



Advertisements of Beauty Enhancing Products: An Interpersonal Analysis

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on the selected advertisements published in various Indian magazines with the purpose of analyzing the concept of beauty in the context of the ideology of an 'ideal' Indian woman. The paper makes use of Systemic Functional Linguistics as a theoretical framework for the purpose of analysis. The choice is based on the assumption that all texts – literary and non-literary, minor and major – can be subjected to linguistic scrutiny to understand their underlying ideology. The study aims to reveal the dichotomy between the implied purpose and actual purpose of the corporate houses. The linguistic means employed by the advertisers to allure the prospective customers and to sell their products are the focus of investigation. The study brings together the diverse fields of linguistics, mass media, sociology and philosophy on a single platform. The paper intends to explore the way the linguistic, feminist, material, cultural, commercial and global issues interact with each other to construct the concept of an 'ideal' Indian woman. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyze the selected advertisements of beauty enhancing products published in various Indian magazines from interpersonal perspective. The advertisers make use of certain specific linguistic structure to allure the prospective consumers towards their respective products.

Keywords: Advertisements, Beauty, Interpersonal, Structure, Function, Linguistic

This paper is an attempt to examine advertisements of beauty enhancing products published in various Indian magazines like 'Filmfare', 'Stardust', 'Femina', 'Good Housekeeping', 'Bridal', 'New Woman', 'Woman's Era', 'Vogue', 'Savvy' etc. from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The advertisers make use of certain lexico-grammatical structures to allure the prospective buyers towards their specific brand/s. Obviously, the purpose is to produce a positive image of the brand in the minds of

the target readers and to get maximum financial returns. But in the process of achieving their objectives, the advertisers also tend to create an idealized image of the target readers.

The interpersonal function of language focuses on the way one interacts with people and establishes and maintains relations with them. It is used to influence the behavior and attitude of the addressee as well as to express the addresser's attitude and behavior. It is used to provide information to the addressee as well as to get information from him/her. Systemic Functional Linguistic is based on the assumption that interaction is an inherent function of language. It implies that there are certain linguistic structures that enable one to communicate through language. The present research paper is an attempt to trace those linguistic structures that advertisers have employed to exchange their ideas about the issues of beauty in the context of Indian women.

Objectives of Study

1. To explore the linguistic strategies used by the advertisers to allure the readers towards their specific brand.
2. To provide insight into the ways through which the readers are unconsciously being exposed to and made part of the ideological positions taken by the advertisers.
3. To find out why a particular advertisement means what it does.

Theoretical Framework of Study

The advertisements of beauty enhancing products under study are analyzed by using the theoretical framework provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics. This theoretical framework gives equal importance to structural as well as functional aspects of language and "interprets language as a system network of meaning potential" (Morley: 1985, 42). It takes into account not only the paradigmatic relations of systems, but also the syntagmatic relations of structure and sequence.

Systemic Functional Linguistics deals with the way language functions in social and cultural contexts. It demonstrates the various

purposes served by the language and the way these are realized at the lexico-grammatical level. It puts forward three grammatical relevant functions of language: i. Ideational Function, ii. Interpersonal Function, and iii. Textual Function.

1. Ideational Function

The Ideational function of language deals with the expression of content. Through this function, the speaker or the writer embodies in language his experiences of the phenomenon of the real world. These include his experiences of the internal world of his consciousness, his reactions, cognitions and perceptions and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding.

The Experiential meanings in a language are expressed through the system of Transitivity. Transitivity is the linguistic representation of extra linguistic experience. This experience may be concerned with the phenomena of the external world or with one's feelings, thoughts and perceptions. In Transitivity system there are options available to the speaker to encode his experiences of the external world and of his own consciousness. The various experiences are represented in language through Processes, Participants and Circumstances attached with them.

2. Interpersonal Function

The Interpersonal function of language deals with constructing interaction. Language is organized as an interactive event where the writer and the reader engage themselves in social and discursal relations. It expresses the writer's comments, attitudes, evaluation and the relationships that he sets up between himself and the reader. It also expresses the communication roles adopted by the writer. It may be of informing, questioning, persuading and the like. Interpersonal function is realized at the lexico-grammatical level mainly through three systems of Mood, Modality and Appraisal.

Interpersonal function covers two main areas. One is concerned with the type of commodity being exchanged and the other with type of interaction taking place. Language can be used to exchange information as well as goods and services. The interactive roles are

of two types, i.e., of demanding and giving. In other words, the interactant can demand information or he can give it and similarly he can demand goods and services and give them. The most usual way of giving information is a statement and the most usual way of demanding information is a question. The most usual way of demanding goods and services is a command or order. There is, however, no linguistically straightforward way of giving goods and services.

