

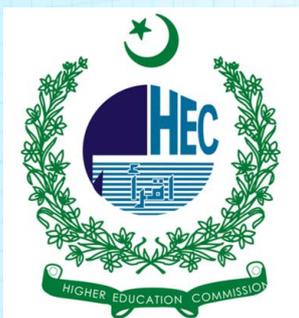
Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

**Multimodal Discourse Analysis of English Language
Advertisements**



¹Atta Ullah Jan

^{*2}Dr. Said Imran

³Dr. Afia Tasneem Wasti

¹PhD Scholar, KUST Kohat & Lecturer English PAK
Institute of Health Sciences, Islamabad

^{*2}Assistant Professor of English, KUST, Corresponding
Author Email: saidimran@kust.edu.pk

³Assistant Professor of English, KUST.
msaafia@kust.edu.pk

Abstract

Advertisement is multimodal communicative practice that does not only promote products in the market but also construct identities and ideologies of their consumers. The aim of this research is to find out that how language, images and layout work together to form a persuasive advertisement, that reinforce cultural norms, power relations and construct ideologies. The findings of the study will enhance our understanding of the multimodal communicative practice of the advertisement in the contemporary consumer culture.

Problem Statement

Advertisement discourse is a social practice and has played a significant role in promoting not only the products in the market but it also reinforces social norms identity and construct the ideologies of consumer in the society by combining language, visual images and layout.

There is extensive research available on this topic, however the role of visual images and spatial organization has not been fully explored.

Now there is dire need to use multimodal discourse analysis integrated with Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the relationship between these semiotic modes, i.e. language, visual images and layout that work together to form a persuasive message in the form of English language advertisements.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the role of linguistic choices, i.e. slogans, lexical collection and linguistic strategies in making persuasive message.
2. To explore the role of visual images, layout and spatial organization in meaning making.
3. To explore the role of advertisement in identity construction and ideology formation of consumers.

Research Question

1. How are linguistic choices, i.e. slogan, lexical collection and rhetorical strategies used in making persuasive messages?
2. What is the role of visual images, layout and spatial organization in making

meaning?

3. What is the role of advertisement in identity construction and ideology formation of the consumers?

Chapter #1: Introduction

Advertisement discourse is the most powerful public discourse in the contemporary consumer societies that is not only used to promote products but it has also influenced consumer social and cultural norms, behaviours, identity construction and ideology.

English is the most dominant language of commerce and trade and English language advertisements occupy a central position in global communication in the construction of meanings, identities and ideologies and shape how individuals understand themselves and others in the world.

Researchers have focused so far only on the linguistic features and rhetorical strategies of the advertisements that work together to form persuasive message in the form of advertisements. No doubt all these studies have contributed a lot to advertisement discourse, however there is a dire need to use **Multimodal Discourse Analysis** and **Critical Discourse** to explore the role of other semiotic modes, i.e. language, visual images and layout in construction meanings, identity and ideological formation of the consumers in the society. Meaning does not reside only with the language alone and it is the product of multiple semiotic modes and English language advertisement is the best example. In order to explore the underlying patterns of advertisements that contribute in the overall meanings, researchers have devised Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as an analytical framework.

MDA was developed by Kres and Van Leenwan and is used by researchers as an influential framework as systematic approach to understand how language, visual images and layout work together to form persuasive messages in the form of advertisement that has great impact on people's identity and ideological formation. For example, selection and placement of images for advertisement, use of different colours and typefaces contribute to make advertisement as a persuasive force that offers identities to its consumers.

Advertisement discourse uses different linguistic choice i.e. imperatives, personal pronouns, evaluative adjectives and metaphorical expressions to make persuasive messages and to establish relationship between brand and consumer. With

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

the help of synthetic personalization, advertisements creates the illusion of personal communication making consumers feel that they are being addressed personally even that they are part of mass audience.

Advertised images also play an important role in describing people life styles and their social relationships. All these representation are influenced and shaped by cultural norms and ideologies assumptions of the consumer society. Layout also plays an important role in the construction and interpretation of the advertisements meanings. They often prioritize emotional appeal over factual information because in advertisements images and slogans always occupy central position while practical details are minimized. Advertisement also plays significant role in identity construction of the consumers. They are not treated only as buyers of the products but treated as certain type of important individuals of the society, i.e. Confident individuals, caring parents and adventurous individuals.

At the ideological level, advertisements have presented consumerism as natural process that is necessary for the survival of life.

