

Full Length Research Paper

Advertising discourse: Studying creation and perception of meaning

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Discourse of advertising has been of interest and significance to many researchers. Linguists are particularly interested in studying creation of meaning and advertisers are largely concerned about studying consumption of meaning. The two go hand in hand. The present study aims at gauging the gap between creation and consumption of meaning through a pair of print advertisements. Creation of meaning was studied using an amalgamation of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and Daniel Chandler's compilation of semiotics whereas for studying the consumption of meaning a field survey was conducted; the sample for which was 450 college going students. At the face value the adverts were projecting novel notions of challenging the stereotypes related with men and women. But on a semiotic and critical discourse analysis it had been found that the advertisement which overtly appeared to break the old norms and welcome the fresh ones were embedded in stereotypical norms related to women. In the end both the advertisements have been compared. Endorsement by a popular celebrity, fair complexion, femininity related with gratification of men's desire- all such discourses are viewed as legitimate by the consumers. Consumers generally do not understand the copywriters' strategies and manipulations in reproducing and propagating these discourses through advertising.

Key words: Advertising, discourses, creation, perception, strategies, ideology.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is one of the most interesting disciplines in the modern era. In fact it has become a communication tool which influences our attitudes towards products, companies, brand names, lifestyles and public issues. Advertising is all pervasive. It is difficult to keep a count of the advertising messages that one is bombarded with in a single day. Advertisements appeal to the consumer by reflecting shared values and thus, serving as an index to popular culture. This is so because by and large, consumers are the products of popular culture in which they live. Advertising works not only on a psychological level but also on a cultural one and it is true that "the

rational and psychological levels in communication can be probed using conventional research techniques but the cultural level is more difficult to access. That is because the culture is 'encoded' in everyday living and the average consumer does not decode his own culture" In this regard we agree with Williamson's (1972) view: "We can only understand what advertisements mean by finding out how they mean".

So, the focus of our study is to explore how the advertisements are created by copywriters and received by the consumers.

The focus of the study is print advertisements since they are available to a reader for a longer time, generally people are more exposed to print advertising and readers of print media are more involved and attentive. Print advertisements are more effective than TV commercials or internet advertising. Viewing of television commercials

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tends to be relatively passive, whereas exposure to print media is more active. With print advertisements a higher proportion of memories are stored as information about the product rather than about the advertisement itself. Print media is still the most effective and most used means of advertising. According to Stewart and Keslow (1989) "the message in a print advertisement aims to distinguish a product from other competing brands so that it can be recalled by consumers who will be persuaded to buy it. The message will form a so-called advertising value in the mind of consumers, and will have an impact on their purchasing behavior. Large quantities of advertising technology have been adopted and developed in accordance with this framework."

LITERATURE SURVEY

Scholars have forayed into various dimensions of production and perception of advertising. Mehta (2000) study found that a consumer's own predisposition toward advertising in general, either favorable or unfavorable would influence how he or she would respond to any advertisement. Toncar and Munch (2001) showed that although advertising messages possess incomplete information advocacy, consumers may not fully understand the information that is provided, and thus the incomplete information can still significantly increase the effect of print advertising, making advertisements more persuasive and recallable. Shaw's (2005) essay interrogated tensions between varying cultural notions of beauty and explored the complex nature of the historical relationship between black and white women. It also illustrated how constructions of beauty were used to enforce the hegemonic agenda of the patriarchy. Semiotics, the study of signs has profusely been dealt with by scholars. In order to foray into the field of Semiotics in relation to advertising scholars have contributed immensely (Hynes, 2007; Liu, 2009; Selg and Ventsela, 2010; Valor, 2005; Gambles, 1998; Danesi, 1999; Reschke and Rhodes, 2003; Clare, 2010; Anderson and Sorenson 2010). Just as and closely related to Semiotics, critical discourse analysis has been widely used in context of studying the discourse of advertising especially related to socio-cultural issues. The proponents like Van Dijk (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 1988, 1998, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2001) Fairclough 1992a, b, c, 1993, 1995a, b, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003 and others have to their credits several papers explaining and applying CDA. Tessa (2007) studied the construction of masculinity and femininity in alcohol advertisements using discourse analysis. The main conclusion of the study was that both men and women were portrayed in limiting ways within alcohol advertisements in men's magazines. Hoepfner (2006) critically analyzed Dove's campaign for real beauty. The findings of the study were that to establish a 'counter discourse' contrary to the

actual beauty ideal seemed to have been successful. However it was argued that it was merely a clever strategy driven by economic interest and not by social or political commitment. Many studies were carried out to gain an insight into issues related to skin and beauty, gender, power, celebrity endorsement so on and so forth. Keeping in view the above facts, the present study has been designed with the following objectives:

1. To examine the gap between copywriters's intended meaning and consumer's perception of advertising.
2. To study the projection and effect of stereotypical norms in consumers in advertising.
3. To investigate the impact of advertising on consumers' preference for complexion.
4. To study the two aspects of advertising: images and texts in relation to the response that they evoke in consumers.
5. To study the effect of figurative language, color scheme, layout and other manipulations on consumers.
6. To study the response of consumers as evoked by the discourse of celebrity endorsement.
7. To study the power politics of creators of advertisers and foray into legitimization of discourses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Discursive practices like advertising are directly linked with culture and society. Fairclough (1992) states that: "Discursive practice...contributes to reproducing society (social identities, social relationships, systems of knowledge and belief) as it is, yet also contributes to transforming society." This statement sums up the role of discourse analysis in the perception of cultural aspects in persuasive advertisements. It can be inferred that society, as defined by Fairclough, points to cultural identity. Discursive practice, like a persuasive advertisement, changes or manipulates the receivers in a society or culture to alter their behavior or "transform society". But the same can be said for semiotics, where verbal and non-verbal signs produce meaning, which lead to the creation of social relationships, systems of knowledge and thus cultural identity. The individual signs and their combinations are manipulated to perform a persuasive function in advertisements (in the text and context), which alters the behavior of the receivers accordingly. So the commonality and complementarity of CDA and semiotics is evident.

The combination of critical discourse analysis and semiotics brings together two disciplines that have not traditionally been used by analysts of advertisements. This would provide the analysts of advertisements with a better understanding of the intrinsic appeal of an advertisement, in other words how the different elements and parts work together as a discourse to perform a certain function. Furthermore, one gets additional insight into the receivers who might respond to the advertisement and buy the product, and make an estimate of the bond the consumer will form with the product. The two approaches are juxtaposed in the model; but the model does not use the entire frameworks of CDA and Semiotics. Only those terms have been incorporated which fulfill the objectives of our study most appropriately. Therefore, some common terms of both the approaches have been utilized and rest of the terms exclusive to one approach or the other. The paper uses Fairclough's CDA since it is the most widely accepted and used.

Daniel Chandler's compilation of Semiotics has been preferred for the same reason. The proposed model utilizes the following terms and concepts:

1. Signs, signifiers and signifieds: the main purpose behind taking this term into consideration was to assess the copywriter's criteria for creation of meaning. The study of sign systems reveal the whole gamut of denotations and connotations which the copywriters make use of.
2. Icon, index and symbol: the purpose was to examine the use of icon, index and symbol as used in advertising for specific purposes.
3. Verbal and visual signs and connection between the two: Advertising discourse cannot be completely comprehended until the verbal and non-verbal aspects are considered together. They go hand-in-hand. Therefore, it becomes mandatory to include this aspect in the model.
5. Framing: In order to study the legitimization of the discourses, it was crucial to understand how framing was done in advertising and what role it played in it.
6. Omission: To study the projection of stereotypical norms and also legitimization of discourses it was worthy to note what was not being said and what the purpose behind it was.
7. Double meaning, ambivalence, ambiguity and manipulation: this was in tandem with fifth objective of the study which was to study the effect of manipulations on consumers. This in turn was possible by first analyzing how manipulations were done by the copywriters.
8. Rhetorical tropes: this was taken into account for fulfilling the fifth objective of the study.
9. Syntagmatic analysis: this was one of the aspects of studying creation of meaning and explaining the choice made.
10. Paradigmatic analysis: this was yet another aspect for exploring creation as well as manipulation of the meaning.
11. Encoding/Decoding and Agency: who is exercising power on whom? This is the main aim of the study- to explore how copywriters hegemonise the mind of consumers through ideology(ies).
12. Codes: they explain the significance of sign systems and impart meaning to them. So it was decided to study the codes in which advertisements were created.
13. Context: the discourse of advertising cannot be fully understood unless the context is taken into consideration.
14. Ideological function of individual signs in the text and text as a whole: akin to the first step in the model, the text as a whole as a sign system threw light on the various connotative and denotative stances of advertising.
15. Intertextuality: this aspect explained the strengthening of context and emphasis on particular aspects as done by the copywriters.
16. Rituals, beliefs, value system, myth and culture: this aspect aimed at fulfilling the last three objectives of the study.

