



RESEARCH PAPER

Hidden Agendas: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Cellular Company's Promotional Advertisements

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DOI

[http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-I\)2.3](http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-I)2.3)

PAPER INFO

ABSTRACT

Received:

February 19, 2021

Accepted:

June 15, 2021

Online:

June 20, 2021

Keywords:

Cellular Companies,
Critical Discourse
Analysis
Promotional
Advertisements,

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This study investigates the manipulation of mobile phone users in Pakistan through promotional advertisements of cellular companies. These cellular companies are Jazz (Mobilink), Ufone, Telenor and Zong. It is a qualitative study in design. Its analysis is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA. The sample of the study consists of seven print promotional ads of four Pakistani cellular companies retrieved from the web. Purposive sampling technique has been utilized to collect data as the focus of the study is on the discourse of print media advertisement. The findings reveal that advertisers distort language in a way which ultimately benefits advertisers not the consumers. It also discloses that advertisements influence customers' choices. Moreover, it concludes that promotional ads yield more benefit to advertisers and are useless for consumers

Introduction

The focus of this study is to analyze the advertising discourse of Pakistani cellular companies to see how they are manipulating viewers through advertisements (henceforth ads). Jazz (Mobilink) Ufone, Telenor and Zong are the leading cellular companies. They offer lucrative packages which include free SMS, internet data and free minutes for calls. These companies depend on ads to promote their offers. Therefore, a lot of money is paid to well-known marketing companies which devise strategies to promote brands and their products. Sympson & Mayr (2010) posit that these advertising companies play with various linguistic strategies to effectively communicate with consumers. Companies use discursive strategies to proliferate ideologies in ads. Chang & Chang (2014) have argued that the main function of the ads is to spread information about the product by media. Hence,

cellular companies are supposed to be extremely careful in promoting products as there are a huge number of products at ignorance level (Baig, et. al 2020).

Arens (2002) asserts that ad is a form of communication through which companies and organizations come in contact with consumers (p.6). Companies and organizations expand their business with the help of these communicative tools. Therefore, a lot of attention and money is paid and spent respectively on ads. Koneska, Teofilovska, & Dimitrieska (2017) posit that serious attention is paid to promote and advertise the products.

Fairclough(1995) describes critical discourse analysis(henceforth CDA) is a type of discourse analysis that aims at investigating the intense connection between discursive practices, texts and broader social and cultural structures. According to Fairclough (as cited in Shatabdi, 2015) CDA also investigates how such kind of language practice happens and shapes the ideologically the relations of power and struggle over power (p. 132).

Literature Review

Vandana (2014) holds that critical analysis of the discourse of the ads assists to unearth the hidden agendas which cannot be easily detected from the surface structure of the advertising discourse. He further examines how the concepts of power and ideology are symbolically discussed for the maintenance of capitalist relations of production, exchange and consumption of goods and meaning as well. There are some studies which have been done in CDA on cellular companies advertising discourse in print and media ads.

The first relevant study to this research topic has been done by Zahid, Ling and Khalid in 2017 on "Pakistani Youth Manipulated through Night-Packages Advertising Discourse". It has established how ideology and power functions influence consumer behavior through ads. The study has revealed that the manipulation of the language in ads is done in a way that consumers' understanding of the advertising discourse of the ads yields benefit to advertisers.

Baig et al (2020) has conducted a study in Pakistan to explore and analyze the role of humor in the discourse of cellular companies' ads. The study has found that humor, if handled properly, can play a significant role in appealing customers' attention. Their study has concluded that, in Pakistan, many cellular companies use humor in their ads at a huge level to influence the consumers' decisions.

Shahzad, Iqbal and Hussain (2020) have completed a study on the "Influence of Cellular Network TV Ads on Brand Switching Behavior of Pakistani Consumers at District Mandi Bahhuddin". Their research has explored effects of cellular networks television ads on the brand switching behavior of the consumers. It has pointed out the one with most effective catchy ads to influence consumers to switch brand.

Shatabdi (2015) has conducted a mixed methods research in Bangladesh to find out what linguistic tools are used in telecommunication ads that makes advertising discourse so powerful that affects the audience. It has also attempted to investigate the effects of ads on language, society and culture. The findings of the study have revealed that the telecom ads' language is influential to the extent of sufficiency to take actions according to the persuasive message communicated by the ads.