Chapter #2 Literature Review

Advertisement is multimodal communicative discourse that combine language, images and layout to form persuasive message, to construct meanings, social identity and ideology of the consumers in the society. Scholars of different disciplines i.e. linguistics, media studies and cultural theory argue that advertisement is not only used for the promotion of products but it also reinforces social identity, influence consumer behaviours and their social norms and cultural values. It also influence and shape the ideological assumptions of the customers.

The concept of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) was first presented by Kress and Van Leenwan. It is an analytical framework that is used for analysis of the advertisement discourse. Kres and Van Leenwan were of the opinions that advertisement is the product of interaction of different semiotic modes. i.e. text, image, colour and layout. This perspective was further strengthened when Forceville (1996) explored the role of visual and multimodal metaphors in advertising to convey abstract meanings i.e. luxury power and freedom.

The persuasive power of the language in advertising was studied by Cook (2001). He examined the role of imperatives, personal pronouns, rhetorical questions in

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

influencing the audience indirectly. Through this strategy, advertisements indirectly shape the attitudes of the consumers to avoid accountability.

Leech (1996), highlight the role of hyperbole repetition and informal register in advertisement. He argued that with the use of these linguistic features advertisement became more persuasive rather than informative. Scholar also explored the role of visual imagery of identity construction in advertisements. Through the strategic representation of bodies, life styles and social relationships in advertisements, consumers are invited to adopt these idealised identities through consumption.

Kres and van Leenwan (2000) explored the role of direct gaze. He was of the opinion that a direct gaze creates a demand image creating pseudo-social relationship between the subject and the viewer, while indirect gaze produce an “offer to encourage the viewer to observe and aspire to represent identity.”

Goffman (1979) explored the role of visual conventions such as postures, touch and relative size that emphasize the traditional role of woman as passive and men as a dominant. Bourdiow (1984) argue that consumption as a marker of social distinction. He was of the opinion that advertisements depict luxury spaces, high-status occupations and leisure activities to a high product with cultural capitals. These visual cues encourage consumers to associate product ownership with upward mobility and personal access.

Layout and design play a significance in meaning making in language-English advertisement. Kres and Van Leenwan (2006) presented the concept of visual grammar in advertisement. It provides a framework to understand the function of layout in advertisement in the process of meaning-making. For example, elements placed at the top and bottom of advertisements often convey different concepts. Elements at the top convey aspirational while at the bottom convey factual information.

Typography choices also carry social meanings. For example, Serif fonts is associated with tradition and reliability while Sans-Serif fonts suggest modernity and accessibility. It aligns the product with the particular social identity and target specific audience reinforcing brand ideology through visual style.

Hall in 1997 explored the role of advertisement in identity construction. He was of the opinion that identity is dynamic and can be produced through representation.

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

Advertisement position their customers as a successful professionals, caring parents and environmentally conscious consumer.

Conclusion

The literature review established English language advertisements as a complex multimodal discourse that construct meanings, identity and ideology. The existing literature review provided valuable insights into advertising discourse. The review also identified the gap that there is need of integrated and critical multimodal analysis that explains that language, images and layout work together in English language advertisement to form persuasive message.

Chapter #3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology aimed to explain research design, data collection, analytical framework and procedures used in this study to examine how language, images and layout can combine to form English language advertisement that not only promote products in the market but also influence consumers behavior, ideologies, social and cultural norms. For this purpose we have used Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as an approach to investigate advertisement as multimodal communicative public discourse.

3.2 Research Design

For this study, we will use qualitative research design. This research design is appropriate to explore the relationship between the text and social practice. It focuses on the meaning making process rather than meaning measuring relationship among different variables.

In this study, we will use MDA informed by CDA for detailed examination of different semiotic modes. MDA will provide tools to examine that language, images and layout work together to form persuasive message in the form of advertisement discourse while CDA offer critical perspective on the role of advertisement that influence identity construction and ideology formation.

3.3 The Research Approach

Advertisement discourse is a social practice which is influenced by social practices in the society. Therefore, we will use interpretive and critical approach because meanings are socially constructed and context dependent. Through critical evaluation,

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

we will study indepth the implicit ideological assumption within the advertisements discourse.

3.4.1 Data Collection

For data collection, we will select English language advertisement and data will be collected from different sources i.e. English print and digital media platforms.

