

# Lexico-Semantic Fields in Advertising Slogans of Coca-Cola and Pepsi

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The article examines advertising slogans as a type of small-format text and conducts a lexico-semantic analysis of the slogans used by Coca-Cola and Pepsi. The analysis highlights both similarities and differences in the lexico-semantic fields (LSFs) used in the slogans. Both companies employ fields, such as “thirst” and “pleasure,” but Coca-Cola’s LSFs reflect an orientation toward quality and tradition, whereas Pepsi emphasizes novelty and appeals to the younger generation.

*Keywords:* small-format text, advertising discourse, advertising slogan, lexico-semantic field, semantic analysis

## Introduction

Recently, researchers have increasingly been attracted to texts of non-standard length. The term “small-format text” has even emerged to refer to them. A small-format text is a short and complete text, characterized by brevity, conciseness, and linguistic compression. The main criterion for identifying a small-format text is its brevity (2-64 words). These texts are used in all types of discourse, including advertising, which is the focus of this study.

## Literature Review

According to V. I. Karasik (2004), “Discourse is speech immersed in life. Discourse is an intermediate phenomenon between speech, communication, and the recorded text. Discourse is a process of live verbal interaction. A slogan is a small-format text and one of the vivid manifestations of advertising discourse” (p. 112).

At the same time, O. A. Ksenzhenko (2011) in her article “Advertising Communication in a Multicultural Space” believes that advertisers must consider the functional characteristics of advertising, the principles of classifying advertised objects and typologizing the recipients of advertising texts, as well as the worldview and linguistic worldview of the target audience (p. 23). Thus, advertising reflects the mentality of the country in which it was created; advertising reflects the country and the time. Moreover, the advertising text is one of the most complex types of text (Molchkova & Shevirina, 2015, p. 176).

The language of advertising as a cultural indicator is expressed through stylistic devices (metaphors, puns, lexical and syntactic repetition, epithets, and comparisons), and through concepts that form the basis of the advertising message (freedom, love, happiness, and refreshment). Therefore, we conclude that the advertising

text is a verbal-symbolic representation of culture.

Advertising slogans are a vivid example of small-format texts, because they do not exceed 2-3 sentences and convey a complete meaning.

It is worth noting that researchers use different approaches to analyzing lexical groupings. The lexico-semantic group is recognized as one of the main forms of lexical grouping in foreign language study. A lexico-semantic group is a set of words that are sufficiently semantically related. However, typically, a lexico-semantic group includes words belonging to the same part of speech. Many researchers also use the thematic principle of grouping lexical units, considering thematic fields (Molchkova, Shabalkina, & Shevirina, 2019, p. 165).

In our study, we base our understanding on A. L. Novikov's (2001) definition: "A lexico-semantic field is a hierarchical structure of a set of lexical units united by a common (invariant) meaning and reflecting a certain conceptual sphere in the language" (p. 569).

### Research and Result

Material for the study included advertising slogans from two competing brands—Coca-Cola (Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Coca-Cola\\_slogans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Coca-Cola_slogans)) and Pepsi (Retrieved from <https://gmdist.com/blog/pepsi-slogans-and-logos-throughout-the-years>). These slogans were subjected to lexico-semantic analysis, through which the main lexico-semantic fields (LSFs) were identified.

Among Coca-Cola's advertising slogans, we identified the following dominant LSFs: "refresh", "thirsty", and "enjoy". We also identified "quality" and "real" as fields.

Among Pepsi's advertising slogans, we identified:

The "refresh" LSF forms a rather large field, consisting of 17 slogans. This field represents 14% of the total number of slogans and is expressed using the word "refresh" and its word forms in 15 slogans. In one slogan, the LSF is expressed through the phrase "brain tonic", and in another—with the words "vim" and "vigor".

Examples of slogans in this LSF include: "Passport to refreshment," "Drive safely... Drive refreshed," "Coca-Cola gives that special zing... refreshes best," "Twist the cup to refreshment," and others.

