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**Discourse Strategies and Portrayal of Women in the Choice of Cosmetic Products in
Lagos Nigeria**

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Discourse Strategies and Portrayal of Women in the Choice of Cosmetic Products in Lagos Nigeria



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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of discourse strategies and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Lagos Nigeria.

Methodology: A mixed method design was adopted for this study using purposive sampling because this study was only to investigate cosmetic product advertisements for women. The data were collected from company websites, YouTube and outdoor ads of popularly used cosmetic products ads which were transcribed for the qualitative analysis and analyzed based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) while for the quantitative aspect data was collected using a questionnaire based on Likert-type scale questions to capture the different variables. They were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Findings: The study findings show that there is a statistically significant relationship between discourse strategies and portrayal of women in choice of cosmetic products in Lagos. It noted that advertisers utilise strategies such as Informing strategy, Skin Inadequacies, scientific evidences and Celebrities to influence people to choose their products. Findings affirm the direct positive of discourse strategies as $R^2=0.935$ depicts that the model explains 93.5% of the variance thereby supporting the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the discourse strategies and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products as the ideology of a woman wanting to look better is preyed upon by advertisers.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study was guided by CDA and theory of Imitative Desire. It reveals that there is a statistically significant relationship between discourse strategies and portrayal of women and using CDA - a kind of social practice it notes that advertisers influence the view of beauty by creating a new beauty ideology and standard derived from the Ads. Therefore, women bodies should engage in campaigns for women to value themselves, reject manipulation and advocate that adverts only reflect socially acceptable portrayals.

Keywords: *Advertisements, CDA, Ideology*

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INTRODUCTION

An advertisement is a paid public announcement through a communication medium, promoting the sale of products or services, political support or propagating an idea done many a times through discourse. Advertising has been defined in many ways by various scholars depending on the situation. For instance, one of the oldest known definitions of advertising given by David Kennedy at the time no electronic media of communication was available, was quoted by Albert Lasker (1995), as “salesmanship in print”. Advertisement is crucial to society in many ways and as such cannot be ignored but all along issues have risen as to how their messages are passed across and the effect. According to Arens *et al...*, (2011) contemporary advertising is the persuasive, “structured and composed non-personal communication of information” about product offerings; it is paid for by the organization. According to Paff and Lakner (1997), advertising is highly visible and many times seen as a controversial agent of socialization. It observed that viewers not only watch advertisements on television to decide whether to buy the product for consumption, they also associate and analyze the roles that are shown on television. The portrayal of women in advertisements is influenced by different aspects of the society such as cultural values, lifestyle and behavior of individuals and the mass media, especially through advertisements plays a significant role in perpetuating values in society positively or negatively at times. Because of the ideology beneath what a woman represents advertisers work on this. They see the female gender as a strong marketing tool that influence the purchasing behavior of consumers and also penetrates into their cultural lives with the use of language and images.

Advertising discourse is discourse style used to create advertising messages through use of some techniques to construct their discourse and it plays a central role in shaping and constructing consumers attitudes, values and notions towards lifestyle, choices, public roles and the decision between the right and the wrong in the society according to Shaikh, Bughio and Kadri (2015). Since Fairclough (1997) sees critical discourse analysis as a kind of social practice where power and ideology influence and interact with one another in his three-dimensional framework of studying discourse, we see it as adequate for this study and as it explores the problems of power, manipulation, social abuse, exploitation, societal inequalities in such domains as media, education and politics (Blommaert&Bulcaen, 2000). This enabled the researcher suggest other options that may be available to advertisers and marketers to create more gender sensitive advertisements.

