



## Language of Persuasion: A Discourse Approach to Advertising Language

Antony Flergin

Department of Linguistics, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu-46, INDIA

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### Abstract

*In the new scenario of consumerism advertisements have become very popular and an indispensable source of information. The very language of advertisements triggers curiosity and surprise. Innumerable sophisticated and cotemporary printed and visual media emphasizes the role of language in the advertisements. Compared to a few decades back, the media of this century depends more on linguists than the story tellers. The persuasive power of advertising language is very much experienced today. How these advertisements affect the human mind is a quite interesting enquiry. However this has been done from different angles by anthropologist, psychologists and sociologists, no approach is complete with out a linguistic analysis. The basic requirement of advertisement is communication. Discourse and pragmatic approach, one of the spontaneous outcomes of the traditional language studie is made use in this analysis. Persuasiveness of advertising language is explored at three levels; 1) Cohesion and coherence, 2) Speech acts and 3) Ideology. A few advertisements published in Indian print media are selected for the analysis.*

**Keywords:** Advertising language, discourse approach, persuasiveness of language.

### Introduction

In the context of innumerable sophisticated and cotemporary printed and visual media, the role of language has become so important. Compared to few decades back, the media of this century depends more on linguists than the story tellers. The texts create different versions of reality in the society. The media which is representing the society in all its aspects has understood the power of language. It can never ignore the language in the pretext of flood of different modes of advertisements. It is not the experience and events that rule and mould the society rather the way these experiences and events are reported or expressed through texts is important. The focus in language has gone further to the structure of the language. The pragmatic and discourse approach to language with special concern with structures initiated a system of contextual and ideological analysis of language structure, discovering irresistible influence of language structure. This has been one of the spontaneity and fruit of the traditional language studies. The persuasive power of language depends on these language structures. The persuasive power of language is very much experienced both in printed and visual media advertisements. This is how this language is different from other types of language structure like argument. Persuasion manipulates emotions, appeals to heart, changes feeling level while arguments appeal to the brain, sense of reason and logic.

**Objectives:** How these advertisements persuade the human mind is a quite interesting enquiry. This has been undertaken by different disciplines such as; anthropologist, psychologists sociologists and so on. But no approach is complete with out a linguistic analysis since the basic target of advertisement is communication. According to linguists there are three levels of

human communication such as; meaning, form and substance or discourse, syntax and phonology. However Bloomfield focused on relation between form and substance, Firth and Chomsky led linguists towards the study of sentence structure beyond morpheme and phoneme, and analysis of conversations<sup>1</sup>. These two initiatives were the impetus to all types of discourse level analyses. To find out whether there are supportive linguistic and discursive elements which have very decisive role in persuading the viewers or readers is the main objective of this research paper.

### Methodology

Though there are many approaches, discourse approach is made use in this analysis. Persuasiveness of advertising language is explored at three levels; i. Cohesion and coherence, ii. Speech acts and iii. Ideology. A few selected advertisements published in different printed media in India are selected for the analysis.

**Cohesion and Coherence:** Cohesion is not just the linguistic feature within the text, but the fact that this feature leads readers to perform certain mental operations to locate and take note of earlier or later parts of the text as they are going through it<sup>2</sup>. At grammatical level of cohesion, there are two antecedents with exophoric and cataphoric references in this advertisement. The exophoric reference 'you' and its generic forms occurs more than 15 times referring to the reader who exists outside the text. The cataphoric reference 'we' pointing forward to the word 'STAR CRUISES' has not been used yet, occurs fives times altogether. There are no anaphoric references. The more number of references indicates the more focus on the subject. The star cruise is not concerned with anything other than the reader. This is the reason more references have been given on the reader. In short

this is set as a conversation between the star cruises and the reader. They focus the reader greater than their cruise itself. This creates such a feeling of significance in reader himself, to be attracted to what have said in the ads.

Lexical cohesion occurs as a result of the semantic relationship between words. The simplest kind of lexical cohesion is the repetition of the words and more common is the repetition of words related to the same subject. This creates lexical chains through out the text. In the above advertisement apart from the grammatical cohesion the clauses and phrases are repeated regularly. The words such as; 'view' and 'spectacle' repeated five times, the noun 'offer' is repeated three times and 'holiday' four times etc. In cohesion small turns of phrase, each apparently isolated, constitute, in the aggregate, the warp and woof of persuasive discourse<sup>3</sup>.

