Chapter 1

Advertising Discourse and its Diverse Strategies: An Overview

There has been much talk about globalization for some decades now. Globalization which may be considered as a drive of businesses to expand markets outside the national boundaries has played a prominent role in the world economy. New communication and transport technology, combined with new management practices and liberalization of trade barriers, have brought a different intensity to globalization (Bauman; Harvey; Castells). The impact of globalization has been tremendous in the global marketplace. There has been a great competition as the stakes of winning or being the leaders in this game are immense. Globally, there was a scaling up in consumption patterns particularly in the western nations. Manufacturing of a diverse array of goods accompanied with competitive advertising has made it difficult for people to resist shopping. As a result, consumers are ever ready to increase their levels of debt to support their lifestyles. Lee points out that “people are mere extensions of the products they consume” (31). Marcuse also points out that:

The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced. (9)

1.1. Advertising

Advertising is the method used by various business companies and other organizations to promote their products and services to the public. The BBC English Dictionary defines advertising as “the activity of telling people about products or events in order to make them buy the products or go to the events” (18). A google e-book (e-Study Guide) defines it as “a form of communication used in helping sell products and services. Typically it communicates a message including the name of the product or service and how that product or service could potentially benefit the consumer.” Kotler defines advertising as “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an ‘identified’ sponsor” (793). But this definition leaves out the persuasive and creative aspects of advertising.

Advertising employs creative techniques to design persuasive communication which
promote ideas, goods and services that are in line with the achievement of advertiser’s goals and consumer satisfaction. As McLuhan asserts, “Advertising is the greatest art form of the twentieth century” (qtd. in Groucutt et al 325). However Ogilvy argues, “I do not regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information.” He goes on to say, “…when I write an advertisement, I don’t want you to tell me that you find it ‘creative.’ I want you to find it so interesting that you buy the product” (7). Advertising, therefore, has a specific purpose i.e. purpose of selling which is why it needs to be persuasive. It has to have an impact. Another important aspect of advertising is that it has to be interesting enough for people to notice it and act on it i.e. buy. Ogilvy believes that, “You cannot bore people into buying your product; you can only interest them into buying it” (7).

Traditionally, effectiveness of advertising was measured in terms of achieving the advertiser’s objective, a specific process by which the advertiser takes action and the potential consumers respond. This paradigm was generally followed in research in the areas of advertising, marketing, and also persuasive communication (Stewart, Furse, and Kozak; Stewart, Pechmann, Ratneshwar, Stroud, and Bryant). Though the paradigm has given important and practical insights, it mainly suggests a one-way view of communication between the advertiser and the consumer – the advertiser communicates and the consumer responds. An advertisement, therefore, is generally considered to be a one-sided communication process – from the advertiser to the public. But this view appears to be limited since how people approach the message in the advertisements and how they respond to them are equally significant. Additionally, how the verbal and the visual of advertising are comprehended and interpreted vary from one individual to another individual. Although, this interaction or communication is very persuasive, the members of public are at will to choose their responses. Proctor et al also challenge the view that advertising is a one-way communicative process. They state that “one also needs to consider the information processing responses of the receivers as they perceive and interpret messages and images in advertisements” (246). They further elaborate that advertisers frequently and purposely try to “convey and transfer underlying, yet unasserted, meanings to unsuspecting viewers…The ability to discriminate between communicator assertions and implications is not straightforward. The receiver's mental agility is put to the test as he or she is challenged by intelligently encrypted information” (247). The readers/viewers are eventually responsible to construe the messages suggested in the advertisements and construct meaning. Advertising messages are designed with an expectation that viewers would notice, perceive and process these messages into positive inferences and consequently evoke such behavioural reaction
that may stimulate and develop interest of the viewer in the advertised product. Advertising language communicates with its receivers and aims at getting attention and makes people interested in them or as Goddard says, “…turn towards them” (6). In the world of advertising, all communication is supposed to be delivered by the advertiser through a medium. The last decade has seen a sudden increase in media channels. The medium may be print, electronic or any other through which advertisements interact with their consumers. At the same time, advertisers do not any longer have to select one of the conventional alternatives to introduce their products. They can choose one or more of the following media – the broadcast media, print media, the Web, or the crossroad posters and hoardings. However, with the coming on of interactive media, such as the Internet, it becomes important to include this media in the means of communicating with the public for advertising. And interactive media also challenges the view of advertising being a one-way communication process. It considers advertising as a two-way communication process, with the interaction of the advertiser and the consumer at its core. Duncan and Moriarty argue that communication (rather than persuasion) is the base for consumer-marketer relationships in an increasingly interactive context. Supporting this view, Stewart and Pavlou observe:

This change in the character of marketing communications not only suggests the need for new measures of the effects and effectiveness of marketing communications, but it also suggests that the meaning of traditional measures of consumer response to marketing communication may change in an interactive context. (376)

1.2. Advertising Strategies: How Advertising Works

In the context of advertising, an insight into consumer behaviour is of immense importance. Generally, people believe in their own immunity to advertising and consider it as childish, untruthful and often very dumb. However, it may be observed that advertisements use a lot of visuals and jingles at regular intervals, which send subliminal messages to the readers taking possession of their unconscious mind which influence consumers' responses without their being consciously aware of it. Goldman believes that postmodern advertisements offer indefinite kind of relations between consumers and consumables. Being vague, these relations disappear and new relations of consumer and images that are recurrent develop. The exposure to the images and the experience of seeing them does not have any bearing on any direct or indirect experience of the items. These subliminal messages have a
slow but a sure impact on the audience and they slowly get converted to consumers. These recurrent messages, even though short and fleeting, influence people into believing that they require the product irrespective of their needs and circumstances. These messages convince them slowly to alter their requirements and buy products being advertised. Advertisements make the benefits of consumption appear more real than the reality itself. It is this hyper reality of advertisements that converts readers into potential consumers.

Goddard observes, “… advertising works on a whole variety of people in surprisingly immediate ways” (2) though people may dismiss advertising language as trite discourse written for the uneducated and may also pretend that advertisements may work on other people but, “they don’t work on us,” (2). The effect of the advertisements is similar to the effect of the subliminal messages which are flashed in theatres telling people to drink cola and eat popcorn. It has been seen that most moviegoers buy popcorons from the theatre at Rs. 100 for what they will spend only Rs. 20 outside the theatre. Though advertisements are short-lived, their “effects are long standing and cumulative leaving traces of themselves behind” (3), that come together and construct meaning of the messages so formed about the culture in which they were produced. These meanings may possibly disclose or perhaps create cultural values many of which may be the values of the dominant group (s) which produced that text.

Schrank points out that people often look at advertising as something that influences only the “vast hordes of the less sophisticated” and that they are immune to the effects of advertising. Such people like to believe that their own purchase has been need-based with advertising playing a minor supporting role in the whole process. In spite of this assumption by the ‘immune to advertising’ people, advertisers spend a huge amount on the advertisements. Clearly, they know better and recognize the results of their action. Although a few admit to being influenced by advertisements to a small extent, surveys and sales figures show that a careful and well-designed advertising promo leaves a remarkable impact. Its effect on people’s psyche is dramatic as advertising works below the level of conscious awareness. It also works on people who claim immunity to it, even if they laugh at its improbabilities, belittle it or go to the extent of ignoring it and dismiss them as harmless, nonsense and trite. Such audience are the advertisers’ delight as they are the most unguarded against the advertisers attack because of their belief that they are immune to all such attacks.

Advertising attacks the consumers in a covert manner, without the consumer realizing that s/he is being hegemonized into buying something that s/he did not need or plan to. It is very important to understand the consumer behaviour and perception in order to understand
the functioning of advertisements. The figure (Arens et.al. 148) given below illustrates the consumer perception process.

![Figure 1.1 Consumer Perception Process](image)

**Figure 1.1 Consumer Perception Process**

The consumer perception process shows that every customer receives a stimulus through physical data that is assessed through physiological and psychological screen. At the physiological level, the buyers would like to see, touch, feel, taste, and smell the product and at the psychological screen level their beliefs, values or attitudes about the product become important. For example, after watching an advertisement of some food item (a chocolate) the buyers, on the physiological level would like to taste it, smell it and touch it (feel its crunchy/creamy texture) to make their purchase of the product regular. But at the psychological screen level, their beliefs or preconceived notions will surface. They may have both positive and the negative beliefs about the product and may wonder whether the product has any harmful effects, for example, whether the product causes tooth decay or whether its consumption would result in obesity and whether the product is for children or adults. An advertisement has to counter such beliefs if it has to sell a product. For example, a few years ago in an advertisement of Cadbury’s ‘Perk’ these beliefs on tooth decay and obesity were easily countered when an attractive model (Preity Zinta) who has a good figure and an alluring smile was chosen to endorse the product. Her child like face and age made children as well as adults identify with her. The slogan – ‘Kuch Khas Hai Hum Sabhi Mein’ – managed to change the perception of people and ensured that grownups also ate chocolates.
Hence the acceptance of the brand among adults increased because the psychological block was broken. In some of the Cadbury advertisements, Cadbury’s chocolates are being advertised by seventy year old figures too – Amitabh Bachchan and Vinod Nagpal – because the age bar for eating chocolates by adults was broken long ago. Another belief that was countered was about occasions of eating chocolates. They are to be eaten, now, on all occasions – be it Diwali or Rakhi or even a wedding – and have begun to replace the ‘traditional sweets.’ In fact, people now prefer giving and receiving chocolates rather than sweets. In one of the advertisements of Cadbury’s, chocolates were presented as ‘laddus.’

The next step in the process is to make the consumer aware of the product through repeated appeals in the media. Through this awareness, the potential consumer interacts with the message. Marshal McLuhan in his *Understand Media* explains:

> Ads seem to work on the very advanced principle that a small pellet or pattern in a noisy, redundant barrage of repetition will gradually assert itself. Ads push the principle of noise all the way to the plateau of persuasion. They are quite in accord with the procedures of brain-washing. This depth principle of onslaught on the unconscious may be the reason why. (247)

The fifth stage as the figure demonstrates is attending to the needs or wants of the prospective consumer. The consumer pays attention to the message which speaks their language and highlights their needs and demands. Hirschberg suggests that advertisements can be effective if they appeal to the needs, values and beliefs of the audience. They use a variety of visual and verbal means to encourage their audience to identify with the people in the advertisements, the experience the advertisements depict and the values they promote. To illustrate this, he gives the example of (late) Elizabeth Taylor who stood for status and embodied beauty, glamour and sex appeal. Her glamour and beauty associated with the merchandising of a product (perfume) would surely make the consumer conclude that the product (perfume) must be superior to the other products (perfumes) and that the use of the product (perfume) would conjure up the same image and status for the consumer too. Hirschberg observes:

> The single most important technique for creating this image depends on transferring ideas, attributes, or feelings from outside the product on to the product itself. In this way, the product comes to represent an obtainable object or service that embodies, represents or symbolizes a whole range of meanings. (464)
Most TV viewers and readers of newspapers and magazines have a tendency of glancing through the advertisements consciously or unconsciously. This tendency of watching and reading advertisements is stimulated by the reward of entertainment and information – the better the reward, the more involved is the audience. Imparting more awareness, therefore, seems to be a technique of requesting audience participation on the development of the message. The impact of the message, hence, depends on the involvement of the audience which depends on the entertainment and information they get from the advertisements. It is the important information that consumers get in ‘Jaago Re’ advertisements in which viewers are given awareness about their rights as consumers, which has led to the success of this ad campaign. Another successful advertisement is ‘walk when you talk’ campaign by IDEA Cellular, GSM service provider. According to a report published by Telecomtalkinfo on the web, the success of this advertisement may be attributed to the idea ‘walk when you talk’ which led “to bring forward people across different walks of life, age-groups and societies and get them to walk for fitness” as people have started to recognize obesity as a sign of not being fit. Obesity is taken as something negative and a walk as something positive because it promotes good health. In ‘walk when you talk’ commercial, Abhishek Bachchan who played a doctor advocates ‘walking while talking’ on the mobile phone to get fit and puts forward this idea to television audience (the general public). The successive advertisements also showed the involvement of the audience (a hyper real situation) with the given message suggesting the participation of the real audience too in the ‘walk and talk’ campaign. IDEA initiated a countrywide movement on ‘walking and talking’, and expected that Indians will follow this idea - ‘Ek Idea pe chal padega India.’ This slogan has two fold meanings. The word ‘idea’ is functioning as the advertised product and it implies that people of India will start using this particular cellular service only. Secondly, it suggests that Indians will adopt the idea of walking while talking. This advertisement targeted everyone and exploited the health consciousness people. It gave a solution to the problem of obesity by finding an easy way out to the issue of not finding time to look after one’s health. A good and simple idea was presented by the ‘Idea’ campaign. According to the same report, “Idea brand campaigns have always celebrated champion ideas which have the power to change the society and the way we live.” For this advertisement, the champion idea was around ‘walking and talking’ for staying fit. This advertisement was much discussed by people of different sections of society and there were a lot of follow up advertisements with a reference point, ‘Walk when you talk’. One of these advertisements shows a hyper real situation of people advising others to walk when they receive a phone call and people
accepting the advice. The advertisement shows people from all walks of life interpellated by the advertisement, giving a covert suggestion to the audience to accept and try the idea and also the product IDEA.

1.3. Persuasion: An Effective Advertising Strategy

The institution of advertising provides a wealth of opportunities to people studying its discourse to study ‘language in use’ and to investigate discourse strategies used for persuasion of consumers. ‘Persuasion’ is a process that the prospective consumers go through when they are exposed to advertising. Persuasion as a concept overcomes attitudes or preconceived notions to achieve the desired effect. It works towards erasing the effects of previous advertising messages (of other advertisements) and turning towards the present message or building on the earlier message (of the earlier advertisements promoting the same product) compelling the target audience to show an appreciation of the message.

One common technique that is used to psychologically persuade consumers to respond positively is to make an appeal to their intelligence that listens to authority. Toothpastes are, therefore, often recommended by dentists and cough syrups by doctors wearing a white coat with a stethoscope around their neck. There are advertisements in which the verbal text suggests clearly that "3 out of 4 doctors recommend..." People who are watching or reading the advertisement are attacked psychologically as there is always an uncertainty in their mind about using something new or different. But when a person who is understood to be an authority or who has knowledge about the product talks positively about it, people value their opinions. Their recommendation always has more credibility than a good looking model.

1.3.1. Solving Problems of Consumers

Advertisements generally revolve around the problem-solution information structure, which is usually found in journalism texts. Such advertisements are designed to appeal to the intelligence of the consumers and may be argumentative in nature. They make a rational case for consumers to buy the advertised product as the only way out of a problem they may be facing. Such advertisements lead the consumers to accept that there are problem situations in their lives. To counter the problem, advertisements present a solution in the form of a product. In health advertisements, the prospective consumer is made to face a health problem
whether real or fabricated. It instils fear in the consumer’s mind and s/he looks for a solution for her hyper real problem. After this kind of psychological attack, advertisements offer a solution – a solution that lies in buying/consuming the product. Generally, the problems created for the consumer are not real problems but are presented in a way, that appear to be more real and threatening than they would be in the real world. Therefore, such created problems have no real solutions and people keep on changing products to handle the created problems. The real-like information that goes in the advertising message creates a problem in one instant and solves it in the next. In one of the Bournvita advertisements, two women are shown discussing health of their children. The first woman asks the second about what she did to provide calcium to her child. The second woman replies that she gives two glasses of milk to her child. The first woman repeats the same question to the confusion of the other. This question becomes a problem for the woman who had not given a thought to this aspect. She gives a worried look. She is then given a solution of giving vitamin D enriched Bournvita as Vitamin D helps the body in absorbing the calcium intake. Michael Hoey, while discussing textual patterns, talks about the problem solution pattern. Hoey explains the problem solution pattern with the help of a made-up example:

(1) I was once a teacher of English Language. (2) One day some students came to me unable to write their names. (3) I taught them text analysis. (4) Now they all write novels (123).

The example shows that there is (1) an optional previous situation, which provides a context for the pattern (2) then comes the problem or “aspect of a situation requiring a response” (3) addressing the problem or the response to the problem and (4) a positive result or evaluation (124). The positive result of the problem mentioned in the Bournvita advertisement is shown with the help of a visual in which the child is shown to be active and happy after drinking milk with Bournvita. In advertisements, the positive result shown is also as hyper real as is the problem. However, it works well for the advertisers, as it makes the viewers feel positive enough about the product to buy it.

Generally, the problem-solution structure of advertisements seems to suggest that there are two logical parts of the text – problem and solution. For example, the impending tooth decay may be treated by using Colgate or Close up or Pepsodent. The problem of mosquitoes that give malaria gets sorted out with the purchase of ‘Hit.’ Carter and Nash suggest that the problem-solution information structure has three logical parts i.e. situation, problem, and solution that may be explained as under.

**Situation:** some situation exists.
**Problem:** a problem is associated with that situation [and fear].

**Solution:** there is a solution (product or service) (69).

The problem solution structure in the Bournvita advertisement is given as under:

**Situation:** Looking after general health of growing children.

**Problem:** Giving two glasses milk is not enough for calcium intake of children. Something has to be done about absorption of calcium in the body.

**Solution:** Giving Bournvita enriched with vitamin D with milk to children will help in absorption of calcium in the body.

The advertisement of ‘Head and Shoulders’ anti-dandruff shampoo (See Fig 1.2)

![Image of Head and Shoulders Advertisement](image-url)

**Figure 1.2: Head and Shoulders Advertisement**

may also be discussed to exemplify this structure.

**Situation:** Kareena’s requirement for stronger, fuller and thicker hair to look more beautiful and to prevent hairfall.

**Problem:** Dandruff in hair that triggers hairfall.
**Solution:** Removing dandruff with ‘Head and shoulders’ anti-dandruff shampoo.

(The text of the advertisement says – When hairfall is a problem, removing dandruff is the real solution.)

Very subtly the advertisement suggests that hair fall is not the problem, the real problem is dandruff in the hair and removing dandruff is the solution. However, the advertisement presents the product as solution to the original problem that is hair fall thereby suggesting to the consumer that the product is a solution to both hair fall and dandruff. The text of the advertisement says:

Dandruff is one of the causes of hairfall and new head & shoulders, which is uniquely customized for women, gives you 100% dandruff removal and upto 95% less hairfall to give you stronger, fuller and thicker hair.

In the advertisement, Kareena Kapoor represents women who may panic on seeing their hair fall [fear of losing hair or getting alopecia]. This fear is countered with the suggestion for consumption of ‘Head & Shoulders’ for boosting health of their hair, removing dandruff and curing hairfall.

1.3.2. **Appealing to the Emotion of Fear**

Another persuasion technique is to appeal to the consumers’ emotions, which is a sure way of catching attention. Generally, the feelings of fear and vanity work wonders for the advertisers. Love and pleasure are also targeted by the advertisers. There are plenty of advertisements which appeal to ‘love’ for the family. For example most insurance advertisements cash on one’s love for the family and one’s fear of some untoward happening in one’s life. The ICICI Prudential ‘Jeetey Raho’ advertisement also exploits these factors.

Scarcity is another fear that advertisers put in the minds of people as they play up ‘Now or Never’ opportunity for the consumers to purchase a product. ‘One day sales’, ‘For a limited period only’, ‘Only for Today’ ‘Last day to avail…’or ‘…till the stocks last’ are phrases that are commonly used to show scarcity.

Health advertisements also exploit fear to get audiences to notice it. These advertisements are often produced with a hope to sufficiently frighten the audience to bring about a ‘desired’ attitudinal change and they resort to buying their product and changing their lifestyle.
1.3.3. Appealing to Desires of Consumers

Like fear, desires and vanity of people are also exploited by the advertisers. There are advertisements on alcoholic and soft drinks that appeal to peoples’ hedonistic desires. Drawing upon Hirschman and Pollay, Gibbs points out that marketing force contributes to unhealthy consumer behaviour. He states:

…one of the most basic and ubiquitous is the implicit collective effort by marketers to discourage consumers from exerting self-control and postponing consumption. (76)

Advertisements for whisky, beer and cigarettes work towards immediate consumption to gratify hedonistic desires. The people in these advertisements are portrayed as having a good time, leading to the belief that purchasing these products will add to gratification of one’s desires. Hirschberg (464) also talks about how cigarettes are presented positively in the advertisements. He says that that the first most instinctive response to the thought of smoking a cigarette would link with the idea of ‘inhaling hot and dry smoke’ from what essentially burnt tobacco leaves are. However, to overcome this initial reaction that might get triggered by the mention of cigarettes, these thoughts of burning leaves, coughing, etc. must be short-circuited by providing them with a whole set of other associations. Cigarette advertisers do this in various ways. Hirschberg (464 – 465) describes these ways as:

i. showing active people in outdoor settings – it puts away the thought of emphysema, shortness of breath or lung disease.

ii. showing cigarette packs set against the background of grass glistening with morning dew or bubbling streams or cascading waterfalls, they subtly guide the audiences response away from what is dry, hot, congested or burning toward what is open airy, moist, cool and clean.

iii. appealing to our different organs of senses, e.g. the use of colours that connote freshness. For example blue and green [sight] menthol flavouring [taste].

Such positive associations with a harmful product often reduce the harm in the eyes of a consumer. Hence advertisements use all kinds of persuasions “to intensify correlations that work to the advertiser’s advantage and to suppress associations that would lessen the product’s appeal” (465). Hirschberg argues:

The kind of associations audiences are encouraged to perceive reflect a broad range of positive emotional appeals that encourage the audience to find self-
esteem through the purchase of a product that by itself offers a way to meet personal and social needs [...] The most common manipulative techniques are designed to make consumers want to consume, to satisfy deep-seated human-drives. Of course, no one consciously believes that purchasing a particular kind of tooth-paste, perfume, lipstick or automobile will meet real psychological and social needs, but that is exactly how products are sold-through the promise of delivering unattainable satisfactions through tangible purchasable objects or services. (465)

1.3.4. Attaching Product with Desirable Lifestyle

Initially, advertising was essentially informational. It informed people about the product that existed or had come to the market and where it could be found. The claims made if any, by the ads were either outrageous such as, ‘…this will cure everything…’ or simple such as, ‘we have shirts of all sizes.’ It basically informed about the utility of the product, ‘…the coat will keep you warm’ or ‘…the car will be ideal for bad roads’ but today advertising is quite chatty and it chats about the status of the product (appearance, style, advantages of possessing it, making people envious (neighbour’s envy, owner’s pride) and about qualities which have little to do, if anything, with the utility of the product. Advertising has become a means to generate interest in products through which manufacturers try to alter the needs of consumers to suit their products. Nowadays advertising works by

i. Creating an affluent, interesting lifestyle in their advertisements.

ii. Attaching products to that affluent interesting lifestyle.

iii. Selling their product as attachments to lifestyle.

Hafel kitchen advertisements are excellent examples of how a rich lifestyle is appended with the product. A very recent advertisement of ‘rotimatic’ is also an example of how advertisers first sell the attractive lifestyle wherein a woman is shown painting (pursuing her hobby) and her husband handling the cooking of meals, laying the table with excellent crockery, cutlery and wine glasses and a bottle of wine. It is assumed that most women will be attracted by the scenario and lifestyle. After ensuring the attention of women, the product ‘rotimatic’ is associated with it.

It is evident that first the advertisers sell the lifestyle and then the products attached to it. In this process, generally, advertisements give us one important and effective message, ‘You can transform yourself by buying.’ Advertising successfully exploits the Cinderella
myth, proposing to the audience to transform themselves, or their lives through consumption which will make them richer in a way but in fact they will be poorer by having spent their money. Advertising promises people of such a transformation by showing them people who have seemingly been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. John Berger also points out that advertising mainly targets the middle/working class and promises to transform consumers if they cooperate with them – if they buy the product that is being endorsed in the advertisement (460). Not only does it promise to transform the hailed audience but also their relationships through a general atmosphere created by an ensemble of products. Olay, for example, promises to perform this magic if consumers use an ensemble of Olay products.

Consumers need to use layers of different Olay products for best results. They advocate using the Olay face wash, followed by Olay face scrub, and then by Olay toner and completing it with Olay face cream.

Another significant method that advertisements adopt is to make the consumers marginally dissatisfied with their present state of life. They propagate that nothing is wrong with the way of life of the society but their own life should truly be better than what it is at the moment. An ‘Indigo car’ advertisement also does the same thing. It cheekily teases the audiences with its bold text, ‘Small Cars are Great, if you are ready to settle for less.’

Advertising is the process of manufacturing glamour. Therefore, advertisements often suggest that on purchase of what is being offered, their life will become better and that they will be envied by their neighbours or friends or relatives. John Berger points out that “the state of being envied is what constitutes glamour” (455). Apparently, it may be considered a rather negative kind of emotion. But it is also true that people like to be envied because being envied is a form of reassurance of one’s superiority over others and this feeds their feeling of one-upmanship when they become consumers. An advertisement slogan from Coca cola was ‘It’s the Real Thing’ which advertised coke as the original and the other cola drinks as fake or imitations with implications that it is wise to have coca cola to feed one’s fetish for genuine products. The purchase of a certain product offers the audiences a chance to create themselves, their personality and their relations through consumption. For this they attack not their conscious minds but their subconscious minds where a lot of hidden desires, that most people are unaware of, exist. People often manifest these desires by consuming certain products. Through these kinds of psychological attacks, as pointed out earlier in the discussion, advertising operates to ascertain its hidden agenda which is to change the ideology of the consumer through hegemony and not by coercive methods but by manufacturing the consumers’ consent without being overtly blatant.
John Berger analyses from Marxist perspective the values that underlie advertisements and argues that fundamental ideology of advertising is the way it commodifies values by suggesting that middle class consumers can share through the purchase of an item, the lifestyles of the rich and the famous. Advertisements do this by promoting envy and the feeling that life has value in so far as people are able, to purchase things.

1.3.5. Simultaneous Appeal to Various Emotions

Many advertisements employ more than one technique in attempting to persuade the audience. Plastic surgery advertisements are a perfect example. They attempt to persuade by appealing to people’s vanity/egotism by exposing their fear of ageing. This is done by promoting positive images of ageing in the media. Advertising depicts ageing as a period of activity, autonomy, mobility, choice and well-being in defiance “of traditionally gloomy stereotypes of decline, decrepitude and dependency” (Katz 27) and dismissing the dismal realities of poverty and age. Katz asserts that the advertising industry has capitalized on this to promote anti-ageing cultures based on notions of timeless living and growing older unburdened by the signs of ageing (27). Supporting Katz, Cardona says:

Anti-ageing ideologies and practices include the belief that, through the consumption of products and appropriate lifestyle choices, individuals can halt or even delay the ageing process and the risks associated with it. (477)

The fear of ageing gets associated with social, cultural and economic exclusion from certain desired groups which positions the ageing body as a kind of physical wealth that needs to be maintained through self-governed consumption. Cardona goes on to say, “Consuming ‘anti-ageing products’ was framed by some users as a self-governing technology that allows the self to exert a certain degree of control over their lives and remain active participants in social and economic life” (480). This gives an ethical dimension to the virtues of timeless, successful ageing self-management and restraint to avoid dependency and illness. In addition to this, advertisements provide a yardstick by which an individual’s life can be measured. And physical decay, ageing, disability and limited functionality are regarded as personal failures (“New sex for old” 6).

It may well be observed that tactics preferred by the advertisers largely depend on the nature of the product being advertised. Just as products promoting health and hygiene e.g. health drinks, nutrient supplements, toothpastes, soaps appeal to reasoning faculty of the
consumers, products advocating luxurious lifestyle which may fall into the category of not-useful or even avoidable are advertised through strategies such as humour as it is difficult to point at the benefits of using such products. Such products include cigarettes, alcoholic drinks, perfumes, etc. They take the support of witty slogans, humourous situations promoting envy and desire more than reason. Such advertisements promise a different lifestyle that is beyond the means of a common person but it comes within the reach through consumption. Promises such as ‘Live life Kingsize’ (Four square cigarettes); ‘The Maruti Suzuki Omni. Fits all’ (Omni); ‘Some of the most interesting people drive Wagon R. What about You?’ (Wagon R); ‘I am lovin’ it’ (McDonald's Fast Food Chain); ‘Because you’re worth it’ (L’Oreal); appeal to the intrinsic desire of people to own the luxuries that belong to the rich and the famous and they can achieve this through consumption. It will be interesting to see how coca cola has used this strategy in India in the last decade.

i. Thanda matlab Coca-Cola! (Cold means Coca-Cola!) (2000s) [2]
ii. Pio sar utha ke (Drink with pride)
iii. Jo chaho ho jaye, Coca-Cola enjoy! (Whatever you wish will come true, enjoy Coca-Cola!)
iv. Burrrrrrrrr (Refreshment ) (2011)

In the US also there have been different slogans to advertise Coca-Cola. These slogans do not appeal to reason but to the consumers’ desire and an appetite for pleasure. Wikipedia lists the following slogans starting from the one in 1886.

- Drink Coca-Cola - 1886
- Delicious and refreshing- 1904
- The great national temperance beverage- 1906
- Good till the last drop - 1908
- Thirst knows no season - 1922
- Enjoy life - 1923
- Six million a day - 1925
- It had to be good to get where it is - 1926
- Around the corner from anywhere - 1927
- The pause that refreshes -1929
- America's favorite moment - 1937
- The best friend thirst ever had - 1938
- Thirst asks nothing more -1938
• Whoever you are, whatever you do, wherever you may be, when you think of refreshment, think of ice cold Coca-Cola – 1939
• The only thing like Coca-Cola is Coca-Cola itself - 1942
• Where there's Coke there's hospitality - 1948
• Coca-Cola... along the highway to anywhere - 1949
• What you want is a Coke - 1952
• For people on the go- 1954
• The sign of good taste - 1957
• The Cold, Crisp Taste of Coke - 1958
• Things go better with Coke - 1963
• I'd like to buy the world a Coke. (basis for the song I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing) - 1971
• Make It Real - 2005
• The Coke Side of Life (used also in the UK) - 2006
• Live on the Coke Side of Life (also used in the UK) - 2007
• Open Happiness - 2009
• Twist The Cap To Refreshment - 2010
• Life Begins Here - 2011
• 2015 - Make it Happy

1.4. Advertisements as Means of Creating Stereotypes

Advertising is a very powerful means of communication as it has the potential to reach people across different strata in society. They have the power to sell much more than the products they advertise. They sell not only the products but also ideas, values, images, attitudes and even addictions. This is an important part of advertising as selling ideas and attitudes also means strengthening stereotypes. The toy industry, for example, sells guns, transformers and action figures to boys but soft toys and Barbie dolls to girls. It is important to note that a clear distinction between a doll and an action figure has been created. Although an action figure appears more or less like a doll but the word ‘action’ attached to the word ‘figure’ makes it a toy fit for boys. It also throws up a stereotype that action is for boys while care and love that dolls are associated with are for girls. The engendering of toys creates stereotypes for children at a very impressionable age and it becomes unacceptable for boys to
play with dolls, but perfectly acceptable for them to play with action figures such as GI Joe, X-men, and Superheroes such as Batman and Superman. However, girls are hardly ever pictured away from their homes in advertisements. They are shown to be contentedly playing with their dolls or kitchen sets in their bedrooms or at the most outside in the courtyard never leaving the vicinity of their homes. They may be shown as removing plates from the table or fixing a meal to help mothers but never with a screw driver to help their fathers to fix the vehicle. In advertisements addressed to boys (boys are shown doing physical action) are allowed more freedom to explore the world. Most advertisements on bikes show boys riding them, showing off their power through speed and control over the vehicle. Girls, on the other hand, ride scooties which are as colourful as their lipsticks. Such advertisements covertly convey the message of what is appropriate for boys and girls and what is not. These advertisements assume the role of social venues where children are schooled into gender roles. TV advertising has become a focal point for research related to social learning as we easily find in them stereotypical models which children follow unconsciously.

Television viewing by children also has social dimensions. Atkin and Miller established the power of television commercials in shaping children's views or bringing about a change in their perceptions of gender roles. Into the commercial slot of 30 minutes cartoon, they placed specially created advertisements portraying women engaged in nontraditional roles. In their study they found that elementary school children who were exposed to these advertisements were perhaps more susceptible to accepting and describing those occupations suitable for women rather than the children who just saw stereotyped advertisements. This suggests that commercials do have an impact, on children's perceptions of the real world. These perceptions also have a significant impact on the career prospects of those who watch them. The longer the exposure to the television commercials they have, the heavier is the impact making people more likely to perceive the world as it is depicted in advertisements. It has been observed that the power of stereotypical advertising works well for the advertisers as stereotypes go down with the audience without any questions. Stereotypes have the power to convince people that the advertisers’ message about the product has value. At the same time, it convinces people of the value of the stereotype as real, right and natural. For them this stereotypical world becomes more real than the real world which further helps the advertisers to establish the stereotypes to their advantage. Komisar claims that such portrayals make it difficult for women to break away from the sexist stereotypes which imprison them (207). Many advertisements may not be very explicit about gender roles. They just show people caged in traditional roles and being happy about the tradition. These
concealed gender stereotypes are a cultural prerequisite and therefore certain characteristics of men and women get endorsed as something natural. The happy housewife stereotype that may be good for the advertisers could be harmful for the audience especially for women themselves. Women may also unquestioningly accept the happy housewife stereotype as a cultural norm which would generally direct them to set aside all their doubts about the rightness of the norm. They would ignore their own wishes about choice of career and desires of leading their lives in a particular way to swap them with the stereotypical model depicted through popular culture including advertisements (Geis et al; McArthur and Resko). Previous research also indicates that advertising which stereotypes women can form unconscious and unthinking attitudes about women and their abilities in society (Geis, Brown, Jennings and Porter).

According to Allan and Coltrane, an increased television watching is also associated with fostering stereotypical opinion of the viewers, especially of gender. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorieli also argue that heavy viewers perceive the world as it is shown on television (Gerbner, et al.). A study published on the Internet web site called exchange4media.com shows that on an average people in India in 2005 watched television for 107 minutes every day and during this, time given to advertisements is about 39 minutes (about 1/3 of the time people spend watching advertisements). During this time, they end up watching a number of advertisements and get influenced by the ideology perpetrated through them. Television advertisers often present women as happy people within the confines of their homes and are essentially shown as creatures who are thrilled on getting a detergent powder. This type of portrayal of women is worrying as it affects both children and adults. On seeing such depiction of women, children assimilate what they observe and repeated onslaught of such information makes it acceptable and natural to them and they pick up signals about how their behaviour and actions should be. The repetition of distorted and stereotypical advertisements makes an impression on the viewer’s mind and this distorted view gets projected as something normal and therefore acceptable. Such strategies do not let the audience realize that they are watching an exaggerated and ideologically biased view of the world.

Advertising has good effects also as it brings about an awareness in people about various things. Advertisements, for example, the polio campaign in India and travel advertisements inform people about places to visit and stay, ‘Jago Grahak’ (wake up consumer), for example, makes consumers aware about their rights. ‘Atithi Devo Bhav’ suggests that people should have respect for visitors to the country and also teaches them a
lesson on the importance of giving a good impression of the country, so that tourists are happy. It will not only give a boost to the tourist industry but also good work opportunities and income to the local people. At times, some advertisements also give people a message on the local culture. For example, HSBC bank slogan ‘The world's local bank’ is very meaningful. These advertisements convey the message that the bank provides international service but employs local people who know their culture and are able serve the clients better. The bank, generally, uses such storyline that illustrates the importance of knowledge of local culture. Such advertisements motivate people to find more about their own culture. An advertisement available on YouTube called ‘HSBC Eels’ is one such advertisement that illustrates that there may be some problems if people from two different cultures (British and Chinese in the advertisement) work together without having knowledge of each other’s culture’. However, it cannot be said that these ads are entirely free of ideology and stereotypical representation. In the ‘Atithi Devo Bhav’ advertisement, for example, a woman is shown getting out of the car with her small son who wants to relieve himself on the roadside. The message it signals to the viewers is that women lack civic sense and more importantly that it is a woman’s job to help their children relieve themselves.

Having said that, these advertisements may have more positive effects but the most prominent effects of advertisements are often negative and they have emotional and psychological effect on the minds of young children shaping their point of view in the long run and reinforcing stereotypes.

1.5. Stereotypical Representation of Men and Women in Advertisements

It is generally observed that women are most often portrayed in the advertisements either as happy housewives or sex objects. Courtney and Whipple examined the comparative portrayal of men and women in television advertisements. They found some striking differences in the portrayal of gender roles in advertisements. They found that women were over-represented in cosmetic advertisements and underrepresented in advertisements for cars and trucks, and other related products such as engine oils. Seventy-five percent of advertisements where women were used were for kitchen or bathroom products which clearly spell out that the place for women in the home is either a kitchen or a bathroom. One of the earliest Harpic (a toilet cleaner) advertisements presented a woman cleaning the toilet seat with Harpic and felt very happy at the result. Immediately after (in the next shot), the man was shown rushing to the washroom. On seeing the clean commode, he expressed his
happiness and closed the door to use it. The present day Harpic ads are also addressed to women. Women are shown to be ecstatic on being able to clean the toilet or the dishes in the kitchen; while men are presented as providers of these products. So, not much has changed in the last twenty years as far as female representation in media is concerned. These stereotype messages that flash day in and day out on TV affect TV – watchers in a way that stereotypical representation of males and females becomes naturalized in their minds, which slows down or rather block the process of social change. In work related advertisements also, women are generally placed at home doing the household chores and waiting for men, who are generally shown as bread winners, in business settings. Kilbourne attests:

The housewife, pathologically obsessed by cleanliness, debates the virtues of cleaning products with herself and worries about “ring around the collar.”

(488)

Going into the details of advertisements, it is often seen that the housewife is shown to be obsessed with cleanliness. Making her husband happy with clean cuffs and collars and getting a nod or a smile of appreciation becomes the sole purpose of her life. She never thinks of telling her husband to wash his neck properly. In one of the advertisements for a particular washing powder, she is shown washing her husband’s briefs and she becomes ecstatic as if reliving the sex episode and appears to be on the verge of self-induced orgasm. The act of washing her husband’s briefs becomes a sex substitute for her in his absence. She is shown to be fantasizing about it. Such advertisements, surely, are hegemonic in nature and they naturalize household jobs as washing clothes as the job of women and project it as a chore to be enjoyed. After all it has its benefits. Van Evra states that:

Many television advertisers... appear to be clinging tenaciously to an image of women as creatures who become unbelievably excited over a detergent’s cleaning power, whose worlds are narrow, and totally house bound and who never discuss anything... complicated or stimulating. (117)

Women are often shown worrying that they may not be fulfilling their role of a wife and mother properly. Men are generally not shown to be worrying about their children’s height or health. Education has not brought much change in women’s life in advertisements. A decade ago she was shown to be worrying over whether to buy Bournvita or Maltova or Boost, today also she worries over the same issue with a slight difference. Her education has made her aware that she needs to give calcium to her child and empowered enough to select the brand that has calcium in it. Women are generally shown mainly dependent on men for their living which makes it normal for them to do the household chores and not participate in any major
decision making except what to buy for her kitchen and bathroom.

 Besides the happy housewife stereotype, she is placed as a sex object in many advertisements. Women shown in advertisements generally have conventional beauty. They show no signs of aging, have flawless skin; have beautiful physical assets. They are young and anorexically thin. Most women in advertisements conform to this norm of beauty whatever the product they may advert to whichever audience. Their presence in advertisements is more for the purpose of titillation and more as sexual objects and less for conveying the message. Courtney and Whipple point out that women become sexual objects when they have no role in the commercial, but appear as an item of decoration. The following image of ‘Athena’ advertisement which appeared in a magazine called ‘Inside Outside’ illustrates how women’s bodies are needlessly used for male gaze.

Figure 1.3: Athena Bath Fittings

If figure 1.3 which is an advertisement of Athena Bath Fittings is studied, it can be said that there seems to be no need for using the naked backside of a woman in an advertisement for bathroom fittings except for the purpose of selling the product by influencing men. The advertisement uses the sexually evocative part of a woman and places the brand name ‘Athena’ in such a way on the backside of the woman’s body that it should appear as if the woman has got ‘Athena’ tattooed on it. Generally, in Indian culture, a large number of rural women get their husband’s name tattooed on their hands. It shows their loyalty and total acceptance of the man in their life. Similarly, getting the tattoo of ‘Athena’ on the very
personal part of their body would perhaps mean acceptance and loyalty to the brand. It is expected that men will remember the advertisement and go in for the advertised brand of bathroom fittings. Though this analysis may appear to be farfetched but perhaps it is one of the possible ones. Murray observes that such advertisements are quite close to pornography.

He points towards the commonality in advertisements that utilize sexuality, in particular the sexuality of women to sell the product. Such advertisements appeal to men in order to be profitable through the sale of the product and to women to make them conform to naturalized norms propagated by the advertisements. With the assumption that advertising has the power to cultivate stereotypes, it is seen that real life women get affected by this. They yearn for the kind of beauty they see in advertisements. It is seen that through such advertising, “women are constantly exhorted to emulate this ideal, to feel ashamed and guilty if they fail” (Kilbourne, 488) to present themselves as beautiful women because their “desirability and lovability are contingent upon physical perfection” (Kilbourne, 488) which they repeatedly see in the advertisements. For them, beauty becomes something that must be achieved and something that can be acquired through consumption.
This fixation may traverse all limits. They can go to any extent to conform to the set ideals and to manipulate and change their faces and bodies. They are so obsessed with their appearance that they are ready to accept “the surgeon’s knife, and undertake strenuous dieting and exercise regimens (Wolf, 478). They view themselves as objects and are dissatisfied with their physical selves. They do not look at themselves in totality; not as women but as sets of body parts each of which need alteration. It is often observed that women are reduced to a thing, and the thing is further reduced into body parts (See Figures 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7) which are beautiful and perfect but dismembered and disconnected from women. A whole lot of advertising images can be seen in magazines and television wherein disconnected body parts are shown. The images above illustrate the point being made that women are often presented in a dehumanized way in mass media. We get numerous such images of female body parts – lips, legs, breasts, torsos. Women, who are objectified by others, learn to do the same themselves. They feel the need to make different parts of their bodies perfect through cosmetic surgeries such as a nose job, a tummy tuck or a breast enhancement through a silicon implant. Celebrities such as Paris Hilton and Rakhi Sawant encourage such behaviour by openly talking about their surgeries and Botox treatments, thereby advertising and endorsing such things. Women are encouraged to devote time, money and effort to improve the way each body part looks. This kind of portrayal of woman and the importance placed upon woman’s physical appearance dehumanizes them by reducing them to sexual objects and creates an unequal environment. In an interview transcript, Sut Jhally, talking about women’s representation in videos (which includes TV advertisements too) says that “women’s bodies are surveyed, looked at, analysed in the same way that one might examine a landscape or an object. Their function in the video is to be examined, gazed at, and desired by men” (5). According to Jenson:

Advertising is a form of soft core pornography that uses a woman’s physical appearance specifically to attract customers or viewers when it is neither pertinent nor necessary in order for the message to be understood. (10) Frequently in such images the head is missing, implying that females are not valued for their intellect, but for their external form, their curves. Jhally believes that showing women as disjointed and disconnected body parts rather than as a person “detracts from thinking about women as real people with their own intellect, feelings, dreams and desires” (6). It reinforces the clichéd maxim that men think and women do, making it natural and therefore acceptable by women. Women become objects for consumption through consent rather than through coercion.
To sum up, it may be worthwhile to say that the representation of women in advertisements reduces their multifaceted characters only to one part of their bodies and that too the sexual part. In the words of Jhally, this problem is inherent in our contemporary culture and this

…complexity gets crowded out by a one dimensional definition of femininity based on a single story of the body of objectification of a passive sexuality whose only goal is to please men being told over and over again so it becomes the only way in which femininity is thought of. In that way, a lot of objectification is extremely damaging as it narrows how we think of femininity … Women become nothing but shadows or silhouettes, merely outlines; just empty shapes that men can fill with their own desires. There is nothing important and unique inside, nothing that makes them human. They are merely shadows of real people. (6)

Supposedly, a byproduct of the industrial revolution, advertising has since evolved as an apparatus of marketing communication. The ultimate aim of advertising is to increase sales by presenting the products and services in a positive light. As Wernick points out:

The more mass marketing has grown in scale and sophistication, the more extensively have value-laden icons and symbols been deployed to move the merchandise, and the more important the advertising industry has consequently become, over and above its economic role, in the ideological life of society. (2)

It has been noticed by different critics that advertising messages cannot be considered neutral. A whole lot of images that are used in advertising tend to naturalize the hierarchies of class, race and gender that are prevalent in society. It will not be out of place to say that advertising has also become an apparatus, like media and formal education, in the cultural reproduction of the current order.

It may also be pointed out that advertisers try to project that advertising compensates for all that is undemocratic in society as advertising provides equal opportunity to all to buy products. It democratizes consumption. In reality, it promotes products and along with products, dominant ideology which will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.