2.1. Mood System

At the interpersonal level, the major system that enacts roles is of Mood. It has systems of Polarity, Modality and Appraisal associated with it. Mood refers to clause types, such as Interrogative, Imperative and Declarative. These patterns deal with the presence and arrangement of certain elements in the structure of a clause. In other words, the component of the clause, which carries a particular speech function, is called Mood. Mood is made up of two components – the Subject and the Finite. Polarity is concerned with whether the clause elements are asserted or negated.

2.1.1. Subject

The Subject is the person or thing with which/whom the proposition is concerned. There can be no argument or negotiation without Subject. The Subject is generally a nominal element in a clause.

2.1.2. Finite

The Finite expresses the Process part of the clause that makes it possible to argue about the Subject Participant. The Finite is always a verbal element, i.e., it is always realized through a verbal group. Verbal group in a clause may consist of one word only or it may consist of more than one word. Where the verbal group consists of more than one word, the Finite is always and only the first element in this verbal group, and corresponds to what is conventionally called the 'auxiliary verb'. Where the verbal group consists of only one word, the Finite and the Predicator are realized in that single word.

2.1.3. Predicator

The Predicator provides content to the verbal element of the proposition. It tells the listeners what is happening. Like the Finite, the Predicator is expressed within the verbal group. The verbal group may consist of a single word or several words. When there is more than one element within the verbal group, the Predicator is all the constituents of the verbal group minus the Finite. When there is only one constituent in the verbal group, then that constituent is functioning both as Finite and as Predicator. This is the case with the simple present or the simple past tense of a verb.

2.1.4. Complement

The Complement is a participant that is somehow implicated in the proposition, but is not the pivotal participant. Like the Subject, the Complement is expressed by a nominal group. This indicates that there can be two nominal groups in a clause, one, which is the Subject, and the other, which is the Complement. The Complement is that nominal group in the clause, which could be made the Subject but has not. Complements are most frequently realized by nominal groups consisting of articles, a head noun and limited number of qualifying elements.

2.1.5. Adjunct

Adjuncts are elements that are additional to the proposition. Their function is to provide additional information about the events expressed in the proposition. They are expressed through all parts of speech except those that are used to express Subjects, Complements, Finites and Predicators. They are expressed by prepositional phrases, adverbs and adverbial groups, or conjunctions. All Adjuncts have two points in common:

- A. They are not pivotal to the clause. They could be left out and the clause would still make sense, although it would not be as informative.
- B. They are elements that cannot be made Subject since nominal groups do not express them.

2.2. Modality System

Modality can be defined as the grammatical resource by which speakers / writers communicate degrees of their opinions. It can be seen as the intermediate space between the positive and the negative poles, or various kinds of indeterminacy that fall in between.

Positive	
Negative	
Yes	certainly, maybe, possibly, etc.
No	-----
Always	usually, often, seldom, rarely
Never	

2.3 . Appraisal System

The Appraisal system is concerned with attitudinal lexis and lexical choices. In the words of Martin (2000: 145), Appraisal systems are the lexico-grammatical resources used to express and negotiate emotions, judgements and evaluations, together with resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations. This system provides a rich and evolving framework for analyzing interpersonal and social relations in a text. The system, which is grounded in SFL, concerns itself with “how speakers and writers adopt inter-subjective and ideological positions in their texts through positive and negative evaluations of the attitudes towards people, objects and events” (Arlene Harvey 2004: 254). A chief advantage of the Appraisal system is that it takes into consideration the non-linguistic features of the text under analysis. This system can be divided into two categories – Attitude and Graduation.

3. Textual Function

Textual Function enables the writers / speakers to construct texts and enables the readers / listeners to distinguish a text from a random set of sentences. This function is internal to the language and is instrumental to the other two functions namely Ideational and Interpersonal. At lexico-grammatical level, this meta-function is realized through the Thematic and Information Structures and various Cohesive devices.

Analysis of Advertisements

The advertisements selected for analysis belong to the field of 'beauty'. It is obvious that the purpose of the advertisers is to persuade the readers about the utility of their product and also to allure them to purchase the product. The hidden motive is to get maximum profit out of this interaction. While doing so the advertisers assume certain roles and they also assign certain roles to the readers. Sometimes, they exchange information about the product with the readers and at other times they direct the readers to do something. Most of the time, they take the readers into confidence and assume the role of their well-wishers. But sometimes, they also give them a kind of veiled threat and tell them what they are going to lose if they do not use the recommended product. An interpersonal analysis brings to the fore the attitude of the advertisers towards the readers as well as the kind of relationship they establish with them.

