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## THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN ADVERTISEMENTS: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the way social norms, particular choices, and ideologies are inculcated through advertisements (ads) that construct gender roles. Ads are important artifacts that represent human lives in a particular manner by propagating and inculcating a specific set of values, beliefs, and attitudes in a very normalized way. This study aims to analyze eight different commercials ads that are taken from Pakistani T.V. channels and the internet to examine how gender norms and ideologies are co-optively taught through advertisements in decorative ways to impose power relations and inequality in a patriarchal state. This is a qualitative study and Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model of textual analysis has been used to reveal how multiple gender-based ideologies are constructed, reconstructed, and legitimized in social practices through the promotion and commercialization of ads. After exploration of the data, it was ascertained that through commercialization media represents the stereotypical image of people where a male is taught to be dominant, and women are taught to be submissive, decorative, and passive dummies. Results reveal that through advertisements gender ideologies are injected co-optively to promote the practice of patriarchy. This study is limited to eight ads only. More revealing results can be found by carrying out similar studies on other ads.*

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**Keywords:** Language, Gender, Advertisement, Ideologies, Fairclough's model (1989)

### INTRODUCTION

Advertisements are not only about the commercialization of products but in disguise of selling products, it promotes gender stereotypical roles as commonsensical and natural. Advertisement (ad) is the form of discourse, which delivers and portrays social concepts i.e., gender inequality as well. An advertisement is a concrete form of communication that gives greater exposure to human life. The advertisement suggests what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in a particular society. It is not only for commoditization, but it also promotes gender stereotypes implicitly as well as explicitly.

This study attempts to examine the representation of men and women in advertisements, and it also explores how advertisements promote gender ideologies for being "perfect", "ideal" and "acceptable" in a particular society. Further, the application of Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been implemented to understand and analyze the text to interpret how gender discourse is exposed, formed, understood, and consumed.

### **Reasons for Selection of ads for CDA**

Advertisements are centralized and focus on the visualization of the society that has to be analyzed through CDA. Advertisements are visual representations of gender stereotypical images; such stereotypical commercials indirectly affect human lives. Further, advertisements suggest what is tolerable and beneficial in a particular society of the country. For this study, advertisements for females and males have been chosen to understand and elaborate on how a female is submissive and objectified in a particular society where she has to live a dualistic life, even in the era of capitalism when she goes outside the home, she has to be very attractive, happy, and confident by the usage of cosmetic products but at home, she has to be submissive. No matter how intellectual, social, committed, and decision-maker she is, if she wears the latest designable dresses, people predict that she is fit, smart, and confident, even though her intellectualism is less or not. On the other hand, advertisements teach if females have white tone skin, then she receives honour and the attention of the people. So, this study brings intentions toward the objectification of females in advertisements that show how media plays a vital role to objectify the female gender.

William (1978) states that advertisement is a central component of communication, which demonstrates social perception and generates structural meanings. Therefore, the discourse of advertisements constructs and reconstructs ideas about lifestyle. Further, Singorielli (1989) explained that advertisements promote gender roles of a particular society, which often influences and instills gendered stereotypical attitudes among the community.

Therefore, the focus area of this critical discourse analysis is to examine the ideology of advertisers who shows men and women advertisements that ultimately portray the advertiser's empirical patriarchal learning. On the other hand, for maintaining patriarchy and capital, advertisers use co-option power through the commercialization of goods.

### **Specific Selection of ads for This Study**

The product-selling and vogue advertisements have been selected in order to analyze how men and women are symbolised in ads. This study concentrates on four advertisements that are taken from the internet, that were used for the commercialization of cosmetic items. These kinds of advertisements have been selected because this study wants to epitomize what's the ideal and tolerable role and image of men and women in this society and how the male gender should behave in this society. Further, this study wants to show how state-sponsored powerful ideologies order to sustain and maintained a patriarchal society.

As Kilbourne (1999) mentions: "Advertising is our environment. We swim in it as fish swim in the water. We cannot escape it... advertising messages are inside our intimate relationships, our homes, our hearts, and our heads". As Cook (2001) states that advertisements are the key to changing the minds, opinions, emotions, and attitudes of people. Further, he explains that advertisers do not only sell products

through advertisements but, they can change the social view and co-actively enforce people to buy things that they are not required. Aforementioned, Cook also feels that advertisements build consciousness, and construct identities and attitudes of the people. For critical discourse analysis, the three-dimensional model of Fairclough has been used. Fairclough's approach does not only highlight historical and social perspective but also formalize dominant ideology and inequality in society.

