



## Constructing and Promoting Social Relationships: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Pakistani Cooking Oil Advertisements

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Advertisement,  
Discourse Analysis,  
Identity,  
Ideology,  
Linguistic Choices,  
Social Relation

*This study analysed Pakistani cooking oil advertisements from a critical discourse analysis point of view. The study mainly analysed the language used in the cooking oil advertisements and the techniques used by the advertisers to attract consumers. The study is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model. Qualitative research was conducted on ten cooking oil advertisements taken from ARY digital channels. It demonstrates how far are Pakistani food advertisements successful in constructing and promoting social relationships and a system of cultural belief to break the gender stereotypes. The findings showed that advertisers use different strategies and linguistic choices to influence the consumers. The advertisements analysed in this study promote the gender stereotype and conventional identity of women. The finding also indicated that both the famous and infamous Pakistani cooking oil advertisements convey the same ideas and promote the same social relations and identities.*

### INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a medium through which advertisers share information about their product to attract people and to persuade them into buying the product. The corporate industry in Pakistan uses different modes of media for advertising their respective product such as TV, internet, magazine, etc.

It is the language of advertisements that direct the attention of the audiences. Language is used as a tool in the discourse of advertisements not only to sell their respective product but also to propagate different ideologies (Kannan, Tyagi, 2013). The language of advertisements has hidden ideologies along with the physical text on the surface level. The discourse of advertisements operates on two-level, primary discourse and secondary discourse. Primary discourse explains the qualities of the product being advertised while secondary discourse

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represents the ideologies embedded in the text (The Dynamics of Advertising, n.d.). Different types of identities are constructed and promoted through the language of advertisements. Advertisers adopt different and innovative linguistic strategies when advertising their product on social media, to attract the readers' attention.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is:

- To highlight the construction and promotion of gender stereotypes in the selected advertisements
- To identify the social relations which breaks gender stereotypes in the selected advertisements

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Griffin (2007), discourse is an umbrella term which refers to all kinds of utterances both verbal and non-verbal. Deborah Cameron (2010) states that verbal hygiene is required to shape the discourse for a particular situation. Discourse serves as a source of building social relations, indicating power and knowledge, for example, a doctor's prescription seems more authentic for a sick person than a common man suggestion. A discourse of each domain has its particular "linguistic format", legal discourse, like ID card, a death certificate has its format, and so on.

Vahid and Esmae'li (2012) analysed six advertisements under Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Kress and Leeuwen's grammar of visual design. According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006), social distance among the viewer also plays a role for the producer and he also sees that how much his viewers are involved or detached from the scenario presented in the images of ads. Producers have the power to change the thought and behaviour of the viewer's especially when producers give power to the viewers to either reject or buy the product. Viewers become more eager to buy the product. When the government is involved in the production process then the power is on the producer side.

Umer (2012) conducted a study on brand advertisements. Language is a system of symbols that express and shape identities. Any kind of language use consists of social as well as personal identities. Without the notion of identity, language has no meaning. Identity is not static. It changes with time and situation (Umer, 2010). Through online communication, people change the features of their basic identity such as age, gender, race religion, etc. with the development of social media, adaptation of identity is increasing day by day. As people are identified by their language, nation, age, etc. in the same way they are recognized through their language which includes the textual as well as a visual feature on social media. The advertisers reveal their identities through their linguistic choices and semiotic features.

Baig (2013) critically studied the discourse of advertisements under Austin's speech act theory and Fairclough model. Austin calls speech act as performative acts, consists of locutionary,

illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. He divided illocutionary acts into directives, assertive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Baig analyzed meaningful linguistic items as locutionary, purpose of advertisers as illocutionary and persuasion power of advertisements as perlocutionary.

Fornkwa (2015) critically analyzed Cameroonian newspaper articles about the 2015 budget. Ideology in a text is signalled by the grammatical form and the genre of the text. Journalists have the power to mediate different ideologies in a newspaper and to control the mind of their readers. They design the headline short and catchy to attract the reader's attention. In the same way, they design the lead and the body in a so technical way which compels the reader to believe.

Yujie Tan (2016) analyzed news reports about "Diaoyu/Senkaku" problems, taken from "Chinese newspaper the People's Daily and Japanese newspaper the Japan Times". It aimed to help the teachers of the English language to use CDA as a teaching tool in the language class and to enable students to realize the social structure and power relations behind the text. CDA helps students, especially foreign language learners who are unaware of the background of the text, to understand the attitude, style, and intentions of the writer.