Wiles *et al...* (1995), in their research of advertising in magazines, pointed out that women featured in non-working roles in 92.3 per cent of the US adverts, 90.7 per cent of the Swedish adverts, and 91.5 of the Dutch adverts upon evaluation. Furthermore, this research noted that women in 81.5 percent of adverts in the US and 57.4 percent in the Netherlands were most likely to be shown in decorative roles. This discovery was supported by another study (Lindner, 2004). These views mentioned above could point to the existence of stereotypes, which were based on a commonly accepted perception as early as the inception of advertising, and this is supported by a statement Sheehan (2013) states that stereotypes are created by the continual, extended exposure of consumers to patterns of imagery. This is corroborated by (Tiggemann & McGill, 2004) that watching as many as just 30 minutes of programmes and adverts presenting a slim body as the ideal type of female body causes insecurity in women and makes

them feel unpleasant with their bodies. Thus, women, both the models and the consumers, grow up with the perception projected by these advertisements that depict women as objects of love for men. In this kind of advertising, women humiliate and devalue their bodies because they have been shown through such adverts. In Nigeria, it is not anywhere much different resulting in the Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice (2015), now known as ARCON (Advertising Regulation Council of Nigeria) with the issuance of a guideline on how female models should be portrayed in advertisements that is acceptable to all cultural sectors of the society, not ridicule females as a sex objects and be conscious of societal expectations of the sanctity of marriage as well as family standards and values. Despite this, there are still challenges to full compliance.

In the current competitive market, both the visuals and the language of advertisements play a crucial role in attracting consumers to buy. Still, most previous researches were only on the text's effect or the visual portrayal of the women. Thus, this researcher intends to examine the impact of discourse strategies and the description of women in the choice of cosmetic products to elicit the desired response from consumers. As a tool to present and promote ideas, goods and services, it seeks all means to encourage or influence consumers to purchase such products and plays a crucial role in communicating messages in today's society. Among others, advertising contributes to the creation of opinions. Issues arose regarding how messages are passed across and their effect on the audience, especially stereotyping women through adverts. The need for advertising to be effective, more women gender friendly and societally acceptable informs this research work.

Statement of the Problem

Advertising plays a major economic role in facilitating sales of new products in the market such as introduction of new products and improvements of existing ones, enhancing brand loyalty and serving as catalyst for economic development and industrial growth (Dominick, 2005). It is indeed a huge business with many organisations competing to succeed thereby making most of them and advertisers to seek the use of various appeals to reach their target audience. Unfortunately, some of these appeals have been criticised all over the world including Africa and in Nigeria. In the contention of Arens, et al (2011), advertising is both "applauded and criticized not only for its role in selling products but also for its influence on the economy and on society". They contend that critics have associated advertising with "a wide range of sins-some real, some imagined" which informs this work. Advertisers utilize various tactics including unverified information, scientific evidence, models and celebrities to arouse interest in their products and to facilitate sales. Reichert & Lambiase, (2003) believes this to be very effective at grabbing consumers' attention in marketing and communications in this 21st century. This is also a challenge in Africa and especially Nigeria where it seems to be eroding the confidence of the ladies leading to loss of self-esteem because of the type of the ideal woman that is portrayed.

Contrary to expectations and desired outcomes, advertizing seems to influence the consumers negatively in the way the messages seem to be laden with a lot of lies, propaganda and misinformation that confuse the consumers expectations. The images that portray women as beautiful, attractive and successful after using the products are not factual in real life. The ideal

slim, slender, light complexion and white skinned does not exist in the African context. Tuchman (2017) in agreement avers that advertising has serious consequences due to its pervasiveness, stereotypical portrayals, manipulation and preoccupation with materialism. This study therefore seeks to examine discourse practice features and portrayal of women in choice of cosmetic products in Lagos Nigeria with the aim of making recommendations to stakeholders to come up with policy to put in check propaganda and lies that have negatively affected the female consumers of cosmetics.

Objective of the Study

To examine the effect of discourse strategies on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Lagos Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two theories were selected for the theoretical framework of this study: Critical Discourse Analysis and the theory of Imitative Desire. Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) is favoured to analyse this work because of its ability to explore various social theories. It began to become popular in the 1980s in an attempt to go deeper into language studies along with social theory (Fairclough, 1992; Society, 2020). It is vastly different from discourse analysis as it explores the problems of power, manipulation, social abuse, and exploitation, societal inequalities in the domains as media, education, and politics (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Yu *et al.*, 2019). Since those times, different scholars have described and explained CDA in different ways. For instance, van Dijk (1985) mentions the existence of a connection between discourse and power in CDA. However, Fairclough (1989) defines CDA as a kind of social practice where power and ideology influence and interact with one another. Following Fairclough and Wodak (1997) we can summarize the main tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis as addressing social problems, involved with power relations are discursive and that discourse constitutes society and culture. Also, we see that discourse does ideological work and that the link between text and society is mediated. Furthermore, we note that discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory thus making discourse a form of social action. This makes the three-dimensional framework developed by Norman Fairclough (1995) of text analysis, analysis of discourse practice, and study of discursive events as illustrations of socio-cultural practices relevant to this study since CDA will be used to examine the social processes that create the ads, advertising techniques and discursive strategies.