#### **THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION (KEY CONCEPTS)**

**Discourse:** The term '*discourse*' has a wide area of signification, it includes literary and non-literary texts which illustrate how the term, concepts portray hidden ideologies. Therefore, discourse creates pragmatics and semantics in our environment into the social and cultural norms. Through discourse, we can understand forms of inequality and wider aspects of power relations.

As Fairclough (1989) states that discourse is a specific form of social practice that centralizes the powerful ideologies which influence and interact with one another. Discourse is considered as written and spoken language which uses more socio-politically oriented meaning (Gee, 2005. cited in Shaikh, 2015). Discourse allows us to understand the conditions and situations in our surroundings. Further, Hanks (1996) defines discourse as a meaningful symbolic behavior. It is a language of action, and he gives attention to language and action both. Discourse does not attempt to describe the individual words spoken by people, but it is used to describe aspects of the world from a sociological perspective.

**Critical discourse analysis (CDA):** Critical discourse analysis is a type of research that helps to analyze the connection between discourse, society, power, and ideology. It helps to show hidden ideologies of the world. Van Dijk (1998) states that CDA is the study of analyzing spoken and written text. It reveals a digressive source of power and dominance. CDA interrogates how digressive sources are preserved and reproduced within a historical, social, and political context.

Moreover, Fairclough has defined "it is aiming to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles overpower". (1995, p. 132) In order to investigate how such practice is ideologically organized by power relations and explore how the relationship of discourse and society is itself a factor in assuring power and hegemony. For this cause, CDA is obligated in incorrect happenings in social life such as the imposition of power and organized restricted view of a lifestyle. Therefore, Wodak (1999) explains that the main aim of CDA is to unveil ideologies, structures of power, political control, and dominance.

**Representation of Gender Roles in Advertisements:** A child is not born with social norms, but society teaches him/her gender norms.

The people of a particular society teach them how to live, behave, and believe; what to wear, and what to talk about, which should be acceptable in a particular society. Ekert and Ginet, 2003 state that gender categorizes a child into masculine genes and feminine genes in a particular society.

Further, advertisements are one of the forms of discourse that plays a powerful contribution to the construction of our identities (Goddard 1998:4). Advertisements are involved in the wisdom of the audience, where the audience has to decode messages and understand gender-based responsibilities (Goddard, 1998). For instance, how a boy should behave in a particular society and what is the responsibility of a girl, mother, and wife. Advertisement is a crucial mediator of socialization in modern industrialized societies. Therefore, advertisement is a tool that is used to maintain certain socially constructed norms such as gender, i.e., men and women are represented with differing attitudes, behaviour, and social status.

**Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses:** The word 'ideology' is a distinctive type of human thought and has recently emerged from the sociology of knowledge. Ideology helps to maintain the discipline of psychological thought. Every group of bourgeoisie holds it and enforces to implement it on the lower-class communities for showing their power relation. Ideology delivers a cluster of beliefs, certain peculiar methods, and a particular style of thinking which can be adapted from its social condition. It constructs or develops commercial ways of thinking i.e., the majority of middle-class families curiously adopt the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie class (the way they eat, the way they oppress, the way they rigorously talk, the middle class wants to facsimile their identity). Furthermore, there are certain patterns of philosophical thoughts and cultural norms which belong to specific social groups. Such kinds of patterns of thoughts and beliefs are known as ideologies. That's why ideologies provide a restricted view of a lifestyle. Further when something makes up the part of your identity that refers to your ideology.

Ideology is an abstract form of mental organization that includes opinions, attitudes, and values which provide a fixed perspective about lifestyle. Ideology lived among the people and their world. Ideologies have emerged from power relations which represent such kinds of practices that strengthen and maintain motives of ideologies among unequal relations.

As Van Dijk (1995) states that implementation of ideologies is an appropriate way to capture the minds of the people and also help to control the societal reproduction of the group. The social institutions inculcate ideologies in the human mind and advertisement is an accurate way; through which an oppressor's intentions are hidden to recognize them directly that demonstrate unequal relations to show false consciousness, i.e., the dominance of males and exploitation of females through decorative items are considered as a natural process.