For studying consumption of meaning, a field survey was conducted. The objective of the field survey was to assess consumers' responses to ten variables namely comprehension, deconstruction, buying intention, knowledge of culture, rhetorical tropes and their implication, images and text, credibility of the communicator, acknowledging a change in attitude, advert effectiveness and detailed analysis of the parts of the adverts. These variables (or set of events measured in this questionnaire) are an outcome of a questionnaire designed specially for this study (Annexure 1). With the help of these ten variables perception of meaning of the pair of advertisements under study was assessed in order to unmask the ideologies, strategies and manipulations which were unrecognized by the respondents. The study was exploratory as well as descriptive in nature. Purposive sampling was used. The sample consisted of one specific predefined group, that is, college going students. They were also selected keeping in mind the level of their maturity which is required to analyze advertisements and

the fact that they are most influenced by the advertisements. The self developed questionnaire contained both open ended and close ended questions which resulted in a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach. The open ended questions were completely unstructured and were kept keeping in mind the exploratory nature of the study. The close ended or multiple choice questions found place due to their role in facilitation of calculation and generalization of responses.

Critical Incident method was used for analysis of findings of the field survey. Critical incident is an event that has a significant effect, either positive or negative, on task performance or user satisfaction, thus affecting usability. The critical incident technique (CIT) is a set of procedures used for collecting direct observations of human behavior or responses that have critical significance and meet methodically defined criteria. The CIT is based on "select the vital and neglect the trivial" notion. CIT was used in the study because it is an important technique which helps in analyzing data seeking information on human behavior.

Sample

The present study opts for print advertisements as sample. The reasons behind this have been discussed earlier in this paper. The following two print advertisements fulfilled the objectives of the study and were chosen as sample for analysis. At least demand for fairness crèmes in India explains people's preference for a fair complexion. This could be a corollary of racism. The aim of the present study is not to argue over racism; it is rather to expose the gender bias and strategies of those who advertise for and also of those who do it against the prioritizing of skin color. So the sample advertisements have been taken from popular Indian magazines which advocate what is in and what is not. The first advertisement appears as an expert opinion and the second one as a commercial. The first one suggests to women that opposite to the traditional obsession with fairness, tanning is in vogue and the second one suggests to men that unlike traditional men the new metrosexual men should look fair and be conscious of their appearance. The advertisements were chosen on account of their social and cultural significance since there is scope for studying the discourses of femininity and masculinity, fair and dark, celebrity endorsement and also power which copywriters exhibit on the consumers and also the power of advertisements to legitimize.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION


Creation and manipulation of meaning

The copywriters leave no stone unturned to attract, persuade and manipulate the consumers. An advertisement is not merely to be read and absorbed by the reader; it has to startle and engage him. In Griffith's (1979) words, "the objective is to grab people's attention and to get the name up front..." To study the strategies and ideology behind creation of advertisements a semiotic and critical discourse analysis has been done. The following analysis explains how the simple looking advertisements are created with great caution and conscious projection or omission of certain things.

Semiotic and critical discourse analysis of advertisement 1

The model with fair skin signifies a girl with obsolete



by Jyoti Kumar



7 easy steps to bronzing

“The sun-kissed skin is the order of the day. Ask the Bollywood sirens, pretty peachy skin has disappeared and the sassy tan reigns.”

before

after

Figure 1. Advertisement 1.

looks and the same model with tanned skin is shown as happening. Accordingly the advertisement projects (Figure 1) “sirens” as seductresses, who lure away people’s heart. The meaning of the advertisement could be established by studying what its parts as well as the advertisement as a whole signify. “Sassy” signifies lively and spirited woman; the discourse signifies changed values connoting the change in the image of an ideal girl from being a “Sita” like figure to a witch, a seductress who looks attractive and there is no negative connotation attached to her. “Reigns” signifies that the tanned skin rules and forms the style statement of the day. So the bits

and parts of the advertisement have been strategically gathered to appeal to the consumers.