The literature review has shown that there is a large amount of research in the area of investigating ads discourse. But studies on cellular companies' ads discourse are in limited numbers. This study is going to investigate the advertising discourse of four Pakistani telecom companies which includes Jazz (Mobilink), Ufone, Telenor and Zong.

Material and Methods

This study is qualitative in design. It employs Fairclough's 3D model for the analysis of the selected ads. Seven promotional ads of Jazz, Ufone, Telenor and Zong have been downloaded from the web. The links of promotional ads and detail of the attractive offers retrieved from the web are presented in table 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1
Ads of Promotional offers retrieved from web

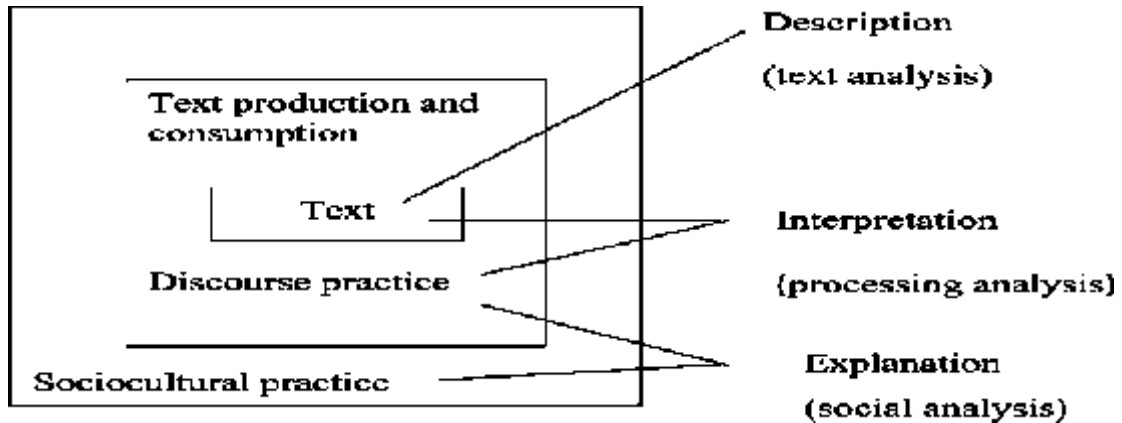
	Company	Corresponding link
1-	Jazz(Mobilink)	1- https://cutt.ly/8xgKh34
2-	Ufone	1- https://cutt.ly/SxgK2gk 2- https://cutt.ly/4xgLV86
3-	Telenor	1- https://cutt.ly/mxgZj8i 2- https://cutt.ly/KxgZMyr
4-	Zong	1- https://cutt.ly/1xgXmDh 2- https://cutt.ly/RxgXZNq

Table 2
Detail of the promotional offers

Company	Offers
Jazz(Mobilink)	4000MB,4000SMS and 400 Jazz/Warid Minutes
Ufone	1000MB,25 Minutes to all networks,500 U2U/PTCL and 500 SMS
Telenor	10 GB Free
Zong	Monthly 2000 MB, Daily 100 Minutes

Sample

Seven promotional ads of cellular companies working in Pakistan have been taken from the internet as a sample for the analysis. Purposive sampling technique has been used for the data collection as the research focuses on print media ads which promote cellular companies working in Pakistan. 3D model of CDA purposed by Fairclough has been employed for discourse analysis and shown in Fig. 1



Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis has been done at three levels; textual, discursive practice and social practice according to CDA framework. The procedure for the analysis of the ads was as follows: First, all ads have been analyzed at textual level followed by interpretation and explanation.

Analysis of the Ads

The analysis of the seven promotional ads retrieved from the web has been done by employing 3D Model. The analysis is as followed:

First Stage of Fairclough's Model: Textual Analysis

Analysis at textual level provides a micro level account of analysis that includes linguistic features such as vocabulary, syntactic patterns and rhetorical devices used in the ads of cellular companies. The term 'text' is not confined to linguistic signs only rather it expands to all the audio and visual discourse such as signs, colors, sound and images. To answer the first research question of this study which is about the use of linguistic features, textual analysis of the ads has been done.