For elaborating the concept of ideology, Althusser (1969) has given Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). Ideological State Apparatuses mostly belongs to private domains that refer to the largest social institution to produce certain kind of ethical beliefs which

gradually constrains us to obey and follow ideology and advertisement is the most powerful ideological state apparatus. Through advertisement, the capital advertisers control the minds of people for maintaining ideologies of capitalism (Shaikh, 2015).

**Gender Roles in Society:** According to Cook (2006), society is constructed by language speakers who generate discourses contextually because a person is identified in a particular society through his/her language, position in society, and way of expressing discourses. In fact, sex is the biological distinction between men and women, however, gender is socially constructed, and it does not adopt inherently. In addition, a child learns about gender through society. Gender teaches a person about what is suitable and acceptable for men and women, such as attitude, way of talking, and dressing. As a male's voice can be a loader enough but a female's voice has to be polite, although the social institutions have to understand that a male is not responsible for the honour of any lady. On the other hand, (in third-world countries) securing honour is the responsibility of the female, and social norms could assign different roles to genders. Suppose (in the majority) a female feels suppression because she has to keep her family honour and the male has to build himself as an oppressor because he is the breadwinner of the family. Moreover, advertisements play a pivotal role to enhance gender roles. Advertisers represent semiotic ads that describe which role of males and females is acceptable in a particular society. So, such kind of hidden ideologies could be evaluated with the help of critical discourse analysis.

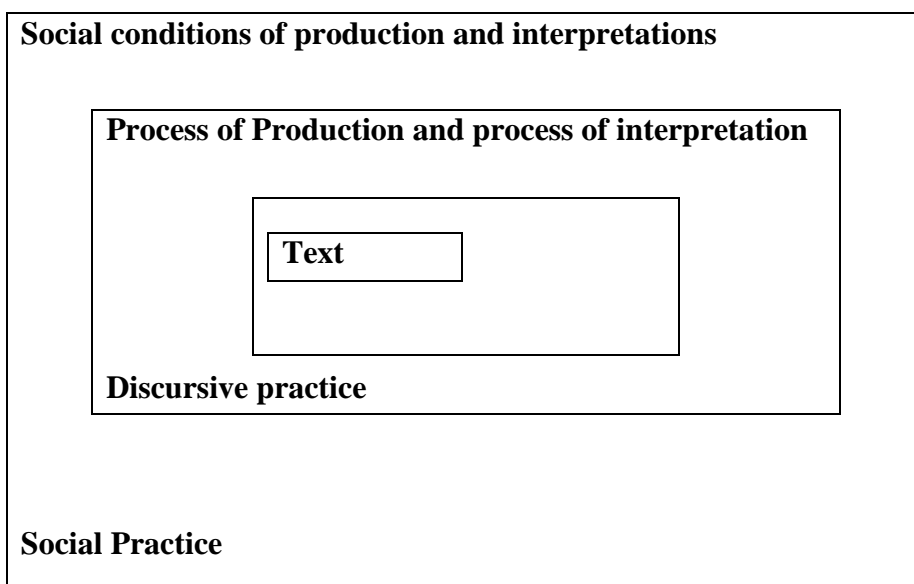
CDA is an essential approach that helps to analyze the historical perspective that is hidden behind gender roles. And gender roles are the cause to construct gender inequality. Further, such kinds of gender roles are analyzed in the next section. Fairclough's three-dimensional model helps to understand how and why such gender roles have been constructed.

## **METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The methodology provides a systematic structure to the research study. The methodology helps to build a conceptual understanding of the issue which can help to examine the sampling. As aforementioned the three-dimensional model of Fairclough is used to analyze advertisements and this approach emphasis on the text and social practice. The advertisements for this study have been selected from the internet, specifically, those advertisements which are essentially relating to how women are objectified through advertisements and how advertisers co-optively implement their ideologies to maintain patriarchy and unequal relations. The researcher has selected particular ads which are popular in various communities and the internet is the best source that has excess to the majority of the communities. Through the internet researcher can criticize that gender inequality is the biggest barrier to the development of a particular country. So, Fairclough's three-dimensional model helps to connect researchers' understanding with ideologically loaded texts, semiotics (visuals), and social norms.