1. **Lakme Hairnext:** In the advertisement of Lakme Hairnext, the advertiser exchanges information about the product with the readers in four of the clauses. He assumes the role of giver of information and assigns the readers the role of receiver of information. In this way, he assumes the role of a superior being who has all the information regarding the product while the readers are presented as ignorant ones. This is done by the use of Declarative sentences. Then in the other four clauses he directs the readers to do something. Here again, he assumes the role of a person in power while the readers are presented as obedient ones. This is done by use of Imperative sentences.

Proportion of Mood Types in the Advertisement of Lakme Hairnext

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Total - 08	04 50%	04 50%	0 0%

As the purpose of the advertisement is to create a positive image about the product in the minds of the readers, all the clauses used in the advertisement are of positive polarity. There is only one

modal operator used viz. 'It's really'. The purpose is to enhance the degree of the following clause. The advertiser wants to bring home the point that it is very simple to get soft and silky hair with the use of Lakme Hairnext.

**Proportion of Polarity in the Advertisement of
Lakme Hairnext**

	Positive	Negative	Modal Operators
Total - 08	08	0	01

2. Dove Whitening Deodorant: The advertisement of Dove Whitening Deodorant contains three clauses and all the three clauses are in the form of statements. It means that the advertiser wants to exchange information with the prospective users of the product. The use of statements further makes it clear that the advertiser assumes the role of giver of information and the prospective buyers are assigned the role of receivers of information.

**Proportion of Mood Types in the Advertisement of
Dove Whitening Deodorant**

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Total - 03	03 100%	0 0%	0 0%

Similarly, the Polarity used in all the three clause is a Positive one. It indicates that the advertiser is quite confident about the information, he provides in the clauses. There is no use of any Modal operator in the text. It further shows that there is no doubt in the mind of the advertiser regarding the information provided in the text.

**Proportion of Polarity in the Advertisement of
Dove Whitening Deodorant**

	Positive	Negative	Modal Operators
Total - 03	0	0	0

The subject position assigned to various participants is also significant. In one of the clauses the subject is ‘hair removal’ while in the other two clauses it is ‘Dove Whitening Deodorant with ¼ moisturizing cream’. In this way, these elements are made responsible for the success or failure of the clauses as interactive events.

3. Gillette Satin Care: The advertisement of Gillette Satin Care promises to bring out ‘the goddess’ in prospective buyers. The term ‘goddess’ is used to connote exotic beauty. The advertiser has used seven clauses to communicate his message. Of these, two are minor clauses containing infinitives ‘to look’ and ‘to feel’. The first one focuses on the external experience of an individual while the second one on the internal one. The purpose is to communicate to the readers that the use of the product will lead to the satisfaction of their external as well as internal needs. The advertisement contains two Imperative clauses where it directs the readers to perform some action. But one of the actions is an internal one indicated by the Predicate ‘experience’. In this way, an effort is made to control the inner feelings of the users. Similarly, ‘reveal’ focuses on beauty and creates positive feelings in the mind of the readers. There are three clauses in the form of Declarative Statements where the purpose is to communicate the working of Gillette Satin Care. The Subject position is assigned to Gillette Satin Care and hence it is made the core of the exchange between the advertiser and the prospective users.

**Proportion of Mood Types in the Advertisement of
Gillette Satin Care**

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Total - 05	03 60%	02 40%	0 0%

The Polarity used in all the clauses is a Positive one except in one clause. Even the Negative Polarity ‘not just to look’ is used to enhance the effect. Even the Modal operator ‘unbelievably’ is used to enhance the degree of convenience in the use of this product.

**Proportion of Polarity in the Advertisement of
Gillette Satin Care**

	Positive	Negative	Modal Operators
Total - 05	04	01	01

3. Olay Natural White: The advertisement of Olay Natural White contains four clauses in total and all the clauses are in the form of propositions indicating that the advertisement predominantly deals with exchange of information. The Mood in two of the clauses is Declarative and in two of the clauses is Interrogative. In the clauses containing Interrogative Mood, the advertiser seems to assume the role of seeker of information. But actually, the questions put are rhetorical ones which are used for the sake of emphasis. The answers are provided by the advertiser himself in the form of statements where he provides information regarding the benefits of the product.

**Proportion of Mood Types in the Advertisement of
Olay Natural White**

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Total - 04	02 50%	0 0%	02 50%

In three out of the four clauses, the Polarity used is positive one. It indicates the certainty level of the advertiser regarding the information provided in the advertisement. There is only one case of negative polarity in the construction type ‘not only ... but also’. Here, it is used to enhance the degree of benefits provided by the product. There is no modal operator used in the advertisement.

