

## Words that Sell: A Stylistic Inquiry into Hindi and Bengali Advertisements

**Dr. Kavita Yadav**

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

**Suvam Sen**

Independent Scholar

[suvam.sen2727@gmail.com](mailto:suvam.sen2727@gmail.com)

**Dr. Abhijeet Satsangi**

Institute of Applied Sciences and Humanities,  
GLA University, Mathura

**Dr. Siddharth Chauhan**

Amity School of Languages  
Amity University Lucknow Campus

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### Abstract

Commercial advertisements leverage linguistic tools to enhance appeal, engagement, and persuasion. These tools not only contribute to the overall allure of the advertisements but also serve to highlight the brand identity and product functionality. The present study endeavours to systematically investigate these intriguing aspects across select Hindi and Bengali commercial advertisements through stylistic analysis. The study incorporates a systematically curated corpus of 100 Hindi and Bengali commercial advertisements spanning diverse products, with a distribution of 50 drawn from audio-visual media and the remaining from print media. Employing an observational approach, the collected data undergoes meticulous linguistic analysis, leading to the identification and categorisation of prevalent linguistic tools and devices. The ensuing examination delineates the nuanced functions of each linguistic device employed in Hindi and Bengali commercial advertisements, substantiating the discussion with illustrative examples. Furthermore, the research provides statistical insights into the frequency of occurrence for each type of linguistic tool, elucidating variations in their utilisation across Hindi and Bengali

commercial advertisements, thereby contributing to the interdisciplinary exploration of language and media.

**Keywords:** Linguistics, Stylistics, Hindi and Bengali Advertisement, Tagline, Linguistic Tools

## 1. Introduction

Advertising is considered a type of communication because it has impacted not just the way we speak and live, but also the everyday interactions we have. Advertisements surround us everywhere; we see huge billboards, pages of newspapers filled with all kinds of ads, corners of our television screens, and constant interruptions in all the content that we watch or hear on the radio (El-Dali, 1996). Elements such as brand logos, names, and jingles related to these brands are ingrained in the consciousness of each one of us (Beasley and Danesi, 2010). In all these commercials, language plays a crucial role. Everyone is in a race to make the most attractive and creative ad to attract consumers. They try to add layers of meaning, depth, allure, and persuasion to woo the customers and to convey the message. Some of the advertisements are very creative; they are loaded with metaphors, similes, and alliterations, among other linguistic devices at our disposal, including prose and poetry with multiple meanings, also promising simple products to be something profound and life-changing.

These advertisements are crafted with catchy slogans, clever wordplay, and persuasive rhetoric to leave a long-lasting impression on our subconscious minds. In recent times, it has also been noticed that in some cases, the advertisement and the products are not even remotely close or associated in any way. By creating such advertisements, brands try to work on the minds of consumers and make them more engaged with the ad. Advertisements are one of the categories that brands use to influence consumers. Taglines are the most concise and effective way a brand can present itself and its products. Taglines capture the identity of the product and convey a message by relating it to the lives of the consumers. Brands, through these taglines, try to capture the attention of customers by including various linguistic and cultural features depending on their audience. It is believed to have a power that engages and inspires the audience but also leaving an indelible mark on the psyche of the customers. These taglines are made in such a way that they are remembered by the customers.

The present study aims to look at the use of linguistic tools in such commercial taglines. This study uses a comparative analysis of advertisement taglines in two South Asian languages, Hindi and Bengali. The analysis includes carefully looking at the taglines at the level of morphology, syntax, and stylistics. By analysing the dataset based at these levels, the present study aims to bring out the intricate interplay between language and TV commercials. To get a better understanding, the study also tries to uncover the nuances of the usage of language – such as slogans, witty wordplay, and rhetorical strategies – in the selected dataset of these two languages. The analysis also focuses on cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structures specific to the regions where these languages are spoken. In the analysis we also look at the different cultural references that these taglines bring in to enhance the effectiveness of these taglines and to resonate with the audience as well. By understanding these features of the taglines, we bring insights of the cultural preferences, norms, and techniques used by the brands in the diverse marketing strategies we observe around us.