**Three-dimensional approach of Fairclough:** Fairclough (1989) has given three dimensions or three analytical focuses to analyze any kind of discourse i.e. verbal or visual written texts, discursive and social practice. For a critical analysis of discourse these major characteristics of Fairclough's model must be focused on, which are as follows:

- At the first step, vocabulary and valuable words would be focused on or analyzed.
- At the second step, analyze the contextual meaning of the text i.e. how a particular text has been produced and how it is received in society.
- At the third or last step, to analyze hegemony or power that is indulged in discourse and social practices.



**FIG:1 FAIR CLOUGH 1989 THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL**

As aforementioned in the three-dimension of Fairclough, each dimension prescribes different rules to analyze discourse, such as, at the first step of textual analysis, analyzer has to examine what are the linguistic features in advertisements. And for the second dimension, there is the need to find out the relationship between text and interaction. And for the last dimension, the text has to be interpreted at the social level to unveil hidden ideologies that are inculcated in every text or interaction. These three phases are mutually connected to one another, and they can be analyzed collectively.

#### **ANALYSIS OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS**

This study attempts to analyze advertisements at the following three levels, i.e., textual analysis, semiotic analysis, and hegemonic analysis. The study has analyzed eight advertisements (two ads are analyzed textually and four ads are analyzed at the semiotic level and two ads are analyzed at the hegemonic level).

**Lexical Analysis:** According to the Fairclough model, a lexical category is used to determine linguistic features that divert the

concentration towards the specific selection of vocabulary. Lexical category talks about how linguistic features or a particular selection of vocabulary is ideologically loaded. Fairclough (1989) states that in discourse analysis the choice of vocabulary is crucial to have insight into experiential, relational, and expressive dimensions of the text to analyze how particular words portray co-optive power. Such as the Fair and Lovely advertisement expresses:

Appendix 1: Fairness has beauty and success. Dark skin is ugly, unhappy, no bright future.

The underlined words in the first sentence '*Fairness, beauty, success*', show that if you are beautiful then you can get a successful and happiest life by the usage the of 'Fair & Lovely' product. Having white tone skin is essential (especially) in third-world countries. There are several products that are advertised for 'whitening'. No doubt, the western empire had left our country, but their false ideologies still have the greatest impact on our country as, in third-world countries people (especially women) believe that 'if we look like British women, it means we are powerful but if have dark skin then we will be ashamed. If girls will be white then they can get concentration on the importance of the audience; your white colour shows that you are kind, beautiful, and confident and you're valuable in a particular society. On the other hand, in the second sentence underlined words '*dark skin, ugly, unhappy, no bright future*' represent that if your colour is not bright it means you are not acceptable in a particular society and, advertisement (products) shows that you have dark skin cells, you have to get prevent by using Fair & Lovely product. Then, your skin will glow, and you will be happy and Fair & Lovely provides you bright future.

Appendix 2: Golden Pearl Cream makes women and girls with white complexion as object of gaze wherever they go

The underlined words: '*makes, women, girls, white, object, gaze*' express that if you have a white skin tone then you will get the central focus at any place by using 'Golden Pearl Cream'. The advertiser once again tries to analyze you (the audience) that if you have white skin, it means you are acceptable thus, in this way gender roles are being constructed. It represents that a particular white skin is socially accepted whereas; dark skin is not accepted. That is, women must only focus on appearances.

**Semiotic Analysis:** Advertisement is the process where advertisers construct a powerful text that can co-optively touches the deeper and emotional level of the consumers. In a similar vein, semiotic analysis refers to analyzing ideologies behind pictures or visual ads. CDA also provides grounds to understand the historical-cognitive perspective of the semiotic ads.





This picture emphasizes the role of women in the kitchen, which shows that the prior duty of a woman is to cook meals for the family and she has to serve in a proper way. This image depicts that 'if a woman is the best cook, then she deserves honourable status among family members. This image also represents that the whitish stylish identity of the woman is important and she has to be the caretaker of the family. Then, she is accepted as a perfect mother and wife in a particular society. Further, the advertiser also shows that 'Kashmir oil' is a product that gives honourable status to any woman when she uses it in her daily cooking. If her meal is tasty then she can maintain her relations in the family. Patriarchy teaches her that 'your gender is made for cooking rather than showing your scientific motives. You have to design your goals that must be related to your family honour'.