Use of Vocabulary

The use of vocabulary plays a significant role in the ads where advertisers spread their ideology about people and events. Most of the vocabulary in these ads

contains both formal and informal words. Grammar is also an important device to convey ideological meanings in advertising discourse. It consists of types of verb, tenses, pronouns, models, emotive words and nominalization. Analysis of all these features helps a lot in showing reality. The description of the use of the linguistic features in ads is as followed.

Adjectives

One of the features of the vocabulary is the use of adjectives in these ads. The advertisers use adjectives to highlight the features of their product. Below is the detail of the use of adjectives in ads of Zong and Telenor.

The image shows two advertisements for mobile SIM cards. The top advertisement is for Zong, featuring a woman in a pink top holding a SIM card. The text on the ad includes 'RECONNECT YOUR 30 DAY INACTIVE ZONG SIM', 'Zong SIM Lagao Offer 2021', and 'HEAD LINES'. A box on the right lists '1-INACTIVE' and '2- FREE'. The bottom advertisement is for Telenor, featuring a woman in a blue top pointing to a SIM card. The text on the ad includes 'LATADAAD FREE Telenor MINUTES', '+5-250# dial now', and 'Telenor 45'. A box on the right lists '1-Latadaad (Countless)', '2- Free', and '3- Nayi (New)'.

Use of Personalization

Advertisers' use of personal pronouns is also common in ads. By directly addressing the audience, they try to communicate practical and ideological reasons. Addressing people individually is more valuable than collectively. Treating people on individual basis is referred to as 'synthetic personalization' (Fairclough, 1989:62). Jazz, Ufone, Telenor and Zong have used direct addresses in the form of pronouns in their ads. The examples of the uses of the second person pronouns and possessive pronouns are circled below in the following ad images of Jazz and Ufone.

Examples of Personalization in Jazz and Ufone ads



1-You
2-Your



1-Your

Use of Catchy Slogans

The available data reveals that telecom companies use catchy slogans to promote their product or services. Catchy slogans are prepared very carefully. They contain eye-catching visual effects, images and color schemes. Catchy slogans which are used in these ads have been circled in the following images of Jazz and Zong.

Examples of catchy slogans in Jazz and Zong ads



1-dunya ko bataa do (tell the world)



The use of Imperatives

Advertisers of the advertising discourse also try to make its audience purchase or do certain actions. To meet this end, they often use imperatives in ads. The detail of the frequently used imperatives in Telenor and Ufone ads has been given below.

Examples of imperatives in Telenor and Ufone ads



Use of Questions

Advertisers try to use questions to create a sense of personal relationship. They use informal language, at times, to keep viewers engaged rather than just conveying information directly. There is an example of this in Jazz(Mobilink) ad. The example has been circled in the following ad image.

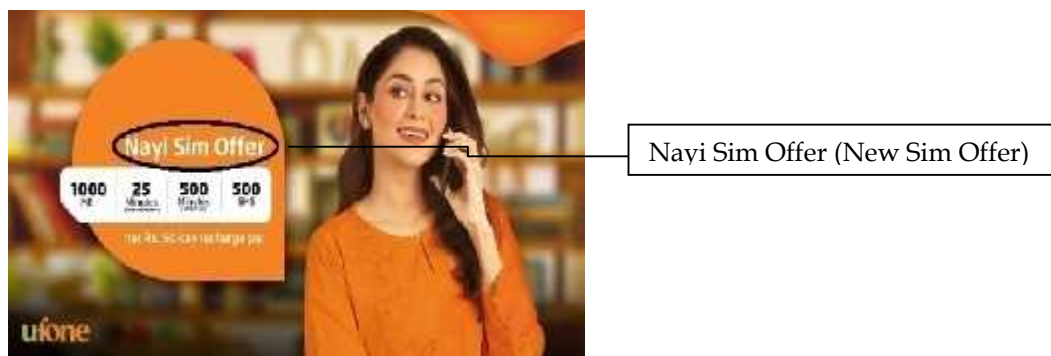
Example of the Use of Question in Jazz ad



Disjunctive Syntax

Advertisers use disjunctive syntaxes to make advertising discourse a conversational style, that is, a sentence without a verb or subject. Such types of sentences hardly include one or two grammatical items. Example has been given below.