The structure of the advertisement has been carefully crafted to set a line of demarcation between what was in and what is in. The comparison of ‘before’ and ‘after’ makes use of contrasted icons. “Before” and “after” also signify “history” and the “latest trend” respectively. So the advertisement is attempting to set a trend amongst youth. In the visual “pretty peachy skin” is contrasted with the “sassy tan”. Bronzing or tanned skin has been foregrounded against the backdrop of “pretty peachy skin”. This has been emphasized with the help of a

hyperbolic expression “has disappeared”. The advertisement first creates a need for getting bronzing done and then also suggests 7 steps to go about it. The tanned skin earlier regarded as unwanted has been presented as “sun kissed skin”. The model with tanned skin occupies a larger space connoting the greater effect that she is supposed to have. According to Kellner (1995) advertising is a source of teaching audiences “how to be men and women, how to dress, look and consume; how to react to members of different social groups; how to be popular and successful and avoid failure; and how to conform to the dominant system of norms, values, practices and institutions” this advertisement serves the same purpose of teaching people what to be and what not to be.

“Bollywood sirens” have been chosen as role models since Bollywood and cricket stars act as impelling brand endorsers. The advertisement projects woman as an attractive object to seduce men. Jyoti Kumar, an expert, is voicing what is in vogue; “order of the day” and “pretty peachy skin has disappeared” construct an ideology of prioritizing dark complexion over the fair one. “Ask the Bollywood sirens” exposes the strategy adopted by the advertiser’s to thrust on people’s psyche what is good and what is not, what is in and what is not through celebrity endorsement. Advertising’s central function is to create desires- to bring onto being wants that previously did not exist. The advertisement is subverting the prevalent norms of obsession with fair complexion and using this as a strategy.

The new woman in the advertisement is not shown as powerful or conscious of her status and performance. Her outer appearance has changed but there is no significant development in the roles and stereotypes attached to her. Advertising reveals gender role stereotypes and influences consumers’ lives socially, culturally and economically. The advertisement subverts the myth of fair skin having an upper hand over the dark which all the sunscreens and fairness crèmes are making use of. But it is not doing so for goodwill sake. The woman presented as an epitome of an object for men’s gratification reveals the strategies and intentions of the advertisers. In this regard the observation of our study is akin to one by Pederson (2002) who focuses intensely on the way one popular advertising campaign by Kellogg Canada fosters an ethos of liberation for women from gender stereotyping, manipulation of perceived body image and ageism. She argued that this style of advertising lifts feelings of guilt and bolsters a mock cultural capital for consumers who believe they are helping to free society from gender shackles, while they are in fact unknowingly contributing to this situation by not challenging these advertisements. This also reflects the politics of unsaid – “a gap which reveals a shared ideology” (Cook, 2001).

According to Mulvey (1975), “to look at” and “to be looked at” are two conditions with uneven hierarchical positions: the former being proper to men, the latter to

women. In the similar vein, the same stereotypes hold true for this advertisement but not for the next which reveals that stereotypes related to women are propagated as they were whereas those related to men are changing. “To be looked at” was true for a chaste woman like Sita in the Hindu mythology too. The seductress in the advertisement also has erotic connotations attached with her. “Sita’s chaste beauty and the *kama* or erotic desire she invokes are central to the widely popular myth of the Ramayana” (Zacharias, 1994), and so is the case with the model in the advertisement that is, however not related with chastity. So, the copywriter, the encoder is hegemonising the decoder’s/consumer’s mind.