Kaur, Arum Gam, and Yunus, 2013; Education, 2018; Society, 2020) argue that ads construct and reproduce the ideology of beauty. They do this by using critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine commercials. People are frequently duped by commercials for beauty items into thinking whatever is claimed is real. Due to the societal notion that women desire to remain attractive at any age, beauty is one of the key topics of media in general and advertising in particular. Thus, advertisers play on the female need to remain beautiful and this is expressed in media with youthful attributes that can be obtained by purchasing certain products dangled before them like bone before a dog in an attempt to get them to procure such products. CDA helps to conduct an in-depth analysis of the discourse therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is relevant for this study.

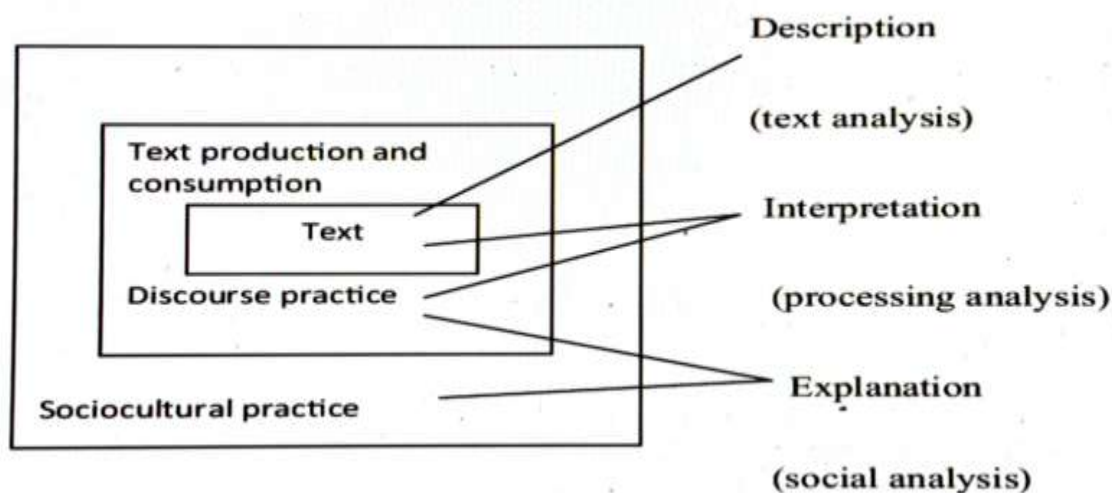


Figure 1: Fairclough's Three Dimensions to Discourse

In the Imitative Desire Theory René Girard, a French theorist, said that humans frequently want to change into someone else (when the other is powerful, famous or beautiful). It purports that Ads take advantage of people's propensity to want what other people want. However, changing into a different individual is not feasible. It is this impossibility that fuels our yearning. In "Sociological Propaganda", Girard's concepts are well described. Ads, according to Vandenberg, serve as participatory rituals rather than as one-way communications. The fundamental purpose of a ritual is to let participants imagine themselves as other members of the community (Vandenberg, 2005). René Girard proposed that human wants are always mediated. We won't be affected by advertisements unless we engage in the social ritual or imitation they encourage. For instance when NIVEA projected an advert of their product Natural Fairness Body Lotion by former Miss Nigeria, Omowunmi Akinnifesi, the target audience were young women and the chances of the target audience buying the cream is high because of the belief is that the cream reflects her beauty. The other ladies are likely to want the cream immediately because their desire is always mediated by their need to have a skin that is glowing as well forgetting that that beautiful skin could primarily be her own naturally skin. Nivea capitalizes on this because the chances of the target audience (young ladies) buying the cream is high since she is a celebrity and also beautiful. The Imitative Desire Theory is relevant to the issue of women that this study sought to address and the consumer's desire to be like the portrayals of the ideal woman through celebrities and models in the adverts. This the study sought to unveil.

