

Glow and Lovely: 'Old Wine in a New Bottle' Farhad Uddin

Farhad Uddin¹

¹ University of Barishal

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Abstract

Cosmetic companies like Unilever sell the perception of general people about beauty through their advertisements and reinforce it to promote their business. Even they do it in disguise form using a positive name and without changing any content in advertisements. By using qualitative semiotic analysis, this research shows how fair-skinned models, white color, and white light are used in the advertisements of Unilever's recently name changed product 'Glow and Lovely' on Bangladeshi TV channels. In the ads of it, any darkness on the skin is shown as unexpected and a hindrance to beauty, success, empowerment, and equality. All of these contents promote fairness as beauty and sustain discrimination based on skin color in society. The research also reveals a close relationship between the perceptions of general people about beauty and the meanings of the 'signs' used in the sampled advertisements.

Index terms—

1 Introduction

Media contents have persuasive power and long lasting effects on the cognitive process of individuals. The audiences acquire perceptions and attitudes modeled by the media (Bandura, 1986). Cosmetic companies sell the perception of general people about beauty through their advertisements and reinforce it to promote their business. Even they do it in disguise form using a positive name and without changing any content in advertisements. Unilever, a well-profitting cosmetic company, changing its product's name 'Fair and lovely' to 'Glow and Lovely' does the same thing as other cosmetic companies do in their advertisements looking like old wine in a new bottle (Sharma, 2020). It has added 'Glow' to its products like Glow & Lovely Advanced Multivitamin, Glow & Lovely Face Wash, Glow & Lovely BB Cream, Glow & Lovely Soap, Glow & Lovely Winter Glow, and Lux Soap.

2 II.

3 Definitions of Terms

Glow: According to Cambridge Dictionary, 'glow' means continuous light and heat that is produced by something. That means if the light is produced or reflected by black material, the glow will be black shine. If the light is produced or reflected by red material, the glow will be red shine.

Beauty: According to the Oxford Dictionary beauty is a combination of qualities, such as shape, color, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight. "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty" (Hume, 1757).

According to the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, the Pleasure and pain are connected to the human mental state, and as his concept beauty does not exist in things. Beauty exists in the mind of the subject that is why it is subjective (Kant, 1790).

The definitions clarify that beauty does not depend on the skin color of human beings.

4 III.

5 Background of the Study

On May 25, George Floyd, a black man, was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a white Minneapolis police officer, who pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds. Demonstrations over the death of George Floyd and others broke out all over the world. Millions of people in the United States participated in the movement called Black Lives Matter. Protest against advertisements and marketing of skin lightening creams was strengthened, and Unilever acknowledged the branding suggests "a singular ideal of beauty." Unilever would rename Fair & Lovely, a skin-lightening cream that has been criticized for promoting negative stereotypes around dark skin tones. It promised to remove references to "whitening" or "lightening" on the products, which are sold across Asia (Jones, 2020).

Abstract-Cosmetic companies like Unilever sell the perception of general people about beauty through their advertisements and reinforce it to promote their business. Even they do it in disguise form using a positive name and without changing any content in advertisements. By using qualitative semiotic analysis, this research shows how fair-skinned models, white color, and white light are used in the advertisements of Unilever's recently name changed product "Glow and Lovely" on Bangladeshi TV channels. In the ads of it, any darkness on the skin is shown as unexpected and a hindrance to beauty, success, empowerment, and equality. All of these contents promote fairness as beauty and sustain discrimination based on skin color in society. The research also reveals a close relationship between the perceptions of general people about beauty and the meanings of the 'signs' used in the sampled advertisements.

Through semiotic analysis, this research shows how fair-skinned models, white color, and white light are used in advertisements of Unilever's recently name changed product 'Glow and Lovely' on Bangladeshi TV channels to promote fairness as beauty and sustain discrimination based on skin color in the society. Though name has been changed, there is no change in contents. Instead, after semiotic analysis, the contents reveal that the advertisements of 'Glow and Lovely' promote fair skin color as a symbol of beauty, success, and empowerment. The research also reveals a close relation between the perceptions of general people about beauty and the meanings of the 'signs' used in the sampled advertisements.