The purpose of the study is to find out the linguistic features various brands use to enhance the appeal and thereby influence the engagement of these advertisements through taglines. The analysis includes bringing out the linguistic tools that are used to captivate the attention of the customers. Finally, the comparative analysis of the two languages seeks to provide specific insights into the cultural references that enhance the effectiveness of these advertisements by capturing attention, elicit emotions, and influencing overall consumer behaviour.

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To see which syntactic constituents are frequent in the wording of the taglines.
2. To identify the morphological processes in the taglines.
3. To identify the stylistic markers, like figurative language and rhetorical devices, used in creating these taglines.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section expands on the role of language in advertisements, diverse strategies that are a part of consciously curating these taglines, and finally, the objective of the study. The next section provides an overview of the review of related literature, including research that has focused on examining advertisements from a stylistic and linguistic

point of view. The third section outlines the methodology employed for the analysis of the selected taglines, and finally, the last section mentions the findings and discussion around these taglines. The paper ends with a conclusion derived from the study and with recommendations and an acknowledgement of limitations while conducting the present research.

## **2. Literature Review:**

Advertisement is a very powerful tool that can be used as a mode of one-way communication between the seller and the buyer. It contains certain linguistic patterns and structures that are carefully chosen by the seller to make the advertisement more persuasive to the buyer. To explore these linguistic patterns and structures is a topic of considerable interest in linguistics and mass communication. Here, the body of literature deals with the stylistic analysis of advertisements in different languages across the world.

Fomukong (2016) studied the stylistic patterns of the billboards of Dangote Cement using The Textual Conceptual Functions framework proposed by Jeffries (2016). Different textual functions, such as prioritisation, suggesting an assumption, listing, naming, and description, are used in the analysis of this study, which shows how context plays an important role in revealing functions and the underlying meaning of a text. The study concludes with the fact that stylistic devices used in the advertisement carry positivity and a common ground that helps the readers recognise the advertisement and create an urge in them to buy the product. Similarly, Rashid (2022) examined commercial advertisements on Facebook with the same theoretical framework and found that the advertisers use a single quality of their products and make it different from their competitors' products. Rashid found that advertisers intentionally create an idealized, pinky picture of the world, and when customers use that product, they make the customer desire to get that.

Among the studies that are done on Indian languages, Ray (2022) gathered sixty famous advertisements from the Indian commercial context and found linguistic patterns at the phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantic levels. At the phonological level, devices like 'rhyme,' 'alliteration,' 'consonance,' and 'assonance' are found. The morphological level includes processes like 'affixation,' 'neologisms,' 'hybridization,' 'reduplication,' and 'code-mixing.' The syntactic level consists of devices like 'Small and Catchy Phrases,'

‘Imperative/Declarative Sentences,’ and ‘Parallelism.’ Figurative devices such as ‘Simile’, ‘metaphor’, ‘hyperbole’ and ‘personification’ are also found in this study at the semantic level. But this study does not give emphasis only on Indian languages; it includes advertisements from both Hindi and English. Another study by Rahman and Warsi in the year 2022 explores the use of English expressions in Hindi TV advertisements. Their study also shows different linguistic devices used in advertisements. But the main focus here is on the use of English expressions that are used in Hindi commercials, and to what extent English is used. And whether this use of English varies with the channel, target audience, and product/service being advertised or not. This study also lacks the fact that the emphasis is not given only to Indian languages.

Overall, after looking through various scholarly works, it is felt that there is a dearth of works in Indian languages on the topic of stylistic analysis of advertisements, especially in Hindi and Bengali.