## **METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK**

The present study is based on qualitative research as it involves a descriptive analysis of the discourse of advertisements. For the analysis of the discourse used in these selected advertisements, theoretical frameworks of discourse analysis (DA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) are selected. In discourse analysis, language is regarded as a tool to build talk and text. Discourse analysis involves the analysis of the processes of production and consumption of the text. DA focuses on the use of language. It is more concerned with what people do while they are talking rather than what people say (Baig, 2013).

DA is a part of CDA. CDA is a branch of applied linguistics that considers discourse as "social practice". CDA focuses on how discourse operates in society. CDA reveals ideologies, power relations, and political control in the language use. CDA studies how language works in particular discourse to uncover inequalities and social relations. One of the founders of CDA is Fairclough, who is a professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University, considers language as "social practice". He proposed a model for CDA, known as the "Three-Dimensional Model" (Sipra and Rashid, 2013).

### **Fairclough Three-Dimensional Model**

Fairclough proposed a framework known as "three-dimensional framework" for discourse analysis. It includes three kinds of analysis:

- Textual analysis
- Intertextuality
- social practices

## **Textual analysis**

This part of the Fairclough model deals with the analysis of a physical text. The focus is on linguistic items, linguistic choices, grammar, vocabulary, the structure of words phrases, etc.

## **Discursive Practices**

In discursive practices, we look at how a person acts in a particular discipline. It talks about the rules, behaviours, and norms which are socially acceptable and are used in the production, reception, and consumption of the text.

## **Social practices**

This dimension deals with the social and cultural analysis of the discourse or text. It tends to make a relation between text or discourse with society.

The purposive sampling technique of cooking oil advertisements is followed. Ten cooking oil advertisements were selected from ARY digital of Pakistan, which is a general entertainment network and can be regarded as a pioneer of Pakistani media.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Generally speaking, the language, word order, structure, and grammar used in the advertisements are designed and arranged very carefully according to the target audiences. There is always a purpose, an idea behind the vocabulary used in the advertisements (Nyagaka and James, 2014).

In the study, the titles used by the advertisers are attractive consist of strong and persuasive vocabulary. Most people buy products by reading only the title because the titles are normally short and consist of strong and persuasive words that attract the readers' attention directly as in the beauty product advertisements analyzed by Abdelal (2014). For the present study, the titles are catchy, short, and consist of such strong words that directly attract the readers' attention (Abdelaal, 2014) as shown by the following examples taken from the cooking oil advertisements examined in this study.

- *Barkat Banaspati and Cooking Oil*
- *Mizan Canola Oil*
- *Mizan Cooking Oil*
- *Sufi Cooking Oil and Ghee*
- *Habeeb Cooking Oil*

Most advertisers convey their ideas through the grammar of the language used in the advertisement, such as repetition, parallelism, the use of active and passive sentences modality, the use of pronouns, adjectives, etc.

## Repetition

Repetition is a literary device used both in prose and poetry that repeats the same words or phrases in a literary work (Repetition, 2018). Repetition of the words, phrases or sentence in advertisements is to emphasize the importance of the product and to make an idea clearer and more memorable for the readers (Get Involved, 2016). Below are the examples of repetition evident from the advertisements:

- The word “*barkat*” in the advertisement “*Barkat Banaspati and Cooking Oil*”, is repeated
- The words “*Ramazan*” “*mamta*” are repeated throughout the advertisement of “*Dalda Cooking Oil and Banaspati*”
- Repetition of the word “*dil*” translated in English as “heart” in the advertisement of “*Habib Cooking oil*” is for the emotional appeal of the youth.
- Repetition of the proverb “health is wealth” in the advertisement of “*Habib Cooking Oil*” also serves as a source of attraction for the readers.
- Repetition of the phrase *Habbib VTF Banaspati* in the advertisement of *Habib Banaspati* to emphasize the idea that the cooking oil is virtual trans-fat free cooking oil.
- Repetition of the sentence “*Her cheez mizan main achi lagti hai*” translated in English as “everything looks good at the table”, in the advertisement of “*Mizan Cooking Oil*”.
- Repetition of the word “*mizan*” in the advertisement of “*Mizan Cooking Oil*”.
- Repetition of the word “*sufi*” in the advertisement “*Sufi Cooking Oil*”.

## Parallelism

Advertisers use different techniques to attract consumers toward the product irrespective of the circumstances. One of the famous techniques used by Abdelal (2014) in beauty product advertisements and other advertisers to attract consumers is parallelism. Parallelism refers to the repetition of the same grammatical structures in a sentence. Different parts of a sentence are expressed equally to indicate that the ideas in the parts are of the same significance (Mehawesh, 2013).