6 TVC: TVC means Television Commercial or audio-visual story of an advertisement.

Although Corporations like Unilever has been widely criticized for profiting on colorism, it continues to produce advertisements that equate light skin with beauty, success, and empowerment. Skin lightening creams are positioned as alchemic agents of selftransformation (Nadeem, 2014). After years of criticism, in light of the Black Lives Matter movement sparked by George Floyd's death, Unilever renamed popular skinlightening brand "Fair & Lovely" as "Glow and Lovely," which is characterized by critics as merely a cosmetic change for a product that promotes harmful beauty standards.

The research can reveal that Unilever uses 'Glow and Lovely' instead of 'Fair and Lovely' in its advertisements whose other contents highlighting fair skin as beauty are the same as those of 'Fair and Lovely'.

IV.

7 The Rationale of the Research

Like other general people in the Indian subcontinent, the general people of Bangladesh also have this perception that to be beautiful, one has to be white-skinned first. Broadcasting this idea through advertising of products reinforces the mentioned perception about beauty, which has huge impact on equality among people in society. Cosmetic companies like Unilever, through their advertising, are selling the perception about beauty on which colonial whiteskinned British have the deepest impression in the Indian subcontinent (Nadeem, 2014). People whose skins are dark buy these products so that they think they can be beautiful that gives them confidence on the way to success.

Though on the face of protest and movement, Unilever has changed the name of the product 'Fair & Lovely' to 'Glow & Lovely,' critics say, its advertisement just feels like the giant is selling its old wine in a new bottle (Sharma, 2020).

Many times these kinds of comments are made without any basis of systematic research. It is necessary to employ a systematic analysis of the advertisement of 'Glow & Lovely.' This study has applied the semiotic analysis to identify Signifiers and Signified as 'signs' and find out denotative and connotative meanings of them. Then, the relationship between the meanings of the 'signs' and the perceptions of general people about beauty has been found out.

8 Method of the Research

In this study, the researcher has preferred to employ qualitative approaches to analyzing data. The researcher employs Roland Barthe's semiotic analysis method to analyze the sampled two advertisements. Semiotics deals with everything that can be seen as a sign. Signs constitute any audio-visuals like words, images, sounds,

gestures, and objects (Eco, 1976). The sign is formed by the combination of the signifier and the signified. Signs are divided into three categories based on their meanings or characteristics namely: Icon, Index, and Symbol. Although divided into three, in a broader sense they are interrelated. Each of these three traits or characters is present in each 'sign', although one may predominate (Nirob, 2018). In the signs the original meanings that they contain, we have encoded through our cultural environment, our preaccumulated experience, knowledge, etc. So, how a topic will be highlighted and what it will mean is fully cultural. An image, video or poster has denotative meaning. When we can individually identify cultural meanings or codes hidden in external meanings through the decode method, it is also possible for us to extract the connotative meaning of that image (Haq, 2008).

This study has applied the semiotic analysis method of Roland Barthe and 'signifiers' and 'signified' have been identified together as 'signs'. Then the denotative and connotative meanings of them have been found out. Then, the relationship between the meanings of the 'signs' and perceptions of general people about beauty has been found out. 2. What is the relationship between the meanings of the 'signs' and perceptions of general people about beauty?

1. Identifying the 'signifiers' and 'signified' which make 'signs' in sampled advertisements 2. Finding out the denotative and connotative meanings of 'signs' used in the sampled advertisements 3. Looking for the relationship between perception of general people about beauty and the connotative meanings of the 'signs' used in the sampled advertisements

In this research purposive sampling has been adopted, as elements, taken to analyze in this research, have specific characteristics or qualities ??Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p. 94). Since the researcher employs the semiotic analysis method to analyze the advertisements of the newly named product 'Glow & Lovely,' the researcher has purposively taken two TVCs broadcast on Bangladeshi TV channels as samples. The advertisements are two TVCs of the same cream named 'Glow & Lovely Advanced Multivitamin.' The advertisements are broadcast in different channels like Channel I, GTV, Jamuna TV, and so on. The videos of the sampled TVCs have been taken from Channel I and Jamuna TV. Then screenshots have been taken to analyze the visuals used in the Television Commercials. Audios have also been considered in analyzing visuals. The 1 st TVC of 'GLOW & Lovely Advanced Multivitamin' cream is of a total of 25 seconds. The 2 nd TVC of 'GLOW & Lovely Advanced Multivitamin' cream is of a total of 29 seconds and the total scenes are 23. For the convenience of the research taking 6 scenes from each advertisement, total 12 scenes have been selected to analyze.

