

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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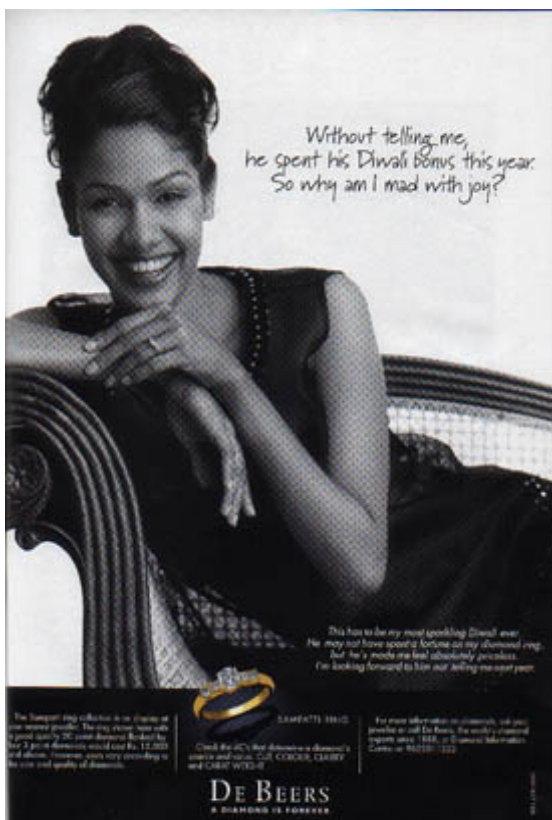
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ADVERTISING LANGUAGE: THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND THE ADVERTISING MESSAGES



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ABSTRACT

Advertising helps in selling. It helps in selling through the art and business of persuasive communication. With emphatic use of language, the copywriter draws catchy and memorable lines and makes his selling ideas clear before the buyers. Advertising makes a psychological impact on the consumers and so invites them to buy a product. Being loaded with psychological overtone, the language of advertising

messages is subtle and mesmerising. A dusky woman will buy a tube of imported fairness cream at high price because the advertisement assures her great career and perfect marriage with instant loveliness. So, it is the psychological make up of the advertisement that makes us think that when we buy Maruti, we buy prestige; when we buy Chawanprash, we buy health and longevity.

It is probably true to say that of all the ways, in which language is used, advertising is the most enchanting to influence our psyche. It is the one form of communication in which human being is keenly and increasingly involved. In fact, language is the most powerful, convenient and permanent means of communication, and, therefore, it makes mass selling possible through advertisements. Advertising is an art of persuading people. The copywriter is like a juggler. He knows which words would be most emotional and moving in a headline to attract the buyers. It is the power of language that sells the product like a hot cake and takes out money from the pockets of buyers. It is not necessary that the copywriter is always successful in communicating the right message. In some of the ads, he fails to deliver the desired results and he couldn't establish an effective nexus between producer and consumer. Language, not used artistically, fails to stir the minds of the people.

BUYING BEHAVIOUR

In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand the psychological implications that govern the consumer's behaviour to buy a product. The psychological variables play an important part in planning advertising strategies and consequently advertising messages

to sell a product. Companies that want to understand how consumers think and make decisions about products conduct sophisticated consumer's behaviour research, to identify their consumers, why they buy, what they buy and how they buy. This information greatly benefits the advertising agencies in selecting media as well as writing copy that would appeal to the particular segment. So advertising is a skillful art of convincing the buyers that the use of a particular cream, soap, oil and shampoo can change their way of life. With Zandu Chawanprash, an old man of 60 years can be rejuvenated as a young man bursting with energy and confidence. A dusky girl vying for air hostess job, a sensuous young model flaunting mobile phone around her neck, a handsome executive desirous of having new luxury car are all the different facets of advertising. They all want to communicate, to persuade, to influence, to lead to some action. That's why, sometimes, the message is so strong that we buy a product which is not of immediate use to us.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Language has creativity and productivity. It is this feature, which enables the advertiser to create exciting appeals in the advertisements. While designing an advertisement, he brings together art and commerce. Ad agencies are in search of gifted writers who can beguile the customers by the beauty of their language. Sell the sizzles, not the steak is another way of saying. "Show, don't tell". People are always more mesmerised by sleight of hand than a documentary. It is human nature to want to escape from the humdrum into fantasy land. Advertising offers people a reason to be seduced. Sell them an idea, draw them a picture, invite them into paradise, even for a moment. They will come down to earth again when they actually use the product.

Consumers subconsciously expect this to happen (Valladares, 2000: 46).