At coherence level the very first sentence is telling about the holiday destination without mentioning the place but as incredible. While reading the text in forward the reader is curious about the place where this cruises is going. The reader has to wait until the last sentence to end up the suspense. The final sentence tells that the holiday destination is nowhere but 'paradise'. The key words such as; 'view', 'offer' and 'holiday' are the coherence markers which add the whole text a flavor of perfect coherence. Structural choices like verb voice can even alter the persuasiveness of messages at cohesion level by increasing enjoyability of the message<sup>4</sup>.

**Speech Acts:** The title of the advertisement of Tata Steel is a question asking 'Why would we encourage this lady to make people breathless?' The very title is a direct question referring to the lady whose name is mentioned later. She is Bachendri Pal, Head of the Tata steel Adventure Foundation. The pronoun 'we' refer to the Tata Steel. The rest of the text is an answer to this question.

**Set out for a country where your view from the balcony changes every hour.**

We're sure you'll agree with us that this holiday destination is truly incredible! The view from the balcony leaves you spellbound and mesmerized, not to mention simply breathtaking views of nature's own spectacle. If this isn't enough there's a mouthwatering offer in store that comes with some fantastic and luxurious options only for the select few. This offer is loaded with On board F&B credits\*, priority check in and checkout, priority seating for entertainment shows and enjoy our Butler services\* too. Wow, that's what we call holidaying, King size!

And if you're the kind of traveller we hope you are, there's still so much more. The pampering hospitality extends across a variety of plush suites and rooms. So, whether you choose to live like a king or otherwise, expect to wake up in the perfect haven.

Once you are done with the lazing around, a range of activities awaits you. From the many attractions, you can choose to take a walk along our shoreline and soak-in the panoramic view or then, relax under a perfect Mediterranean weather with a chilled beer (or two).

After you've built up an appetite, prepare to be spellbound for choice with Flavours from around the world. Luckily for the party animal in you, the celebrations only get bigger. You can enjoy mesmerizing live shows and dance performances, or carry your lucky charm to the casino, else watch yourself become the life of the party at the nightclub.

And yes did we mention that this holiday comes to you with a limited time only price, which puts all holiday destinations to shame?

So come discover a paradise that's waiting to be discovered.

**SPECIAL OFFER ON SUITES & BALCONY CABINS**  
Save up to Rs. 30000\* per person for 5N cruise on SuperStar Vingo. Attractive discounts available on 3N and 2N cruises also.

**STAR CRUISES**  
The Leading Cruise Line In Asia-Pacific

www.starcrusecountry.com - It's time you visited.

\* Further information visit Star Cruises - Ahmedabad: 07955 07599, Bangalore: 08020 63007, Mumbai: 022 4128848, New Delhi: 011 28641814/7093 or Bookings please contact your nearest Travel Agent or our Preferred Sales Agents: Travel Tours: 080 4480300, Thomas Cook: The Holidaymaker: 0226 5920333, SCRC World Forum

Figure-1  
The Week, June 3, 2012

**TATA**

**WHY WOULD WE ENCOURAGE THIS LADY TO MAKE PEOPLE BREATHLESS?**

- Because Bachendri Pal of The Tata Steel Adventure Foundation conducts leadership training camps across India's mountainous terrains for business leaders of tomorrow.
- Because, we believe that pushing people to their limits makes them indestructible leaders.
- Because to climb a mountain or cross a river, it takes nothing but willpower.
- Because in the same way, determination is all it takes to take on the challenges of tomorrow.
- Because, by pushing themselves to go on, people are able to scale great heights.
- Because making leaders is just as essential as making steel.
- Because it's not just a company policy, it's an unwavering belief.
- Because, each time a new leader rises to the surface, our conviction deepens.
- Because however strong our steel may be, our values remain stronger.

**TATA STEEL**  
Values stronger than steel

**Bachendri Pal**  
Head, Tata Steel Adventure Foundation

www.tatasteelindia.com | www.valueabled.com | Join us at Follow us on

Figure-2  
Industrial Economist, June 2013

The first sentence, Bachendri Pal of the Tata Steel Adventure Foundation conducts leadership training camps across India's mountainous terrains for business leaders of tomorrow<sup>5</sup>. It is a declarative sentence telling about the programme of the Tata Steel Adventure Foundation.

The third sentence is an assertive sentence beginning with the phrase we believe that pushing people to their limits makes them indestructible leaders.

To climb a mountain or cross a river, it takes nothing but will power is an indirect imperative of speech act. It means that we must need will power or to climb a mountain or cross a river will become impossible.

