

Exploring Conversational Implicature within perfumes and condoms Advertisement Slogans Containing Sexual Innuendo

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Abstract

This study investigates the creative use of conversational implicature in English advertisement slogans of perfumes, and condoms with sexual content. It explores how advertisers make use of certain linguistic tools and tactics such as flouting Grice's Cooperative Principles (maxims of relation, quantity, quality, and manner), to persuade consumers while abiding by advertising regulations. By the Analysis of 10 slogans, the research found the widespread use of particularized implicature and significant flouting of most maxims: there was a complete usage of particularized implicature, along with a 100% violation of the maxim of quantity and the maxim of manner. Additionally, there was a 75% violation of the maxim of quality, while no violations were found regarding the maxim of relevance. The findings highlight how advertisers subtly promote their products while maintaining relevance for targeted audience to easily grasp the intended message. Furthermore, pragmatics teachers acknowledged the importance of studying ads in pragmatics though some were cautious particularly in relation to sexual content. Future research should expand the scope of slogans and analytical techniques.

Keywords: *Conversational implicature - Grice's maxims – Advertisement Slogans – Perfumes and Condoms*

DOI: 10.7176/JLLL/109-02

Publication date: January 31st 2026

Introduction

The communication of product, service, or concept information through impersonal and persuasive media, typically supported by defined sponsors, constitutes advertising (Bovee, as cited in Frolova, 2014). A prevalent linguistic strategy in advertising is the narrative style, which can articulate product details either explicitly or implicitly (Mott, as cited in Fitriyah, 2008). Explicit communication is characterized by directness, while implicit communication relies on indirect suggestion. Thus, advertising language can vary in its degree of directness. Prior scholarship, exemplified by Maiska's (2013) investigation into generalized conversational implicatures in Kartu As advertisements, has established that conversational implicature effectively reinforces promotional content, with implicit advertising demonstrating considerable consumer impact. The use of implicit language is particularly germane to condom advertising, a product often subject to social proscriptions in many contexts due to its perceived connection with sexual permissiveness.

The prohibition against explicit instructional language in perfumes and condom advertising compels advertisers to ingeniously utilize implicit communication. An illustrative example is the slogan "Feel everything," which implicitly suggests that intimacy can be more fulfilling with this condom which enables extended sexual performance, leading to a later climax. This strategic deployment of implicature in condom slogans and advertisements allows producers to bypass overt informative statements.

Consequently, in their efforts to market a product often regarded as taboo and associated with sexual freedom, advertisers of condom products and perfumes are compelled to employ implicature or violate certain Gricean maxims within their slogans. This strategic approach facilitates product promotion while navigating societal sensitivities. Therefore, the presence of conversational implicature and the violation of cooperative principles or maxims are highly probable occurrences in condom advertisement slogans. The strategic deployment of implicit meaning, or conversational implicature, in advertising warrants scholarly attention due to its potential to augment advertising efficacy. This investigation, therefore, sought to identify the specific conversational implicatures present in condom advertisement slogans and to examine their mechanisms for conveying messages to consumers.

The incentive for undertaking this study stems from the principal limitations identified in prior research. Firstly, condom and perfume advertisements present a distinct case compared to other products advertisements. This is due to the societal taboo associated with condoms and certain perfumes advertisements especially in the eastern cultures. Secondly, the prior investigation into print advertisements lacked specificity regarding product categories.

Research Questions

The primary research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What types of conversational implicatures are used in perfumes and condoms advertisement slogans?
2. How do conversational implicatures work within perfumes and condoms advertisement slogans?
3. How Tunisian pragmatics teachers perceive the slogans ?

Literature Review

Implicature, as theorized by Grice (1989), is broadly categorized into conventional and conversational types. This study specifically focuses on conversational implicature, which denotes the implied meaning conveyed by a speaker's utterance. Conversational implicature can be further delineated into three subcategories. The first subcategory, **generalized conversational implicature**, does not necessitate specific or shared contextual knowledge for comprehending the implicit meaning, as illustrated by the following exchange:

- a) Anna: Did you meet John and Aly?
- b) Sonia: I met John.

In this example, without requiring any pre-existing shared knowledge, it is implicitly understood that Sonia met John but not Aly. The second subcategory is **scalar implicature**. Yule (1996) describes this as an implied meaning that extends beyond the explicit or literal meaning of an utterance. Consider the example:

- b) Some students are absent.