A vast amount of time, money and energy go into the creative work of developing advertising appeals to influence the buying behaviour of consumers. The basic concepts in marketing tell us that it is all about satisfying consumers' wants and needs. All appeals are created for the purpose of advertising needs and wants and sharing how the advertised products can satisfy those needs and wants. AH Maslow got a basic human need structure explaining five levels hierarchically,

- I. Psychological needs or biological needs: the most potent of all human needs such as food, water, sleep, hunger, thirst, etc.

II. Safety needs: needs for physical safety, security and stress.

III. Love needs: needs like affection, belongingness, etc., particularly fulfilled by marriage, parenthood.

IV. Esteem needs: for self respect, prestige, social approval, achievement, etc.

V. Self-actualization needs: needs for self-fulfillment or becoming someone great in life.

Aesop Glim, in his book, 'How Advertising is Written and Why' explained lucidly the secret of successful copywriting. He relies on nine basic appeals: The five senses: touch, smell, taste, hear, sight. The four instincts: sex/love, fear/security, anger, hunger. These appeals are a mix of reason and emotion and extensively used to arrest attention and create interest towards the advertised product. A hormone cream touches a right chord with the weaker sex:

“How women over 35 can look younger”.

A fairness cream opens up a secret of beautiful complexion:

“There are only three steps between you and beautiful skin”

Another ad of nasal decongestant has a reason to use it:

“When you cannot smell a rose”.

In some ads, the appeal is rational and the buying of a product itself certifies that we have done a right selection. As Lalitaji congratulates herself in the ad of Surf:



“Surf ki kharidari mein hi samajdari hein”.

While looking at Lux toilet soap ad, we usually see, a close-up of a beautiful film star's face, her soft and creamy complexion and a picture of soap with a headline:

“Beauty soap of the film stars”.

The ad reflects two important aspects: first, a benefit to the consumers (beautiful skin) and second, a reason to believe (because film stars endorse it). The ad stylishly presents that Lux soap will immediately turn an ordinary face into a film star complexion.

TOBACCO ADS: TOXIC IS TONIC!

Advertising builds a brand with a set of association, favourable connotation and positive psychological overtones. Although the product may not be valuable and useful for the society, the advertising creates a fanciful ambience of acceptance and utility for the target consumers. If we see the image of **Marlboro** cigarette, we will find the carefree cowboys... fun and freedom... muscular power... mythical West (Harrison, 1987). These associations stimulate fantasies and aspirations of the target market. **Wills** cigarette has a punchline, “*Made for each other*” projects



as if a young couple could not be of each other without enjoying **Wills** cigarettes. To smoke **Four Square** is nothing but to ‘*Live Life King Size*’. If someone smokes ‘**Red and White**’, he is different from the rest. The ad line goes:

‘Red and White Peene Walon Ki Baat Hi Kuch Aur Hai’.

Even one smoking brand goes beyond all reason and imagination and asserts that smoking could be a sweet pleasant experience because **Gold Flake** ad says:



It is honeydew smooth.

It means, advertising can sell anything by riding on sentiments and the emotions of the potential buyer. The copywriter, who chisels the words in an advertisement, is a literary super brain. He spells magic through the words and phrases and sets a mood to grab the product or obtain the desired response.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Advertisers try to assess which needs are most important to consumers at any given time. However, no category of needs constantly takes precedence over the other. For example, since the events of 9/11, Gulf War, Asian Tsunami, safety and security have become overriding needs in the entire world. Here, again language does wonder in conveying the message in the most appropriate manner. Language meant for advertisement is very witty, charming, and sometimes mysterious. Its basic object is to

convert an indifferent customer into a potential buyer. One insurance company emotionally bargains the consumers by creating the fear of critical illness in its mediclaim policy:

‘Who will take care of your family, if you fall ill?’



Another insurance firm (AVIVA Life Insurance) assures its policyholders of any kind of eventualities that take place in future:

Retirement nahin, enjoyment Kal Par Control

India's premier insurance company promises its policyholders to be with them whether rain or shine:

**Life Insurance Corporation of India
Zindagi Ke Saath Bhi, Zindagi Ke Baad
Bhi.**



Advertising takes the consumers to a illusionary world where in just a minute a hungry child gets instant gratification with Maggi noodles, a dark rustic girl becomes Miss India in few days after applying a particular brand of fairness cream and the back pain of a housewife gets out of the window, in a few seconds with *Moov*. These are the unique marvels of advertising that heavily broods on our emotional anxieties, psychological fears and social affiliations. So, in this way, advertising sells hope, projects dream, satisfies ego and ensures prestige and status by inviting us to grab a particular product.