**Proportion of Polarity in the Advertisement of
Olay Natural White**

	Positive	Negative	Modal Operators
Total - 04	03	01	0

In the clauses containing Declarative Statement, the Subject position is assigned to Olay Natural White. In this way, the validity of the clauses as interactive events is put on the product itself. The presence of Interrogative clauses in the text makes the advertisement a dialogic one. The readers are involved in the process of interaction and their view is given importance.

5. **Asmi Diamond Jewellery:** The advertisement of Asmi Diamond Jewellery is endorsed by Priyanka Chopra, a film actress and a model. Obviously, the advertiser wants to cash on her ability to communicate. It is based on the assumption that the credibility and popularity of the film star will get transferred to the brand. The Circumstantial Adjunct ‘for the woman of spirit’ shows that this brand is aimed at a specific category of users. The advertiser makes use of three clauses to communicate his message. All the three clauses are in the form of Declarative Statements. It means that the advertisement deals with the exchange of information.

**Proportion of Mood Types in the Advertisement of
Asmi Diamond Jewellery**

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Total - 03	03 100%	0 0%	0 0%

Polarity wise, all the clauses are of Positive Polarity. There is only one Modal operator ‘believe’ used twice in the advertisement. It indicates high degree of confidence in the brand as well as of the communicator.

**Proportion of Polarity in the Advertisement of
Asmi Diamond Jewellery**

	Positive	Negative	Modal Operators
Total - 03	03	0	2

In two of the clauses, the subject position is assigned to ‘I’, i.e., Priyanka Chopra. It means she performs a key role in the interactive event. She is made an entity by reference to whom the assertion can be affirmed or denied. In one clause, ‘every new day’ is put at the subject position. The assertion has validity only by reference to it.

6. **Amante Lingerie:** The advertisement of Amante Lingerie contains eight clauses in total and all the clauses are of Declarative Mood. It means that the main purpose of the advertiser is to communicate information about the product with the readers. Again, the role of the advertiser is that of a giver of information while the readers are put as receivers of information.

**Proportion of Mood Types in the Advertisement of
Amante Lingerie**

	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
Total - 08	08 100%	0 0%	0 0%

Polarity wise, all the eight clauses are of positive Polarity indicating high level of confidence of the advertiser. There is a use of modal ‘can’ that falls somewhere between the positive and negative poles. It shows the ability of ‘the right lingerie’:

And the right lingerie **can** flatter your body and make you feel gorgeous.

Then, there is use of the Modal operator ‘believe’:

At Amante, we **believe** every woman is beautiful.

It is high degree Modal operator and shows the faith of the advertiser in the participants mentioned in the Residue. The advertiser’s use of ‘we’ at subject position helps the brand in gaining the confidence of the readers. Then, we have the use of Modal operator ‘thought’:

And you **thought** lingerie is only for models.

It indicates high degree of Modality on the part of the readers. But the advertiser’s purpose is to prove in the rest of the advertisement that the readers’ thinking is not the right one. The product can be used even by the readers.

Proportion of Polarity in the Advertisement of Amante Lingerie

	Positive	Negative	Modal Operators
Total - 08	08	0	03

In different clauses, different participants are put at Subject position. ‘You’, ‘we’, ‘the right lingerie’, ‘our range of innerwear’, ‘designs and fits’ etc. are some of the participants at Subject position. In this way, the advertiser has focused on different entities in the advertisement.

Conclusion

In this way, an analysis of advertisements of Lakme Hairnext, Dove Whitening Deodorant, Gillette Satin Care, Olay Natural White, Asmi Diamond Jewellery, Amante, from the Interpersonal perspective brings to the fore various lexico-grammatical strategies used by the advertisers to communicate with the readers and prospective buyers. The analysis reveals that in majority of the clauses, the dominant Mood is the Declarative one. It shows that the

advertisements are mainly concerned with the exchange of information. Even here the advertisers assume the role of giver of information and the readers are assigned the role of receivers of information. Next to Declarative Mood, the advertisers have used the Imperative Mood where they direct the readers to perform certain actions. Most of the time, it is a direction to use the product or how to use the product. In a few clauses of Interrogative Mood, the advertisers assume the role of receiver of information. But even here, their role is a representative one. They echo the questions which they think are there in the mind of the readers. From the angle of Polarity, most of the clauses are of Positive Polarity. It shows the high confidence level of the advertisers about what they say about the products in the advertisements. The elements put at Subject position in different advertisements are diverse as they deal with different products. But most of the time these are either the product advertised or some attribute of the product or the users themselves.

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