Semiotic and critical discourse analysis of advertisement 2

To begin with, it is significant to study the signs and their significations in the advertisement (Figure 2). “Performance” and “measure” signify the need of a proof that is attached to men since logic is associated with them (“Male Logic and Women’s Intuition”). Garnier’s age old logo “take care” has an emotional appeal. Fairness meter is symbolic of proof. The circular leaf like image signifies nature or the product’s relation to nature. The use of logic and aspiration as constituents imply the appreciation the advertisement would enjoy at the hands of target audiences, whose purchasing decisions are guided more by logic, information, and facts (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). The crème has been named as “powerlight” since power is again associated with men. The word “new” signifies not only the product being fresh in the market but also the concept of metrosexual men preferring fair skin.

The structure of the advertisement is of a great importance to the encoder of the advertisement. The audience at a glance fails to realize the efforts the copywriters make in order to have a powerful impact of the structure. Only a careful examination can reveal the strategies of the advertisers and the way they perpetuate ideology. In this particular advertisement, representation of the notion of having a fair complexion with Garnier moisturizer is in the foreground while the features of the moisturizer have been put in the background. “First fairness” suggests that the product is a result of innovation. The shades of yellow and green in the background signify the lemon extracts which the cream is made up of. It is a means of increasing the product recall. It is ironical that the fairness moisturizer nowhere emphasizes the idea of men getting more attractive with its use as opposed to the case of the previous advertisement. It rather lays stress on other factors like performance and power unlike the previous advertisement exposing the ideology of women being beauty objects and men being powerful reconstructing

get up to 2 tones fairer!
performance you can measure.

**GARNIER
MEN
PowerLight**
Fairness Moisturiser with SPF15

Garnier Men PowerLight
The first fairness cream for men* with powerful results that you can measure.

Enriched with:

- Brightening amlon extract that helps fairness, dark dead cells to reveal baby face and smoother skin.
- Antipigmenting long stem extract that helps prevent melanin production** to reduce dark spots.

Formula with SPF 15 to protect skin from harmful sunrays and prevent further skin darkening.

The product comes with Garnier Men Fairness Scale™, so you get fairness performance you can measure.

0 1 2 3 4 3 2 1

4 week clinical study among Indian men, 2009 (n=10000)
* From Garnier™ in vitro test. ** Fragment illustration of melanin used in the test.
For further advice write to: The Garnier Skin Care Advisor
at advisor@garnierindia.com, call at (022) 2492 3294, toll free no. 1800-22-3000
or SMS your queries to 575755 (Garnier <Name> <Query>). Charges (₹) to Rs. 3 per SMS.

Take care.
GARNIER

Figure 2. Advertisement 2.

the gender stereotypes.

The model turned actor John Abraham appears with fairness metre to suggest what the text says "get up to two tones fairer". The image of the celebrity endorser of this advertisement matches with the concept. As against Shah Rukh Khan who has been an endorser for many brands with many new concepts for example Lux soap and fair and handsome, John Abraham is an epitome of

new mischievous metrosexual man. This is in accord with Grant McCracken's (1989) model which proposes that celebrities' effectiveness as endorsers stems from the cultural meanings with which they are endowed. So the copywriters covertly make use of culture of consumers to hegemonise their mind. The construction of reader as highly concerned about masculine fashion codes manifests itself in "get up to 2 tones fairer", which

accounts for the practices associated with appearing in a certain manner. Like the previous advertisement this one also presupposes that people like to look attractive and go by latest trends. Most of the Indians have an obsession with lighter skin tones. They rather equate beauty with it. This stereotype was highly made use of in case of women but in relation with men the case was otherwise. The advertisement associates power, performance and measurement with men repositioning the stereotypical image of men being related to these traits.

The brand audience of the product comprises: metrosexual men and also those who follow them as role models. For successful communication to take place, the audiences must be taken into consideration in the advertising process because "what is appropriate for one audience may be unsuitable for another" (Sheehan, 2004). Kellner opines that there are those who follow the "dictates of media culture" by "following the dominant fashion, values and behaviour and there is another group which resists "dominant forms of culture and identity, creating their own styles and identities" (Kellner, 1995). The advertisement projects men with fair skin as powerful. Skin-whitening cream is situated in the context of Indian culture, is fetishized through media, and is distributed to consumers. Since the launch of fairness cream in 1978, it has been evident that the advertising strategy would rest on a core pillar that exploited the existing social stigmas associated with darkness.