Example of the disjunctive syntax in Ufone ad



Font Size

Among other features of the advertising discourse one is the font size. It is very much noticeable in print ads. Information is conveyed in different fonts. Goddard (2001) asserts that the use of different fonts and typographies are attention seeking devices as they create special effects on viewers. Examples of "big font" and "small font" have been given in the following ads images below.

Examples of big and small fonts in ads of Zong and Jazz



Second Stage of Fairclough’s CDA Model: Interpretation/Discursive Practice

It is a well-known fact that the second stage of Fairclough’s model deals with interpretation of discourse. This layer deals with the production, reception and consumption processes of discourse. It aims at highlighting discursive tactics employed by advertising companies which influence viewers’ choices. The discursive strategies in this study include contextual situations, intertextuality and coherence. Interpretation of the ads has been done to answer the second question of the study.

Contextual Situation

Print media ads use contextual situations to attract its audience attention. These situations are presented differently. The detail of the contextual situations is given below. The following four promotional print ads out of seven have been selected for the description of contextual situation.

1. Jazz print ad

2. Ufone print ad



3. Telenor print ad



4. Zong print ad



Contextual Situation in Jazz ad

This ad can be divided into two parts. First, a female model dressed in white has been shown standing in a room. Second, the model in the ad is pointing toward written discourse that says the following:

- 1- Do you have a super 4G sim?
- 2- Check sim status by dialing*443*7#
- 3- Upgrade your sim and get 4000MB,4000SMS and 400 Jazz/ Warid mins for 7 days

The model in this ad is pointing towards different offers if a new sim is bought. First, a question is put to develop some sort of relation and engage the target audience. Secondly, it is asked to check sim status whether it is the latest sim or not. Motivation is taking place to influence consumer's mind. Different offers are being offered to customers to buy whether they need or not. Finally, there is a catchy slogan that says "dunya ko bataa do" (tell the world) about these promotional offers if they do not know. In other words, it is indirectly making the audience excited about the offers.

Contextual situation in Ufone ad

This advertisement has a model on right side while on the left there is a written discourse of the ads. It promotes various offers of the Ufone network. A smiling model dressed in orange, which resembles product color, is talking on the phone and looking towards written discourse that communicates different offers. The detail of the written discourse is below:

- 1- Naya sim offer (Translation: New Sim Offer)
- 2- 1000MB, 5000 Minutes U2U/PTCL and 500SMS
- 3- Har Rs.50 kay recharge per (Translation: On every recharge of 50 Rupee)

It is evident from the written discourse of the ads that code-mixing and code-switching discursive techniques have been used to seek customers' attention.

Contextual situation in Telenor ad

A model is also smiling and pointing to different offers from Telenor cellular company. Offers have been presented in written discourse. He is dressed in blue which is also the color of Telenor Company. Dress color of the model represents an affiliation with the company's product. The detail of the ad's discourse is as followed:

- 1- Telenor ke nayi sim khareedo aur pao(Buy a new Telenor sim and get)
- 2- Latadaad free Telenor minutes(Countless free Telenor minutes)
- 3- Aik din ke liye(Just for a day)

Here the advertisers also use code-switching and code mixing techniques to achieve its target. Use of formal and informal words has also been used to establish relation with intended customers.

Contextual situation in Zong ad

Zong ad can also be divided into two parts like other cellular companies advertisements in this study. There is a celebrity (Atif Aslam, a popular Pakistani singer) dressed in black and raising his index finger to point out 1. One symbolizes that Zong is number one cellular company and he himself is no 1 singer in Pakistan. On the other hand, there is a written discourse of the ad. The detail of the written discourse is as followed:

- 1- I'm on the no.1 network
- 2- Pakistan's no.1 singer prefers no.1 network

Intertextuality

Intertextuality is another discursive technique which is frequently used in ads. There are some examples of intertextuality which refers to a text in another text. For example in Zong ad, it has been maintained that Pakistan's no 1 singer prefers no1 network.