3.4.2 Sampling Method

For this study, we will use purposive sampling method. To select advertisements from different sources it will follow the following guidelines:

- i. English language advertisements
- ii. Clear integration of different semiotics modes i.e. language, images and layout.
- iii. Advertisements that focus on consumer oriented products or services.
- iv. Advertisement that are full of identity, theme representation (life style, success beauty)

3.4.3 Corpus Size

We will select 30 – 35 advertisements from different sources of English language for in-depth qualitative analysis. This is manageable number of advertisements and sufficient to identify measuring patterns and discursive strategies without sacrificing depth.

3.5 Analytical Framework

In this study, we have used multimodal analytical framework that combine concepts from visual grammar and fair dough 3D, CDA model.

3.5.1 Linguistic Analysis

In MDA, we analyze that how language is used in the advertisement to construct persuasive messages. The linguistic analysis focus on:

- i. Lexical choices.
- ii. Grammatical structures.
- iii. Use of synthetic pronouns.
- iv. Slogan and taglines.

3.5.2 Visual Analysis

MDA also analyze the role of images in advertisement in meaning-making identity construction and ideology formation. It examines:

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

- i. Representation meaning (Participant's setting and their actions)
- ii. Interactive meaning (gaze, angle, distance of images in the advertisements)
- iii. Visual modality (realizing, colour, heights)

3.5.3 Layout and Composition Analysis

In the layout of the advertisement the information value, salience, framing and grouping is analyzed. During the analysis of information we analyze:

For example;

i. Information Value

How information is placed in the advertisements. i.e. Top / bottom, center / margin. It guides viewer attention.

ii. Salience

How to grab attention of the viewers (e.g. Bold, Visual, Colours, contrast).

iii. Framing

How elements are framed to construct meaning?

iv. Grouping

How different elements are grouped together in advertisement to create meanings?

3.6 How to Analyze the Collected Data

In order to analyze the collected data, the following procedure was adopted:

- i. Familiarization with the data.
- ii. Mode specific analysis i.e. language, images, layout.
- iii. Multimodal integration of three semiotics modes language images and layout of the advertisements.
- iv. Application of CDA to MDA findings to identify identity and ideologies of the consumers.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In this study, efforts are made to observe the following ethical considerations:

- i. Acknowledgement of original source of advertisements.
- ii. Data is used only for academic purpose.

Limitations of the Study

Nature of Qualitative Methodology

- i. It means that findings of qualitative methodology is always subject to interpretation in different ways.

- ii. There was limited size of the corpus that is not sufficient for broad generalization of the findings.

Chapter # 4 Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Here is in this chapter, the data collected from English language advertisement was analyzed through Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). The advertisements are not treated as isolated text but combination of language, images and layout that construct persuasive message in the form of advertisements. Specific examples of advertisements from different sources are used to illustrate that how multimodal semiotic modes operate in practice.

4.2 Linguistic Construction of Persuasive Message

Advertising language prioritizes the emotional appeal over informational context by using lexical choices that are positive, evaluative and emotionally loaded. Consider the following examples taken from different advertisements.

- i. L'oreal iconic slogan is "*Because you worth it*"
- ii. Apple use slogan "*Think different*"
- iii. Nike "*Just do it*"
- iv. Coca Cola "*Taste the feeling*"
- v. McDonald's "*I'm in love it*"

Analysis of the Linguistic Choices:

- i. L'oreal "*Because you worth it*" "**Because**" is used here in the slogan for reason making it justified and personal. Moreover the adjective "**Worth**" gave more value to the consumer than the product. To sum up we can say that by using "**Because**" and "**Worth**" in the advertised discourse, the focus is placed on the customer rather than the product.
- ii. "*Think different*" Apple used this powerful phrase in 1997. Adjective "**Different**" is culturally associated with creativity and intelligence. The slogan focus on the emotional connections and symbolic values positioning Apple's users as innovative and intellectually superior.
- iii. Nike "*Just do it*" Here the word "**Just**" is used that show empowerment and urgency "**Do it**" is direct call to action that sparks readers motivation and desire for advertisement.

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

- iv. Coca-Cola “*Taste the feeling*” Here the word “Taste” is imperative verb which is associated with sensory and experimental evoking emotions that are linked to enjoy a drink.
- v. McDonald’s “*I’m in love it*” The word “Love” is emotionally loaded that is associated with happiness.

To sum up we can say that these brands use positive lexical choices, evaluative language and emotionally loaded words by framing products as solution to abstract desires rather than practical needs.

