

ECOLINGUISTICS AND ADVERTISING: DISSECTING IDEOLOGY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

Esha Javed

MPhil Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad
Email Id: eshajaved2852002@gmail.com

Ifrah Fatima

Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad
(Corresponding Author)
Email Id: ifrahfatima.ENG@tuf.edu.pk

Ayesha Imran

MPhil Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad
Email Id: ayeshaimran00000@gmail.com

Abstract

Ideologies are beliefs about the world which are shared by a group of people or a society which achieve transcendence through language. This study aims to examine the ideology transmitted through the language used in advertisements whether it to be beneficial, ambivalent or destructive through scrutinizing its role in protecting or harming our environment. The study employs Arran Stibbe's (2021) 'Concept of Ideology' from his work Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By (2021) to investigate the nature of discourse used in advertisements with a particular focus on how lexicogrammar, metaphors, and narratives are employed in the language to propagate ideologies. The present study is qualitative in nature which inquires three different domains of advertisement, i.e., addictive products, detergents and skin care products. A convenient sample of 9 advertisements, three from each category, is selected for examining the role of language. The findings highlighted that the advertisements of addictive products, detergents and skin care products are conveying the ideologies of addiction, consumerism and racism respectively through their language. Addictive products' discourses are ambivalent because they state warning; destructive since they are hazardous for consumption and beneficial because they prohibit from using them. Both skin care products and detergents are destructive because they use harmful chemicals that not only harm human beings but also our ecology. The study is significant in its providing awareness about the diversity of discourses which shape audiences' perception through certain ideologies and result either in ecological degradation or stability.

Keywords: Ideology, Discourse, Advertisements, Ecolinguistics, Media Study, Critical Discourse Analysis

Background of the Study

Advertisements are paid, non-personal forms of discourse often employing persuasive elements used by identified media sources. They are generally linked with mass media of newspapers, magazines, cinema, televisions and radio. Humans communicate conceptually by transferring 'pictures in the heads' through verbal (words) and non-verbal (art, music, gestures, photographs etc.) symbols. However, advertisements are different from face-to-face communication in terms of having persuasive power and lack of direct or immediate feedback. They have complex form and content and could be analyzed in different ways. For instance, the use of stereotypical elements in terms of gender roles and family can be examined or the propaganda they are promoting could be investigated (Rotzoll, 1985).

It is stated by William (1978) that ads play a central role in communication, representing societal perceptions and meanings as cited in Sanobar et al., (2022). It therefore shapes and reshapes

lifestyles' patterns. These advertisements promote stereotypical gender attitudes which generate a particular ideology within a community and have to be critically analyzed through CDA (Signorielli, 1989) as cited in Sanober et al., (2022). These advertisements are not merely limited to persuade a large public or shaping audience perceptions, but they expand to altering consumer behavior and impacting our environment either by promoting or demoting sustainable practices.

The language used in advertisements is multifaceted and strongly impacts the community and their behavior and when ads persuade effectively, they can alter the ways people behave (Johannessen et al., 2010). In recent years, the use of ads has been significantly changed in terms of providing awareness about environmental protection. These green advertisements are gaining importance, and the industries and corporations are promoting green practices and marketing practices for improving lifestyles and meeting the customer needs. (Ain et al., 2021).

But still there are certain advertisements which are using language and manipulative strategies to convince people that they are sustainable but covertly they are perpetuating ideologies which are harmful for the environment. The need of the hour is to uncover the linguistic patterns used in discourse which propagate ideologies in advertisements and analyze them critically within the dimension of ecolinguistics, an emerging field in CDA. Thus, this study employs Concept of Ideology from Arran Stubbe's (2021) framework of *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* to highlight linguistic patterns in the discourses of the advertisements to circulate certain ideologies and to reveal the beneficial, destructive or ambivalent nature of discourses.