AD WORLD: ENOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH

Advertising fascinates most people. It flirts momentarily with their lives, seduces them and leaves them with wonderful images and dreams. Dreams, that to be fulfilled, make people work harder and harder, earn more and more to spend more and more (Tiwari, 2003). Critics debate that most advertising is more propaganda than information. It makes very tall claims about the products and beguiles consumers into buying things they do not need. Advertising is a very persuasive medium and its prevalence in the mass media lead many critics to argue that advertising plays a major role in influencing and transmitting social values. Sometimes, it dictates what is good or bad and proclaims its authority in our decisions. Words are the powerful tools and so the following ad lines are the strong indicator of excessive imposition and interference in our decision-making.



Nothing else will do. (Scorpio)
 There can be only one original (Bajaj Eliminator)
 With us, you are sure (SBI Life)
 Brush like a Dentist (Oral B)
 We deliver anything (GATI)
 Too good to resist (Jaguar)



HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

Advertisers often refer to core values, when selecting their primary appeals. Because values are so closely tied to human behaviour and so difficult to change, private research firms try to monitor values and look for grouping of values and behaviour patterns. For instance, the importance of sending all children to college is emphasized in America. Conversely, in a country such as Portugal, the custom is to send sons to college before sending daughters. So ads for college in America feature both men and women while similar ads in Portugal mostly feature men (Wells *et al.*, 2003). Attitudes are a reflection of our values. Some ads are based on our strong, positive emotions. Exploiting our dreams and aspirations, the advertisers pick-up the beautiful words and phrases to design emotional messages. An ad of Bajaj Chetak celebrates the spirit of success.



*Apne Sapne Ko
 Apne Pasine Se
 Sichna Padta Hai.*

The above line persuades a young man with a good career to realize his dream by buying a scooter out of his hard-earned money. The ad further goes:

Jiyo To Iman Se.

It reinforces our decisions as an honest hardworking man. Other positive emotional appeals involving price, prestige or exclusiveness are often employed in the advertisements of fabrics and toiletries. If you are a



successful man and does not want to miss anything in life, wear Raymond suits; it makes you a '**complete man**'. Besides fabrics, Park Avenue offers a wide range of toiletries to nurture your personality.

Park Avenue: 'a guide to well groomed male'.

Language does the job of an icing on the cake of Advertisement. It is like a cherry on an Ice Cream cup. The copywriter is the man who with this powerful tool writes new history of extraordinary sale and profit.

DECIPHERING THE CYPHER

Innovation is the buzzword in the advertising world. Advertising is an ever-changing activity. The copywriter is always looking out for new and different ideas for its product. The advertisers accommodate numbers, symbols, signs, formulas and even zeroes in ad copy. Again, there is a psychological motive behind all these applications. It is a human nature that we would like to gain more and spend less from every transaction. Manipulating numbers to give an exaggerated notion of their gain and a minimized version of their spending is one of the tricks of the trade. So, we say, your safety costs just Rs. 5 a day rather than Rs. 150 a month or Rs. 1825 a year. But when it comes to your gain, you say get an interest of Rs. 1800/- a year rather than Rs. 5 a day. Zeroes have a mesmerising quality which a smart copywriter exploits to sell (Thomas, 1997). The *Hero Honda (CD-Dawn)* ad picks up the similar theme and highlights the magic of digits in this way:

100 Days

100,000 Bikes

Celebrating a Record Breaking Achievement.

Zeroes epitomise the hugeness of size. It multiplies the value of number and so the product. Some ad lines include mathematical signs to establish their product in the market. These signs could be anything, but they are effective and meaningful when they are use in context of place. Two more ads have the similar propositions:

Dettol: Be 100% sure

Anchor Tooth Paste: 100% vegetarian.

In both ads, % marks are used to emphasize the USP (unique selling proposition). The numerical adjective (cardinal) 100 is being actively placed with % mark to ensure the genuineness of the product. First ad talks of purity as a unique selling funda while other ad targets the vegetarian gentry. Dettol is a symbol of the good health and hygiene. The brand Dettol shows that how much one cares and loves for his family. Anchor toothpaste has a different appeal segmented to a particular group who has an aversion to non-vegetarian products. When writing ad copy, copywriter tries to include signs and symbols as they take less space and effort and finally convey the messages across the consumers.

CONCLUSION

Advertisements are the best specimen to witness the social changes and trends that affect the masses. The copywriter's criterion for creating an advertisement is the finest form of deep analysis and strong command over his customers and market. Language is a weapon that he triggers off on human psyche. The advertiser knows the nerves of the society and its subjects, and accordingly he plans his advertising messages and casts his spells over the customers. The copywriter is very cautious in selection of words and phrases while writing an ad copy. He studies the temperament of a buyer and makes use of language with the assurance that it will evoke the desired reaction to what he wants to sell. The copywriters are always in search of smarter ways to grind the customers to part with his money. Sometimes, the advertiser is over ambitious in promoting his product by creating unrealistic desires without showing the means to fulfill such desires.

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