Fair and handsome is a brand that created the Men's fairness cream segment in India. Launched in 2005, the brand became the creator and the market leader of this segment. Following the lead are other brands which include Garnier men powerlite. Just like the previous advertisement this advertisement brings to mind the picture of fairness crèmes and sunscreens which are flooded in the market nowadays. The advertisement is also intertextual with the advertisements of other products of Garnier which is an established name in the market today. The advertisement tries to build faith by making use of the brand name. Since Bollywood provides the most popular escape mechanism for millions of Indians, who lose themselves in the fantasy and drama of the movies, it is hardly surprising that the leading parts are played by fair-skinned Bollywood actors and actresses.

Though current influences from film and marketing are important to the success of fairness creams, it is important to understand the deep social roots that also support this phenomenon. The apex of the *varna* pyramid was assumed by the fair-skinned priestly Brahmins. These complexion-based stereotypes were further emphasized through religion. Hindu mythology, for example, depicts heroic tales of fair-skinned benevolent gods, such as Ram and Shiva, fighting the darker-skinned devils and demons, analogous to the Aryan versus Dravidian battle. Religious stories, such as that of

Lord Shiva ridiculing his wife, Goddess Parvati, for her dark-skin color, remain part of the religious literature. According to Padma Puran, a Hindu religious text, one day god Shiva teased his wife, the goddess Parvati, about her dark skin; he called her "Blackie" (Kali) and said that her dark body against his white body was like a black snake coiled around a pale sandalwood tree. When she responded angrily, they began to argue and to hurl insults at one another. Furious, she went away to generate inner heat in order to obtain a fair, golden, skin. One could argue that these mythological scriptures were not meant to promote racism based on skin color, but nevertheless they have created stereotypes in the minds of the readers and followers—stereotypes that have lingered for generations. The period of British rule in India from 1858 to 1947 further fuelled the divisions associated with white and dark skin. The advertisement plays an important role in strengthening the stereotypes associated with the masculine. By doing so it creates a need for the target audience to buy the product. The text operates on the binary oppositions assumed to be related to men and women. In the above pair of advertisements the feminine and the masculine are represented discursively. The feminine is represented as a commodified body whereas the masculine is linked with power and fashion. Equating fairness with beauty has turned out to be a key consumer insight in the case of the fairness creams. In stark contrast to India's current image as an emerging global superpower the society still remains obsessed by fairness frenzy, fuelled further by factors such as Bollywood and advertisements for creams that promise to lighten the skin. So, advertising plays an extremely important role in the production of popular culture.

Consumption of meaning

Consumers take advertisements at face value. They do not budge even an inch to explore the copywriter's attention. They are interested, if at all they are, in deriving sense and getting across the message of the advertisement. To gain an insight into consumers' reaction towards advertising a field survey was conducted.

Percentage wise distribution of responses of field survey to advertisement 1: '7 Easy steps to bronzing'

Table 1 shows that nearly half of the total number of respondents (48.88%) was not able to comprehend this advertisement. The reason could be sample consumers' obsession with fair skin which does not allow them to think beyond the context. One of the study which supports the view that Indians equate beauty with fairness states, "Focus-group interviews with Indian

Table 1. Percentage wise distribution of responses of field survey to Advertisement 17: Easy steps to bronzing'.

| | Yes | No | Cannot say |
|-------------------|-------|-------|------------|
| Comprehension | 32.22 | 48.88 | 14.44 |
| Deconstruction | 7.77 | 87.77 | 4.44 |
| Buying | 9.99 | 87.77 | 2.22 |
| Culture | 5.55 | 90 | 4.44 |
| Rhetorical tropes | 11.11 | 83.33 | 5.55 |
| Image | 30 | 30 | 40 |
| Communicator | 32.22 | 55.55 | 7.77 |
| Attitude | 6.66 | 90 | 3.33 |
| Effective | 22.22 | 55.55 | 22.22 |
| Detailed analysis | 6.66 | 91.11 | 2.22 |

