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A Foray into Advertising and Language:

from

“Thanda Matlab Coca-cola”

to

“Bye Bye, Thandi”

By Jay Mehta

Acknowledgement

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Won't it sound foolish to say the two words "Thank You" to my parents? I would fumble for words if I attempt to thank my dad who has been with me through thick and thins of life. A mentor, a friend, a companion... - my dad is simply EVERYTHING to me.

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Abstract

A Foray into Advertising Language: from “*Thanda Matlab Coca-cola*” to “*Bye Bye, Thandi*”

“Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark; you know what you are doing, but nobody else does.”

- **Stewart H Britt**

Advertisement, primarily, is a public declaration – aimed at informing and convincing the mass to buy goods or services. Language has a powerful influence over people and their behavior. This is especially true in the sphere of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is paramount. Visual content and design in advertising have an immense impact on the consumer, but it is *language* that helps people to identify a product and remember it.

The paper is grounded on some texts collected from advertisements including examples of words, phrases or constructions that are different from the diverse varieties one encounters on a regular basis. This includes informal spoken language between close friends. In doing this exercise, one may learn more about what creative prospects language allows.

This research paper is an endeavor to construe the varied linguistic patterns in the contemporary advertisements. It commences with the significance of the prominent concepts of communication in the arena of advertising. Furthermore, it also pinpoints that there is a special use of language in the commercials. The paper chiefly pertains to the three pertinent questions in this regard:-

‘*What*’ is the correlation between advertising and language?

‘*Why*’ is there a peculiar usage of language in the advertisements?

‘*How*’ are the aforementioned observations applicable to the advertisements in India?

To substantiate the arguments, the researcher plans to present a few specimen advertisements, possibly from both the print media and the electronic media.

Research Paper

“A book, a movie, a movement, a leader or even an advertisement that catches the mood of the culture, at the cusp... at a time when the mood is changing before it becomes popular – are a culture bearer. ... Norms and rules in society, science, music, literature and yes advertising are always changing.”

– Amitabh Bachhanⁱ

‘*Communication*’ includes a plethora of incidents and activities. It is a bond between the humans to convey a particular set of feeling, idea or information. One’s need for communication is one of the most fundamental and indispensable requirements. *Communication is a process which increases commonality – but also requires elements of commonality for it to occur at all.*ⁱⁱ

The Sanskrit term ‘*sadharanikaran*’ in Bharata’s *Natya Sahstra* comes closest to the sense of ‘common’ or ‘commonness’ usually associated with communication. *Sadharanikaran* is a social process which can be achieved among *sahridayas*, people with a capacity to receive messages.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This infallible concept of the Indian communication theory is undoubtedly significant apropos of the process of communication through any sort of advertisement.

Advertisement, primarily, is a public declaration – aimed at informing and convincing the mass to buy goods or services. Language has a potent influence over people and their behavior. This is especially true in the sphere of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is paramount. Visual content and design in advertising have an immense impact on the consumer, but it is *language* that helps people to identify a product and remember it.

The use of language in advertising is not always a correct or authentic one. This, by no means, suggests that it is not the proper use of language. On the contrary, it is more creative in a sense that the innovative use of words, concoction of certain phrases, and coinage of terms – all these traits are apparent in advertising. This rather triggers people’s curiosity. Anything which is creative especially in advertising draws the eye-balls of the people. Advertising is an arena

where ‘*Creativity*’ is an operative word. Be it jingles or visuals, punch lines or dialogues: ad world has it all.

This paper discusses few specimen ads from the electronic media. The Paper also analogizes the Gujarat Tourism ads collectively titled as ‘Khushboo Gujarat Ki’. Besides, it exemplifies the Amul butter ads which are noted for correlating the current affairs with the brand.

The researcher has observed the prominence of certain linguistic phenomena in the advertisement world such as witty and pithy statements, figures of speech, coinage of words, colloquial expressions etc. the reason being, the ad aims at conveying the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) or the presumed quality of the brand to a specific target audience. For this, the words and expressions are used in such a manner that they create a psychological image of the paradoxes of life: agony and ecstasy, astonishment and ennui, jovial and disheartened etc.

Below are listed select words which are created by uniting two distinct words and thereby appealing to the intellect of the viewers or the readers:

Concoction of Words

- Incomesurance – Insurance Company
- Youngistan – Pepsi
- Go Babelicious – Scooty Pep Plus
- Dillogical – Lays
- Skinnocence – Lacto Calamine

Apart from this, television commercials are marked by the pithy and memorable statements that they furnish which are known as punch lines. The list below commences with an almost epigrammatic punch line created by the renowned copywriter and lyricist Prasoon Joshi.