It should be noted that in this case, the verb "refresh" and the noun "refreshment" are used mostly in their direct meanings. The consumer is urged to think of Coca-Cola every time they want freshness:

"Whoever you are, whatever you do, wherever you may be, when you think of refreshment, think about ice-cold Coca-Cola."

However, there is also an implied meaning that is not explicitly stated but assumed. The word "refresh" is used not only in the sense of quenching thirst, but also in the sense of "refresh brain" or "refresh life", meaning Coca-Cola not only quenches thirst, but also evokes new emotions, clarity, and vitality.

Slogans in this semantic field highlight how refreshing Coca-Cola is and show the outcome of consumption—a fulfilled need. In contrast, the second field, built around the negatively tinged word "thirsty", represents the customer's need or problem that the product resolves. Slogans in the "thirsty" field had a shorter lifecycle—used between 1922 and 1968—while "refresh" slogans had a longer lifespan, from 1887 to 1964, and returned again in 2010, indicating greater effectiveness. We can conclude that using positive LSFs, which portray a satisfied need, is more effective than focusing on the problem.

The "thirsty" LSF includes 14 entries, representing 11.5% of the total. The word "thirst" in the analyzed

slogans performs various functions, and analysis shows that thirst often acts as the subject of the action.

The first advertising slogan featuring the word “thirst” appeared in 1922:

“Thirst knows no season.”

In this slogan, thirst is depicted as a living being that doesn’t recognize seasons—It exists year-round.

In 1923, the next slogan appeared, quite short and simple:

“Enjoy thirst.”

Here, thirst is no longer something negative—It’s a reason to enjoy a delicious drink.

In the 1932 slogan “Thirst come, thirst served” and the 1938 slogan “Thirst asks nothing more,” thirst again plays the role of a character. The first slogan presents the drink’s properties and results—thirst comes, and it is served. It shows that quenching thirst will not be a problem, because Coca-Cola takes care of it. The second slogan negates all other competing beverages.

Interestingly, among Pepsi’s slogans, we also identified a “refresh” field, formed by the words “refresh” and “change”. We included five slogans in this field, representing 10% of the total.

The word “refresh” in this context means more than just “refresh with a cold drink.” Its meaning is broader. Pepsi offers to “refresh” or even change the world. The brand challenges the status quo.

“Every Pepsi Refreshes The World”

“Are you ready to take the challenge?”—examples from this LSF.

Thus, while Coca-Cola uses the concept of “refresh” in the direct sense, Pepsi employs it metaphorically and more globally.

Pepsi has always positioned itself as something new and fresh, in contrast to its competitor. Nine Pepsi slogans form the “generation” lexico-semantic field, containing the noun “generation”, and three slogans are united by the adjective “young”.

“Come Alive! You’re In The Pepsi Generation”

“Be Young, Have Fun, Drink Pepsi”

“Generation Next”—examples from this field.

This ad campaign was undeniably successful, significantly influencing society. The term “Pepsi Generation” became a precedent phenomenon, referring to the youth of the 1980s and 1990s.

The next Coca-Cola field, “enjoy”, refers to emotional characteristics. The company does not sell a drink—It sells enjoyment, feelings, and emotions.

Slogans in this field have been used throughout the company’s history (1904-2016), with 20 slogans included, accounting for 16% of the total.

The 1904 slogan—

“Coca-Cola ... satisfies.”

—makes no mention of rational product qualities. People buy not the product, but the feelings and experiences it offers  
—making these slogans popular and effective.

In 1911:

“Enjoy a glass of liquid laughter.”

This beautiful metaphor—*liquid laughter*—perfectly conveys the message. Coca-Cola represents emotion, happiness,

and laughter.

This emotional LSF is also frequently expressed through the word “life”. Not life in the existential sense, but life full of pleasure and emotion:

“Cheerful life of Coke”

“Coke adds life...”

“Life tastes good”

Coca-Cola becomes a symbol of such a life.

