Conclusion

This research concludes by revisiting the main issues that were discussed in previous chapters. It assesses CDA as a critical approach through the analysis of advertising discourse and discusses how CDA functions as a critical tool in revealing the hidden agendas in discourse. The conclusion will also point out some limitations of the work and scope for further research.

The analysis extends over three chapters and studies advertisements taken from different magazines published during the last ten years and also some television advertisements. The analysis focusses on how stereotypes get naturalised and reinforced, which hidden meanings or ideologies are at work in the discourse of print and television advertising.

The study reveals that advertisements not only inform the consumers about the product, its availability, and its benefits but also help to indoctrinate consumers with a set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour that are considered vital for the primary purpose of advertisements, i.e., persuading people to become consumers. It was also revealed during the study that advertising discourse represents the dominant social institutions and upholds the existing power structures with little inclination to transform these power relations to suit their purpose. Advertisements find benefit in reproducing the existing knowledge about people and social spaces like home, school, office; institutions such as media, education in order to gain by their inherent power. In other words, they attach social meanings or implications with certain products which makes consumption a social requisite and symbolic of the social status that the product represents. Further, the fact about who uses the product and for what purpose is equally important for the social standing ascribed to the consumer, be it a male, a female, a transgender, or a child.

The present study looked at a number of product advertisements for detailed analysis and for reference to certain points made in the thesis. The analysis, therefore, chiefly looks at gender biases and discrimination that have become naturalised in society and therefore become the background knowledge (MR) for most advertisements produced. Most advertisement featured either men or women as models which is very much understandable because consumers are generally male and female. Advertising is a very powerful medium that has the capacity to blind people with socio-cultural ideology. It is an ideology which obliges media to portray women as weak, dependent, submissive, and men as strong.
adventurous, healthy and earning hands. Women have always been the ‘other’ sex for men or members of the outgroup, the ‘others’ who must be dominated and enslaved. The irony is that women happily accept the status of second sex subordinated to men because this is ‘natural’ and the media exploits this ‘natural inferiority’ of women to the fullest extent with the conscious consent of women. The language that is often given to women in contrast to men and the visuals that are used in the advertisement are no less symptomatic as it indicates their involvement in the larger social processes that help naturalise the ideology of consumption as important.

Drawing on a number of approaches to discourse analysis, an eclectic framework was used for the purpose of analysis. However, as pointed out earlier, it does not use all the analytical tools and does not use them in a particular order. It selects the analytical tools in any order, according to the language of the advertisements in question keeping in view the aim of analysis. Accordingly, with an overall CDA perspective, the analysis looks at the visual and the verbal aspects of advertisements to reveal the relationship between language used in discourse of advertisement and socio-cultural ideologies.

The analysis is mainly based on the critical analysis of the verbal and the non-verbal with the presumption that it would reveal certain cultural practices prevalent in society. The analysis illustrates that a critical analysis of the visual and the verbal texts of advertisements can lead to explanations of the ways language functions in the meaning formation and material practices which are generally biased.

The analysis includes the study of semiotics, transitivity, modality, pragmatics, speech act theory, contextual analysis, conversation analysis, intertextuality, etc. The analysis suggests that investigating the visual and the verbal in the discourse of advertisements is important as the features of a product are best described and presented through them. This is the reason why attractive models are used for presenting the product. More beautiful the model is, the better are the chances for the product to sell. The interaction between the verbal and the visual, in the present study, creates a discourse which highlights how different elements of advertising texts, most of them non-linear, relate to each other. Fairclough contends that the blend of the verbal and the visual elements is very important in the advertising texts. He believes that both the television and the print medium exhibit the blend of the visual and the verbal and highlight that the salience of the image is one of the postmodern characteristics of advertising. He says, “visual images allow advertising to more easily create worlds which consumers may be led to inhabit, because of the strength of the ideology expressed in saying that ‘the camera doesn’t lie’.” (Language and Power 172).
As a framework in the present study, CDA has successfully highlighted the inequalities proliferating in society. Using a variety of CDA tools, the study has aimed at uncovering the beauty myths as in the Maybelline, ‘Zeroone’, CibaVision advertisements. It has highlighted stereotypical treatment of gender in asymmetrical portrayal of men and women. Men are generally shown as strong earning hands and women as weak and dependent housewives as in the advertisements of Polo, Park Avenue beer shampoo, Lazboy and Hafele. In the Park Avenue Beer Shampoo and the Lazboy advertisements, for example, women are reduced to redundant things in the lives of men who can replace them with a glass of beer (as in the beer shampoo advertisement) or TV programme (as in the Lazboy advertisement). Both the advertisements echo similar ideology making women an object to be used at convenience of men. If women are presented as working professionals, they are not shown at their ‘uninteresting’ work place. They are shown in places like a café (as in IFB advertisement) or outside the gates of their children’s school (as in Polo car advertisement). Women are not presented as serious professionals concerned about their work but as worried women whose priority is her home; her household chores. For women, this is ‘right’ because it is natural. In the IFB advertisement, the woman is sitting in a café thinking about the housework that she has to attend to giving the signal that her job is insignificant and house work more significant as shown in the IFB advertisement. Similarly in the Polo advertisement, the woman (she may or may not be a working professional) is shown to be doing a chore of picking up her son from school in the afternoon, when the husband is in office. Also as mentioned in Chapter 1, the discourse of advertising stereotypes women in society and makes people form unconscious and unthinking attitudes about women and what they can do in society.

The advertisements Maybelline, Zeroone, and CibaVision capitalise on these mythically ascribed qualities of women such as beauty and eroticism. They, along with the Cinderella Myth of transformation, reinforce the stereotypes, legitimising the male gaze and eroticism.

Chapter 5 of the thesis includes transitivity which is one of the most important analytical tools in CDA. The analysis demonstrates that the study of social semiotics, in conjunction with verbal processes in advertisements, helps in interpreting how texts function within their contexts of production, purchase and consumption. The analysis of verbal processes involved in the construction of ideological discourse of advertising reveals that generally, material processes, relational processes and mental processes are used in advertising. The material processes are generally used to demonstrate what the products can
do when consumed; relational processes demonstrate the properties of the product (using the
verb ‘have’) and sometimes how the product transforms the consumer (with the use of the
verb ‘become’). The mental processes in the advertisements demonstrate how the processes
engage the consumer and the way advertisements are able to exert pressure on the minds of
the readers to become consumers, and how the target readers respond to the product or what
goes on in their minds when such pressure is exerted. It may be noticed that the use of
positive adjectives in the material and relational processes increases the pressure on the
prospective consumers without their being aware of it and the readers become consumers
through an ideological and hegemonic process. In terms of power relations, the transitivity
analysis illustrates the power in the hands of advertisers who are interested in maintaining the
social status quo wherein inequalities are seen as natural and it is these inequalities that
become the base of the advertising scripts which most people read and watch without being
aware of their willing participation in the process of accepting asymmetrical realities of the
society. In all the advertisements analysed, it was found that the advertisers serve the interests
of the dominant class and gender and thrive on these social inequalities. The study of
transitivity, as may be inferred from the analyses, therefore, supports discourse analysis and
makes it critical, by picking up semantic implications through the analysis of the verbal
processes or the words of actual action. It helps to explain critically that linguistic and non-
linguistic codes used by advertisements reveal certain predetermined world views to sustain
the existing order of things.

The use of ‘nominalization’ in CDA functions ideologically by obscuring who carried
out the verb process; what happened and when. It explains that the use of some particular
words reveals the position of people in society and their ideological stances, which are
concealed in language. Only a microscopic analysis of language use can lead to the
unconcealment of these stereotypies, ideological agendas and unequal power relations in
society. The nominalization used in the advertising privileges men to the disadvantage of
women. For example in the ‘Zeroone’ advertisement in Chapter 5, ‘plot’ and ‘weapon’ are
nominalizations used to conceal who hatches the plot and who uses the weapon even when
the visual suggests what the use of nominalization is trying to obscure. This obscurity adds to
the indeterminacy of meaning which works to the advantage of advertisers. In the
advertisement of American Express Credit Card, the phrase ‘Personalised attention round the
clock’ conceals identity of the agent giving the impression that if women (as suggested in the
visual) buy this card, they will get attention from everyone everywhere and not just from the
‘friendly executives eager to help’.
Deixis is another important CDA tool used in advertisements. As Yule observes that deictic expressions communicate more than what is overtly said, it becomes important to look for deeper meanings in expressions such as ‘you’, ‘that’, etc. In Park Avenue Beer Shampoo, the male model sits in a chair in a room and uses the word ‘that’ to point at the women standing on a small round platform as well as the glass of beer that replaces them in the next frame. It may be interpreted that the use of spatial deixis reduces the status of two women to a thing as they get equated to a glass of beer resulting in objectification of women.

Another important tool that was used to analyse advertising texts was ‘presupposition’. It is again a linguistic strategy of concealment. Besides, implying meanings without overtly stating them and by presenting things taken for granted and natural when they are undoubtedly challengeable and ideological, presuppositions aid the construction of meaning through the world-view of the readers themselves and their responses to the language. As language comes from the social contexts, how it is used and how it is understood, is directly related to the question of power. An example of a seemingly very innocent advertisement of Surf Excel on TV shows a child polishes his grandfather’s shoes and in the process spoils his own clothes. At this the grandmother addresses her daughter-in-law to say that the boy has increased her work. The advertisement presupposes washing being a female job, most women will feel interpellated by the advertisement. And this is perhaps the reason that the daughter-in-law immediately feels interpellated and says that it is easy for her as she has surf excel. It illustrates how such advertisements are entrenched in social practices it is in theses social practices that that social interaction gets a context which shapes the discourse and thereby power relations.

Turn-taking system as an analytical tool, especially in the television advertisements, revealed the social inequalities without being overtly apparent. It was seen, that women are not given enough speaking turns in the advertisements and the ones that are given to them are not significant enough, which is an indicator of the status of women in the social hierarchy. In the Beer shampoo advertisement, women do not get to speak at all. Doing the analysis of the turns given to women in terms of quantity as well as quality becomes indicative of their status in advertisements which reflect the socio-cultural contexts and practices.

In the Polo advertisement, even when the man is absent, his speech gets more space and he takes his turn. He plays God and his place is metaphorically shown to be omnipresent. Similarly, in the Bournvita advertisement, discussed in Chapter 3, ideological bias was noticed. The advertisement illustrates how the woman gets the least number of turns while the father and the son get to talk more and the content of their talk is more important while
the woman plays a stereotypical role of a housewife who does not possess enough knowledge to participate in the talk.

In this way, ideological bias against women in advertisements was noticed while doing the analysis using different tools. The general analysis suggests that advertisements emerge from social realities and reflect the ideology of the society in which they are created. As the advertisements are easily within the reach of common people, they can be clearly detrimental to the image and the position of women as they ratify the images that exist in the minds of people. The postfeminist advertising, however, suggests that patriarchal ideologies of gender in terms of women’s powerlessness and oppression are outdated. They argue that this is fast becoming a women’s world, in which relations of power are shifting in favour of women. The analysis of the IFB advertisement in chapter 4 for example suggests a modern working woman sitting in a café rather than in a kitchen. This corresponds well with what postfeminists may think and give women today a stronger position than women in the past, but if the advertisement is examined carefully, it reveals no change in the position of women. They may be physically out of their homes but the home and the housework is with them mentally. Similarly, in the perfume advertisement in Chapter 5, the woman is shown to be plotting to use a weapon. This corresponds well with what postfeminists may think and give women in the present times a stronger position than women in the past, but when the purpose of the plot is examined, it reveals no change in the position of women. Her effort to allure her man with a ‘plot’ and the ‘weapon’ does not make her powerful in any sense of the word. Seemingly empowered, the woman is shown in a seductive stance and is ready to use a weapon. But she does not realize the weapon may eventually work against her in real life and will be used against her to reinforce the existing ideologies and social power relations. Lazar believes, “Such representations, however, far from supporting the feminist cause, are quite detrimental to it. Feminists’ concern for women’s empowerment is appropriated and recontextualized by advertisers, evacuating it of its political content and instead infusing meanings quite antithetical to feminism” (159).

Advertising, in print as well as on screen, features males and females in their stereotypical roles. Advertisements have the psychological power to trap people in stereotypical roles and generally, it works to the disadvantage of women. The power of advertising to change, shape and mould public opinion has had a major impact on the lives of women. Also, fitting them into stereotypes helps advertisers to increase their sales while maintaining the status quo in society. Male stereotypes, generally, include power, prestige, good health, adventure but female stereotypes include comfort, family, affection, tenderness,
romance, etc. While men are ascribed such attributes for their own benefit, women are shown to have them for their men and families. Additionally, advertisements show men normally as they are but women are objectified for the male gaze as we see in the advertisements of Excalibur shirts, Zerone perfume and Ciba Vision contact lenses. They show men in offices, gyms, in outdoorsy settings (Park Avenue advertisement) while women are shown in domestic settings which include welcoming the guests and chatting with friends. When successful women are presented in the advertisements, they are shown to have the superlative faces and bodies. Such kinds of advertisements generate negative social effects because of the images and naturalised gender roles they throw up. It pressurises the ordinary women to keep themselves sexually attractive at all costs. Advertising perpetuates such traditional gender stereotypes because these stereotypes mirror dominant social and cultural values and advertisements reinforce these values as natural and evident.

It may also be worthwhile to mention here that the representation of women in TV advertisements reduce their multifaceted characters only to one part of their bodies and that too the sexual part. Women are also often portrayed in an obscenely objectified manner that reduces women as mere individual body parts rather than a woman. It creates an environment where men are not likely to see women as equals but will continue to judge them on their anatomical desirability.

The analysis corroborates the earlier studies in the language/discourse of advertising that in the product advertisements, there is a hidden agenda which can be unmasked only with a detailed and critical analysis of the advertising texts. It is often projected by the advertisers that advertising democratises consumption and compensates for all that is undemocratic in society by providing equal opportunity to all to buy products. In reality, however, it promotes products and along with products, ideology that generally constructs inferior position for one group in society, for example, showing women trapped in the patriarchal world of domesticity, childcare and beautification which reduces their status. It was demonstrated through the critical analyses that the advertisements keep sexist images and ideas in correlation and help maintain a male dominant system. The analysis asserts that language is not an innocent medium but a structuring medium that structures the world in deliberately chosen ways. It points towards how advertisements affect attitudes and behaviour of those who feel hailed by them. The moves that people make, as part of their socialisation, encode their priorities, exclusions and the ideologies that make and direct their social characters. Through the foregoing analysis, it was argued that discourse and society are shaped by each other and can be understood only in relation to their roles or contexts in society. The analysis
highlights that there is a two way dialectic relationship between discourse and society wherein language changes according to the context and situations change according to the kind of language used.

For example, the analyses illustrated that the representation of men and women in society needs to be understood in terms of the social values, beliefs and ideals attached to men and women. Unless we go deeper than the obvious meanings that are found at the superficial level, it may not be possible for us to fully grasp the socio-cultural politics that assigns certain roles to men but certain OTHER roles to women using linguistic or non-linguistic codes. The study of these linguistic and non-linguistic codes, while doing the critical analysis of advertisements revealed how certain ideologies and predetermined worldviews work towards sustaining the existing order of things. The study of transitivity, wherein focus was on the use of verbs and how the verbs position the ‘characters’ or the ‘actors’ and the ‘goal’, also reinforces the meanings arrived at during the analysis.

The thesis carries analysis of eleven advertisements – nine print and two television advertisements. The critical analysis of TV advertisements also revealed similar results as did the analyses of print advertisements. Advertisements are indeed the ideological state apparatuses that interpellate readers and viewers and ascribe subject positions to them through hegemony. It is through such ideological apparatuses that the unstability of hegemony can be especially taken care of. The discourse of advertising like the discourse of ISAs constantly works towards winning consent of people for a goal (consumption in advertising, for instance) which results from a struggle to maintain the relationship of domination. As hegemonic victories cannot be taken for granted, they have to be constantly recovered and struggled over. The ever-changing advertisements for the same product and a continuous onslaught of advertising texts in the print media and TV are proof enough of hegemony and its constant struggle to win consent.

It was also noticed that most advertisements are potential FTAs. They attack the positive face of the readers by asking face threatening, embarrassing questions. These questions revolve around the problems that advertisements first project and then promise to solve through consumption. Through this, readers are hegemonically persuaded to become consumers as readers do not want to face those embarrassing questions even when alone. Hence, to rectify the problem, advertisers give a solution laced with naturalised social notions and dominant ideology, thereby maintaining the status quo and supporting the existing power relations and inequalities.
The analysis demonstrates that CDA studies discourse to uncover the hidden and the opaque and brings to light how power relations work in society. A traditional kind of linguistic analysis of form may not prove to be quite useful in fully unpacking the concealed ideological intent. Traditional linguistic analysis would be useful only to the extent that it explains the structural relations of language that words get into as part of the advertising discourse. CDA is a socially committed paradigm that attempts to bring about change in society by revealing the concerns that have become naturalised and part of the social psyche. The analysis aimed at foregrounding the ideological function of media discourse such as advertising and exposing, how as a result of advertising, such obvious social inequalities rampant in society stop getting noticed. Such analyses empower people in a way that they look at all texts critically and do not get misled by the textual practices of commercialism and consumerism with advertising as their covert weapon. This may also help in making people critically aware of their own use of language as also that of others around them.

While doing the verbal and the visual interpretations of the advertisements, it was observed that advertisements have changed over the years. Advertisements now are more visual and less verbal. The reason for the reduced lexical density may be, as mentioned above, that visuals authenticate the promises made by the advertisements more than the words do. The visuals are more economical because a single visual flash says more than the elaborate verbal to demonstrate the efficacy of the product. Secondly, it is important to mention that advertisers understand the effects of subliminal advertising which embeds hidden messages that can be easily be inserted into visuals; and can be communicated to the readers/audience more through visuals, which makes the impact of visuals much more than words. Additionally, it may also be mentioned that models in today’s glamour world do not have many qualms about what may be the semantic implications of what they are asked to do. They communicate the voice of advertisers to the readers and become willing cohorts in imparting the socio-cultural ideologies which work against them in the garb of ‘interesting’ visuals, which the advertisers want the readers and the viewers to remember and perhaps talk about socially. Visuals have the ability to make people interested in the advertisement as they first see the visual and read the verbal only if the visual interests them. This is also one of the reasons why attractive models are used for presenting the products – presenting them as eye candies. Another important reason that needs mention here is that the print advertisements are generally supported by similar advertisements on TV and the advertisers rely on the viewers’ memory to fill in the gaps in the print advertisements using the corresponding TV commercials. These are some possible explanations why modern print advertisements tend to
keep the verbal text as short as possible to support the visual. This phenomenon that advertisements are becoming more and more visual was observed during the investigation of advertisements of cars, perfumes, readymade kitchens, house-products and cosmetics, etc. Even the social-message advertising is becoming more visual by the day. The anti-smoking campaigns, for example, emphasise more visuals not only in the campaigns but also on the cigarette packs as statutory warning. The two pairs of advertisements given in the appendix support this hypothesis. These advertisements appeared in magazines with a gap of more than five years. It can easily be observed that the later advertisement of the same product uses more visual and less verbal.

Although the present project did not discuss this phenomenon of visuals becoming more and more important in the advertisements owing to the limited scope of the study, it became quite noticeable during the study. This observation has implications for future research to establish this hypothesis. However, a lot of work is further required to critique the discourse of advertisements. The presentation and production of advertisements have changed to a large extent as has technology and advertisements will keep changing with time and with changes in the beliefs of people and social ideology. Therefore, the critical analysis of the discourse of advertising like other discourses such as newspapers, TV, social networking chats and images, and instructional materials such as text books, would always yield new findings which will be in accordance with the changes in social consciousness.