Examples of parallelism used by the advertisers in the current study are as follows:

- “*Zyada lazat, poori sehat aur bohut si bachat*”,
- “*un ki kamai mai barkat or mairy hath main barkat*”
- “*Jahan mamta wahan Dalda*”

Translated in English as:

- More delightful, whole health and more savings
- There is blessings in his earnings and blessings in my hand
- Where there is mother’s love there is Dalda

## Vocabulary

Vocabulary used in the advertisements is a good source of conveying the advertisers’ ideologies (Nyangaka and James, 2014). Generally, advertisers use both positive and negative adjectives in advertisements. Positive adjectives are used to highlight the qualities in the product while

negative adjectives are used to show the problems and bad points before using the product (Arumugam and Yunos, 2013). Below are the examples of positive adjectives used in the cooking oil advertisements.

*zyada lazzat, pori sehat, , zyada mazboot*

Translated in English as:

More flavor, whole health, more strong.

### **Poetic features in advertisements**

Instead of using simple language, most of the advertisers use poetic language, background music, and songs, etc. to attract the readers toward their product. Music and poetic features in advertisements motivate the listeners and give a form of energy that cannot be provided with any other source (Hecker, 1984). Rhyme is used to add musicality and gives a pleasing effect to the poem (Rhyme, 2017).

Rhyming words in the present study are:

*Mamta-Dalda, pakana-banana, pakaya-khilaya,*

### **Pronoun**

Advertisers try to make direct connection with the readers by using personal and possessive pronouns. Addressing the readers directly and individually rather than collectively is known as synthetic personalization (Smith, 2004). The use of personal pronouns such as “you” and possessive pronoun “Yours” address the readers personally which makes the readers feel a kind of closeness with the advertisers and the product. It seems that the product is especially designed for them. The advertisers in the cooking oil advertisements have also used personal pronoun such as:

- *Ap ne bhi suna hoga k “Health is Wealth”*
- *Hum tumharay naye ghar khana khanay arahay hai..*

Translated in English as:

- You have also heard that “health is wealth
- We are coming to your new house for eating a meal.

The use of the pronoun “*hum*” establishes a relation between the readers and the advertisers. The readers can relate themselves with the participants of the advertisements (The Importance of Pronoun 2021).

### **Scientific Language**

Advertisers also use words that sound scientific and technical to have a good impact on the readers and to show the readers that the advertiser of the particular product in advance and up to date (Arroyo, 2013). Scientific words used by the advertisers in the selected cooking oil

advertisements are:

Flow catalyst, vitamin A,D,E, omega 3, omega six, cholesterol, vefa five, VTF, Canola, immunity booster.

### **Women's Social Identity**

In the present study, the conventional and conservative social role of women is promoted. In the advertisement for "*Barkat Banaspati*," the very conventional role of the husband and wife is promoted. Husband is ready to go for his job and tells his wife in a very assertive way "*yaad rakna, sham ko dost aye gy khane per*". The husband gives a reminder to wife to prepare food for the guest and the wife happily admits her suppressive role and replies in a very respectful manner "*G, g, yaad hai*". Women's stereotypical identity is promoted by the advertiser, to stay at home and do the household chores like a cooking meal (Hillin, 2016).

In the advertisement for "*Habib Cooking Oil*," the social identity of a woman is promoted. A woman standing in the kitchen with cooking oil and cut vegetables, ready to cook indicates the traditional strong association of a woman with the kitchen. The traditional gender role of a woman is promoted throughout the advertisement of *Habib Cooking Oil* where a woman is held responsible for her family's health, wealth, and prosperity (Goodwin et al, 2005).

### **Religious Identity**

Religion is used as a source of attraction in the advertisements to sell their product. The use of religious words by the advertisers such as "barkat", "ramzan", "mezan" show that the advertisers target Muslim audiences, but we can interpret that such religious words and beliefs can exploit the religious feelings of the audiences. The conventional and religious belief of "barkat" is encouraged throughout the advertisement of "*Barkat Banaspati and Cooking Oil*". "Barkat" that is God's blessing and divine increase in the meal is required. In the advertisement for "*Dalda Cooking Oil*" the word, "Ramzan" is repeated to represent the religious identity of the audience. "Ramzan" is the holiest month for Muslims. *Ramzan* is regarded as the month of generosity. Muslims fast during daylight and then after sunset, they break their fast (Ramazan 2020).

In the advertisement for "*Mezan Cooking Oil*" the sentences "*na zyada na kum*" no more no less "*bs balance herdum*" just balance every moment, and "*chalo baant lein her zimadaari*", "let's share every responsibility" connotes the idea of balance in everything and thus reveal the religious identity of both the readers and the advertiser (Amina Ilyas 2015).