Table 2. Percentage wise distribution of responses of field survey to Advertisement 2: 'Garnier men powerlight'

| | Yes | No | Cannot say |
|-------------------|-------|-------|------------|
| Comprehension | 73.33 | 14.44 | 12.22 |
| Deconstruction | 12.22 | 84.44 | 3.33 |
| Buying | 54.44 | 32.22 | 13.33 |
| Culture | 11.11 | 83.33 | 5.55 |
| Rhetorical tropes | 13.33 | 45.55 | 41.11 |
| Image | 67.77 | 16.66 | 15.55 |
| Communicator | 58.88 | 37.77 | 3.33 |
| Attitude | 27.77 | 70 | 2.22 |
| Effective | 55.55 | 36.66 | 7.77 |
| Detailed analysis | 9.99 | 88.88 | 1.11 |

women reveal that most agree that an obsession with fairness and its projected attributes continues to prevail despite an awareness that beauty is a more personal and complex concept. Many believe the connection between beauty and fair skin arises from age-old historical beliefs that are now perpetuated in advertisements for fairness creams." (Kavita, 2008)

A large majority (87.77%) of people could not deconstruct the advertisement. Nobody could see the stereotypical notions attached to a female here. To quote a response, "this concept is totally new. This could be one way of attaining modernity to break all the traditions". One of the respondents said, "Why does this beautiful woman want to become ugly?" It is evident from this that notions of beauty are equated with fair complexion. Very small number of respondents (9.99%) showed an intention to buy the product which is supported by the finding that the advertisement was unable to change the attitude of most (90%) of the respondents. Majority (55.55%) of the respondents found the advertisement ineffective. Nearly 40% of the respondents have mentioned that the model before bronzing looked much better which is again a proof of their criterion of fair complexion being prioritized than the dark one. A large

majority of the respondents (90%) strongly objected the advertisement's having an effect on their attitude. Majority of respondents (55.55%) found the communicator ineffective. Most of them felt that communicator was not a well known face. Most of the respondents did not identify and relate with her. She was just another model to them so she was unable to convince them.

The woman in the advertisement has been presented as a piece to be looked at and admired for her beauty and man not to be looked at but to be adjudged through his performance and other such qualities. An average consumer is unable to acknowledge this notion of women being objects to be looked at as propagated through this ad. A few respondents admired the advertisement and the whole concept for its newness. A respondent said, "With such a product, I feel I am out of danger from being totally traditional. I welcome changes and this novel concept is certainly interesting and I would like to acquire it to attain my individuality." The seductress in the advertisement also has erotic connotations attached with her. "Sita's chaste beauty and the *kama* or eroticism she invokes are central to the widely popular myth of the Ramayana" (Zacharias, 1994). The case with the model in the advertisement is similar that is however not related with chastity. So the stereotypes related to women are by and large being maintained in the advertisement.

To conclude, the advertisement revealed the majority of Indian consumers' (under study area) preference for fair complexion over dark skin tones. Only a few could afford to be different in thinking alike. It certainly showed a shift in value from chastity of Sita to seduction of an attractive female without negative overtones. It was found that a few respondents were not uncomfortable with this change showing different responses to the same advertisement stimulus since perception of consumers differs depending upon various factors and situations like mind set, geographical location, rituals, etc. Consumers were confused as far as effectiveness of image or text in the advertisement was concerned. They found the language difficult to comprehend and the transformation from fair to dark just could not cross their heads accounting for the ineffectiveness of the advertisement. They strongly objected the advertisement's having an effect on their attitude. It has been observed during the survey that respondents generally deny the fact that advertisements affect bring changes in their attitude.

Percentage wise distribution of responses of field survey to advertisement 2: 'Garnier men powerlight'

It is evident from Table 2 that due to easier (as perceived by the respondents) language than the previous this advertisement was much more comprehensible. A large number of respondents were unable to deconstruct the advertisement since it is in harmony with their cultural beliefs of the ideal beauty being fair in complexion as

opposed to the previous one. So, the respondents fail to unmask the ideology and strategy behind it. To quote a response, "having lighter skin tones attract people towards you, you get powerful and who is the fool who would not like to be powerful?" this shows how the message of the advertisement hits the psyche with preconceived notions of fair being better. A large majority of the respondents said that the advertisement did not change in their attitude, it rather strengthened their beliefs. A very small number (11.11%) of respondents found use of culture in the advertisement. This is evident of how advertisements propagate ideology without consumers' notice since this advertisement is deeply rooted in the cultural myth of beauty being equated with fairness.