Pepsi also used an emotional approach—we identified the “joy” lexico-semantic field. This field makes up 30% of their slogans. The meaning is expressed with the verb “live” in three cases and the noun “joy” in three others. Other slogans are more abstract, for example:

“Where there’s Pepsi, there’s music,”

where *music* implies pleasure and mood.

Examples:

“Join The Pepsi People Feelin’ Free”

“Catch That Pepsi Spirit”

“Live For Now,” etc.

These slogans resemble Coca-Cola’s “enjoy” field, but Pepsi again presents a more active stance—striving for change. Coca-Cola depicts life as wonderful now, while Pepsi suggests that the drink brings transformation. This aligns with Pepsi’s role as a challenger brand—Its slogans are louder.

In addition to the main LSFs, we also identified smaller, but still important fields.

Let’s consider Coca-Cola slogans representing the “quality” LSF. This field includes eight slogans—6.5% of the total. These slogans were used from 1906 to 1951. They emphasize product quality and distinguish the brand from competitors. This was necessary to justify the higher price compared to, for example, Pepsi.

“The drink of quality”—this slogan implies that if you want to *taste* quality, you need to drink Coca-Cola.

A 1947 slogan alludes to the U.S. national motto “In God we trust”:

“Continuous quality is quality you trust.”

This wordplay elevates Coca-Cola to a national level, suggesting the drink is a symbol of the country.

Over time, however, the “quality” field was replaced by the “real” LSF, which includes six slogans (5%). In our opinion, this is because “real” is more relatable and widely used than “quality”. The word “quality” has become cliché—almost every brand claims quality, so the word has lost its impact. By contrast, “real” retains its meaning and resonates more with the audience. These slogans were used from 1942 to 2005.

Examples from this LSF:

“It’s the real thing”

“Make It Real”

It’s also worth noting that Coca-Cola is known for using image-based advertising, where the brand itself is the main semantic element.

Such slogans were used from 1886 to 2008. We identified 17 of them—14% of the total. Examples include:

“The only thing like Coca-Cola is Coca-Cola itself”  
 “What you want is a Coke”  
 “Live on the Coke Side of Life”

In contrast to this, we examined Pepsi slogans representing the “different” LSF, which emphasize the brand’s distinction from competitors. The messages here are “different,” “more,” and “the best.”

Pepsi has always competed with Coca-Cola as its main rival. We found 10 slogans that contain clear opposition—20% of all slogans.

In its early history, Pepsi gained customers through price competition—The drink was marketed as equal in quality to Coca-Cola but at half the price:

“Twice As Much For A Nickel Too.”

The drink became more recognizable, gained an audience, and this influenced marketing. However, there were inconsistencies: in some years, the drink was positioned as the *same* as Coca-Cola, while in others, the focus was on differences and taste advantages.

Examples:

“Taste That Beats The Others Cold” (1967)  
 “Same Great Taste” (1998)  
 “Dare for More” and “Pepsi. It’s the Cola” (2003—both launched in parallel)

We can conclude that slogans emphasizing differentiation were more effective. In recent years, these slogans have become louder:

“The Best Drink Created Worldwide”  
 “Pepsi is #1”

## Conclusion

We can conclude that both companies use similar LSFs in their positioning, but express them in different ways.

Coca-Cola slogans are more conservative—“Refresh” has a direct meaning: to refresh with a cold drink. Pepsi uses “refresh” metaphorically and globally, offering to “refresh” the world. Pepsi is a new, youth-oriented drink. “Generation” is a core concept for the brand, aiming to build a community united by love for Pepsi. Coca-Cola, on the other hand, is a more family-oriented drink. This is reflected both in its slogans and in its visual imagery. Pepsi represents a youth party; Coca-Cola represents family with children, family holidays.

Coca-Cola has widely used image-based advertising, positioning itself as brand number one—quality and real. Pepsi, meanwhile, positions itself as the bold, tastier, more affordable alternative.

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