Punchlines

- Thanda Matlab Coca-cola
- Yeh Hai Youngistan ka Wow! – Pepsi
- Iss ko Laga Dala to Life Jinalala –Tata Sky
- Utterly Buttery Delicious – Amul
- What an Idea, Sirji! – Idea
- Hum Chlor Mint Kyun Khate Hain?
- Taste the Thuder – Thums Up
- Zindagi ke Saath bhi, Zindagi ke Baad bhi – LIC

“After all, both films and advertising deal with consumable commodities and in both you have the spectacle of the conscientious artist striving to express himself in aesthetic terms; while the sponsor, hovering in the background and caring little for Art, concerns himself solely with profits.”

- Satyajit Ray^{iv}

There are striking commonalities between an advertisement copy and a film. Both have similar constituent parts like theme, script, acting, choreography, dialogues, and music. The last one appears in the form of a jingle in advertisements. Some brands have given timeless jingles which went to the extent of becoming a rage. For example,

Some Popular Jingles

- Close Up – Kya Aap Naya Close Up Karte Hain?
- Nerolac – Jab Ghar ki Raunak Badhani Ho
- Pan Parag – Pan Parag, Pan Masala
- Nirma – Washing Powder, Nirma
- Lifeboy –Tandurasti ki Raksha Karta Hai
- Amul –Zara si Hansi, Dulaar Zara sa
- Vicco Turmeric – Nahi Cosmetic, Vicco Turmeric Ayurvedic Cream

Significance of Vocabulary in the Gujarat Tourism Ads

The traits of advertising as discussed in this paper are efficaciously exploited even in the videos promoting the tourism activity in various states and the recent instance is the advertisements by the Department of Tourism, Government of Gujarat. Titled as '*Khushboo Gujarat ki*' starring Amitabh Bachhan and others, these promotional videos have struck a chord amongst the tourists and one of the reasons is the exuberance of the places conveyed through the beautified use of language and vocabulary in them.

- Kutch:

The 60 second video about the potentiality of tourism in the region of Kutch showcases the aesthetic aspects of life in Kutch. To meet this objective, the copywriter has used the adjectives like '*Stark*' and '*Austere Beauty*'. Apart from that, the invitational statement '*Breathe in the zest for life*' helps in tempting the visitors.

- Somnath Temple:

The 60 second video on the Somnath Temple puts forward the saga of this historic temple and its tumultuous past. For the same, the words and phrases denoting the worth of spirituality are used such as: '*Sense of Identity*' and '*Fragrance of Faith*', to name a few.

- Gir Forest:

The 70 second video presents the alluring beauty of the landscape and scenario in the Gir forests. On top of that, it harps on the synchronicity in the existence of the wild creatures and the human beings. To narrate this convincingly, there is the use of apt adjectives and phrases such as '*Stark and Pristine forests*', (Lions') '*Magnificent Presence*', '*Symbolizes Pride*' etc.

- Punch line in all the aforementioned ads:

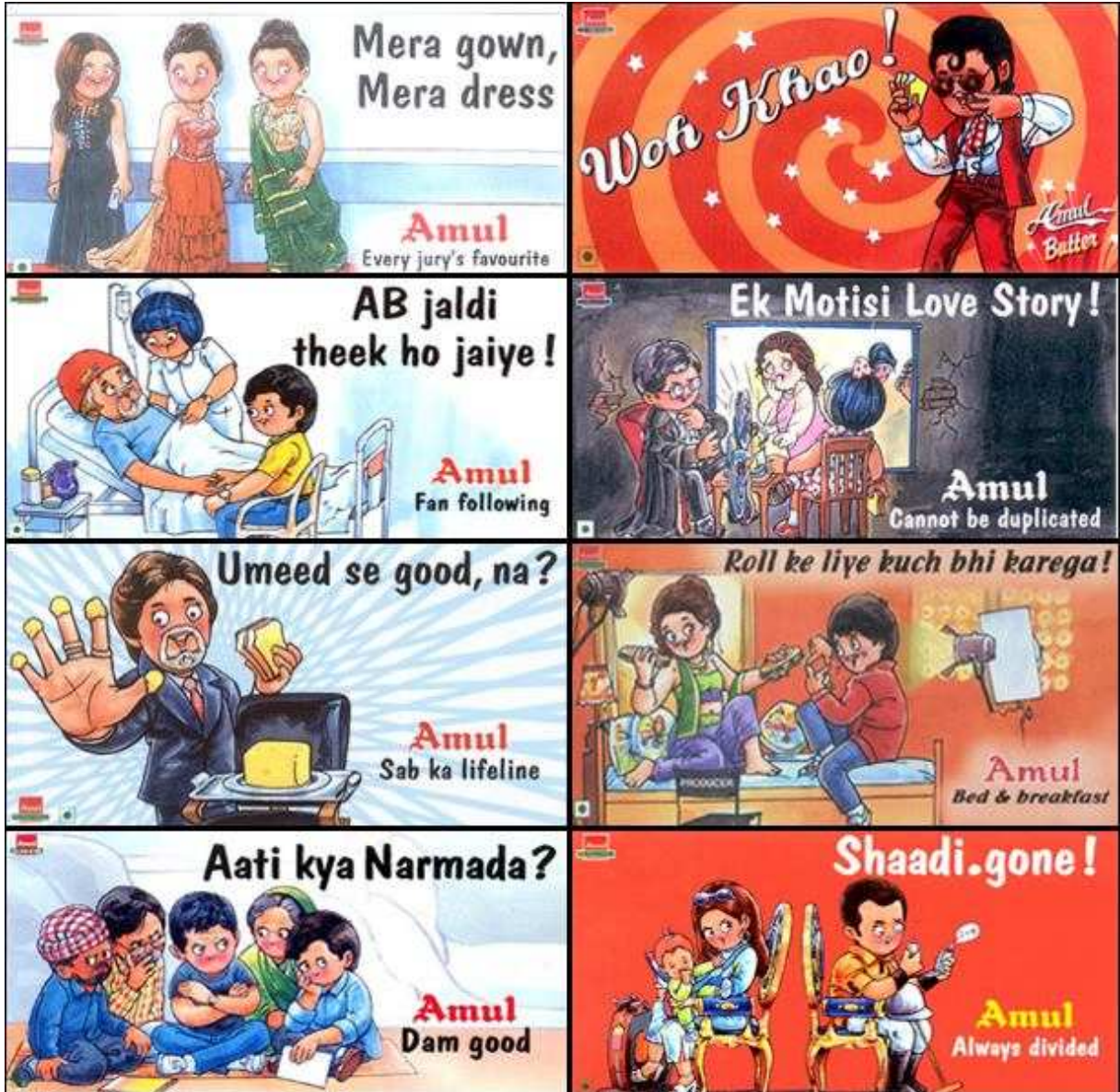
Breathe in a bit of Gujarat.

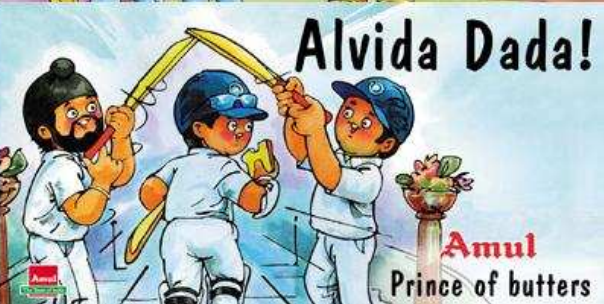
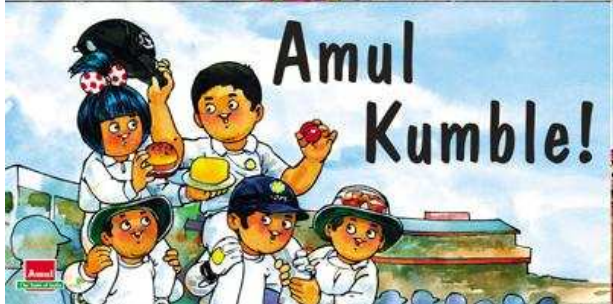
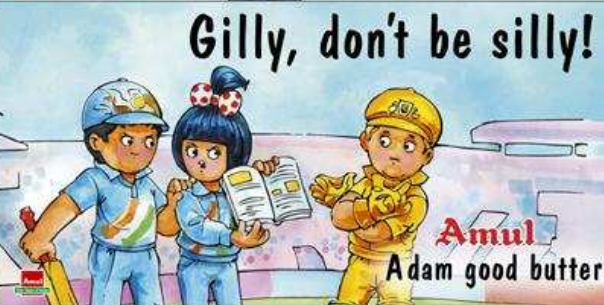
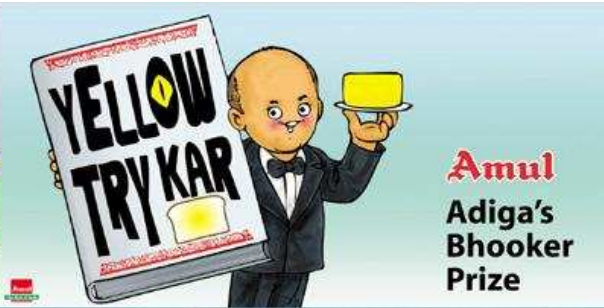
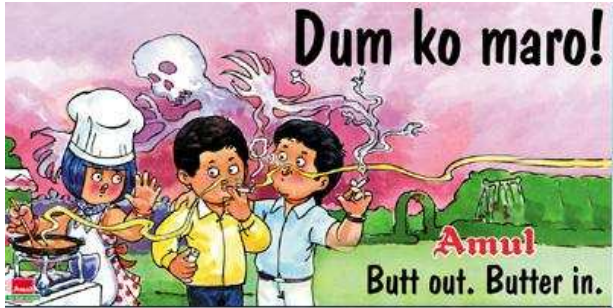
Ads for the Amul Butter:

Advertisements of the Amul products need a special mention here. They have developed a remarkable way of publicizing their brand. At some peopled places of the city, the huge hoardings of the Amul butter are apparent in which a current issue has been caricatured or lampooned in a light-hearted vein and is also associated with the brand. The ability to create humor as well as to comprehend it, has always been one of the parameters for language learning. The Amul ads help one in doing so. A witty slogan poking fun at the issue tickles the funny bones of the viewers / readers. For example, the following ads deal with the Shrisant- Bhajji clash, a football player bullying the other in the final match of the previous FIFA world cup, parody of famous Hindi films, the KBC show, Amitabh Bachhan's sickness, Aamir Khan's controversial involvement in the Narmada issue etc respectively.









Findings:

A study of several advertisements in the print as well as the electronic media, the researcher has succeeded in drawing certain tangible findings. Advertising, being a commercial form of propaganda, aims at placing the brand in the psyche of the customers and further, at sustaining it there. For this obvious purpose, language has been utilized as a tool amongst the other aspects. The language used in advertising largely depends on the target group. For example, a product meant for the teenagers or the youth would say with a cool and devil-may-care attitude:

“Sirf taller ya stronger ya sharper hone se apni library nahi banti, boss!”

Besides, an innovative usage of various linguistic components strikes the keynote at the very subconscious level and makes a long-lasting impression on the consumer’ minds. Apart from the intellectual faculty, the advertisements have to follow cultural conventions in Indian territory. For the Indian market, in particular, the language of advertisement has to connect an emotional bond with the consumers. It can be conspicuously observed that the significant use of language in advertisements in India have been triumphant in meeting the aforementioned requirements of the MNCs.

From the perspective of language learning, the researcher has observed that the beautiful use of language in the Gujarat Tourism ads help in chiseling one’s vocabulary.

To sum up, language as an integral element of commercials compels us to notice the brand at least and that too, in the nation which is known for immense cultural and religious diversity. This area provides a goldmine of study and research for the intelligentsia.

Appendix:

Transcripts of Gujarat Tourism Ads:

Kutchh:

60 Sec

English

19.07.'10

This is the surreal Run of Kutch: the doorway to India. When the night is clear and the Moon in full bloom, these white sands light up radiantly. For those nights, the Earth becomes the Moon. This stark and austere beauty is so colorfully contrasted by the people of Kutch, by the vivid colors of their handicrafts and the sweet melodies of folk music.

Close by is the serene of laidback beach of Mandvi, where the land gently rolls into the sea. Breathe in the zest for life here, the colorful festivals, the arts, the vibrance. Breathe in a bit of Kutch. Come; breathe in a bit of Gujarat.

Somnath Temple

60 sec

English

19.07.'10

There are twelve Jyotirlingas: the essence of Lord Shiva spread across India and the first amongst these holy shrines is the temple of Somnath. For several centuries, foreign invaders attacked this shrine to destroy our sense of identity and our culture. But faith is not made of wood and stones. It cannot be wiped out by merely destroying the structures. Our faith prevailed and after every invasion the temple was rebuilt. Not far from here is the Saraswati River. Close by also is the Bhalka Teerth where Lord Krishna was fainted struck. Somnath Temple – Breath in the power of belief. Breathe in the fragrance of faith. Breathe in a bit of Gujarat.

Gir Forest

70 sec

English

19.07.10

This is the Girnar mountain range – far older than the Everest. Within these ranges lies the ancient forest of Gir. This is the domain of Asiatic lion. More than four hundred of these regal lions roam this forest marking their boundaries with their magnificent presence. But this king of jungle shares an unusual relationship with the human subjects. Lion and man share this land in peace, respecting each other: the goof reason why the lion population is on the rise. These magnificent inhabitants of the Gir forest have symbolized India's pride. Breathe in their presence. Breathe in these stark and pristine forests. Breathe in a bit of Gujarat.

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