This picture shows that if a lady uses this cream, then she will be a role model. Even, capitalism teaches her that your white skin is essential for any context i.e., if you are 'whitish' then 'you can get a good opportunity, if you are white then you are valuable and acceptable because the white colour represents developed people and those are only from British. So, the people of third-world countries try to look like them rather than study and work like them.



The advertisement for 'Nothing to hide' shows that a woman's body is made for objectifying beauty products, her body has to be a gazing object if she uses 'Clear Shampoo'. On the other hand, Islamization suggests that patriarchy has to limit her private life. She does not expose her qualities openly in social surroundings. This capitalistic ideology co-optively assigns dualist life to a woman i.e. at a marketplace she has to be very attractive, confident, and beautiful in the usage of certain products and at home, she has to be submissive and behave like an ordinary housewife. Further, at home, she has to be polite, less confident, and obedient to her male family member.



This picture depicts that if the male family member is skilled in cooking, cooking is not his prior duty. So, he will be depended on his wife in terms of cooking. Such kind ads portray that wives are made for household chores. Even, a wife's best work is in the kitchen.



**Social Practice Analysis:**  
Advertisement is the major activity of the



demonstration which is practiced throughout the world. The meaning and motive of the advertisements vary from context to context. Such types of meanings are constructed through the process of interpretation. The process of interpretation talks about what is in people's mind and what people represents through semiotic advertisements.

Norman Fairclough (1989) introduced the term 'Member Resource (MR)' which he calls MR is used for 'the cognition receiver's mind. Therefore, MR is used to talk about the historical knowledge of the people that the advertisers implement through advertisements. That's the advertisements for domestic violence and male dominance; gender inequality people received naturally, and no one can question it.

In fact, criticizing advertisements makes us understand the story behind the commercials. Even, advertisers switch off such kind of criticism by the representation of beautiful ads. So, discursive practices or advertisements represent how to be confident, beautiful, and successful, furthermore, it informs women that how they have to represent their identity by using certain products.

In addition, interpretation is the process of society, which indulges gender-based ideologies in the minds of the people. For instance: People see women as an object instead of human beings, on the other hand, in third-world countries "being whitish" is a very complex issue (what is the ideology behind "being whitish" is discussed below).

#### Appendix 1: (Nido) Your instinct is to protect him (Child).

The underlined words '*instinct, protect him*' represent that her instinct shows that she is the caretaker of the family, it is her instinct that she has to protect her child. But this is not the instinct of the father to protect his child. Advertiser shows that only Nido is the product that provides better protection to your child. And only the other is the person who serves milk to her child and not the duty of the father.

This image shows that woman is not marginalized only in a third-world country, but a woman has objectified in western countries also. This patriarchy and capitalism inform her that her body does not have any shape; her body is made for commercializing objects.



## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To conclude, advertisements represent notions, values and attitudes, and desirable images. Advertisements are produced to serve the interest of social power relations. Aforementioned that the advertiser produces such kind of ads that demystifies the role of

women. Further, advertisement reproduces those ads which show that women are made rather than born. Women are taken as objects rather than as human beings. This is a policy of patriarchy. And patriarchy talks about the dominancy of males, where dominancy occurs at that place gender inequality gets birth. As Kamla (2008) said that if one person is submissive then the other person is automatically oppressive. Women are not only objectifying but the capitalistic system suggests her 'if you want to be perfect you have to be submissive, you have survived dualistically, at home it is your instinct you have to serve your family and outside the home you have use products and represent yourself as an active participant.

Gender inequality is not an issue only in Pakistan, but it is a worldwide issue, which changes its shape day by day. As a researcher, it is our duty is to start speaking about gender norms, we have to recreate our relations which have to be grounded upon freedom. If we will do this, then coming up generations never face the gender inequality that we are facing today. An advertiser has to change his/her mind about representing advertisements because advertisement is the major process that reveals what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Further CDA is the process that helps to recognize different questions about inequality and what kind of ideologies the capitalistic class co-actively uses for maintaining their capital.

If people think about whom they are, and why they are if they try to know the motive of their life if they try to know the value of humans. Then gender differences may be decreased in our society because humanity never teaches to objectify a particular body, it gives value to the thinking process of humans. After all, a woman's body is not studded with pearls and diamonds that everyone has to watch and it's not important that every woman has to look like a beautiful lady. Women are also human like males as. Freedom of speaking could be the cause of change.

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