Problem Statement

In today's fast paced era of globalization and industrialization, advertisements are playing a crucial role in dissemination of information about goods and services of various corporations by using such language patterns that convince masses to buy their products. However, it is a matter of concern that the language used in advertisements is constructing ideologies which represent collective minds in the society and their effect on the environment. Thus, the present study aspires to identify the linguistic elements used in discourse of the advertisements to recognize whether they are destructive, beneficial or ambivalent in nature. By examining the ecological concerns through discourse analysis, this study is insightful in expanding the field of CDA by integrating it with ecolinguistics.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the language used to construct ideology through Arran Stubbe's (2021) Concept of Ideology in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*
2. To analyze the ideology manifested through discourse portrayed in advertisements promoting sustainability or degrading our environment
3. To scrutinize the destructive, beneficial or ambivalent nature of discourses embedded in the ideology

Research Questions

1. What role does language play in constructing ideologies through discourse in advertisements?
2. In what ways, ideology in advertisements promote or demote sustainability practices impacting our environment?
3. How is discourse practiced in advertisements to develop ideology, recognized as destructive, beneficial or ambivalent?

Significance of the Study

This present study is insightful in its examination of ecological impact of ideologies generated via discourse in the advertisements of addictive products, skin care products and detergents. This study is also helpful in providing awareness to the general public about the diverse nature of discourses used in the advertisements through the examination of linguistic tools utilized by them. Moreover, this study will be favorable for future researchers to investigate other genres of discourse or narratives to reveal their ideological impact in relation to ecolinguistics, thus providing a broad platform for further exploration of interplay between language, ideology and ecological concerns.

Delimitation

This research studies only a short sample of 9 advertisements from three domains; addictive products, detergents and skincare products, focusing on the language; the lexicogrammar choices, metaphor and narrative entailed in the advertisements. The core of the research is to study only the ideology produced through beneficial, destructive or ambivalent discourses used in advertisements through Arran Stibbe's Concept of Ideology in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (2021).

Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis serves as an epitome to identify and interpret the role of ideology through discourse. The strength of CDA lies in its building the gaps between language used in context and the power dynamics in the society (Breeze, 2011). It has evolved rapidly in the 1990s and provides a base for textual commentary. CDA asserts that there exists a relation between language, power and ideology, as well as how people perceive the world through the text and envision people with the representation of the world. It thus creates awareness about social issues (Stubbs, 1997).

Fairclough (2010) states that the primary concern of CDA is to determine the impact of power dynamics and hierarchical structures in producing social injustice, especially the discursive practices, the consumption and production of discourse and the relation of discourse with power affecting the societal norms and cultural practices. It is an approach which analyses language and discourse used in a social context. It studies language and textual practices to reveal the relationship between language and power. It therefore meditates upon the construction of social dynamics, identity, knowledge and power through text either written or spoken in various contexts or environments.

The daily life activities based on interactions are deemed as discourses by means of which individuals communicate, transfer and receive information. The interactions are diverse ranging from personal encounters to broader social practices, from mundane conversations to interactions from public media, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines and to more formal discourses for instance political and academic lectures. Van Dijk (2008) states as cited in (Jabar & Yunus, 2017), interactions which provide information is language, which indicates several ways to make meaning such as gestures, image, gaze, pitch, intonation and other multimodal signs which can be evaluated and interpreted with the help of CDA.

CDA is expanding and covers a diverse range of areas. It is not only limited to the relationship between humans and societies but also explicitly sheds light on the importance of interaction between humans and their environment, thus giving rise to an emerging field called ecolinguistics. Likewise, CDA, Stibbe (2013) states that ecolinguistics relies on linguistic

analysis in terms of humans' relationships with more attention towards their link with ecological systems. It analyses discourses from consumerism as well as poetic pieces of nature to criticize those which promote environmental degradation while encouraging those which promote positive connection and care for nature.

According to the International Ecolinguistics Association (IEA), Ecolinguistics defines language's function in interaction among humans, other species and their environment. The focus of ecolinguistics is on destructive discourse: the stories which harm the human beings, animals or our environment by excessively using natural resources, which should be resisted; and beneficial discourse are the stories which need to be promoted because they are opposite to destructive ones. In the study conducted by Mouton.(2024), health is taken as something which has a significant and remarkable place in an individual's life and should be enjoyed, protected and struggled to maintain. Among the destructive discourses, advertising discourses are contributing in persuading the audience to buy unnecessary things, causing conflicting harm to individuals and the ecosystem.