9 VI.

10 Representation

Representation means the use of language to convey something meaningful or to represent the world meaningfully to other people (Hall, 1997). When an advertisement is presented to the viewers, it is called representation in the general sense. "In language, we use signs and symbols -whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects -to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas, and feelings" (Hall, 1997). That means using signs and symbols to represent the world is representation. Representation gives us meaning but it is not in a simple way. There are three approaches to how language, paintings, images, sounds, symbols etc., give meaning to the audience. These are the reflective approach, intentional approach, and constructionist approach. Among them, the most acceptable to linguists is the constructionist approach. The most popular supporters of this approach are Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, French literary theorist Roland Barthe, and French philosopher Michel Foucault (Acosta, 2012). According to Michel Foucault, through the use of 'discourses' that is somewhat similar to language, 'representation' is the production of 'knowledge' that is somewhat similar to meaning (Foucault, 1980).

The words, sounds, and images that carry meaning together in a general term are called 'signs'. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure referred to the form or the language used to refer to a concept, as the 'signifier,' and the corresponding idea it triggers in our brain as the 'signified.' Together, these constituted the 'signs,' which he argued are members of a system and are defined in relation to the other members of that system ??Culler, 1976, p. 19).

In the case of an image the image is a 'signifier' and the concept of that image is the 'signified.' Both of them constitute the 'sign' that represents and meaning is created. This meaning can differ according to culture.

Language and its meaning are related to the culture of the audience as to how the representation will be received by the audience. The red or yellow or green of a traffic light has no meaning of its own: red means 'stop' and green means 'go.' In our culture, we have encoded red meaning 'stop' and green meaning 'go.' Any representation is, therefore, cultural (Hall, 1997).

Besides, an image of an advertisement has encoded denotative meaning. If we can decode the cultural codes or codes attached to it, it is possible to find out the connotative meaning of that image. We can do this in the way introduced by the French literary theorist Roland Barthe (Haq, 2008).

To get any meaning, in the first level, we have to decode every signifier of the text, sound, image, etc., in the simple way (denotative meaning). But Barthe says that these also have a broader cultural meaning (connotative meaning). According to Barthe this level of meaning is the stage of 'myth' ??Barthe, 1957).

Following Roland Barthe's semiotic analysis method in this research, the researcher has identified 'signs' used

in the sampled advertisements of 'skin glowing cream' marketed by Unilever and has found out the denotative and connotative meanings of those 'signs.' The 'myths' have also been shown.

VII.

Semiotic Analysis of the TVCs

In the process of analysis the researcher first identifies the 'signifiers' like colors, images, icons, symbols, etc. and the 'signified' (the concept) as 'signs.' Then, denotative and connotative meanings of those 'signs' are found out. Finally, the researcher finds out the relationship between the connotative meanings of those 'signs' and the perceptions of general people of Bangladesh about beauty.

st TVC of 'GLOW & Lovely Advanced Multivitamin' cream:

The total duration of this TVC is 25 seconds, and the total number of scenes is 18. For the convenience of the research, from 18 scenes, six scenes have been selected to analyze.

Story

In this TVC, one of the models looking at the white and glowing face of the other surprisingly says, "Wow! Have you been to the parlor?" In reply, she says, "Not at all." She asks again, "Then, so much glow, how?" In reply, she says, "From glow and Lovely" She asks again, "Only glow and lovely? She replies again in the affirmative and adds that it reduces dark spots, dark circles, and blackness of sun heat. She also adds that for glow, everything is in one cream. Then, from voice over we can hear, "Entering deep into the skin and reducing dark spots, dark circles, and darkness of sun heat, multivitamins of Glow and Lovely give HD glow. For glow everything is in one cream." The total video is of 29 seconds and the total number of scenes is 23. For the convenience of the research, six scenes have been selected to analyze.©

Story

In this TVC, a fair-skinned lady model, looking at the comparatively less fair face of the other, asks, "Only boys stand for University's election. Who will change it?" Addressing a middle-aged man as father, she replies, "I will stand for election." Her father says, "Election! Hot sun, so tiredness, leave it, mother." She says, "It is you who taught to fly. You didn't teach not to climb high."