The use of the quantifier "some" implicates "not all", suggesting to the listener that not students are present, despite the lack of a direct logical entailment within the sentence itself. The third subcategory is **particularized conversational implicature**, which necessitates shared contextual knowledge for the comprehension of its implied meaning (Yule, 1996). For illustration:

- d) Peter: "Hey, coming to Jane's party tonight?"
- e) Janet: "I have an exam tomorrow."

To interpret Janet's implied refusal, Peter must draw upon tacit knowledge that having an exam typically entails Janet spending the day reviewing for it, thereby precluding her attendance at the party.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

Grice's Cooperative Principle elucidates how individuals use language and forms as the conceptual basis of implicature. This principle is further subdivided into four maxims (Levinson, 1983):

1. **Quantity:** Speakers should provide information that is as informative as required for the current communicative purpose.
2. **Quality:** Contributions should be truthful and supported by adequate evidence.
3. **Relevance:** Utterances should be pertinent to the ongoing topic of conversation.
4. **Manner:** Communication should be perspicuous and unambiguous. This involves:
 - a. Avoiding obscurity of expression.
 - b. Avoiding ambiguity.
 - c. Being brief.
 - d. Being orderly.

A previous research on advertising implicature by Frolova (2014) has investigated the deliberate violation of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle namely, quality, quantity, relation, and manner in order to achieve effects on customers. These studies have employed a range of methodologies, including qualitative content analysis of advertisements such as the examination of slogans and experimental research in which participants are presented with different versions of advertisements. Another research exploring implicature in advertising includes Maiska's (2013) study, which examined generalized conversational implicatures in Kartu As (SIM Card) advertisements. This research concluded that generalized conversational implicatures were strategically employed to emphasize implied meanings related to product promotion, significantly influencing audience persuasion towards purchasing the advertised products.

Another relevant study by Al Fajri (2017) investigated the application of conversational implicatures in print advertisements. This research analyzed ten advertisements published between 2016 and 2017 in English and

Indonesian men's and women's magazines. While advertising, as a means of mass communication between advertisers and the public, is theoretically expected to adhere to the Cooperative Principle and its maxims, advertising designers frequently deviate from or intentionally violate these maxims. Such deviations generate inferences that achieve specific communicative impacts. Al Fajri (2017) suggests that the strategic use of conversational implicatures in advertising offers substantial benefits to advertisers and companies. These applications can serve various functions, ultimately rendering advertisements more efficient and persuasive. This includes enhancing cost-effectiveness, improving memorability, arousing and sustaining viewer interest, and enabling marketers to mitigate liability for implied claims.

Research Methodology

3.1. Subjects:

The study's sample comprised two distinct sets of data. The primary data consisted of 10 perfume and condom advertisement slogans selected for linguistic analysis. The secondary data involved 6 pragmatics teachers, who were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions regarding the pedagogical value of analyzing these slogans. These teachers constituted a purposive sample, specifically chosen from those who teach Grice's maxims. The sample intentionally included a proportionate number of male and female teachers (three males and three females), a decision attributed to the researcher in soliciting his perspective on such a sensitive topic.

3.2. Instruments:

To investigate the research questions, advertisements of perfumes and condoms were specifically collected from online platforms. Additionally, interviews were carried out with the 6 purposively sampled pragmatics teachers to ascertain their perceptions of the advertising slogan analysis as a learning exercise. These interviews were conducted via online meetings, utilizing pre-designed interview sheets to guide the discussion. The collected data is presented in table 1:

Table 1: List of Data

Perfume Slogans	Condom Slogans
Victoria's Secret: "The Sexiest Lingerie in the World."	SKYN: "The Closest Thing to Wearing Nothing."
Calvin Klein: "Between Love and Madness Lies Obsession."	Trojan - Pleasure Pack: "Feel Everything." "For Pleasure that Lasts."
Yves Saint Laurent - La Nuit de L'Homme: "The Scent of Seduction."	Durex : "Make Your Own Equations (1 + 1 + condom picture = 0) "
Playboy: "Entertainment for Men."	"Dear Dinosaurs, Population Control, is Easy. You Didn't Have to Go Extinct. Sincerely, Durex" "To All Those Who Use Our Competitors' Products: Happy Father's Day" -Durex-

3.3. Data collection procedures:

Data collection involved a document analysis, which entails gathering information from various written sources. In this study, as noted by Sudaryanto in Nirmala (2015), the researcher employed a referential method to identify the referents of implicatures and examine the application of Grice's Cooperative Principles in condom and perfume advertisement slogans to illustrate their representations. Furthermore, the researcher adopted an interactive data analysis model (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to analyze the perceptions of Pragmatics teachers. Initially, the raw data collected were selected, focused, and simplified according to the research objectives. Next, the researcher organized the data for the purpose of drawing conclusions or validating findings. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the data.