Language is deemed as a source of manipulation used in advertisements that promotes consumerism and causes ecological degradation. A study conducted by (Yousaf et al., 2024), highlights developing countries like Pakistan, who use such linguistic patterns and choices in their advertisements which is causing significant environmental impact by spreading false information and misleading practices. The research enlightens the reality of language practices used as environment friendly but are actually deteriorating the climate and human health. The findings highlight that these ads undermine the background of the sources from where they have been collected, by using adjectives to appeal to the consumers and promoting consumerism rather than environmentalism. The linguistic analysis reveals that these advertisements are involved in environmental degradation in Pakistan by causing deforestation or overhunting of birds as well as excessive use of fertilizers to meet the needs of consumers. This study thus challenges the traditional linguistic practices of stimulating consumerism in advertisements in Pakistan by boosting eco-friendly products.

Since discourse involves multiple ways of interacting, therefore advertisements are considered as a source of information about products or services to convince people to buy them. It is a mode of communication having the ability to shape people's opinions and public perceptions towards the products and services (Kalsoom, 2019). The study focused on Pakistani fairness products ads which shape the public to admire beauty in the form of fairness. Through Fairclough's (1989) 3D model, the study highlighted the impact of advertisements on audiences, especially women propagating the ideology of racism. It was found out that fairness products ads are influencing women's identities who idealized fairness as means of perfection and beauty.

A study conducted by Ahmed et al., (2021) has investigated the use of metaphors by companies to seek sensual appeal of the customers. For this purpose, 13 advertisements were selected from multinational companies A, B, C and D and analyzed on the basis of Lakoff and Johnson's theory of Conceptual metaphor (2008) and Stibbe (2015) framework of ecolinguistic analysis. The findings of the research suggested that companies use metaphors to attract the audience by appealing their senses. Along with the use of metaphors, these agencies add to the product's value using Meta help by attributing other qualities to them. The research also significantly awarded the audience about the metaphorical patterns used in advertisements and their impact on

the general public. By assigning positive qualities to products, the agencies instill a sense of being a right choice for the customers thus impacting their feelings.

Similar study was conducted by Ani et al., (2021) to examine the linguistic features used in ads. The study focused on how language is used by manufacturers to develop stories which sound eco-friendly and resonate with the values of ecosophy. This study highlights how ecologically preferences are created through language for the customers. For this purpose, data limited to advertisements of beverages and dairy products was collected from official websites of five food companies. These ads were analyzed through Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Theory, by using Stibbe's (2015) model of ecolinguistic analysis. The analysis revealed that the food manufacturing companies establish various stories using language which are implicitly stated and manipulate the minds of purchasers or consumers by shaping their perceptions and considering them mundane. Furthermore, this research is helpful to recognize the discourse produced by food companies as ecologically destructive which ignites consumerism. Similarly, language used in the ads is believed to be specifically for marketing purposes but it indirectly promotes the ideology of consumerism.

Research Gap

The existing literature mainly deals with the role of advertisements in shaping public perception overlooking ideological aspects incorporated in the ads and the nature of discourse. Therefore, the current study examines the ideology constructed in the discourses of ads through language analysis using Arran Stibbe's Concept of Ideology in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology And the Stories We Live By* (2021).

Research Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature which has analyzed 9 advertisements from three categories, addictive products, detergents and skin care products, three from each category, selected randomly through convenient sampling from national as well as international companies, through drawing its foundation from Arran Stibbe's Concept of Ideology presented in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and Stories We Live By* (2021).

This framework is a combination of various linguistic theories including Critical Discourse Analysis, Frame Theory, Metaphor Theory, Appraisal Theory, Identity Theory and other related theories. However, these theories were concerned with the relationship among human beings. But, the focus of this framework is exclusively on the relationship between human beings and nature. Stibbe (2021) describes stories as "cognitive structures in the minds of individuals which influence how they think, talk and act" and "*Stories we live by* are stories in the mind of multiple individuals across a culture" (p. 6). In eco linguistics, the role of language is investigated to explore its sustainable practices and interactions among humans and their environments. Stories are manifested through language and the characteristic forms of language which disseminate specific ideologies are discourses.