Majority of (58.88%) respondents found the communicator effective and 55.55% found the advertisement as a whole effective. The reason behind these findings could be that most of the Indian youngsters perceive Bollywood stars as trend-setters and the case is akin here. Most of the respondents visualized the model turned actor John Abraham as their style icon. So they could easily correlate between the image and the message of the advertisement resulting in better comprehension and effectiveness. The communicator is effective not only on account of his being attractive and credible but also because he represents the hip hop, metrosexual culture. This is in accord with Grant McCracken's (1989) model which proposes that celebrities' effectiveness as endorsers stems from the cultural meanings with which they are endowed. Despite of the respondents' positive view regarding effectiveness and intentions to buy the product, it did not bring an acknowledged change in their attitude.

To sum up, it can be said that effectiveness of the advertisement is greatly due to the style icon- John Abraham. The obsession with fair complexion is shifting towards men as well. Most of the consumers could not see the stereotypes attached with men and women in these two advertisements. They rather took them at face value as new concepts, breaking the tradition thereby being deceived by the copywriter's strategies.

Comparison and contrast of advertisement 1 and 2

A majority of respondents were unable to deconstruct the second advertisement of the two since it is in harmony with their cultural beliefs of the ideal beauty being fair in complexion as opposed to the former. So the respondents failed to unmask the ideology and strategy behind it. The stereotypes related to women hold true for the first advertisement but not for the second which reveals that stereotypes related to women are propagated as they were whereas those related to men are changing.

CONCLUSION

The copywriters take all pains to create bits and pieces of the advertisements strategically and effectively but the consumers' perception of the same merely goes beyond a superficial scan. The advertisements which overtly appeared to break the old norms and welcome the fresh ones were embedded in stereotypical norms related to men and women. The findings of the survey also revealed the majority of Indian consumers' preference for fair complexion over dark skin tones. Only a few could afford to be different in thinking alike. The responses of field survey reveal how readers judge advertisements on different basis, some focusing on the content and other on the overall effect. Therefore, a given standardized advertising stimulus is likely to be perceived and evaluated differently in various contexts, depending upon various factors. The survey also reflects how viewers perceive advertisements as indicators of facts without manipulations when they do not think of what is not being presented and what is the context behind the given picture. Semiotic and critical discourse analysis of the advertisements throws light on the responses evoked by celebrity endorsement. The celebrity who is more popular and with some connotations (like hip-hop) attached with him tends to attract more attention of the consumers.

The findings of the survey also reveal that respondents' responses to an advertisement are highly affected by its endorser. Copywriters lure the consumers by creating new demands and use this as strategy to hegemonise the mind of consumers. So it was found that creation of meaning and consumption of meaning, though related, are not identical. The copywriters tactfully manipulate the consumers by presenting certain facets and hiding the others.

The consumers, on the other hand, largely unaware of the manipulations achieved through linguistic means, suspect the advertisements, feel that the advertisements do not change their attitude but in fact get carried away by the rhetorical tropes and the syntagmatic and paradigmatic arrangements of the advertisements. Endorsement by a popular celebrity, fair complexion, femininity related with gratification of men's desire- all such discourses are viewed as legitimate by the consumers. Consumers generally do not suspect the copywriters strategies and manipulations in reproducing and propagating these discourses through advertising.

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ANNEXURE 1

Questionnaire

Instructions: First mark Yes, No or Cannot Say and then elaborate upon your choice.

1. Can you comprehend this advertisement?
2. Can you deconstruct the advertisement to find out the hidden strategy or ideology behind it?
3. Would you like to buy the product or service being advertised after looking at the advertisement?
4. Is the advertisement making any use of cultural stereotypes?
5. Do you recognize the rhetorical tropes and their functions as used in the advertisement?
6. What according to you is more significant in the advertisement? Image, no or cannot say?
7. Is the credibility of the communicator a factor for responding better to the advertisement?
8. Does the advertisement affect your attitude?
9. Do you find the advertisement effective?
10. Did you analyze the advertisement in the similar detailed fashion ever before?