The sentence making leaders is just as essential as making steel is an indirect warning that both making of steel and making of leaders are essential. We can not escape from the responsibility of making leaders. Warning is for the benefit of addressee not of the speaker. We, the readers must be responsible of making the leaders.

The phrases such as; it's an unwavering belief and our conviction deepens point forward the most attractive phrase of the advertisement that 'however strong our steel may be, our values remain stronger' it's a declarative sentence.

Final note at the bottom of the brand name 'values stronger than steel' is an assertion that our values are stronger than the steel produced.

The conditional indicative 'because' beginning of each sentence signals the intended relationship among the clauses, such that message recipients automatically infer the presupposition necessary for completing the argument. Thus it leads to persuasion<sup>6</sup>.

There are altogether three types of direct speech acts such as; question (1), declarative (2,6) and assertive (3,7) and two types of indirect speech acts such as; imperative (4) and warning (5)

**Ideology:** Advertising claims vary in the degree of confidence signalled by the language used. Specific words and phrases are often used for signalling the probability of a claim being true<sup>7</sup>. Whether we are aware of it or not, these words are never neutral. They always represent the world and create a kind of relationship with the people with whom words are communicated. In other words it always to some degree promotes a particular ideology. An ideology is a set of beliefs and assumptions regarding good or bad, right or wrong and normal or abnormal<sup>8</sup>. Different ideologies indicate as many as models assuming how the world is supposed to be.

The phrases quoted in the ad of '100 PIPERS: i. CEO AT 40, ii. MILES TRAVELLED 5, 47,000, iii. VILLAGES ADOPTED 2  
4. BE REMEMBERED FOR GOOD

The given phrases tell about different ideologies and how these ideologies promote different versions of realities in the mind of the reader. The finely dressed and colorfully pictured gentleman is standing inside the room where all types of antique articles and objects are seen to be alive. The left top of the picture is given the first three phrases referring to the gentleman who stand in the centre of the canvas. The middle bottom of the picture quotes the fourth phrase referring to '100 PIPERS' tin at the right end of the bottom.