### **3. Methodology**

We have employed a comparative research design to carry out the linguistic analysis of randomly curated fifty advertisement taglines in Hindi and Bengali from varied sources like the internet, newspapers, magazines, television commercials, etc. First, the taglines were transcribed word-for-word in an accessible notation for universal readability. Second, we performed a multidimensional linguistic analysis of the taglines, where we looked at morphological, syntactic, and stylistic aspects of the taglines. We looked for morphological processes like inflection, derivation, and compounding in the taglines. Syntactically, we looked at the structure of the phrase or clause of the taglines, including average word length, word order and sentence complexity. At the stylistic level, we investigated the use of rhetorical devices like alliterations, metaphors, puns, and similes, among other figurative uses of language, in order to make the taglines compelling and persuasive. Subsequently, we investigated the patterns, similarities, and differences between the tagline datasets of the two languages.

### **4. Results & Discussion**

#### **4.1. Hindi**

We found the average word length of the selected taglines to be 5.5, indicating that most taglines consist of approximately five words. Interestingly, verbs or verb phrases were rampant in the form of the taglines. In addition, our examination revealed that 65% of the Hindi taglines are formed as Declaratives, followed by Imperatives at 25%, and Interrogatives at 10%. Further analysis revealed the presence of figurative devices within the dataset, indicating a variety of devices employed in creating the Ad taglines. These figurative devices include Rhyming in the form of catchy jingles (e.g., "viks kī golī lo, khic-khic dur karo"), use of Metaphors (e.g., "BRAIN IS ROOM" as in "dimāg kī batti jalā de"), Simile to demonstrate a clear comparison between two things (e.g., "dudh sī saphedī"), Oxymoron to make the statement look more catchy (e.g., "dāg acche hai"), Onomatopoeia to express the emotions/situation directly (e.g., "jingā lālā"), Alliteration to grab attention (e.g., "kiṭ kaeṭ brek bantā hai"), and Hyperbole to make big claims (e.g., "deś kā simenṭ"). The taglines show a remarkable use of hyperbole in about 50% of the taglines, followed by metaphor and simile observed in 16.7% of the taglines, and alliteration and oxymoron in 8.3% of the dataset.

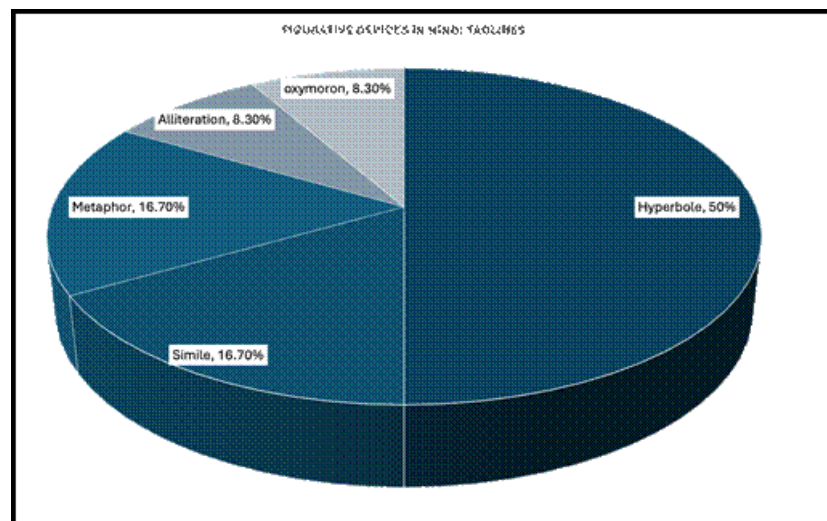


Fig. 1: Distribution of these figurative devices in the selected examples of Hindi taglines in the advertisements.