Data Analysis

The findings indicate that there was a complete usage of particularized implicature, meaning that the advertisements can only be understood by some particular people who have some background knowledge. For instance children would find it difficult to understand these advertisements. Results uncover how advertisers frequently violate Grice's maxims to enhance their messages, frequently resulting in interpretations that go beyond the literal statement (Chikhladze, 2017). To illustrate, there was 100% violation of the maxim of quantity and the maxim of manner, along with 75% violation of the maxim of quality, while no violations were found regarding the maxim of relevance. These advertisements containing sexual innuendo heavily utilize implicit clues to forge emotional bonds, highlight product advantages, or provoke laughter and irony. The discussion underscores that grasping these implicatures can boost consumer involvement and brand image, demonstrating the influence of communication in advertising.

This strategic ambiguity enables the transmission of intricate messages that could otherwise be seen as direct or even contentious thus engaging consumers on a more emotional and alluring level (Chen, 2009; Maryam et al 2023.) This method taps into the audience's ability to infer meaning, enabling them to "read between the lines" and interpret messages that reflect aspirational goals or perceived advantages (Adler, 2020). This sophisticated communication approach is notably showcased in products like perfumes and sexual health products where direct statements often fail to resonate as effectively as evocative, emotionally charged language (Wedananta et al. 2020; Xu and Yang 2025). Implicature turns advertising slogans into complex semiotic entities, where the interplay of signs and symbols conveys information, evokes emotions, and influences perceptions of brands and products (Xu & Yang, 2025). These indirect cues are crucial for companies aiming to connect product use with intended results, especially in delicate contexts such as sexual gratification (Rubio, 2018). To illustrate, the "product-claim" provides clear information about a product, whereas the "reward dimension" indirectly conveys the social or emotional advantages gained from its use, frequently reinforcing gender stereotypes (Rubio, 2018).

This analytical framework highlights how advertisers ingeniously use implicature to subtly convey powerful messages, turning basic product features into aspirational lifestyle and desired self-images. This study reveals a deliberate use of common cultural understandings related to romance, attraction, gender norms, and consumer desires. These slogans often violate or alter conversational maxims, frequently employing provocative or paradoxical language to captivate and emotionally engage the audience, rather than making straightforward product endorsements. Often, the actual advantages of the product are overlooked, with the focus instead on vague emotional rewards like confidence, sensuality, risk-taking, and authenticity. For instance, Calvin Klein's advertisement "Between Love and Madness Lies obsession" employs metaphorical language that defies the maxim of manner by prioritizing poetic expression over straightforward communication. The literal interpretation associates obsession with love and madness, whereas the implied meaning indicates that wearing the perfume correlates with a person's intense, captivating attraction and a daring, unconventional persona. This generates a cinematic and provocative appeal. Yves Saint Laurent's "La Nuit de L'homme" conveys a sense of nocturnal masculine charm through a possessive and concise expression "The scent of seduction", which combines fragrance elements with sexual allure. Scent is viewed as an engaging sensory aspect of seduction that transcends mere utility, appealing to consumers who enjoy multi-sensory experiences. The advertisement violates the maxim of quantity by omitting clear product features, instead implying a sophisticated, confident identity linked to nightlife and seduction. This slogan reinforces traditional masculine, and corresponds with French luxury branding, targeting consumers who appreciate sophisticated, cosmopolitan imagery.