Coherence

Fairclough(1992, as cited in Andrew, 2008) considers coherence a property of interpretation rather than a property of texts. The text of the under review study is coherent in a sense that it uses many discourse conventions of the advertising discourse which are typical of the genre. All ads almost use similar offers with

similar vocabulary. Therefore, it is evident that the discourse of the ads has coherence.

Celebrities' Endorsement

Telecom companies pay a lot of money to celebrities to promote their product. Therefore, they try to hire best models, actors and sportsmen to do ads for them to inspire the target audience. Atif Aslam is a famous Pakistani pop singer and he can be seen in the Zong ad. Similarly, in other ads, there are famous models and actresses in Jazz, Telenor and Ufone.

Third stage of Fairclough's CDA model: Explanation

Explanation is the third and final level of Fairclough's CDA model which refers to societal bodies, institutions, organizations and cultural customs that determine the text production process. A discourse makes sense when it is understood in relation to its social setting. Social context has a great importance in meaning-making process of discourses and language use in discourses is embedded in the context of the situation. Therefore, utterances can become understandable within this context of the situation. The analysis of this level includes macro-themes and our everyday life perceptions of the social setting.

The text is written in this very study as the print ads are the subject matter for the analysis. Analysis of this study includes the use of cell phones in Pakistani in particular and the world in general. The under analysis ads of Jazz, Ufone, Telenor and Zong are in collaboration with the postmodern technologized age. Its use has an essential part of people's everyday life. Mobile phones serve as means of communications among people living at distances. It has become a one of the basic needs of life. Therefore, its use cannot be denied. Whereas the question of its excessive use is concerned, it is a matter of great concern. It is a paradoxical situation in Pakistan that it has become unnecessarily necessary. Its excessive and extra use deprives people of their basic necessities of life because they spent a part of their income to excessive use of mobile phones. Therefore, it is adding to poverty and becoming a social evil.

Let's consider how it is adding to poverty and becoming a social evil in Pakistan. First, who wants to use a mobile phone more than necessary? There is an obvious answer to this question. People who are free and rich and have nothing to do can spend their money to keep themselves engaged. Advertisers' purpose is not to create opportunities for the people to communicate with others but to make more money by offering them different packages. The offers are so lucrative that common people spend more than what they are supposed to spend. This way, they are being exploited and it is becoming a social evil which is depriving people of their basic needs. If we critically examine the ads of Jazz, Ufone, Telenor and Zong, it can easily be found that they are exploiting people.

Secondly, these ads are also creating an identity for men and women. It is evident in the ads that beautiful women are only those who have fair complexion and are tall and thin. This way, ads' discourse is manipulating viewers' perceptions of things. Although, the women in the ads of Jazz, Telenor, Zong and Ufone have been shown in cultural dress but the religious aspect of dress which dominates Pakistani women dress is missing. Females in the ads have been shown without scarves. Pakistani culture is deeply rooted in religion and the absence of religious aspect in dress is leading to the construction of females' new identity. This way, they are being exploited and manipulated. There is also construction of men's identity. They have been shown as muscular unlike the past heroes with bellies out there. The celebrities who are working for these companies' ads have a strong effect on the minds of people. People like to follow these celebrities or look like them. Ads are promoting the ideologies of the ruling class by ideological state apparatus through discourse which looks very natural to common people. Power relations are very much observable in these ads. People are forced through hidden ideologies which are in the discourse of the ads. Hegemony is being maintained by one group on other through discourse that is leading to inequality in societies.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, ads promote products but they promote ideologies as well. Ads force people unconsciously to use products and services which they wish to achieve in their life. Discourse that includes semiotics and linguistic features is a powerful tool to influence viewers and construct ideologies. This study has focused on cellular companies' promotional ads to see how the producers of ads use their power to force common people to buy their product. This is done ideologically not repressively. There is an obvious relation between language and power and reality is distorted in ads to manipulate people's choices. Although, ads of the cellular companies project that offers are for the benefit of people but in reality they are not. These companies influence people to buy their products and disturb people's budgets. These promotional ads are destroying our cultural and religious values by changing our way of life. To conclude, it also concludes that these promotions are useless for the customers but yet these cellular companies are offering these lucrative packages.

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