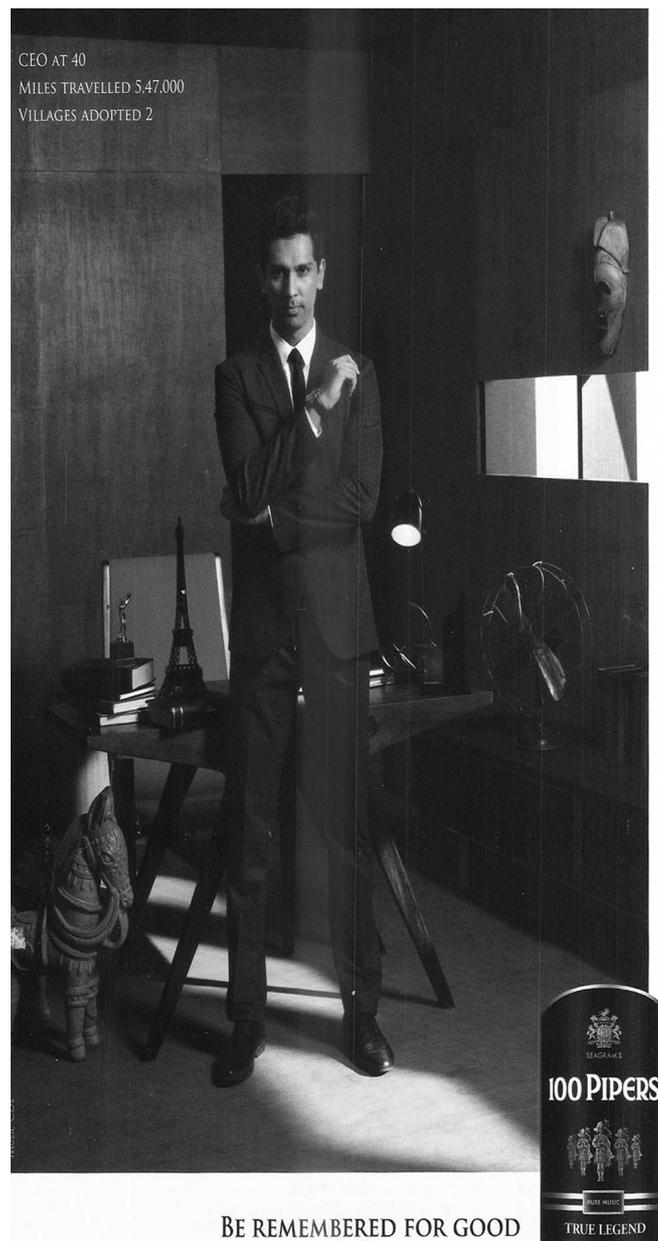


Figure-3  
The Week, December 8, 2013

CEO means the Chief Executive Officer. The man referred here is a CEO at the age of 40. Becoming a CEO at such a young age is really surprising and adorable. CEO is one of the top corporate officers in any Organization. He often reports to the Chairman and Board of Directors. He drives change within the organization, by applying policies and motivating the employees. It requires lot of hard work, experience and business networking to become one of them<sup>9</sup>. CEO's are very social persons and have really good contacts with executives of other companies. This is a position that a man can dream as the end of the heights of his career. How does he achieve this?

Travelling is a sign of rich world experience. The figure 5, 47,000 is the total miles travelled within the age of 40. It is as large as to travel the whole universe 20 times. The distance around the Earth, also known as its "circumference", is 24,906 miles. How could he travel all these miles?.

The social commitment is exemplary. In the midst of his heavy busy schedule in the corporate world and travel around the world, he found time to spend with the ordinary village people. Who or what is the inspiration behind this commitment?.

The answer of all the above questions represent the fourth phrase. It is an indirect imperative, shortened for diction. 'It is to be remembered for Good'. 'It' refers to the '100 PIPERS' tin liquor. The so called 'good' is nothing but the above mentioned achievements. To achieve good things in life, we are supposed to remember the '100 PIPER'. It is at the same time a warning that if it is not remembered, there will be no good. Remember all the way to achieve good in life and shall not forget it when something is achieved in life.

The antiques in the rooms reminds the legacy of the product. The product is labeled as '100 Pipers, pure music, True Legend'.

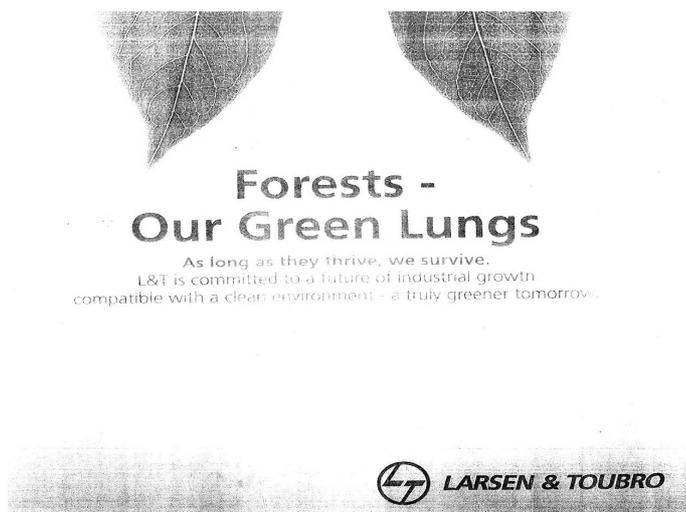


Figure-4  
Corporate India, January 15, 2012

The 'LARSEN and TOUBRO' industrial developer reaches at the people by their future commitment and target. The phrases are: i. Forests- Our Green Lungs, ii. As long as they thrive, we survive. iii. LandT is committed to a future of industrial growth, iv. Compatible with a clean environment- a truly greener tomorrow.