Rohmah & Suhardi (2020) examines TV advertisements and the findings suggest that advertisers use a variety of strategies to manipulate women and that advertising language is used to control people's thoughts. Discussing the discursive practice of advertisement (Najihah, 2020) found there are nine discursive techniques by which the discourses strongly relate to the social context of consuming the text. They are scientific evidence, informing discourse, self-

representation, unrealistic representation, puffery, emotive words, simple and clear discourse and giving discounts on the product. Hamid and Shahdan (2018) in their study on total fairness Inside-out: reports that advertisers firstly capture the attention of consumers through 'catchy' or attractive use of word arrangements such as rhyming phrases and then use strategies such as invoking consumers insecurities by pointing out possible flaws that many women face such as dull skin. These studies revealed how the ideology of beauty is constructed through advertising language and by stereotyping of women insinuating that cosmetic products bring about a better life. Advertising, they assert is used to control people to want to appear as the models/celebrities in the adverts. Most of the works were qualitative studies but this research work takes a step further by using a mixed method design to corroborate the results.

Most of the previous researches were on the text's effect or the visual portrayal of women so, this study focused mainly on discourse through use of language and strategies advertisers use in cosmetics advertising to influence their consumers. Moreover, unlike most previous researches based mainly on qualitative studies, this study is based on the mixed method approach. This is to enable the researcher suggest other options that may be available to advertisers and marketers to create more socially and gender-sensitive advertisements.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method design was adopted for this study using purposive sampling because this study was only to investigate cosmetic product advertisements. For the qualitative aspect, data were collected from company websites, you tube and outdoor ads of seven advertisements out of a target population of ten popularly used cosmetic products and they were transcribed for the process of analysis. They were then analyzed based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. Also, data was collected from a sample of two hundred and fourteen respondents from a target population of 636 using a questionnaire based on Likert-type scale questions ranging from 1-5 indicating the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with each statement used to capture the different variables for the quantitative aspect. The data was subjected to SPSS 22 and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine advertising discourse and portrayal of women in choice of cosmetic products in Lagos Nigeria. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics such as correlation analysis and regression analysis this section presents the findings and discussions.

Table 1 Response Rate

	N	N	Frequency	%
Response	636	214	119	92.99%
Non- response			15	7.01%
				100%

The population size for this study was 636 media practitioners and students while the sample size was 214. The study recorded a response rate of 92.9%. This is considered adequate since a response rate of 70% or higher is desirable according to Glasgow (2005). A lower response rates call into question the representativeness of the sample (Fonsnacht, 2013).

The study with a questionnaire based on Likert-type scale questions ranging from 1-5 indicating the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with each statement examined the effect of discourse strategies and the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products for the quantitative aspect. Using CDA it then relates the relationship between the productive and interpretative processes of discursive onto the context. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics.

Table 2: Effect of Discourse Strategies on the Portrayal of Women in the Choice of Cosmetic Products

Aspects	Response						
	(%) SD	D	N	A	SA	Means	Std.Dev
Adequate information about products in the advertisements is what spurs me to make purchase	7.0	5.0	8.5	48.2	31.2	3.9196	1.10260
I am motivated to buy products that have scientific evidence in the advertisements	5.5	7.5	14.6	50.8	21.6	3.7538	1.05154
Celebrities in ads help me recall products more promptly	6.5	9.5	15.1	48.2	20.6	3.6683	1.10579
Ads pointing out inadequacies or Skin flaws as why I need the products prompt me to take action.	6.0	9.0	17.6	49.2	18.1	3.6432	1.06759

Source: Research Data 2023

Table 1 shows that about 7.0% (14) respondents chose strongly disagree on informing strategy on their choice of cosmetic product to purchase while 5.0% (10) respondents chose disagree on the fact that information strategy of cosmetic advertisements influence their choice of cosmetic products. However, 8.5% (17) respondents were neutral on the question. Interestingly, about 48.2% (96) and 31.2% (62) respondents agree and strongly agree respectively that information strategy of cosmetic advertisements influence their choice of cosmetic products to buy agreeing with the proposition of (Cook, 2001; Nima Rashid *et al.*., 2020) that giving information relating to the content of a product is important as it explains what the consumer's need before using the product.