The fair-skinned lady model comes with the product in her hand and advises her that the Glow & Lovely cream will take care of the hot sun. She also advises her to glow. Then in the voiceover, it says, "Fair & Lovely is now Glow & Lovely. It protects from the sun and its multivitamins reduce dark spots. It gives HD glow." Then the first fair-skinned lady model appears on the screen and asks, "And then?" She replies, "I will change the country." The fair-skinned lady model smiles in the affirmative. In the next scene, the leading character says, "Glow in your own identity, Glow & Lovely." Anything that is dark is harmful to beauty. Using only one cream, all kind of darkness can be removed and fair skin can be gained to have glow on face.

Anything that is Dark is harmful to beauty is a myth.

Signs

Discussion on Both TVCs

Both the TVCs show fair and white colors have glowing capacity, but science tells us even black color has glowing capacity. When black color glows, it becomes black shine. So, showing only fair and white color as glow is a myth. Keeping the fair-skinned model as the leading character and excessive use of white color in both TVCs, emphasis is given on only fair skin in disguise of glowing skin. Both the TVCs show any kind of darkness like dark spots, dark circles, and darkness of the sun has to be removed to have a glow on the skin. Conveying this message, it suggests having fair skin in the name of glow. In the 2 nd TVC, some other aspects related to 'beauty' have been included. In the second TVC, it is shown that if a woman's skin is not fair, she cannot be successful, empowered, and equal to a man. If she wants to stand in university election, she has to work in the sun. And election is a tiresome job. To overcome all these obstacles, she has to use Glow & Lovely. Here also, it means to have fair skin as it shows any kind of darkness like dark spots and darkness of the sun has to be removed to have a glow on the skin. Fair skin gives her success and makes her feel empowered and equal to men. She says that she will change the country. Here the word 'country' has been used to mean that the model loves the country. Thus the product comes emotionally closer to the people of Bangladesh. These conceptions of beauty broadcast through advertisements by Unilever are myths because beauty doesn't depend on skin color and skin color doesn't bring success. Gender equality and women empowerment depends on other aspects of their life. Unilever has no love for the country. Rather, it loves profit.

18 Relationship between perception of general people about beauty and the connotative meanings of the 'signs' analyzed in the research:

Many people in Bangladesh consider light skin more attractive and desirable, resulting in the discrimination of dark-skinned people, particularly girls and women (Jensen, 2020). Since the people of Bangladesh consider light skin more attractive, the cosmetic company Unilever tries to make its products and advertisements similar to the perception of the people of Bangladesh about beauty. Through its advertisements Glow & Lovely, it pretends to give solutions to social problems like gender inequality by showing that skin color is responsible for gender inequality. So, skin color has to be changed from dark to fair. By buying and using Glow & Lovely, this problem can be solved. By doing this, they increase the sale of their products and perpetuate the discrimination based on skin color through their advertisements.

IX.

19 Conclusion

Advertisements shown on TV have obvious effects on the targeted audience and they can influence them to buy products by reflecting their perceptions. Thus wrong perceptions are reinforced and become well-rooted in society.

In this research, by using qualitative semiotic analysis, the 'signs' used in the sampled advertisements have been found out. The 'signs' in both the advertisements taken to analyze, mean fair skinned models symbolize beauty. Excessive use of white light as color in both the advertisements means only white color glows. Any darkness on the skin is shown as unexpected and a hindrance to beauty, success, empowerment, and equality. Hot sun and tiredness are not matter if you use Glow & Lovely that will make your skin fair. To establish self in the society even in election as equally as man fairness is a must.

There is a close relation between the meanings of the 'signs' analyzed and the perceptions of general people of Bangladesh about beauty. People here consider light skin more attractive and desirable and create discrimination showing no attraction to darkskinned people especially women. The 'signs' in the advertisements reinforce their perceptions about beauty and establish myths.



Figure 1: a) Research Questions 1 .



Figure 2: 6



Figure 3:



Figure 4:



Figure 5:



Figure 6:

Signifiers Signs

Year Retrieved from Channel I on 03/07/2021 Sec.-1-2
2021

Volume Retrieved from Channel I on 03/07/2021 Sec.-6-7
XXI
Is-
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IV
Ver-
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I

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Global Retrieved from Channel I on 03/07/2021 Sec.-16-17 Retrieved from Channel I on 03/07/2021 Sec.-17-2
Jour-
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Man-
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Busi-
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search

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