"Discourses are standardized ways that particular groups in society use language, images and other forms of representation" (Stibbe, 2021, p. 20). He has identified eight forms of stories which are demonstrated through language. These are ideology, framing, metaphor (a type of framing), evaluation, identity, conviction, erasure, salience and narrative. Among these stories, the present study examines only ideology which is perpetuated through linguistic tools in the advertisements. The stories are not merely the sheer representation of the reality, but they

fundamentally shape our perspectives of negotiating the reality. However, the stories that make use of discourses, construct ideology

Ideology

“Ideologies are belief systems about how the world was, is, will be or should be which are shared by members of particular groups in society” (Stibbe, 2021, p. 21). It is stated that ideology in terms of Critical Discourse Analysis as belief systems or worldviews are practiced by a specific group of individuals. Some consider it negative (for example racism), others take it neutrally as a belief system of any group in society either positive or negative. Likewise, Stibbe (2021) mentions Van Dijk (2011) concept of ideology as a form of social cognition and states the example of ideology of new global economy given by Fairclough (2003) to provide essence to the story which is a version, a perspective or description of the world which is not necessarily false but is a possibility among many others (p. 21). These stories are conveyed through the standard linguistic features (discourses) used by a particular group in a society to reflect certain ideologies. Stibbe (2021) illuminates that in discourse analysis, ideology is revealed through the repeated patterns of linguistic features in multiple texts. However, the focus of ecolinguistics analysis of an ideology is to investigate whether it is perpetuated via destructive, beneficial or ambivalent discourses.

Destructive Discourses

Stories which are perceived to be causing harm to the environment are called destructive discourses. For example, the discourse of neo-classical economics begins by dividing the world into certain kinds of people. These are consumers, workers, land owners etc and this is called functionalism, defining people in terms of their function. However, the function of the consumers is to satiate themselves, lacking attention to the natural world.

Ambivalent Discourses

Discourses which are claimed to be abided by the sustainable practices but often lead to environmental degradation. For example, promotion of recycling of the products without reducing their over consumption. Similarly, discourse of zoos is ambivalent because on the one hand, it emphasizes connection with nature and conservation, but on the other hand, it isolates animals from their natural habitats to put them in cages in order to be gazed at as 'others' (p. 25).

Beneficial Discourses

Discourses which convey ideologies to encourage people to protect the systems support life (Stibbe, 2021, p. 26). For example, haiku nature poetry is traditional Japanese discourse which is considered beneficial in modeling a close, respectful, and non-destructive relationship of humans with nature. Ordinary plants are animals that are considered worthy of representation and referred to in concretely imaginable ways (e.g. frog rather than fauna) and are represented actively through being given the role of actor and sensor (p. 28).

Language Analysis

The language employed in discourse reveals the ideology in advertisements. The choices of lexicogrammar, metaphors and narrative all play an important role in ideological propaganda

Lexicogrammar Choices

Lexicogrammar choices are a combination of lexis (words) and grammatical structures (grammar) which are used to convey meaning, shape interpretations and to accomplish communicative purposes. These choices are affected by context, audience and the purpose of the discourse. They devise how ideologies are constructed and perceived.

Metaphor

Metaphors are linguistic tools that impact cognition by shaping how people perceive, understand and develop relationships with the world. They directly attribute one's quality to other non-identical things.

Narrative

A narrative is commonly referred to as written or verbal text or story which appeals to the emotions by embedding events which resonate with cultural values.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section involves examination of language used in ads by identifying the lexicogrammar choices, metaphor and narrative. It would help in identifying the ideology constructed via different types of discourses.

Category 1: Addictive Products

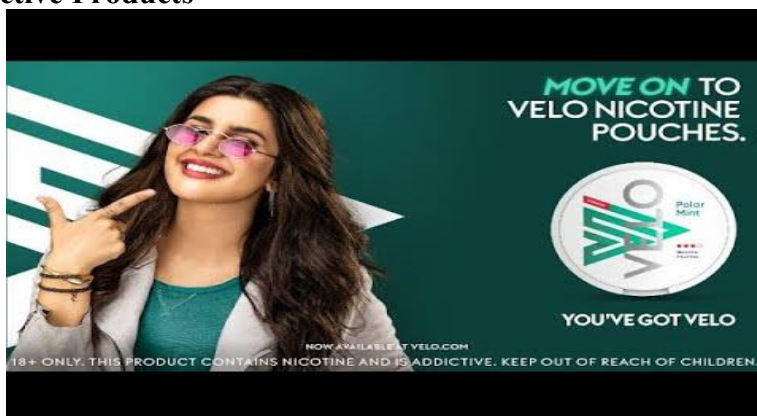


Figure 1

The employment of the phrase “Move On” is a command imperatively urging the need for acting upon it. It also suggests that this product is a better alternative for the users conveying a positive connotation. The use of the pronoun “You” creates a direct connection between the product and the viewer. The ad has stated a specific age group for the consumption along with its addictive nature without clearly exhibiting the warning sign or tag. Thereby, masking its potential health implications, the repetition of the brand name “Velo” is suggesting its cruciality in modern lifestyles.