4.3 Visual Representation and Identity Construction

Visual representation in advertisement has significant role in shaping identity construction.

4.3.1 Analysis of the Visual Images:

- i. Nike “*Just do it*”

Visual: Diverse athletes, pushing limits and overcoming challenges.

Identity: Empowered motivated and driven.

- ii. Apple “*Think different*”

Visuals: Innovative thinkers

Identity: Innovative, forward thinking and bold.

- iii. Coca-Cola “*Taste the feelings*”

Visual: Smiling faces, vibrant colours and sharing moments.

Identity: Construct identity of happiness in diversity and Nostalgia

- iv. McDonald’s “*I’m in love it*”

Visual: Cravings inducing food vibrant colours and happy moments.

Identity: Construct identity of convenience, affordability and fun.

4.3.2 Analyzes Gaze, Angle and Distance in the Construction of Meaning

1. Gaze

i. Perfume Ads

In these ads the model looks straight at the camera that create intimacy.

For example: In the D & G “The one perfume advertisement, the model look straight at the camera with the direct gaze.”

ii. Luxury Car Ads

In the Mercedes-Benz class ad model looks away from the car. Averted gaze

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

emphasizes product created mystery.

iii. Looking at Product

Model looks at the product (for example food ads) direct attention, create desires.

2. Angles

Camera angle also plays significant role in the forming persuasive message in the advertisement.

For example: Low angle camera is used in luxury ads i.e. Mercedes-Benz etc. the model looks away the focusing on the car.

While high angle (looking down) at the product make things small and vulnerable. These are not used in luxury ads.

3. Distance

Distance in advertisement creates different vibes.

i. Close-up:

Creates an intimacy, focus on product details. For example: Perfume ads focusing on a model's face.

ii. medium shot:

It shows interaction. For example: In coke ad friends laughing together, medium shot captures their interaction and the product.

4.3.3 Visual Modality

In advertisement high visual modality is created through professional photography and techniques i.e. lighting, composition and colours.

For example:

i. **Apple ads:** Crisp minimalist product shots with perfect lighting.

ii. **Luxury fashion brands:** Stunning high fashion photography with bold colours.

4.3.4 Layout and Composition Meaning

In the advertisement, layout play significant role in meaning making. For example:

Visual elements and slogans are placed in the central position of the advertisement while product details are placed at the bottom. This spatial arrangement convey emotional or ideological message rather than factual information.

For example: Samsung and in other smartphones advertisements the product

image is placed at the center of the advertisement while the product details are positioned at the bottom in a smaller fonts.

4.5 Multimodal Interaction of Different Semiotic Modes to form Persuasive Message

In English language advisement, language, image and layout work together to form persuasive message in the form of advertisements. All these semiotic modes contribute independently to meaning making. However, persuasive message emerges from their interaction.

For example:

In Nike advertisement, the slogan *“Just do it”* image of the athletes in motion and dynamic layouts work together to construct an ideology of determination and self-discipline. The product Nike becomes for people a symbol of personal achievement rather than athletic equipment.

To sum up we can say that single mode carries the message alone, while persuasion arises from the integration of multiple semiotic modes.

4.6 Construction of Identity

The analysis of these advertisements show that identity is flexible, improvable, achievable through the process of consumption because the consumer is not presented as buyer alone but also an individual responsible for their success, appearance and happiness that is align with neoliberal discourse.

4.7 Consumer Ideologies in Advertising Discourse

Advertisement Discourse also produce dominant ideologies.

- i. Consumerism: Coca links happiness to consumerism.
- ii. Individualism: Nike emphasizes personal responsibility and effort.
- iii. Neoliberalism: Fitness and beauty ads promote self-optimization.

Chapter # 5 Discussion

This study explores the relationship of language, images and layouts of the English advertisements to form persuasive message.

Advertisement uses different linguistic choices i.e. evaluative adjectives, imperative, synthetic, personalization and slogans to create emotional appeal rather factual information about the product. Consumers of the advertised products are presented as active, self-improving subjects. Strategic use of gaze, angle and high

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

visual modality invite idealization and present desirable life style is attainable.

Layout and spatial organization prioritize aspirational meanings by foregrounding images and marginalizing factual information.

These multimodal strategies construct consumer identities that focus on self-improving. Rooted in individualism, self-optimization and aspiration, naturalizing the ideologies of consumerism and neo liberalism. The finds of the study conclude that advertisement is a powerful public discourse that influences consumers' behavior and social values.