The pragmatic analysis of the current paper also aimed to decipher the emotional appeal invoked by these taglines. It has been found that these taglines are formed around various themes. Such as, themes of Fear (e.g., "dobārā mat puchnā"), Strength (e.g., "bhaiyā ye dīvār tuṭ tī kyu nahī"), Greed (e.g., "jī lalcāye rahā nā jāye"), Solidarity (e.g., "deś kā siment"), and Security (e.g., "jindagī ke sāth bhī, jindagī ke bād bhī"). In terms of morphological processes, the taglines exhibited features such as Compound Nouns (e.g., "kiṭ kaṭ brek"), Compound Verbs (e.g., "jān jāo"), Conjunctive Participial constructions (e.g., "apnā lak pehen ke calo"), and Reduplication (e.g., "khic-khic"). Interestingly, another prevalent linguistic phenomenon of code mixing was observed on multiple occasions, wherein multiple languages were utilised within the taglines. In most cases, the other language was found to be English, for example, 'luck' in *apnā lak pehen ke calo*; 'break' in *kiṭ kaṭ brek bantā hai*.

## 4.2. Bengali

Upon analysing the Bengali data, it was found that the average word length of the taglines in the collective data is 5.2, similar to that of the Hindi data. Also, the taglines were in the form of verb phrases (VP). However, there are instances of noun phrases (NP) taglines as well. Additionally, multiple figurative devices are found, which are being employed in the construction of Bengali Ad taglines too. The figurative devices found in Bengali advertisements are similar to Hindi dataset. The examples of these devices include - Rhyming as instantiated in *phruṭi āche to pārṭi āche* "Frooti is there so Party is there", Repetition to emphasise an idea/concept as in *ṭhāṇḍā ṭhāke ṭhāṇḍā rākhe* "Stays cool, keeps cool", Hyperbole for an effect employed in *sundor cul sobār odhikār* "Beautiful hair is everyone's right", Metaphor to compare two sets of ideas *dudher solidḍ dost* "best friend of milk", Jingles to present an idea interestingly, observed in *shudhu ekti saridon, matha dhora theke dey aram, sudhu ekti saridon* "Only one Saridon, gives relief from headache. Only one Saridon", Rhetorical Questions to emphasise a point as seen in *āpnār ṭuth peṣṭe ki nun āche?* "Does your toothpaste have salt?" and Emotional Appeals to make a product more relatable to the consumers as showcased in the Ad *māyer bhorshā shudhu deṭoler socchotā* "Mother only believes in the cleanliness of Dettol".



The frequency of occurrence of these figurative devices used in Bengali advertisements is depicted in Fig. 2 below. As is evident, the highest occurring figurative devices are Hyperbole (27.30%) and Rhyming (27.30%), and the others include Repetition, Emotional appeal, Jingles, Metaphor, and Rhetorical questions, observed to have the same frequency.