On being motivated to buy products that have scientific evidence it shows that about 5.5% (11) respondents chose strongly disagree that while 7.5% (15) respondents chose disagree that

scientific evidence has no effect on the choice of cosmetic products. About 14.6% (29) respondents were neutral on the question. On the other hand, about 50.8% (101) and 21.6% (43) respondents agree and strongly agree respectively that they are motivated by scientific evidence to purchase cosmetic products. This affirms the view of Susanti (2019) that advertisers manipulate women by giving facts about their beauty products and encouraging the positivity of their products by providing such scientific evidence words to show the efficacy of such product.

Concerning the fact that celebrities in ads help to recall products table shows that about 6.5% (13) respondents chose strongly disagree that celebrities' approval of cosmetic products do not influence their choice of cosmetic products while 9.5% (19) respondents chose disagree. The respondent that are neutral are 15.1% (30). On the other hand, about 48.2% (96) and 20.6% (41) respondents agree and strongly agree respectively that celebrities' help them recall cosmetic products does influencing their choice of cosmetic products. The respondents desire the products because someone in the advertisement desires that item in line with René Girard, a French theorist, describing the Imitative Desire Theory that humans frequently want to change into someone else (when the other is powerful, famous or beautiful) thus affirming this finding.

Respondents on issue of Ads pointing out inadequacies or Skin flaws as prompting them to buy products table shows that about 6.0% (12) respondents chose strongly disagree that Ads pointing out inadequacies or skin flaws as why they need the products prompt them to take action while 9.0% (18) respondents chose disagree. The respondent that are neutral are 17.6% (35). However, about 49.2% (98) and 18.1% (36) respondents agree and strongly agree respectively that Ads pointing out inadequacies or skin flaws as why they need the products prompt them to take action. This is in line with Hamid and Shahdan (2018) that advertisers point out particular skin inadequacies or flaws in consumers and that these inadequacies can only be taken care of by the particular product advertised and with this undeniable call to action, consumers purchase such items as a purported deliverer.

Furthermore, hypothesis tests were carried out on research objective two if discourse strategies has significant impact on portrayal of women as summarized in Table.

H₂: There is a significant impact between discourse strategies and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic product.

The hypothesis tests if discourse strategies carry a significant impact on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products. The dependent variable the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products was regressed on predicting variable discourse strategies to test the hypothesis H₂. The table below shows the summary of these findings on the hypothesis tests.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Result on the Relationship between Discourse Strategies and Portrayal of Women

Hyp	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	P-value	Hypothesis Supported
H ₂	discourse strategies portrayal of women	0.967	0.935	2854.377	0.000	Yes

Source: Data Analysis, 2023

Results in table 3 indicate that discourse strategies significantly predicted portrayal of women, $F=2854.377$, when P is 0.000 implies that there is high significance, which indicates that the discourse strategies can play a statistical significant role in shaping portrayal of women ($b=0.967$, p is 0.000). The result shows direct positive of discourse strategies. Moreover, the $R^2=0.935$ depicts that the model explains 93.5% of the variance. The discussion on the main points in the findings uphold the views of Najihah (2020) relating to discursive techniques on discourses and that they strongly relate to the social context in consuming the text such as scientific evidence, self-representation, puffery, emotive words etc. The findings discussed on the discourse strategies based on the second level of Fairclough's CDA corroborate these findings.

The second level of analysis of Fairclough's CDA which involves the production and consumption of texts, with a focus on how power relations are enforced by advertisers through the use of various strategies in their discourse to attract consumers were then analysed by considering the context comprehensively. It aims to identify the strategies used by advertisers in attracting prospective consumers. Therefore, this stage related to the production and consumption of texts in the analysis of strategy used in the advertisements in relation to the problem statement corroborates these findings. It focused on how the texts were produced; consumed and how the power relations were enacted as analysed in table 3.