Condom slogans like SKYN's "The closest thing to wearing nothing" highlight a direct but metaphorically enhanced product emphasizing comfort and natural sensation. This slogan overstates quantity while implying spontaneity and confidence in intimacy. Nevertheless, clear safety instructions are necessary to prevent confusion about the effectiveness of protection, though it may introduce risks concerning product clarity and safety perceptions. As for Durex, it employs a humorous tone, including "Dear Dinosaurs, Population control is easy" to engage its audience. Contraception isn't a taboo anymore, and making it acceptable to talk about birth control openly. These slogans violate conventional wisdom by employing a humorous, non-precise language, with the goal of diminishing stigma and making people more accessible. The phrase "You didn't have to go extinct" employs irony to suggest that their product offers a contemporary solution to an ancient issue, encouraging consumers to deduce the product's convenience and efficacy. Conversely, Durex's "To all those who use our competitors' products: Happy Father's Day" utilizes competitive humor that defies polite conventions. The implicit meaning reflects brand assurance and humor, yet it could alienate certain consumers if perceived as harsh, underscoring the significance of tone adjustment across different users. The Father's Day

message sarcastically suggests that users of competing products are fathers now, leading consumers to deduce a lack of efficacy of other brands

Cross-cutting observations suggest that these slogans frequently revolve around themes of romance, danger, confidence, and stealth, employing humor to mitigate delicate subjects. The balance between straightforward product endorsements and inspirational advertising enables consumers to imbue their own interpretations onto the brand's image. Innovative and lighthearted styles help distinguish brands, yet careful consideration must be given to cultural contexts and audience inclusivity.

Practical implications for studying or crafting such slogans include: Distinguishing between stated content and implied identification or lifestyle claims, mapping the cultural scripts and shared information the slogans invoke, assessing audience assumptions and ability dangers of misinterpretation, making sure alignment among implicatures and the brand's preferred character, and balancing readability and ambiguity to preserve intrigue without obscuring product blessings. This nuanced use of implicature in marketing slogans demonstrates how manufacturers leverage cultural narratives and conversational standards to create emotionally compelling and noteworthy messages that transcend literal product descriptions.

This strategic ambiguity permits for the circumvention of direct ethical or social censorship, even as simultaneously captivating the target market through an advanced play on suggestive language (Wedananta et al., 2020). This deliberate violation of Gricean maxims, in particular the maxim of quality (be clear) and relevance, compels the target audience to engage in a deeper cognitive procedure to decipher the underlying message, thereby improving memorability and persuasive impact without explicitly pointing out potentially controversial content (Wedananta et al., 2020). For example, the pervasive use of particularized implicature in sexually suggestive slogans suggests that advertisers craft messages meant for a selected audience with prior knowledge of sexual contexts, thereby excluding or minimizing comprehension by means of younger people (Wedananta et al., 2020).

In order to answer research question three, the analysis of the perceptions of the six pragmatics teachers in Tunisia reveals a strong consensus on the importance of understanding sexual innuendo in advertisements. For instance, 83% (5 out of 6 teachers) believe that understanding the use of sexual innuendo in advertisements will be beneficial for students' future endeavors. Teachers noted that this knowledge equips students with critical analytical skills necessary for navigating complex advertising landscapes. Concerning cultural overlap, 100% (6 out of 6 teachers) agree that the global landscape features blurred cultural borders, facilitating the integration of Western and Eastern cultural elements in advertisements. This overlap is seen as an opportunity for students to learn how to create culturally sensitive advertisements. However, the interviewed teachers stressed the need for strategic communication : 67% (4 out of 6 teachers) highlighted the necessity of developing strategies to convey sexual content in a manner that avoids conflict and respects cultural norms. Teachers emphasized the importance of pragmatics in crafting messages that resonate with diverse audiences.

Conclusion

This study explored the use of conversational implicature in advertising perfumes and condoms, focusing on slogans with sexual innuendo. It demonstrates how advertisers leverage implicit language and flout Grice's maxims to create persuasive messages that engage consumers through implicature. This strategy is particularly effective in condom and perfume advertisements, where subtle language replaces overt sexual references, allowing brands to navigate social sensitivities. By manipulating Grice's Cooperative Principle, advertisers generate implicatures that resonate with audiences, tapping into subconscious desires without explicit messaging. This indirect approach broadens interpretations and conveys persuasive content concisely, making it ideal for socially sensitive products.

The findings have important implications for advertising practices and theory, offering a framework for culturally sensitive strategies while enhancing our understanding of Gricean maxims in commercial contexts. Future research should investigate cross-cultural interpretations of implicit advertising, compare implicit and explicit messaging effectiveness, and track the evolution of implicature strategies amid changing social norms.

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