



Revisiting
Language and Literature

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**REVISITING LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE**

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Language in the Advertising Industry: Use or Abuse?

Jitender Kumar

Introduction:

The advent of digital technology was an evolutionary phase which led to drastic changes in people's lifestyle and perception of things around them. Television in its time of inception was deemed as a 'mechanical toy' to entertain people and was taken as a sorcerer's tool for trickery. It was not considered a creative medium. Soon it gained its deserving fame and became popular among all age groups as it could provide people with what they wanted.

Along with the increasing popularity of television and cinema, we witnessed a penchant in the youth to remain up-to-date with the current trends in fashion, lifestyle and so on. The economic globalization and liberalization led to mass production and distribution of goods and services. Big firms had to devise newer ways to reach out to their potential customers. Digital media such as television, cinema, and social media were means to facilitate entrepreneurs and service providers to target people at a large scale. At present these platforms provide the consumers with all the information they need about products and services in the comfort of their home. This process of luring the consumers into buying the products by showing them visual content (still or recorded short films) regarding the concerned product or service is known as advertising. The advertisers provide information about the products, thus making it easier for the buyers to compare the available products of a similar nature. Advertising doesn't necessarily have to be restricted to contents shown on television, in cinemas or social media. Any form of creative expression in the form of slogans, photographs, video clips, illustrations, signs and symbols trying to represent a product or service in order to persuade someone to buy it could be termed as Advertisements.

According to Economic Times, advertising, as defined by the Advertising Association of the UK, "is a means of communication with the users of a product or service. Advertisements are messages paid for by those who send them and are intended to inform or influence people who receive them."

Advertising involves extensive research on the products and creativity;

creativity in using language and conceptualizing the plot of the advertisement considering the demand and target buyers of the products.

Advertisements mainly have two types of functions: informative and persuasive. The informative function focuses on providing the consumers with all the relevant information of the product. The persuasive function involves competing against other advertisements or rival goods and services providers. Persuading the consumers to buy the products is a part of the persuasive function of advertising.

Appropriate Use of Language in Print and Audio-Visual Advertising:

As there are two sides of a coin, advertising also has two sides to it; the good and the bad or deceptive side. There are many advantages of advertising as it provides thorough information about products and services. The term 'Print Advertisements' will be used in the paper to refer to advertising through newspapers, handouts, package or labels of products, flyers and hoardings whereas the term 'Audio-Visual Advertisements' will be used to refer to television commercials, radio ads and ads on social media. I will collectively point out at the appropriate use of language in both the forms of advertising. Advertising helps in increasing the sales of a product owing to the use of catchy language and appealing presentation. Advertising is a creative art providing opportunities to many who want to showcase their creative skills, thus providing job opportunities to many and contributing to the nation's economic growth. As language is the major tool to convey ideas and express views, advertisers use it in the best possible ways.

Advertisements are user-friendly and try to reach out to the consumers, convincing them by arguing in favour of the product and the need to buy the product. The attractive layouts, enriched with photos, graphs, tables and maps help in the branding of the product or service and grab the attention of the consumers. Newspaper advertisements (also known as classified advertisements) help people find the desired jobs, products and services as it is a pool of various types of advertisements keeping the needs of the people in mind. In the audio-visual advertising the appealing, exciting voice and appearance of the actors along with the deft use of language makes all the difference. Advertising is like a 'social energy' which keeps spreading around influencing, encouraging and captivating people in its stranglehold.

Deceptive or Dubious Use of Language in Print Advertising:

I will take examples of a few products where language has been used in a very clever or rather deceptive manner so as to prove the product to be appealing and worth buying can be discussed. The advertisers and producers play with the psychology of the buyers promising them purity, authenticity, quality and numerous benefits of the products.

For instance, Dabur claims Chyawanprash to be ‘clinically tested’, thus earning the trust of the consumers for the product to be safe and healthy as it has ‘double immunity’ or is ‘sugar free’. It is not feasible for a layperson to test the product in labs to check for the lack or availability of the mentioned elements. Sometimes it gets very difficult simply to check for the authenticity of the given product as there are many similar and fake products available in the market. Many people buy it as a substitute for medicines for common cough and cold as it claims to ‘help fight illnesses’ and provide immunity against the aforementioned diseases.

Sometimes the advertisements present facts in such a disguised manner which if rationally introspected seem to be far from reality. AXE Recharge, a deodorant of Hindustan Unilever Ltd. urges us to “be the life of the party with this vibrant and infectious energetic fragrance that sparks conversation” by using the deodorant. If a mere spray of deodorant could make a person a confident and effective communicator, there won’t be any need for year- long Communication Skills courses. Everybody knows that and yet we see that the use of language in this fashion does really help increase the sale of such products.

Perfection is the essence of life but it needs a lot of efforts and perseverance. However Nestlé’s Nescafe Coffee claims to provide ‘perfect cups’ of coffee seeing which many people instantly buy the product.