Furthermore, the product is metaphorically associated with happiness, joy and refreshment through the portrayal of a girl who is smiling and enjoying the product. The ad narrates a kind of transition from typical harmful products containing tobacco to nicotine pouches which are equally health hazardous and addictive.



Figure 2

The ad begins with the clear warning statement, which infers that it has a different purpose to persuade the viewers. The ad uses an idiomatic expression “more than meets the eye” highlighting that the product has something more than it appears generally or the general appearance or perception of the product is withholding something from the audience. Furthermore, the ads use imperative sentences to directly address the audience. In this case, the message is delivered directly from ZYN to the retailers prominent in the line “when you stock Zyn, you do more than just sell Zyn”. However, the advertisement has appealed to the viewers by shifting the narrative focus of actual product selling and promotion to social responsibility. The brand is involved in “a portion of every purchase goes back to helping community”. This is what the brand was metaphorically stating through, “Zyn cares”, framing itself with a positive picture, ignoring the potential and fatal risks of addiction of the product. The repetition of “Zyn” in the ad emphasizes its positive role in sustaining the helping community despite its harmful addiction.



Figure 3

The billboard ad is focusing on the consequences of vaping which affects lung health. It uses direct and strong imperatives “be vape free and quit vaping” to emphasize on taking urgent action. The word “breathe” is capitalized to create awareness about the impact of vaping on human’s health. The ad also uses the pronoun “your” to directly convey the message to the

consumers. Furthermore, the line “your lungs don’t deserve destruction” metaphorically illuminates the involvement of vaping in causing irreversible damage to the lungs. The ad narrates the bombastic side effects of vaping regardless of the brand, the flavor and the influencers promoting it to accentuate modern lifestyles.

Ideology

Through the language analysis of addictive products ads, it is found out that certain ideologies are conveyed to influence masses. Nicotine addiction is being promoted as an alternative to tobacco in order to normalize dependence on harmful substances. The reliance on nicotine to seek pleasure disrupts psychological functioning of the human mind. However, this fatal addiction has adapted different names masked under brands, diverse flavors and easy availability, but they altogether rectify themselves from their responsibilities in causing addiction by explicitly stating warning.

Nevertheless, there are counter ideologies which are spreading simultaneously promoting anti-vaping narratives to aware people about their wellbeing. They focus on mental and physical health which is drastically altered by addiction habits. These ideologies are playing their role in counting the leveraging consequences thus advocating for healthier and sustainable lifestyles.

Nature of Discourse

The discourse used in addictive products ads is classified as destructive, ambivalent and beneficial. The first and second ads are categorized as both destructive and ambivalent. They are destructive because they are spreading the ideology of addiction by harmonizing the use of nicotine in the products. On the other hand, they are deemed as ambivalent in terms of labeling nicotine as an addictive product, implicitly blaming consumers for the consumption of these hazardous substances without even realizing them. However, the third ad is taken as beneficial because it is helping communities know about what they are consuming and what the future implication of its consumption is. Thus, it awares the people to quit vaping and other addictive products generally in order to achieve real felicity through sound mind and body instead of temporary pleasure gained through addictive products.

Category 2: Detergents



Figure 1

This ad directly addresses the consumers using the pronoun “You” but it develops a connection between people and their clothes. There is personification where emotion of love is attributed with clothes implying that clothes have feelings like human beings. The phrase “new love”

highlights that the detergent is extremely pleasant for the clothes that they enjoyed being washed with it unlike previous detergents. The detergent's slogan "love clothes love Voom" relates love for the clothes with the love of the product, hence increasing the purchase of the detergent. The mentioning of "fashionable forever" and "future consumer" narrates the inevitable need of the product in becoming fashionable and satiating customers.



Figure 2

In this advertisement, the detergent is named "Hero" conventionally, a hero is a human being who saves other's lives or helps in solving others' problems. But in this advertisement, the detergent is called a hero because it is powerful and washes away stains bringing complete cleanliness. The statement metaphorically "all in one" indicates the capability of detergent in providing solutions to all problems faced by people while washing clothes. The use of "optical brightener" targets the audience who want their clothes to shine brightly. It thus, narrates that the detergent is helpful in not only fighting stains but also in improving the appearance of clothes, making them lively and newer. The detergent centralizes itself by becoming customers' selection who seek both cleanliness and visual appeal.



