Synopsis of the Ph.D. Thesis

Linguistic Deviations in Advertising Messages of Chocolates and Beverages: It’s Impact Measurement on the Psychology of Children in India

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Linguistics Deviations in Advertising Messages of Chocolates and Beverages: It’s Impact Measurement on the Psychology of Children in India” and submitted by Ruchika Sharma ID No 2006PHXF406P for award of Ph.D. of the Institute embodies original work done by her under my supervision.

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Introduction

Language may not be a determinant of our thought process but it certainly is a catalyst of our perceptions and memory that strongly affects the ease with which we perform our mental tasks. If anything corresponds to the words available in our minds it definitely makes it easier to make conceptual distinctions. Several researches have also established the fact that people recall things more easily if the things correspond to easily available words and phrases (David Crystal, 1987).

Children as consumers are a predominant section of consumer segment. Advertisers are always in dire need to promote their products to them. Children as impressionable individuals not only have a potential to pester the purchase decisions but they also have capacity to become very loyal consumers in long run. Research has highlighted the usage of different mechanisms that advertiser use to capture the young minds at a very early stage such as fun action emotional, product appearance and highlighting the product features (Barcus, 1980; Krunkal, 1992). To catch them young, copywriters play with words to lure them with innovative disruptions that not only boggle their minds but also have indelible impact. This long lasting impression is created by devising catchy slogans that captures the attention effortlessly and have longer retention.

Slogans are one of the key three elements of brand identity along with brand name and logo. Since the name and logo are not that very explanatory in terms of communicating brand in literal sense, slogans play a very important role in conveying to the consumers the real essence of brand and hence providing a distinct and important identity to the brand. Slogans are so important in advertising that majority of ads do have them as an integral part. Slogans have now become a prime vehicle for advertisers to convey all the key characteristics of a brand. This consequently
helps to enhance, brand image and awareness through recognition, recall and favorable associations. As highlighted by Dahlen and Rosengren (2005) & Keller (1998), slogans can serve as hooks or handles in capturing the meaning of a brand and in relaying what makes the brand special. Keller (1993) also highlighted in his study that “slogans are designed to attract consumer attention, crystallize brand positioning, increase advertising memorability, and improve brand affinity”. The importance of slogans is certainly realized by the advertisers and manufacturers, thus it will not be an exaggeration to find firms spending millions of money for the development of effective slogans and their promotion. Mathur and Mathur (1995) in their research found out that effective slogans add panache to the firm value. This added value provides an edge to the advertising campaign, product cycle and also business cycle (Kohli, Leuthesser and Suri, 2007)

With the increasing popularity of slogan, increases the need to link them fittingly with brands (Lamons, 1997), this can be seen as an inherent weakness in the advertising industry and require immediate attention to overcome. Traditionally slogans have been presented in the form of jingles basis on the belief that jingles help create the memory and recall of brands better. However an experimental study by (Yalch, 1991) has proved that jingles help no better than simple slogans. Corder (1986) reviewed several recall studies and commented that exposure plays an important role in identification of slogans and also found that shorter and simpler slogans were learned more quickly than complex ones. Bradley and Meeds (2002) on the similar lines conducted experimental study by manipulating syntactic complexity of the slogans while retaining their meaning and found that these manipulations does not affect the understanding of the slogans. They have found that recognition was better for simpler slogans but recall was better for complex ones, indicating that the complexity of slogans might have initiated deeper processing and thus leading to enhanced memory. These findings are in sync with the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacciopo, &
Schuman, 1983), signifying that keeping slogans simple does not necessarily enhance their memorability. McQuarrie & Mick (1999) and Lagerwerf (2002) advised that slogans may get appreciated better if their complexity is increased through figurative device or introducing deliberate ambiguity. Going through all these studies on importance and effectiveness of slogans, it is seen that there still don’t exist any guideline or methodology to construct effective slogans. There is a scope for experimentation for finding out possible effects of linguistic deviations on recognition and recall, which in turn would be helpful in shaping up effective slogans.

Moving back to research subject children as consumers, it is noticed that this segment packs a significant power in terms of money for the sellers. Simmons Market Research Bureau realized this existence of monetary power in children’s segment and went on to start 'The Kids Study' in 1990. Baxter (1991) notices that this study has been initiated to make available consumption and media behavior of children’s segment akin to their adult counterpart. Piaget’s theory of cognitive development (1952) has been the theoretical foundation for majority of the research studies focused on examining effects of advertising on children. These studies have used the Piaget’s theory as a basis for the purpose of comprehension and forecasting of children’s responses. All of these studies have largely focused on two pathways: cognitive considerations and impact of advertising on consumer socialization (Raju & Lonial, 1990). Although some marketing studies involving children include some form of attitude measurement, they are usually in combination with or are secondary to a cognitive-related query (e.g., Brucks, Goldberg & Armstrong, 1988; Hoy, Young, & Mowen, 1986) or focus on methodological considerations in measuring children’s attitudes (e.g., Macklin, 1988). Development or interrelationship of children’s attitudes toward the advertisement (Aa), the advertised brand (Ab) and likability of slogans has received a very limited attention in the advertising literature with just few good studies like Roedder, Sternthal, and Calder.
(1983), who investigated the consistency between attitude toward the brand and choice behavior among 8 to 13 year-olds. Looking at the research conducted for adults as the subjects, which indicates that Aad is one of the factors that influences brand attitude and purchase intention, it seems important and highly relevant to focus the study on effects of Aad for children as subjects as well. According to Gardner (1981), understanding the role of Aad in the formation of brand attitudes has important implications for the attitude formation process. Given the explosion of research in the past decade dealing with adults and the attitude for advertisement-attitude towards brand-Purchase Intention relationship, one would expect to see an almost parallel stream of research dealing with children.

Majority of the research on understanding children psychology and effect of linguistic deviations on children is limited to the American, British or European audiences. Recent advances in the Indian economy as well as the observed demographic changes in Indian households have attracted researchers to focus on Indian markets but when it comes to children as consumers the level of research is not sufficient and conclusive. Further, since India is just a developing economy and households here though changing are very different from the developed economies therefore the researches conducted in all those developed economies is not directly applicable here. Therefore, research on children as consumers in Indian households demands attention. All these motivations and literature gap bring the initial motivation for this research.

**Scope and Objective**

The focus on advertising to children has increased in recent years. Not only the advertisers are trying to get more and more insights into the young consumer's mind but parents too are getting cautious in terms of monitoring the content and exposure to advertisements. To extend the
understanding of children as consumers, advertisers are going into the realms of cognitive development. Lots of studies have focused on cognitive development as a basis to understand the information processing power of kids. These studies have established children as full-fledged consumers in themselves. By the age of eight, children's cognitive development is full and they can begin to process complex information. Copywriters, due to this are no longer focusing only on simple and easy to comprehend normative slogans, but they are manipulating words and deviating from the normal norms of grammar, syntax and morphology. These deviations are widely used by the copywriters.

As it is long established fact, that children not only possess purchase power, they also possess significant influence on their parents' purchase decision. That is the reason that the advertisers are not targeting just adults for consumer durables but they also are considering children's role in the buying decision of adults. This pester power is however limited in consumer durables but the product category in which they hold one hundred percent purchase power are confectionery and beverages. This product segment is prime focus of advertisers mainly because kids possess full autocracy in purchase power. It is generally difficult to find logical USP for such products, therefore copywriters use ample of creative language to lure these young consumers. Therefore, understanding the types of deviations used and the frequency of the same become quite relevant. However, there are studies that have segregated the types of deviations but the types and frequency of these deviations in the slogans of confectionery and beverages is very scantily studied so far.

The child-centric research has considered cognitive development as an axle that has helped researchers to understand children as consumers in terms of their information processing and also the other associations that they develop with a brand at an early age. These developmental theories have helped in finding the answers to questions such as how children are similar to adults in
association formations and how their limited rationality allows them to easily fall for the persuasive intents of the advertisements.

Advertising as a complete unit is persuasive with gamut of attractiveness and opportunities to build stronger and varied associations with the brands. The ample research available in this regard corroborates with the above statement. However, there are also studies that have tried to see all the components of an ad from various angles such as comparison of verbal and nonverbal content in ads, techniques of copywriting, information processing at various age groups and gender that is spread across various product segments, etc. The verbal content and its role in achieving the overall effectiveness in consumers mind is not yet done so far. In strict regard to child oriented studies have considered factors such as cognitive development and associations for an ad but the relationship between cognitive development, language learning and impact of linguistic deviations in the process of brand recognition and brand recall has not yet established. Therefore the specific objectives of this study is to consider Piaget's development theory as ground to understand the following:

- To identify the types of deviations used in advertising slogans of chocolates and beverages.
- To understand the impact of advertising slogans on children's brand recall and recognition.

**Research Methods**

The study was conducted with the primary aim of identifying linguistic deviations used in advertising slogans and its impact measurement on children as consumers. This purpose was achieved in three phases. First phase, 702 advertising slogans of confectionery and beverages that were advertised during 2009-2013 in India were tabulated. Further, content analysis of these advertising slogans was done mainly to identify and categorize the linguistic deviations present
along with their frequencies of appearances. This analysis of deviations acts as a starting point for carrying out the analysis in second phase of the study. For phase II, out of these 702 slogans, products/brands that has advertised two or more slogans during this period were segregated. These 44 such brands with old and new slogans were further segregated on the basis of established brands that spend most on advertising. Finally, randomly 11 brands were selected for Experiment i.e. quantitative part of the study. This quantitative work was performed on primary data collected through questionnaires aiming at measuring the effect of linguistic deviations on children’s brand recall and recognition. For this work, 200 school children were selected by using convenient sampling technique, eliminating the effects of extraneous variables. In this, two questionnaires have been employed to seek the responses regarding children’s ability to recognize and recall the brands from old as well as new advertising slogans. The collected data was analyzed statistically to find out the relationship between the said ability and slogans in specification to age as well as gender of the respondents. The data collected was analysed by using non parametric statistical techniques such as Chi Square, Sign test, Wilcoxon Test, Friedman ANOVA.

To further generalize the findings of the experiment on a larger sample size, the phase three of the study was carried out. In this phase, through bootstrap simulation technique 1000 random samples of 100 respondents were simulated. This simulated data was again statistically analyzed as per the techniques used in previous phase.

**Findings**

Results of all the three phases are discussed in length below
Content Analysis (Phase I)

The findings on the content analysis showed significant number of linguistic deviations in advertising slogans of confectionary and beverages. Out of all the six deviations, grammatical deviations are predominantly used across all the sections namely: Biscuits and Snacks (76%), Beverages (39%) and Chocolates (49%). From the frequency analysis for each section of product category it was clearly visible that majority of the deviations used by the copywriters were grammatical (present in 78% of the taglines) and semantic (present in 39% of the taglines). Looking at each section separately we see some difference in the frequency of deviations. For biscuits, grammatical deviations were dominantly present (76%) followed by semantic (37%) and lexical (29%). Rest of the three deviations in this section were observed in fewer number of the slogans (less than 10%). For beverages, semantic deviations were observed in highest numbers (59%), present in more than half of the slogans. Following these were grammatical deviations (40%), lexical (17%) and finally codemixing (19%). It was observed that phonological and Graphological deviations were absent in beverages section. For the chocolates section like beverages, phonological and Graphological deviations were found nearly absent with a scant presence in only few of the slogans together (7%). In this section, semantic and grammatical deviations were found to be present in nearly equal number of slogans (50%), only with a slight difference here and there. Codemixing follows these with a presence in lesser number of slogans (29%). On observing these results from all the three sections we can say that grammatical and semantic deviations are most popular for the copywriters irrespective of the product being advertised. Reason being the ample scope of creativity that these provide to copywriters. On the other hand lexical deviations are used infrequently by copywriters with a little more popularity for biscuits section. This above section wise comparison of deviations suggests that grammatical
deviations are more in number in comparison to any other deviation, reason being its ability to provide novelty by disjunctive grammar and at the same time its ability to provide similar grammatical associations, thus making the consumers relate more with the message. Another deviation that provides ample scope for novelty associations is semantic deviation across all the product categories. The fewer occurrences of phonological and graphological deviations provide a new insight about the complexity of associations these create for the young minds. Slogans are meant to capture attention in a very short span of time, out of the clutter of several another ads filled with amalgamation of several components of ads. Due to this constraint copywriters feel restricted in the use of graphological and phonological deviations as it might easily get unnoticed especially by the children. The reliability test obtained also corroborated with the findings of the analysis.

The study can be summarized by stating the fact that copywriters very meticulously use deviations to form catchy and appealing advertising slogans such as listed out in chapter 3. As per the target consumers, copywriters combine the categories of deviations judiciously. The findings across the product categories reinforce the findings of the previous research that establishes children as full fledge consumers. This is very much visible in the formation and the techniques used by copywriters in the messages that are targeted towards children. However, the broad conclusion can be drawn from this study is that no advertising message is free from the usage of deviations. This establishes the relevance of studying the impact of linguistic deviations on the minds of children as consumers.

**Experimental Analysis (Phase II)**

Findings of experimental analysis gives significant insight into the relationship of slogans and ad identification & brand recall of children that too analyzed age wise as well as gender wise, for old
and new slogans. Apart from relationship, findings also provide us an insight into the likeability and relevance of slogans as factors playing a role in assisting identification and recall. In the end findings also provides an analysis of importance of all components of an advertisement namely: tagline, jingle, story, character and music.

The relationship analysis is divided into four sub sections that are 1) relationship between slogans and ad identification gender wise, 2) relationship between slogans and ad identification age wise, 3) relationship between slogans and brand recall gender wise and 4) relationship between slogans and brand recall age wise.

**Relationship between slogans and ad identification gender wise:** findings suggest that there exists a significant association between gender and level of ad identification for old advertising slogans however, for new advertising slogans there exists no significant relationship. This coincides with the recent research on different information processing capability of men and women, suggesting that women require more information in comparison to men for processing information. Copywriters device slogans that are very catchy and compact in order to aid in the recognition and recall process, however even then these slogans are not adequate enough to provide the information required by girls to process the message in its entirety as intended by the advertisement. Studies suggest strong correlation between gender and consumer judgement and this leads to lower level of satisfaction among women than men. This analogy is evident to say that men like slogans more than their counterpart that is strongly augmented by the findings in this study.

**Relationship between slogans and ad identification age wise:** findings suggest that there is significant relationship between age of respondents and level of ad identification for old advertising slogans however, for new advertising slogans there exist no significant relationship.
This suggests that children who are currently in concrete operational stage (8-12 Yrs), when shown the advertising slogans from their operational stage (2-7 Yrs) are not able to identify the slogans as comparable to their elder counter parts. This correlates with Piaget theory of Cognitive development that a child’s Conservation and transitivity in the affective realm allow the child to form and hold stable and consistent attitudes at a level previously unattainable.

**Relationship between slogans and brand recall gender wise:** findings suggest that there is no significant association between gender and level of brand recall for old advertising slogans as well as new advertising slogans. This suggests that though boys exhibit more liking towards slogans and were able to identify ads more, the other associations which play important role in brand recall are not dependent on gender. Though the findings are not in sync with the findings of identification of ads, since per above referred studies boys have higher processing ability and are able to identify ads more than girls. These suggest that when it comes to the recall of brand shown in the advertisements, boys are no better than girls even though having higher processing ability for the shown ads. This can be associated to a cognitive study that suggests that brand recall happens from the left hemisphere of the brain which though prominent in boys as compared to the right one, is utilized equally by the women reason being their ability to use both the hemispheres of the brain efficiently.

**Relationship between slogans and brand recall age wise:** findings suggest that there is no significant relationship between age of respondents and level of brand recall for old advertising slogans however for the new advertising slogans there exist significant relationship. This suggests that brand recall is dependent on other associative stages, such as purchase intentions, purchase power and satisfaction, apart from just the age of respondents. Therefore, for old slogans neither of the two age groups had these other associations that lead to incorrect brand recall. However,
when new slogans are shown, the elder group having stronger association for the above mentioned stages are able to recall the products name correctly.

Findings on likeability and relevance of slogans suggests that all eleven taglines for the new as well as old advertising slogans were deemed both likeable as well as relevant by the children. This augments that the characteristics responsible for liking of taglines such as creativity and message clarity are not affected by age or gender. This clearly suggests that slogans can be perceived in isolation without the underpinnings of products’ associations, due to the creative aspects and easy comprehensibility. The brand associations formed during the ad exposure and after the consumption are not affected by children’s understating of different components of advertisements. They find taglines as an integral and relevant part of advertisements. This test also suggests that the likability or relevance of the slogans used in the experiment was in no way responsible for other experimental findings. From the findings of component wise analysis of ads it can be observed that even though tagline are the most popular component of advertisement, among younger age group, jingle, story and character also play an important role. Whereas, these components tend to lose their importance for the elder age group respondents.

Simulation Analysis (Phase III)

Findings of the analysis performed on the simulated data are in congruence with the small sample findings in second phase. This suggests that all these findings can very well be generalized for the entire Indian market and can be used for developing advertising slogans so as to achieve efficient recognition and recall of the brand by children through these advertisements.
Contribution to Knowledge

The thesis attempts to contribute in various ways. Overall it contributes to the literature in following ways. First and foremost, this study fills the literature gap in usage of linguistic deviations in advertising and advertising targeted towards children as consumers in India. This thesis has merged the streams of research with theoretical developments in advertising to kids, the cognitive development theories and advertisements targeted towards children. It provides real experimental evidences that determines the importance and influence of linguistic deviations in advertising to Indian kids which very few studies attempts to do for Indian market. Second, this thesis investigates the categorization of linguistic deviations in advertising slogans and the frequency with which these types are predominantly used in ads specially those of the confectionary and beverages segments and are meant for the children as consumers. Thirdly, this thesis attempts to define the role of linguistic deviations in recognition and recall for the advertised brands in the minds of children. This thesis is among the few works, to reach out to children in real life situations and gather data to conduct an experimental study understanding this impact. However, no studies so far have explored implications of Piaget’s cognitive development theory on children’s brand recall and recognition in India. This study is one of its kind that focuses on both gender specific and age specific analysis of the collected data. Review of related literature reveals that to this date, no study has been conducted as an example of generalizing results for the entire Indian market under study by using Monte Carlo Simulation.

Limitations

As this research is confined to the analysis and impact measurement of linguistic deviations of slogans on children’s brand recall and recognition, the review of the literature suggests that there are other advertising elements that might have impact on brand recall and recognition. A plethora
of other elements such as music, story, jingles, and visuals are likely exogenous factors. To keep
the study with manageable proportions for rigorous investigation and maintain parsimony, the
following limitations are to be considered:

1. The content analysis was done only for two product segments i.e. confectionery and beverages.
   More product segments can be included realising the growing pester power of children.
2. Copywriter use rhetoric devices too as a mode for create taglines but only linguistic deviations
   are considered as these overlap with most of the rhetoric devices. However, these can be
   separately considered for this type of study.
3. The number of advertising slogans taken for the experiment were eleven. More number of
   slogans can be included in the study.
4. The study was carried out in only two phases with old and new advertising slogans within a
   small time gap of two weeks.

**Scope for Future Research**

The language of advertisements is an important component that has capacity to lure the children
as consumers. Based on the findings discussed above the researchers recommends the following:

There is a need to see the isolated impact of other components of advertisements such as visuals,
music, story etc. Further the comparative study of these impacts would help the marketers in
understanding and focusing on the components as per the need. The study was done on children
from concrete operational stage, this can be further compared with children from other cognitive
development stages. To understand children as consumers and their brand associations fully, other
variables such as brand awareness, brand spiraling etc. can also be considered. The fact that
children develop understanding and likability for the ads at an early age, can be further used as a
basis to dig the various other brand association further. The study of linguistic deviations can be further taken up by including both deviations and rhetoric and their role in creating ad identity and brand recall.

References