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## Power and Manipulation in News Paper Advertisement

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper aims at analyzing an advertisement advert and campaign for body care products in order to investigate power and manipulation techniques of consumer product and companies to reach more customers and sell more products. This paper aims at analysing an advertisement campaign for the body care products in order to investigate power and manipulation techniques of consumer product and companies to reach more customers and sell more products. The discourse fragment analyzed is based on the Fairclough (2001) theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), Van Dijk's concept of Manipulation in CDA and Multimodality in discourse by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996). The data used for this research is an advertisement publication placed in THE MIRROR (the most popular Ghanaian weekend News Paper), by the FC BEAUTY COLLEGE. Key findings indicate that, (a) producers of advertisement employ several degrees of language in advertisement to enact power over its targeted audience; (b) there are divergent strategies and techniques used in adverts by a producer to manipulate the reader or targeted audience, and (c) that positioning of positive self-representation and negative other-representation are exhibited in the discourse of advertisement.*

**Keywords:** *Critical discourse analysis, advertisement, manipulation, multimodal representation, multimodal discourse analysis*

### **1. Introduction**

We are living in an era of information explosion where advertising seems to be an indispensable building block of the media. Radio, TV, and the Press are, to a great extent, financially motivated to present adverts. From a sociological perspective, advertising will only flourish in a community where individuals live above subsistence level and where technological advancement makes mass-production possible (Vestergaard & Schroder 1985).

Advertising language is therefore an organization of text that suggest some cohesion or meaningful interpretation to the target consumers, and the demands description of its functional and formal aspects with reference to the semantic and pragmatic interpretations. The language of advertisement has been viewed in various ways by different scholars with some variations as well as some commonness in them. Advertisement is a major means by which organizations and producers make their goods more attractive to their prospective buyers. These adverts are seen as art, used as decoration or regarded as symbols for certain styles and attitudes. They appear on walls as well as on clothes, radio, papers or prints, webs and televisions, and have this way access to a much broader public visibility than other kinds of adverts. In order to understudy the concept of discourse behind advertisement and its impact on consumers, the theoretical frameworks of Norman Fairclough and Van Dijk's concept of Manipulation in Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to understand and explain the discourse of advertisement in the Ghanaian context and perspective. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways does language play a role in enacting power and ideology in advertisement(s)?
2. What strategies do advertisements employ to manipulate the public?

#### *1.1. Objective of the Study*

The general objective of this research is to examine and analysis advertisement campaigns placed in the media especially in the print media. It further examines how advertisements of beauty and body care products can be used to investigate power and manipulation techniques of consumer products to reach more customers and sell their products.

### **2. Review of Related Literature**

Scholars have undertaken much research in the area of Critical Discourse Analysis in many disciplines, especially in the field of linguistics. Van Dijk (2006), and Rudyk (2007) have focused more on political discourse while Fairclough (1992, 1995) has considered CDA in some advertisements, much of such works have not been done in the Ghanaian context to validate the findings in other countries.

Martin Begoll (2006) investigated the area of "Media World, An Introduction to Discourse Analysis", his motivation was to compile a set of useful approaches to analyse the communication processes of printed advertising, using theories and methods of critical

discourse research especially on visual communication. By employing Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) Visual Analysis, Norman Fairclough's (1992) CDA, Stuart Hall's (1980/94) Media reception and production and finally Nigel Edley's (2001) Discourse psychology, he highlighted how the depicted participants are composed, how adverts use expected patterns which occur in the society and are strongly influenced by cultural coding. The study showed that "the partial stress by producers or advertisers on their own popularity, goods and services in the adverts and their offensive struggle for constituting the product as a universal cult nearly tends to mad ambition".