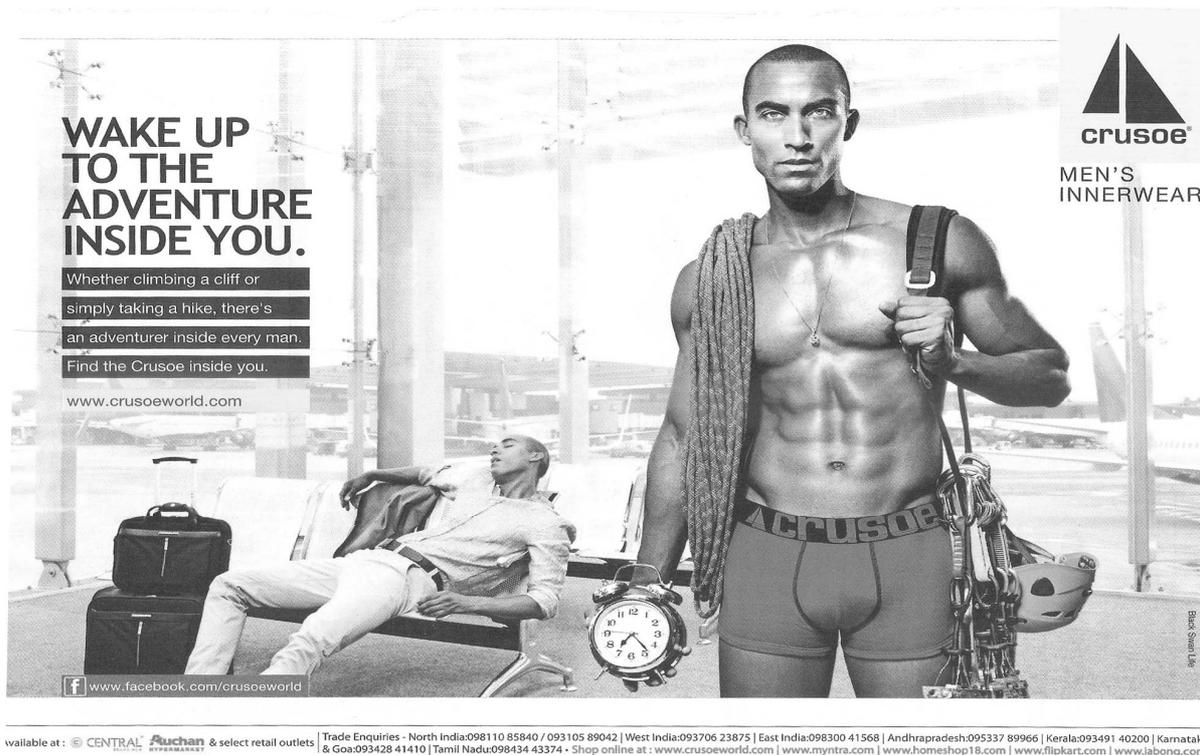
Ideology of Forest as a metaphor 'green lungs'. Thriving lungs, the symbol of life and survival

The commitment of L and T is not just industrial growth rather a clean environment – a green world tomorrow. The environmentalist's charge regarding the industrialization is that the city swallows the forest. The environment protest all over India has become a major concern of the social, religious organizations and even of the political parties. The pollution diseases in the city are increased in large scale. It is in this context LandT, one of the major industrial developer commit itself to a green industrial world tomorrow. The focus of the text is not on the industry of LandT rather on the forest and environment. They make strong cry against the industrialization along with the environmentalist.

**Multi modal discourse analysis:** According to Michael Halliday whenever we use language we are always doing three things; we are representing the world which is called ideational function of language, we are creating, ratifying or negotiating our relationships with the people with whom we are communicating, which is called interpersonal function of language; and we are joining sentences and ideas together in particular ways to form cohesive and coherent texts, which is called the textual function of language<sup>10</sup>. All of these functions together promote an ideology to persuade the listeners or readers. He says we are representing the world through language which represents people, character, concepts, ideology etc. These are called participants in the function. The words which tell about the doings and actions of these participants are called the words of processes. This is summarized as 'whos and whats' in the all texts.

**Ideational:** Ideational function at textual level is accomplished through the relation between the participants with processes. The participants are mainly nouns and processes are the verbs of action. In images participants are portrayed as figures, and the processes are portrayed visually. Images can be narrative, classificatory; or analytical. In narrative images, action processes are usually represented and called as vectors.

Narrative represents figures engaged in actions or events; two young man in an airport. Both are ahead of travel. The luggage for the travel is in their possession. The aircraft is ready down the runway.



**Figure-5**  
**The Week, December 8, 2013**

Classificatory represents figures in ways in which they are related to one another in terms of similarities and differences or as representatives of types; one among the two men dressed well but sleeps on a chair closing the eyes without giving the face to the reader. The other young man standing gazing at the reader closely. He is having only underwear named 'Crusoe' around his waist as a dress, a roll of rope on his shoulder, a bunch of hooks with a cap hanging on his another shoulder, a timepiece on his right hand with the time of 7:24.

Analytical represents figures in ways in which parts are related to the wholes; both are in an airport, a public place and part of it. The luggage is part of the travel. The rope and hooks on the shoulders and time piece in the hand part of an adventure trip.

**Interpersonal Function:** It is to create and maintain some kind of relationship between the producer of the message and its recipient. These relationships are created through the languages of system of modality, as well as through the use of different social language or registers. In images viewers are placed into relationships with the figures in the image and by extension, the producers of the image, through devices such as perspective and gaze.