Table 3: Strategies Used in the Examples in the Text Advertisements

	Strategies used in the Examples in the text advertisements
• Informing strategy	Hawaii soap comes in carrot, papaya and calamansi ... Joy Beauty Bar is a richly formulated soap made from natural ingredients ... Specially formulated to keep you clean, clear and confident The Snow White from Hush'd cleanse nurtures ...
• Scientific evidence or words	Whitening soap with herbal extract Pro Skin Care Vitamin Complex Suitable for all skin types, Joy skincare soap contains milk ...
• Celebrity endorsement	Using celebrities such as Mercy Eke, Venita Akpofure, Sophie Alakija, Cynthia Nwadiora, Jasmine Uche, etc,
• Skin Inadequacies	Sun takes its toll on the skin It leaves the skin irritated and uncomfortable
• Emotive words	... look fresh, beautiful, younger and radiant (Eva) your skin, leaving it soft, supple, and silky smooth (Joy)

From the findings, it can be seen that the advertisers apply various discourse strategies in promoting their product. The strategies such as Informing strategy, Skin Inadequacies, scientific evidences, Celebrity, and emotive words are used to influence the people.

The advertisers manipulate women by giving facts about their beauty products through words, that is, informing strategy and the positivity of the product is further encouraged by providing such scientific evidence words to show the professionalism of the product and to support its effectiveness because the products are proven with scientific evidences and provide many benefits. Then, advertisers also use 'emotive words'; this kind of language is used to connote their power to beautify and thus overcome unattractiveness.

Also, the advertisers use beautiful celebrities and models as representatives of their products as the models using the products. It is believed these beautiful models presented, will attract consumers to their product to make them become beautiful. This is the way advertisers use various techniques to establish a power relationship and increase their production, consumption, and distribution in the society. The findings affirm the relationship between the effect of discourse strategies on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products as in the work of Rohmah and Suhardi (2020) that advertising texts were created by elevating existing realities and shaping certain realities in society for the ultimate goal of persuading the potential buyers s evidenced in this study. Also in this regard, (Hamid & Shahdan, 2018) in the study total fairness Inside-out: linguistic features in whitening product advertisements explains that advertisers use strategies such as invoking consumers insecurities by pointing out possible flaws that many women face such as dull skin, which in turn invokes their desire to be fair and beautiful according to the society's standards of female beauty already portrayed.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

The results of the findings indicate that the discourse strategies can play a statistically significant role in shaping portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Nigeria. Also, Critical Discourse Analysis reveal that advertisers use strategies such as Informing strategy, Skin Inadequacies, scientific evidences and use of Celebrities influence the people to choose their products because the physical appearance of women is mostly influenced by social beliefs and perceptions.

Conclusions

More women in today's society especially the younger generation in Nigeria focus more on their outward appearances because of its influence on their social relationships or career life. As a result, many people believe what the advertisement says and choose to try these products. This is part of the effect on social change of advertisements in the society. They change the way society views beauty, that the standard of beauty is from what the advertisement says thus creating a new beauty ideology. Thus, advertisers through various discourse strategies persuade and at times manipulate women into buying into these cosmetic products as a way of achieving a more beautiful skin. These various techniques also help establish a power relationship and increase their production, consumption, and distribution in the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed, that discourse strategies accomplish a crucial role in advertising in society. It is used by advertisers in attracting prospective consumers. Findings show that advertisers manipulate women by giving facts about their beauty products through words, that is, informing strategy and create positivity of the product by using scientific words to support its effectiveness because the products are proven with scientific evidences that provide its benefits. They use beautiful celebrities and models as representatives of their products thereby invoking consumers insecurities (directly or indirectly) by pointing out possible flaws that many women face such as dull skin leading to reduced self - esteem and in turn arousing the desire to be fair and beautiful as portrayed through the adverts. There is therefore the need for competent authorities like governments to promote more participation of women in the production bodies, administrative bodies and decision-making positions in the society to engage in intensive campaign towards the need for women to value themselves and reject any form of manipulation and ensure that women-friendly policies are established. This campaign should include the encouragement of women to strive and own Media outfits of advertisement as well as take positions of managerial posts in advertising agencies in order to ensure the balance representation of women based on what is obtainable in reality.

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