Figure 3

This uses a powerful concept to attract the audience. It targets the general public who are unable to spend quality time with their family due to heavy indulgence in chores or other affairs. Words like “new Tide” and “double power” suggest that the brand cares for you therefore they have improved the quality of their product to reduce your burden. “Tide for time” metaphorically represents the role of the detergent in efficiently cleaning the product, saving time for people to spend with their loved ones. The statement “put Tide to work make time for life” recounts that the detergent is a trustworthy partner whom you can rely on to work assisting in enjoying life activities.

Ideology

The ideology which is perpetuated through the ads of detergents is consumerism and fashion. These advertisements encourage consumers to view detergents more than just a product but as something which is an essential part of life and helps us in time management by effectively doing its work.

Nature of Discourse

The discourses are destructive in nature. Detergents use harmful chemicals to brighten the clothes so that customers are attracted. The “optical brightener” used in detergents is extremely hazardous, causing skin allergies or sensitivities, when mixed with water it contaminates the water bodies thus affecting marine life. These discourses are only working for the benefits of humans or the companies ignoring the potential risks for other species in the environment.

Category 3: Skin care Products



Figure 1

The ad hierarchically ranks “self-care” at the top most to incorporate relativity with every individual viewing the ad. Skin care is metaphorically compared with two notions; luxury and necessity, to redirect the general perception of hygiene maintenance from extravagance to an important activity. The statement “self-care is not a luxury it’s a necessity” therefore, imperatively narrates a strong message, leaving no room for concerns for prioritizing hygienic practices in their routines. The green leafy background indicates that the ads uses nature as a tool to attract attention of the consumers deeming the product’s connection with nature or using natural ingredients.



Figure 2

The lexicogrammar choices influence audience perception in this ad. The word “brighter” is an adjective combined with the noun skin, “brighter skin” which appeals to the audience who wants whiter and brighter complexion. Moreover, it metaphorically associates beauty with brighter skin. The exclamation “this wedding season!” instills a sense of immediate action. The ad offers a twenty percent discount which perfectly resonates with the sense of urgency to buy the product to achieve the desired results. The ad sets forth that the product is a must have to improve one’s appearance in the wedding season.



Figure 3

This ad uses words like “fair, whitening, brighten” to create emphasis on getting fairer. It is a whitening cream the ad of which directly links being fair with being handsome as the name of the product highlights “fair and handsome”. Furthermore, the time given for achieving the desired result is “5 days” which appeals to the audience who want rapid results due to time constraints.

Ideology

The ads of skin care products are mainly involved in constructing the ideology of racism and consumerism. These ads are created to target those people who are facing skin problems to make

them more insecure therefore, framing them to buy these products to fit in society and feel confidence.

Nature of Discourse

The discourses of this category fall under destructive discourses. Because they are masking their responsibility in causing masses insecure about their looks. These products often use harmful chemicals which have negative effects on humans as well as on our environment such as plastic packaging. The sole purpose of these ads is to provide solutions to the problems they have created themselves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has examined the language used in advertisements, with a particular focus on how lexicogrammar, metaphors, and narratives are employed to propagate ideologies. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and ecolinguistics, the study has demonstrated how advertisements not only market the products but also shape public perception and influence consumer behavior. By analyzing various advertisements from both local and international brands, it has become evident that the language of advertisements plays a crucial role in constructing ideologies, often aligning with societal norms or challenging them. The study has also highlighted how advertisements use language to create emotional connections, often blurring the line between necessity and desire, and how they perpetuate either beneficial, destructive, or ambivalent discourses.

Furthermore, this research has shown that advertising discourse transcends regional boundaries, highlighting the universal power of language in shaping consumerism and public ideology. The integration of ecolinguistics has provided a unique perspective in analyzing the impact of advertising on society, offering insights into how advertisements can either promote harmful ideologies or challenge existing beliefs. In essence, advertisements are not just about selling products; they are powerful tools for influencing ideologies and shaping societal values. This study contributes to the understanding of advertising discourse by bridging the gap between CDA and ecolinguistics, emphasizing the importance of language in constructing and perpetuating ideologies in the global marketplace.

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