorial metaphor in advertising*. London: Routledge.
Gerard, S. (2012, September 5). Nike continues branding dominance with #makeitcount and @Nikefuel.
Glasser, R. A. (1998). A plea for phraseo-stylistics. In T. Kakietek (Ed.), (pp. 22-31). Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Slaskigro.
Grosser, W. (1995). Style in advertising. In W. Grosser, J. Hogg & K. Hubmayer (Eds.), *Style: Literary and non-literary* (pp. 265-285). Salzberg, Austria: The Edwin Mellen Press.
Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Goffman, E. (1983). The interaction order: American Sociological Association, 1982 presidential address. *American Sociological Review, 48*(1), 1-17.
Jeffries, L. (2001). Schema affirmation and White Asparagus: Cultural multilingualism among readers of texts. *Language and Literature, 10*(4), 325-343.
Joel, M. (2011, July 11). Twitter is random. http://www.twistimage.com/blog/archives/twitter-is-random/
Jones, R., Bhatia, V. K., Bhatia, A., & Vyas-Ngarkar. (2011). *Nutritional labeling as social interaction*. Paper presented at the 12th International Pragmatics Conference.
Jones, R. H., & Hafner, C. A. (2012). *Understanding digital literacies: A practical introduction*. London: Routledge.
Kress, G. R., & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.
Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Leech, G. N. (1972). *English in advertising: A linguistic study of advertising in Great Britian*. London: Longman.
Malinowski, B. (1923). The problem of meaning in primitive languages. In C. K. Ogden & I. A. Richards (Eds.), *The meaning of meaning: A study of the influence of language upon thought and of the science of symbolism* (pp. 296-336). London: Routledge.
McLaren, D. (2012, September 11). What does the ASA ruling on Rooney / Wilshere Tweets mean? http://www.theuksportsnetwork.com/what-does-the-asa-ruling-on-rooney-wilshere-tweets-mean
McStay, A. (2011). *The mood of information: A critique of online behavioural advertising*. London: Continuum.
Mills, S. (1995). *Feminist stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
Montgomery, M. (2001). The uses of authenticity: 'Speaking from experience' in a U.K. election broadcast. *Communication Review, 4*(4), 447-462.
Myers, G. (1994). *Words in ads*. London: Edward Arnold.
Naciscione, A. (2010). *Stylistic use of phraseological units in discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Neistat, C. (Director). (2012). Make it count [Video]: Nike http://youtu.be/WxfZkMm3wcg
Page, R. (2012). The linguistics of self-branding and micro-celebrity in Twitter: The role of hashtags. *Discourse and Communication, 6*(2), 181-201.
Piller, I. (2001). Identity construction in multilingual advertising. *Language in Society, 30*, 153-186.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the internet is hiding from you*. New York: Penguin.
Rettberg, J. W. (2009). 'Freshly generated for you, and Barack Obama': How social media represent your life. *European Journal of Communication, 24*(4), 451-466.
Russell, C. P. (1921, June 2). How to write a sales-marketing letter. *Printers' Ink*.
Santini, M. (2006). *Interpreting genre evolution on the web: preliminary results.* Paper presented at the 11th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics, Trento, Italy, April 4.
Schirato, T., & Yell, S. (1997). *Cultural literacies*. London: Allen & Unwin.
Simpson, P. (1993). *Language, ideology and point of vew*. London: Routledge.
Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986). *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. London: Blackwell.
Sweney, M. (2012, June 20). Nike becomes the first UK company to have Twitter campaign banned*. The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/jun/20/nike-twitter-campaign-banned
Stockwell, P. (2002). *Cognitive poetics: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
Tanaka, K. (1994). *Advertising language: A pragmatic approach to advertisments in Britian and Japan*. London: Routledge
ttudium (2012). Top 25 funniest Tweets of all time - Funny Twitter posts. Retrieved September 10, 2012, from http://tthudium.hubpages.com/hub/Top-25-funniest-tweets
Toolen, M. (1992). *Language, text and context: Essays in stylistics*. London: Taylor & Francis.
Tuten, T. T. (2008). *Advertising 2.0: Social media marketing in a web 2.0 world*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
Ungerer, E. (2000). Muted Metaphors and the Activation of Metonymies in Advertising. In A. Barcelona (Ed.), *Metaphor and metonymy at the crossroads* (pp. 321-340). Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
van Leeuwen, T. (2001). What is authenticity?, *Discourse Studies, 3* (4): 392-7.
Vestergaard, T., & Schrøder, K. (1985). *The Language of Advertising*. London: Basil Blackwell.
Zappacigna, M. (2011). Ambient affiliation: A linguistic perspective on Twitter. *New Media and Society, 13*(5), 788-806.
Zappacigna, M. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and social media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web*. London: Continuum.