Yella Hoepfner and Matrikelnr (2006) similarly investigated Beauty Advertisement Discourse using Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty as a case study. The aim of the researcher was to analyze advertisement campaign for body care products in order to investigate the intentions and techniques of consumer product companies to reach more customers and sell more products. This study mainly employed Norman Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis as the tool of analysis for the research. The findings of the research indicated that "conventions of discourse types are shaped by those who have power behind discourse and "such shaping is achieved through ideology". Yet, "power, whether it be 'in' discourse or 'behind' discourse, is never definitively held by any one person, or social grouping, because power can be won and exercised only in and through social struggles in which it may also be lost" (ibid). That is why current power-holders have to "constantly reassert their power", because the 'relatively unpowerful' (of the particular moment) are liable to strive for it and grasp it.

Leech (1966), in his pioneering and comprehensive study on English in advertising, has analyzed in detail different aspects pertaining to grammar, vocabulary, discourse and rhyme and rhetoric of advertising with special reference to television. He has effectively related these aspects with the functional factors such as attention value, listenability or readability, memorability and selling power. Illustration, display typography, vocal emphasis, prompt spelling, grammatical solecism, metaphor and paradox are some of the aspects linked with attention value. Simple and colloquial style and familiar vocabulary are connected with readability. Phonological regularities such as alliteration, rhythm, rhyme and jingle are related to memorability. Frequent use of imperatives and superlatives are connected with selling power. The distinctive property of advertising language has been closely identified with the use of clauses, phrases and words as minor sentences, which constitute a different kind of grammar known as Disjunctive Grammar.

Geis (1982) has made an attempt to describe how language is used in American advertising, especially television advertising. He focused on certain linguistic devices that feature most prominently in advertising. According to him, the advertisers employ the word 'help' as in phrases like 'helps to achieve' and comparative phrases like 'more or less' which are impressive because they are indistinguishable from the law like generic claims of scientists. He has concluded that advertisers in general tend to prefer vague language rather than language with explicit empirical consequences and prefer subjective claims to objective claims.

The reviewed studies have indicated that some researches have been carried out in the area of media advertisement using critical discourse analysis. The review reveals that producers employ many means in indicating power over consumers. Again ideologically it was indicated that consumers are in one way or the other manipulated to accept what the producer puts on the media. Nonetheless, Fairclough in his work in media advertisement claimed that much work must be done in the field of advertisement bearing in mind the different forms of adverts and their respected fields. To fill the gap identified by Fairclough, this paper examines the roles of the producer, the agent and the consumer in the process of advertisement in the Ghanaian context, using advert of FC BEAUTY COLLEGE.

### 2.1. Theoretical Basics

This discursive analysis shall be based on the sociolinguist and poststructuralist Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is supposed to be an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse. It views 'language' as a form of social practice` (Fairclough 1989: 20) and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced by 'text and talk`. Besides Fairclough, some other theorists such as Van Dijk's (2006) concept of manipulation and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) multimodality are included in the study to foster the understanding of what could be described as critical discourse analysis in advertisement.

Fairclough developed a model for CDA which constitutes three-dimensional boxes, nesting one inside the other. The inner box presents the text, a critical analysis of an advertising phenomenon; the accordant method for this is description. The box in the middle presents the discourse practice: which means the processes of producing and receiving, the method is interpretation. The outer box presents the socio-cultural practice, which represents the socio-historical conditions of producing and receiving, the method is explanation.

Thus, to Fairclough the discourse happens as a *social practice* (the box in the middle) on the interface between *social structures*, which set the frame for all possible realizations (outer box) and *social events*, which mean realized texts (inner box). The persons involved are considered as *social agents*. According to the printed adverts, the process of advertising is seen as social practice, producer and receiver as social agents (what Kress terms as the interactive participants) and the advert itself as a social event. The practice of advertising producing and receiving only happens along the lines of social structures, but as it will be shown, these structures can be influenced or modulated through advertisement communication.

Van Dijk's (2006) concept of 'manipulation' is a communicative and interactional practice in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interest. Manipulation involves domination or abuse of power and is thus illegitimate. Manipulative discourse typically occurs when the victims are unable to understand the real intention or to see the full consequences of the beliefs or actions advocated by the manipulator. Van Dijk (2006) conceptualized manipulation as a form of social power abuse, cognitive mind control and discursive interaction. These domains of manipulations are in a triangulated framework and are dialectically related. Manipulators (which include advertising agents) employ interaction strategies which include positive self-

representation and negative self-representation. This ternate of Van Dijk's theory will be used to indicate how manipulation, social power and its abuse are produced in the discourse for this study.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) concept of multimodal and its effects on discourse will be very useful in the analysis of this paper. The theory advocates the meaning behind the semiotic elements in discourse where more attention is placed on the elements termed visual communication. There are three interrelated variables that contribute to the analysis of a multimodal text when using Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory, and these are salience, information value and framing.