Viewers: the man who is standing ready to make an adventure is gazing at the viewers with sharp eyes and very close to the viewer whereas the other sleeping in the chair has not given his

face to the viewer. His body is turned the other side of the viewer. He is also far away from the viewer.

Producers: close photograph on the 'Crusoe' man and long shot on the sleeping man. Closeness creates intimacy whereas long shots create an impersonal feeling. Photograph is seemed to be highly saturated colour image which can not be considered as realistic compared with the other black and white photographs in the newspapers.

**Textual Function:** Texts are organized in a linear fashion based on sequentiality whereas images are organized spatially. Figures in an image is placed either centre or periphery, top or bottom, left or right and foreground or background.

Spatial: the textual information is given at the left side of the picture. The ideal world of a man is narrated in the left side (1, 2, 3, and 4). Though product's name is introduced in the left side, the complete product is introduced in the right side. Here only the viewer understands completely about the product (5).

- i. Wake up to the adventure inside you.
- ii. Whether climbing a cliff or simply taking a hike, there's an adventurer inside every man.
- iii. Find the Crusoe inside you.
- iv. www.crusoeworld.com.
- v. Crusoe, MEN'S INNERWEAR.

Background: Airport, aeroplane etc. in vague and shadow image, sleeping man and his luggage etc. rather in clear but distant

Foreground: The Crusoe man with extra clarity and pixel.

Multi modal discourse approach enable us to understand how participants in interaction work cooperatively to weave together lower-level actions such as gestures, glances and head and body movements into higher-level actions and in doing so, help to create and reinforce social practice, social relationships and social identities. In short verbal text paired with imagery is more memorable than verbal text alone. Although we do not intend to equate memory with persuasion, the picture superiority effect implies that images produce more elaborate processing with attendant implications for strengthening the impact of verbal persuasive appeals<sup>12</sup>.



Figure-6  
The Week, April 28, 2013

1. The indirect politeness of invitation 'HIT THE BEACH, BEAT THE HEAT' telling that you hit the beach then you beat the heat, a warm welcome to the beach.

2. 'IDULGE IN THE 3Bs OF SUMMER- BEACH, BODY AND BEER IN THIS ISSUE' promotes the ideology of leisure life in summer.  
3. LIVE THE FINE LIFE

Shillum, a retreat in Mumbai's backyard. Denim is the way. 36 hours in San Juan

These are the explanations of fine life in Mumbai; an escape from the society, the style of dressing and the place of retreat, San Juan. San Juan Islands are an important tourist destination today, with sea kayaking and orca whale-watching by boat or air tours, two of the primary attractions.

'THE MAN- THE LAST WORD IN THE LIVING' it is a declaration that the magazine 'MAN' represents last resort of fine living. This is asserted in the subtitle of the magazine; 'THE LUXURAY MAGAZINE FOR THE DISCERNING MALE'. The man who is having discerning power would choose this magazine.

The image, the angelic beauty of Bollywood, Amy Jackson is visualized on the cover of the magazine, gazing at the viewer with a mesmerizing eyes.

**Suggestions and Findings:** i. It is not necessary that advertisements should be an image. The more number of cohesive and coherence markers the more will be the focus on the subject at textual level. These markers at textual level itself create persuasion among the readers. ii. The speech acts is a powerful persuasive technique among textual advertisements. The different patterns of speech acts such as; question answer method, problem- solution methods, suspense creating methods are some of the most influencing attractive methods used in many of the textual advertisements. iii. There are no advertisements without ideology. If the ideology is powerful the ads will be compatible. The weak ideology ads remain stale and less persuasive. iv. Image level advertisements are more realistic and strongly represent the truths. Photographs are seemed to be more persuasive than paintings and drawings. Black and white photographs are realistic than highly saturated colour images. v. Attraction and persuasion are two different levels of influence. Attraction is more sensory and immediate whereas persuasion is more intensive and long lasting.

## Conclusion

Advertising is a hybrid communicative process based on both textual and visual corpus. The agents who involve in the advertisements are lexical and grammatical words in textual level and figures and images in the visual level. The textual analysis at different levels such as; cohesion and coherence, speech acts and ideology and visual analysis on multi modal discourse level gives an over all view of the both textual and visual ads. In advertisements both text and image is equally important. On the basis of mode of presentation the degree of

persuasion varies. Discourse approach based on the analysis of text and context of the advertisement is purely linguistic rather than sociological and anthropological. However, discourse includes all such branches of knowledge too. This study elicits the supportive linguistic elements such as discursive structures<sup>13</sup>, genres in the persuasive language of advertisements.

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