The advertisement of "*Kisaan Cooking Oil*" reveals the religious identity of the participants of the advertisement. Son greets his mother with as *salaamu alaikum*. The word "*salam*" is an Arabic word that means peace. In Islam saying *salam* is sunnah. Sunnah is the main source of Islamic law.

### **Linguistic Identity**

The use of Urdu language in the selected advertisements shows the advertisers' national identity

but this identity becomes ambiguous when the advertisers use words from a foreign English language. Though English is not a national language of Pakistan but it is considered as the language of prestige and status (Language, a status symbol, 2013). Therefore advertisers use words from English language in order to have a good impact on the viewers. Following are the examples of the code-mixing highlighted by the present study.

- *Rakhiye is dil ka khayal, naye Habib Cooking Oil ke sath.*
- *Is main shamil hai flow catalyst jo bana hai vitamin A, D, E, omega 3 or omega 6 se mil ke*

## CONCLUSION

Demonstrated from the above analysis, advertisers use different linguistic techniques such as catchy and attractive titles of the product such as “*Barkat Banaspati and Cooking Oil*”, direct address to the readers by using personal pronouns such as “you and “Yours”, repetition and parallelism for the purpose of bringing rhythmical effect in the language of advertisements.

The use of positive adjectives highlights the features in a product and conveys the idea that the product, if used, may bring these qualities in your life such as healthy life, strong muscles, *zyada lazzat, pori sehat, zyada mazboot*. The use of personal pronouns makes the readers feel that they are of utmost importance and the particular product is designed especially for them. Use of technical and scientific vocabulary in the advertisements such as vitamin A, D, E, omega 3 and omega 6, VTF, flow catalyst immunity booster.

The use of poetic language instead of simple language is also a technique used by advertisers to attract readers. The structural features of poetry such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, etc. add musicality and give a pleasing effect to the content of advertisements, such as *Mamta, Dalda, hifazat, niyat, lagaty, nachty*. Directing the readers toward certain action by using imperatives such as commands, show the authoritative role of the advertiser. Advertisers use short verses or sentences to save the reader’s time and avoid boredom because people get bored by reading long sentences.

The study also uncovered the hidden ideologies and agendas of the advertisers. The findings show that advertisers convey different ideologies through advertisements. Advertisers advertise their products according to the need and trends of the people in society.

Cooking oil advertisements are mostly targeting women as readers because in Pakistani society the cooking is only associated with women. By showing women working in the kitchen, busy in cooking, and holding all the family’s responsibilities the advertisers want to highlight that how women are suppressed and overburdened with responsibilities in Pakistani society.

By showing a little deviation from the social norms the advertisers conveyed the idea that men are equally responsible for their family and should share the responsibilities with women. Endorsement of actresses and famous personalities in advertisement help the advertisers to sell their product. The celebrities presented in the advertisements live a happy and healthy life because they use the particular product thus conveys the idea that using the particular product



will be perfect like the celebrities.

Based on the objective that is to explain the relationship between language and identity the study analyzed how identities are revealed through language. The language of the selected cooking oil advertisements reveals the identities of both the advertisers and the consumers. The use of Urdu language in all the advertisements revealed the national identity of both the advertisers and the viewers.

The vocabulary used in the advertisements such as “*Barkat*”, “*Sufi*”, indicates that both advertisers and viewers belong to a Muslim society thus reveal their religious identity. The individual identity of each product is designed by the advertisers in such a way that it makes the product beneficiary for the consumers and thus persuades them into buying the product. For example, the ability of “*Barkat Banapati and Cooking Oil*” to bring “*Barkat*” and divine increase in every house makes it individual.

The present study also concludes that both the famous and infamous cooking oil advertisements promote and encourage the same idea. All represent women as socially suppressed and overburdened with responsibilities such as “*Barkat Banapati and Cooking Oil*” which is not much famous and “*Habib Cooking Oil*” a very well-known cooking oil used by most of the people, represent the same social identity of women, managing the house and family. The advertisement for “*Mezan Cooking Oil*” which talks about balance in everything shows a little deviation from these conventional roles and conveys the idea of balance in responsibilities of men and women. Such a deviation may be regarded as a harbinger of a positive change chauvinist society of Pakistan.

### FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study focuses on the discourse analysis of cooking oil advertisements in Pakistani context. The study used Fairclough's three-dimensional model and analyzed the textual and social aspects of the advertisements. The study opens up a way for further researches. The same model can be applied to any other mode of media such as print media and the internet. The present study also opens up a way for the analysis of cooking oil advertisements in other than Pakistani context and makes a contrastive analysis.

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