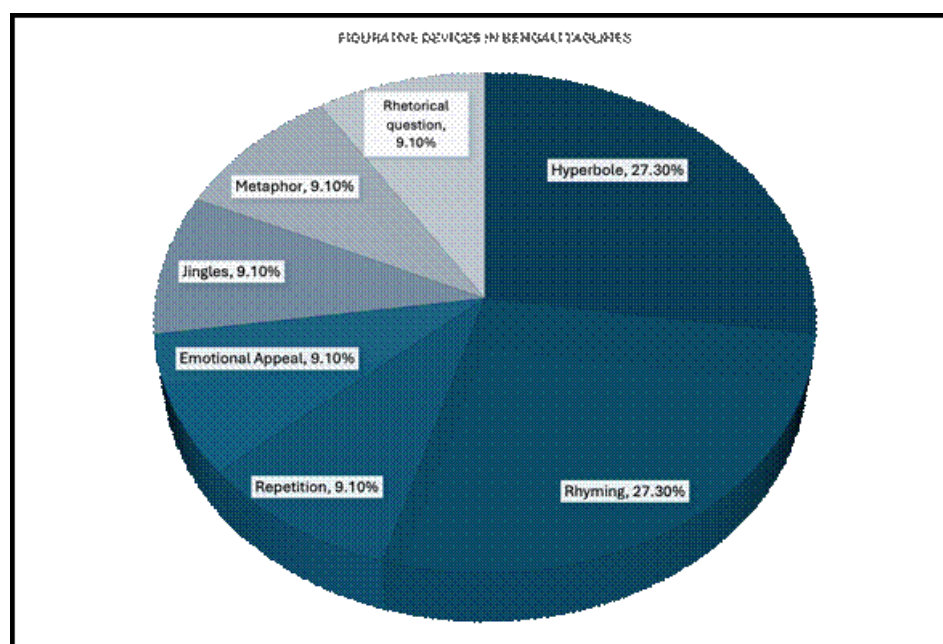


Fig. 2: Distribution of these figurative devices in the selected examples of Bangla taglines in the advertisements.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study, which aimed to analyse the advertisement taglines linguistically, comes up with several significant trends. Hindi ads were found to employ more declaratives (65%) than imperatives (15%). Whereas Bengali utilises almost no imperatives with the overwhelming usage of declaratives (90%). This shows that the declaratives are the most preferred form of taglines. In terms of the usage of figurative devices, hyperbole emerged as the most frequently employed rhetorical strategy in both languages, among others like alliteration and oxymoron. This indicates the fact that exaggeration is used as a persuasive technique by the advertising industry to promote products and appeal to the attention of buyers. If we observe the number of words per tagline, the



average length of the selected taglines in both languages is approximately five words. Short taglines are employed as they are more likely to be remembered by consumers. To sum up, the findings of the study signify the usage of linguistic and rhetorical strategies in advertising, and also the role of linguistic factors in shaping these messages through these ads. These insights into the linguistic tools and their impact on the appeal and involvement of commercials can provide markets with essential knowledge in creating impactful and persuasive campaigns. We recommend similar cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies exploring the similarities and differences in the depiction of advertisements in other Indian languages. This can inform us of the linguistic and cultural preferences reflected through the linguistic analysis of the taglines.

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#### **Author details:**

Dr. Kavita Yadav holds a PhD in Linguistics, from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India. She recently served as a Fulbright FLTA (2024-25) at Ohio University, Ohio, USA. Her interests lie in Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Linguistics, Pragmatics, Thanatology, and English Language Teaching. ORCID: 0009-0002-3194-8665; Email: [kavi3322@gmail.com](mailto:kavi3322@gmail.com) Address: A 256-257 Bhagwati Garden Extension, 55 ft Road, Uttam Nagar, NEW DELHI 110059

Suvam Sen is an Honours graduate in English Literature from Gurudas College. He completed M.A. in Linguistics from University of Calcutta. He worked as a research intern and a project trainee at Linguistic Research Unit in Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. He is currently engaged in a project under SPIRE LAB, IISc, Bangalore. The areas of his interest are Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Cognitive linguistics and Astrolinguistics. Email: [suvam.sen2727@gmail.com](mailto:suvam.sen2727@gmail.com)  
Address: Vill- Bishnupur, P.O-Akhra, Dist- Purba Bardhaman, pin- 713502

Dr. Abhijeet Satsangi is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, GLA University, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India. His research interests lie in Pragmatics, Media Linguistics, Cognitive Linguistics, Ecolinguistics, and English Language Teaching. ORCID: 0009-0005-7095-877X; Email: [abhijeet.satsangi@gla.ac.in](mailto:abhijeet.satsangi@gla.ac.in) Address: MOH: Ratnopatti PO: Shubhankarpur, DIST: Darbhanga, PIN: 846006

Dr. Siddharth Chauhan is an Assistant Professor at the Amity School of languages, Amity University, Lucknow campus. He holds a PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi. His research interests lie in English Language Teaching and Cognitive Linguistics. ORCID: 0000-0003-1739-087X; Email: [siddharthc@lko.amity.edu](mailto:siddharthc@lko.amity.edu) Address: Flat No 402, Dream Residency, Near Amity Lucknow, PIN- 226028