### 2.2. *Advertisement as a Concept*

Advertisements (sometimes referred to as adverts in this study) are understood as 'the everyday texts' that persuade people to buy certain products or inform their target audience about some aspect of reality and products. Dyer (1982:2) states that advertising means 'drawing attention to something', or notifying or informing somebody of something. In order to understand the purpose of advertisements, one has to treat advertisements as a discourse type. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:4) define discourse as socially constructed knowledge of some aspect of reality, developing in specific social contexts and in ways that are appropriate to the interests of social actors.

Advertising involves three major stakeholders. These are the manufacturers, consumers and advertising agencies. Cook (1992) classifies the manufacturers as senders, the consumers as addressees or the intended audience and the advertisers also as senders. The mass media are the channel through which advertisements reach the consumer. The mass media consists of commercial television, radio, newspapers, and magazines among others.

### 2.3. *The Discourse of Advertising*

The discourse of advertising consists of the copy, the image, the logo and the headline (Cronje et al. 2004). For the purpose of this study, I will analyze the salient discourse features of my chosen texts. These include the image and the verbal text, because of the various elements found in the design of advertising; advertisements are referred to as multimodal texts, as has been mentioned above (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). Messaries (1997: 221) suggests that an advertisement's visual message can remain partly or wholly implicit even when there is extensive verbal commentary ostensibly telling us how to interpret the images. Various techniques of appeal are found in advertisements. Firstly, as Messaries (1997) claims, by linking a product with a certain image, the advertisement makes it possible for users of the product to draw that link as a means of making a public statement about how they themselves wish to be viewed. Secondly, as Williamson (1978) claims, advertisements usually position viewers to participate in an interpretative process on the basis of 'false assumptions', positioning viewers to presume a line of equivalence between the product and the glamorized traits of the model. Thirdly, Goldman (1992) asserts that, advertisements tend to invite us to step into the 'space' of the advertisement to try on the social self we might become if we wore the product image.

Advertisements can be classified into non-commercial and commercial on the basis of the object and purpose involved in advertising. In non-commercial advertisements, selling and buying are not involved but certain ideas, morals or appeals are communicated to the public from government agencies or various associations and societies. The purpose may be related to charity, political propaganda, or different social welfare measures. Commercial advertisements are sub-classified into commercial consumer advertisements and prestige advertisements. The commercial consumer advertisements involve consumer goods such as cosmetics, medicines etc., while the prestige advertisements include services like banking, insurance etc. Of the different classes of advertisements, the commercial consumer advertisements are the most prominent in terms of both quality and quantity. A successful advertisement is expected to accomplish five functions namely (1) attracting attention, (2) commanding interest, (3) creating desire, (4) inspiring conviction and (5) provoking action. (Vestergaard and Shrodder, 1985)

## 3. Methodology

The qualitative research method was used. The method involves two steps: collecting the data and analyzing it. In collecting the data, the writer applies the qualitative research method. David Doofey (1984: 267) says, "The term qualitative research will here refer to social research based on non-qualitative observations made in the field and analyzed in a non-statistical way." Therefore, the analysis of this research will not be done in statistical form. This is analysis base on meanings and symbols. A purposive sample was used to select "THE MIRROR" (the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011 edition), since it is the nation's entertainment and social newspaper, and has a lot of patronage. The sampling procedure was also to aid in selecting the most dominant advertisement.

### 3.1. *Research Design*

The research work employed the qualitative methodology where meaning was deduced from the textual and semiotics of the advertisement. Again Fairclough's (2001) three dimensional models of CDA were used as a framework for the analysis and the discussion of the data. