

UNVEILING THE UNSAID: THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI TV ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract

This qualitative research has a practical approach of analyzing the Pakistani television advertisements with an aim of exposing the concealed messages presented by the adverts. It transcends the obvious statements and explores the ways in which advertisements intelligently apply language to convey cultural beliefs and manipulate the audience. The study employs a descriptive discourse analysis approach to examine 15 prime-time television adverts of the popular Pakistani brands, which are carefully selected to take part in the study. Some of the theories that have been combined to analyze it are: inferential pragmatics, speech act theory, politeness theory, and presupposition. The results demonstrate how advertisements violate the principles of conversation to establish implied meanings, undertake actions such as persuading and promising, employ strategies to gain trust and connection, and rely on powerful cultural assumptions about family, success, and gender. These understandings demonstrate that Pakistani advertisements serve as their version of cultural dialogue, allowing the perpetuation and creation of social conventions and appeals to consumers. The study contributes to the disciplines of media linguistics and cultural studies through a closer examination of how language, persuasion, and the cultural identity of Pakistan in commercial communication are interrelated.

Keywords: Television ads, politeness theory, persuasion, commercial communication, descriptive discourse, cultural conversation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Literature Review

The pragmatic analysis of advertising is a highly fruitful branch of linguistic studies that deals with the creation of implicit meanings of advertisements being strategically built, in order to convince the audience. Specifically, the theory of conversational implicature that Grice (1975) formulated and his Cooperative Principle maxims have been widely used by scholars to study how advertisements can communicate indirectly through the violation of the same rules. As an example, the research of food and consumer goods advertising, including the example of the analysis of the Sasa slogan Ada Rasa Ada Harga, shows how the lack of compliance with the Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner maxims produces the sense of premium quality and emotional worth, which is supported by the multimodal techniques of visuals and music (Sari, Rosita, and Pancarriani, 2025). On the same note, the study of cosmetic, laxative, and telecommunication advertisements has shown that pragmatic strategies such as euphemism, presupposition, and coded implicature have a dual purpose to remain polite and be able to persuade, frequently by hiding as well as taking advantage of ambiguity (Crespo-Fernandez, 2021; Kadhim, 2023; Adindu and Chikamandu, 2022; Riska and Febryanto, 2022; Zuh). This literature establishes that one of the cross-cultural advertising strategies being employed is indirectness.

Alongside pure linguistic analysis, more and more recent research takes the form of a multimodal approach as it is realizing that the creation of meaning in advertisements is a joint construction in which verbal, visual, and auditory language usage interweave. Comparisons of Nokia ads and IKEA commercials indicate that secondary meanings, which involve self-

expression or home comfort, are constructed based on visual metaphors, color symbolism, and intertextuality and have to be provided with the help of the viewers (Kravchenko and Yudenko, 2023; Dewi, Suastini, and Juniartha, 2022). This corresponds to the results on the topic of social media advertisements and public health, where the hidden messages about the healthy lifestyle or the effectiveness of the product are implemented into the text and image (Sari, Suastini, and Juniartha, 2022; Suarez et al., 2023). Moreover, the importance of the socio-cultural context in the formation of the interpretation is also observed in the literature that states that collectivist cultures, such as Indonesia, might put emotional and symbolic appeals above direct rational persuasion (Sari et al., 2025). The impact of demographic and platform algorithms on the delivery and reception of ads is also studied in research on ad targeting in Facebook and Swiss comparative advertising (Kaplan et al., 2022; Kauz and Gollnhofer, 2025).

1.2. Research Gap and Contribution

Although there is an excellent body of international research on this subject, the gap in comprehending the way in which meaning is produced in Pakistani TV advertisements with the help of practical and multi-layered communication is still very large. The majority of available literature is based on Western and Southeast Asian (particularly, Indonesian) and several European settings. Although the findings of these studies provide viable theories, their findings may not be entirely applicable to the Pakistani niche of the societal and linguistic contexts. Such an environment consists of several languages, such as Urdu, English, and regional dialects, certain cultural traditions, religion, and various behaviors of people as consumers. Moreover, the majority of the research on the multi-layered communication in ads has paid attention to digital or print media such as TikTok or Instagram, but little to TV commercials, which is a significant and culturally significant channel in Pakistan. The proposed research, *Unveiling the Unsaid: A Pragmatic Analysis of Pakistani TV Advertisements*, will fulfill this gap. It examines how the Pakistani advertisers employ subtle forms of communication, such as implied meanings, violation of the rules of conversation, and integration of visual, musical, as well as bodily cues, in order to produce convincing messages that are relatable by the local audience. Based on the models of other studies, including the theory of conversation by Grice and the multi-layered analysis model by Kress and van Leeuwen, this research will offer insights into the context of Pakistan. It will demonstrate not only whether, but how these communication strategies work within the cultural context of Pakistan, and this may bring to light new indirectness, respect, emotional attachment, or symbolic connotation. The study would make contributions to the ongoing discussion on the working principle of ads all around the world, as it introduces the Pakistani culture into the subject and could be valuable to both local advertisers and researchers in order to bridge the gap between the international theory and practical communication in Pakistan.

1.3. The Research Problem and Its Significance

The success of television advertisements as a tool of influencing consumer behavior and shaping social norms is shown by their ever-growing acceptance all over our culture. The best advertisements do not necessarily tend to be the explicit ones, but the message that the ad depicts through the use of the implied or implied information. The main issue of the project is that the implicit meaning developed in the use of language in Pakistani TV advertisements as the means of persuasion has not been systematically examined. We are inundated with these messages, and yet the major part of the linguistic strategies and pragmatic means and the rules of how they convey that are not followed and perceived are under-researched and under-explored. Since these strategies play an important role in analyzing how an ad sells itself to its audience, the analysis will not be limited to describing what the ad is about, but will offer an approach to how it can be interpreted that there is more than just a piece of content in the ad, but a structure itself and processes involved in the implied communication. This research

project tries to crack the coded message in order to comprehend the way through which the advertisers create an appeal to the audience with an unconscious process of seeking common cultural knowledge and practical values that eventually influence the audience's perceptions, desires, and values. Moreover, the analysis has unique value to all three of the stakeholders regarding establishing a more profound insight into how commercial messages are built and delivered, in the particular socio-linguistic setting of Pakistan.

2. Theoretical Framework

The pragmatic framework provides the platform upon which the analysis takes place; it considers advertisements as communicative actions that are pragmatic (meaning they are supposed to produce specific perlocutionary actions, influence purchase decisions). This framework is based on four pillars, which are interconnected. To start with, the implied meaning is explained in the background of the Theory of Conversational Implicature by Grice. Grice has held that there is a principle of cooperation in the foundations of communication, which are underpinned by principles of quality, manner, quantity, and relation. But to form conversational implicatures, advertisements will often strategically violate these maxims. To express the concepts of freedom and adventure, an ad may, say, contain a beautiful picture of a car on some mountain road (breaking the Maxim of Relation when the written text is specifically about engine power). To decide the implicatures that the advertiser intended, this paper will methodologically find such flouts. Second, Speech Act Theory transfers analysis of meaning to action (Austin, Searle). It argues that the illocutionary force of utterances performs actions. Praise or persuasion is done through statements such as You deserve the best in advertisements and not just assertions. To determine what the most important persuasive strategies are in the advertisements, this research will divide the major illocutionary acts, directives, Buy now, commissives, we promise quality, and expressive, we care about your family. Third, Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson) examines the role of language in regulating the so-called face, or how individuals perceive themselves in society. These adverts must persuade the individuals without being offensive. This theory will be made use of in the discussion of how positive politeness is used in advertisements, which brings about solidarity. Positive advertisements use inclusion, using the word we, negative politeness using indirectness, and using humility, which lessens the face-threatening quality of delivering a sales pitch, which makes the appeal more acceptable and more culturally resonant. Lastly, the concept of presupposition will be utilized to determine the implicit cultural assumptions that advertisements have to operate upon. Presuppositions are also known as backgrounded claims that are considered to be acknowledged common ground. The phrase "get your natural glow back" in an advert for beauty cream means that the customer has lost it, and that natural glow is a popular and acceptable standard. This work will expose the deeply rooted, often unspoken cultural rules to which advertisements are activated to relate to the target audience by listing these cultural assumptions of gender, family, class, and success. Coupled together, these theories can be very powerful in terms of explaining the composition of the unsaid.

3. Research Questions

1. What pragmatic strategies (implicature, specific speech acts, politeness strategies, and presuppositions) are employed in Pakistani television advertisements to generate implicit meanings?
2. How do these pragmatic strategies reflect and reinforce specific Pakistani socio-cultural values and norms?

4. Research Objectives

1. To identify and categorize the key pragmatic mechanisms used to convey implicit messages in a selected corpus of Pakistani TV advertisements.

2. To analyze the relationship between the identified pragmatic strategies and the construction of cultural narratives surrounding family, gender, success, and consumer identity in the Pakistani context.

5. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to conduct an in-depth, interpretive analysis of the implicit meanings embedded within Pakistani television advertisements.

5.1. Research Design

The descriptive qualitative research design of the study is focused on discourse analysis. The methodological approach aims at an interpretive as opposed to a statistical approach to disclose the lower levels of meaning that are inexpressible in the advertisements. Qualitative discourse analysis is the best tool to use in the task as it allows a systematic study of the language in use in the context of its socio-cultural environment. The emphasis of this design is on understanding how the advertisements express their message in ways other than those that are quantifiable. It perceives any advertisement as one conversation, a well-structured communication that makes the viewer undertake social acts and develop mutual understanding. By this approach, the latent meaning becomes observable and understandable, and this enables the investigation of the tactics employed by advertisers to convey values, assumptions, and appeals to go into depth.

5.2. Data Collection and Sampling

The limited yet manageable number of 15 Pakistani TV ads was carefully selected to be used in data collection. The purposive sampling method was used to make sure that relevant information was chosen and the data used to support the objectives of the research. This non-random process allowed intentionally selecting advertisements that can be a good example of implicit communication. To select the advertisements, certain rules were used: the advertisements must belong to popular Pakistani brands, they must be broadcast in high time slots in the national TV channels during the last three years, and they should be from different product categories, like food and beauty or banking ones. This narrow and broad selection assists in identifying similar pragmatic approaches to language in the commercial advertisements in Pakistan. The advertisements were sourced from the official brand's YouTube and TV recordings to make sure that the information they had was authentic and could be analyzed properly.

6. Process of Data Analysis

Data analysis is organised in a multi-layered, methodical process of applying pragmatic theory to the set of 15 advertisements. Such an approach goes beyond creating a superficial account of the content of the ads but instead requires a methodical breakdown of the process by which implicit meaning is created and received. Every ad will be regarded as a full communication process, and its communication, voice-over, image, and music will be transcribed and analyzed as a unified piece of writing. The discussion takes place in four connected phases, with each one being informed by a certain theory.

7. Findings and Results

7.1. Dominance of Implicit Meaning in Advertising Discourse

The discussion of fifteen television advertisements done in Pakistan shows that persuasion is most frequently attained by the use of implicit meaning. Instead of using direct and factual statements concerning products, advertisers always use indirect linguistic means to convey values, pledges, and emotional appeals. This means that Pakistani TV advertising is not an informational discourse but rather a form of communication that is inculcated within the culture.

7.2. Use of Conversational Implicature

One of the major findings is the systematic application of conversational implicature by violation of the conversational maxims of Grice. Adverts often go against the Maxim of Quality in terms of making exaggerated or emotive assurances that cannot be verified objectively. The Maxim of Manner is also commonly neglected in metaphorical and imprecise formulations, and the Maxim of Relevance is broken when the products associated with the abstract concept of happiness, identity, patriotism, or self-worth are presented. These infractions prompt viewers to provide their own interpretations through common cultural background information, which proves that implicature is an intentional and arranged act of persuasion in Pakistani television advertisements.

7.2.1. *Shezan Juices - "Ghar Ka Shezan."*

The slogan of Shezan Juices, Shezan Juices Ghar Ka Shezan, is a violation of the Maxim of Manner in metaphor. It does not literally claim purity because it refers to juice from the home. The implicature is that the product has the same unadulterated, trustful nature of something that was made in the home environment with maternal care as opposed to unsafe or artificial products (Crespo-Fernandez, 2021). It mostly undertakes an expressive action, linking the brand to the feelings of trust, nostalgia, and homely love. It employs a positive politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987), which refers to the urge of the viewer to be a good provider who selects safe, wholesome products to make their family, so that it confirms their role in society. This ad is a strong and effective one that supposedly assumes that the products outside of the home are suspect and the final standard of safety and quality is the choice of a mother.

7.2.2. *National Foods - "Har Rishtay Mein Masala."*

The hyperbole is an attempt to break the Maxim of Quality in the tagline. Relationships are not literally spiced, but the implicature is that meals prepared with their products serve as the emotional reinforcement that makes relationships in the family closer and brings happy moments. It is a commissive act; it gives a promise that consuming their masala will not only make food tasty but will also positively influence the relationships within the family and help leave a lasting impression by appreciating the most important social unit that the viewer holds, the family. It is based on the assumption that family relationships in the modern world are stressful, and the discussed meal is an important, but endangered, family tradition that helps to keep these relationships.

7.2.3. *Shan – Khushiyān Chakh lo*

Khushiyān Chakh Lo (Taste Happiness) was a slogan that violated the Maxim of Manner by Grice because it involved the application of the metaphor. It implies that Shan masala makes cooking a happy and creative process (Crespo-Fernandez, 2021). The slogan was a succinct one that redefined domestic work as a creative skill. Through a straightforward strategy, it recognized the need for the cook to be appreciated. The commercial presupposed that the cuisine traditions are a valuable and significant component of culture that must be maintained.

7.2.4. *Tresemme - "Salon Finish" Campaign*

The ad was in breach of The Maxim of Quality because of saying that it has a salon finish, which is an exaggeration. The implicature involved here is that the customers would receive high-class and professional beauty in the comfort of their homes. The advertisement is commissive in nature since it offers universal access irrespective of social status. Positive politeness is applied in the ad, as it focuses on the wish of the audience to achieve an elitist image.

7.3. Speech Acts as Persuasive Tools

The results indicate that the Pakistani TV commercials mainly operate using performative speech acts and not mere statements. The most dominant are commissive, and advertisers

assure quality, trust, emotional safety, or moral uprightness. Both expressive speech acts are also typical because advertisements identify products with emotions like love, pride, nostalgia, and happiness. Directive speech acts are less common and are indirectly stated, typically in the form of advice or encouragement, and not normally using direct commands.

7.3.5. Nestlé Milkpak - Mayar jo bny apka Itebar

Through the theory of Grice, the ad violates the Maxim of Quality in generalizing through an emotive statement that cannot be literally checked. This entices the connotative implicature of MilkPak, safeguarding the dish, but also the credibility of the mother. The tagline is commissive in terms of Speech Acts, promising that the meal is reliable and will induce the feeling of emotional safety, but assuming that cooking food is a core part of a mother and her family's trust.

7.3.6. Peek Freans Sooper - Sooper Hai Zindagi

This advertisement slogan, Sooper Hai Zindagi (Life is Super), violates the Maxim of Relevance, meaning making an implicature that the cookie makes normal life more enriched. It is an expressive speech act that glorifies trivial pleasures and employs positive politeness by identifying the brand with optimism. It is on the assumption that life is dull and requires improvement.

7.3.7. Pantene - "Hair Fall Control" Campaign

It implies that loss of hair is a serious issue, which may spoil one's reputation and self-esteem. It works as an admonition (some kind of instruction) of the social dangers of hair loss and a commissive assurance of prevention and undisputable assurance. It employs negative politeness, presupposes that the self-esteem of a woman is fragile and vulnerable to external criticism, and claims that a neat hairstyle is an important aspect of an effective public image through highlighting a possible threat to the public image (confidence) of the audience and providing a protective measure.

7.4. Politeness Strategies in Advertising Language

The findings indicate that there is a massive application of politeness strategies in order to ensure that persuasive messages become socially acceptable. Strategies that include positive politeness, including the use of inclusive language and common culture allies, prevail. These policies focus on unity, family principle, and communal identity. Negative politeness strategies are used where there are sensitive topics like beauty, insecurity, and religious or ethical issues, where indirectness is used to bring down face-threatening connotations.

These observations demonstrate the significance of social harmony regarding the Pakistani communicative practices.

7.4.8. Dabur Vatika - Maa Ki Dua, Jaddon Ki Shaan

The Dabur Vatika advert intentionally broke the Maxim of Relevance by linking hair oil with the blessings of a mother and the pride of a family. This gave rise to the argument that the product was a means of cultural perpetuation where not only hair was being saved, but also family pride and identity. Therefore, the advertisement has done the expressive speech act of paying tribute to tradition since it presupposes that the hair of a woman is indistinguishably connected to the social status of her family (shaan) and with positive politeness to indicate how the viewer has their cherished lineage.

7.4.9. Lux - "Film Star" Campaign

Through rational use of celebrity endorsements, the customers were insinuated that they could also attain similar glitz and prestige in the aftermath. It appealed to the values of positive politeness to appease the hopes of viewers in executing an expressive speech act that equated the brand with cinematic fantasy. The persuasive power of the campaign was based on the cultural assumption that movie stars are an authoritative and aspirational ideal of beauty.

7.4.10. Telenor - "Khud Ko Pehchano."

The Maxim of Relation suffers at the hands of telecom connectivity being associated with self-discovery, which assumes that their service not only works, but it is also the means of self-reflection and discovering the real self amidst disorder. This command, which is delivered as a piece of advice, with a technique of positive politeness to express care about the inner needs of the viewer, other than the simple communication, tries to bring a business transaction to the level of philosophy. It is based on the assumption that modern life cultivates alienation and that genuine self-knowledge is a very desirable thing that is difficult to find.

7.4.11. UFONE – *Tum hi toh ho*

The exaggerated expression *tum hi toh ho* poses itself as something that brings ease and comfort in a hectic environment, since it is such a simple and powerful device that it can solve all the complications in life. It is an expressive gesture of cognizing the daily tribulations of the customer and a commissive gesture which promises to control and streamline. It uses positive politeness by knowing the desire of the viewer to lead a hassle-free life and giving a clear solution to the problem. The ad presupposes that the customer feels ineffective and powerless and that his/her daily routine is subject to minor administrative inconveniences.

7.4.12. Jazz - "Digital Pakistan"

The choice of jazz is an active, patriotic choice to add to the contemporary identity and national progress (Sari, Rosita, and Pancarrani, 2025). It makes the brand an enabler of this new digital future through the use of inclusive we language, a powerful positive politeness strategy that creates a feeling of in-group belonging of progressive Pakistanis, and a powerful expressive phenomenon of national pride and a cooperative phenomenon. It assumes that Pakistan requires a digital wake-up call, and the audience wants to be perceived as modern and techno-savvy, and nation-building citizens.

7.5. Presuppositions and Cultural Assumptions

The discussion shows how advertisements are based on massive presuppositions to trigger cultural beliefs without necessarily stating them. The general assumptions that can be made are the centrality of the family unit, the moral responsibility of women, the social significance of physical appearance, and the role of religion in ethical consumption. These assumptions, being addressed as common knowledge, are not subject to much questioning, and they act as potent persuasive means.

7.5.13. Fair & Lovely (Glow & Lovely) - Career Campaign

The implicature is that fairer skin is not merely about being beautiful, but it is the only requirement to be a confident individual, being socially accepted, and having a career opportunity (Kadhim, 2023). It is an act of order (change your skin to change your life) and a commissive act, which is guaranteed to deliver a radical socio-economic resolution. It is very preconditioned with a strong-rooted social prejudice according to which light skin is synonymous with competence, beauty, and earned success.

7.5.14. Meezan Bank - "Halal Banking" Campaign

In the underlining of the word Halal as opposed to the theological explanation of the term is a violation of the Maxim of Manner. The implicature sets up a clear divide of moral purity: traditional banking is either Haram or dangerous, and Meezan provides both spiritual and financial security (Suarez et al., 2023). It is intended as a caution against traditional finance and as a commissive assurance of righteous and celestial accolade. It walks a perilously personal issue by applying religious wording as an armour, and its business decision will seem a religious duty. The premise behind the campaign is that religious integrity in financial affairs is an acute, unquenched concern of consumers, and that other banks do not address this religious concern.

7.5.15. *Faysal Bank- Apki Khidmat Hmari Zimedari*

The conversational implicature in this advert was the violation of the Maxim of Manner. It contained the indefinite word Khidmat, Zimedari to imply a more profound connection, a relationship commitment, on a level beyond banking. It had promised continuous service and stability. Courtesy was expressed using the positive strategies, which portrayed the bank as an underprivileged, committed servant. This meant that this attitude towards a client was not common in other institutions.

8. Discussion

The results of the present research indicate that Pakistani television advertisements are not only commercial messages, but also the complicated relationships of the socio-cultural discourse. The implicature is widely employed by advertisers, which proves that they rely on the capacity of the audience to read the indirect messages based on the common cultural norms. This is in line with pragmatic theories that posit that meaning is mutually constructed between speaker and listener.

The prevalence of the commissive and expressive speech acts is an indication that persuasion in Pakistani advertisements is more emotional and relational than informational. Advertisements are aimed at establishing trust, reassurance, and moral legitimacy rather than coming up with factual product comparisons. Politeness strategies also contribute to this strategy by enabling an advertiser to appeal without being loud and obtrusive, especially in a collectivist culture.

The excessive use of presupposition points to the fact that advertising discourse contributes to the strengthening of the current social order, especially to the gender roles, family roles, religious beliefs, and norms of success. Advertisements help to perpetuate and naturalize the dominant ideologies of culture by putting forth the assumptions as natural and unchallenged truths.

In general, the discussion emphasizes how pragmatic approaches help Pakistani television advertisements to manipulate consumer behavior and, at the same time, affect the development of cultural identities and social values. This proves that the persuasive aspect, as well as the cultural influence of television advertising in Pakistan, involves implicit communication.

9. Conclusion

This paper has aimed at analyzing pragmatic advertising techniques applied in the advertisements on Pakistani television in order to communicate not directly expressed meanings. In a discussion of fifteen television advertisements in the prime time, the study examining the mechanisms of communication uses the conversational implicature theory of speech, the politeness theory, as well as the presupposition, to show that the central role of persuasive advertising in the Pakistani context involves the use of implicit communication.

It has been found that the advertisers use indirect language repeatedly even when some facts are being presented. Conversational implicature, which is the result of the intentional violation of Gricean maxims, enables advertisements to imply trust, quality, emotional satisfaction, and moral legitimacy without making the claims that can be verified. The discussion of speech acts also indicates that advertisements work mainly based on commissive and expressive actions, where they assure reliability, care, happiness, or ethical conformity, and persuade the audience on an emotional level. Politeness strategies and especially positive politeness are essential in rendering persuasive messages acceptable within society by appealing to the shared values, including family, solidarity, and national or religious identity.

The impact of presupposition as the central component of the discourse of advertisement is another important finding of the study. The Pakistani TV commercials often rely on implicit cultural beliefs about gender roles, family set-ups, beauty norms, religious ethics, and their vision of success. By regarding these assumptions as common knowledge, advertisements not

only persuade the consumer but also enhance and reinforce norms of existing socio-cultural realities.

On the whole, this study shows that Pakistani television advertisement is a type of cultural discourse and not commercial communication. Advertisements affect the behavior of consumers through pragmatic strategies and, at the same time, they affect social values and identities. The paper will enrich the literature in the area of pragmatics and media linguistics, as it offers context-related information about the interaction between the elements of language, culture, and persuasion within Pakistani television advertising. It also emphasizes the significance of critical recognition of implicit meaning in media, as an academic tool as well as a more knowledgeable way of reading the daily commercial messages.

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