Some products like Cadbury Celebrations tap on people’s emotions or sentiments by making them feel as if without this product the celebration of a particular occasion will be incomplete. The language is so appealing that many people fall for it. For instance, the packaging box of Cadbury celebrations says, ‘with all your favourite Cadbury chocolates inside, this pack is designed to be loved by everyone. Gift the joy of many bites, many nibbles, many pops and a lot of happiness. Spark of celebrations and joyful moments with all those who are a part of your world.’ Reading such

captivating language makes a person believe that without this product he/ she can't possibly enjoy the occasion wholly.

Certain products try to take people in their confidence by specifically labeling their products with phrases like 'commitment to Quality' as seen in Nestle's '2-Minute Noodles'. Glucon-D, a so called 'Instant energizer' of Heinz claims to be enriched with a variety of essential nutrients and therefore a must-be in every household.

Deceptive or Dubious Use of Language in Audio-Visual Advertisements:

Audio-visual media such as radio ads, television commercials and social media advertisements are the most common and popular form of advertising at the present time. Owing to the large number of subscribers to satellite channels (Dish TV), the advertisers can 'sell anything from a drink to a political party' using the tricks of 'psychological' advertising. They tap the desires of the people, especially that of the youth by converting their desires or wants into needs and thus unfurling an unceasing struggle to keep up with the ever-changing trends in all walks of life. This also leads to a way of demarcating the class. Buying or possessing a certain thing is a sign of class. A person has to have a certain model of luxury car in order to be a 'man' or a certain mouth freshener defines a person's class or personality with a provocative tagline. For example a certain brand of mouth freshener, Rajnigandha has a tagline of its Television Ad "Kuch kar aisa Duniya banna chahe tere jaisa" which loosely translates as 'do something (extraordinary) that people would want to be like you or people get inspiration from you. Such challenging and intriguing ads persuade people to buy the product. A deodorant helps a person to go on partying all night as if it is the magical source of energy and nutrition. Gender, class hierarchy and materialism are some of the inalienable concepts that advertisements deal with. The very same positive 'social energy', due to its misuse engulfs everyone in its tight grips making us slaves of industrialization.

T.V. Commercials represent life in such an extraordinary manner trying to make people believe in the 'magic' of advertising. I will point at the use of language in a few popular Television Commercials or Ads out of the thousands, which are making people's lives more difficult and despondently competitive day-by-day.

Many celebrities appear advertisements, endorsing products or services. They are known as the 'Brand Ambassadors' of the respective products. Since these celebrities are popular, it gets easy for the products to reach the kitchen shelves or store rooms of the people through these agents. Madhuri Dixit, a well-known Bollywood Actress endorses Aqua Guard water purifiers. Getting a guarantee of 'purity of water' from a person whom the masses adulate based on their heroic characters in certain films, leaves a lasting impression on the consumers' minds. Thus, the lofty and cunning language accompanied with the celebrity endorsements result in a boom in the sales and publicity of the products.

Some cosmetic products are advertised in T.V. commercials in such an inconsiderate and lousy manner as if the viewers are foolish. Fairness creams claim to turn a person fair in a week or a month, a certain green tea claims to help you lose weight by 5-10 kgs within a week of consumption, hair growth products show a bald person transformed into a 'handsome' young man within a month or two by using a certain magical potion. However the tragedy is, many or rather most of the consumers don't benefit from the use of these products unlike the actors shown in the advertisements. The manufacturers easily escape the situation as they accuse the consumers of being negligent in observing the 'terms and conditions' of the use of the products.

Many products come up with lucrative discounts or a freebie with a certain amount or quantity of purchase. These products have to suffer the scrutiny of different governing bodies. However, the consumers have to be a bit more careful while accepting the products based on what they see on the label or in the television commercials or cinema halls or on hoardings. They should instead pay attention to the factual data and use the products.

Literary or Figurative use of Language in Advertising:

Most of the advertisements use language to bring out the essence of the product. Use of literary language is also observed in many advertisements. I will try to collectively cite examples of literary use in print (Newspaper, Handouts, Hoardings, Wrappers and packaging of goods) and Television Commercials.

Figures of speech such as **onomatopoeia** (words like 'crunchy-munchy', 'crispy-chipsy' etc.), **alliteration** ('sassy spicy', 'utterly butterly' 'Taste the Thunder' etc), **simile** ('Live like a King'), **hyperbole** (Live young Forever',

Repetition (A sip of nature, a sip of life) are used along with many other forms of catchy slogans arresting the mind of the viewers.

Conclusion:

It cannot be easily concluded whether language is misused or appropriately used in advertising. It all rests upon the intention of the advertisers and the purpose for which it has been created. The Sales Ads, for example are very provocative, connotative and persuasive whereas educative advertisements are convincing, rational and argumentative. We see both appropriate use as well as misuse of the language in advertising and due to its misuse advertising has earned a bad name. Many people consider advertising a creative art which in the age of 'mechanical reproduction' has become a pseudo-art form or a means to mislead people and earn money. It is a creative expression which should remain so by keeping up with the good practices not just by the proper use of language, but also by considering the social, political and cultural requirements of the time. Instead of using advertising as a means of earning money and luring people into buying something, it should be converted into a platform for creative, artistic geniuses to showcase their talents envisioning a bright future for the consumers, free from deception and dubiousness.

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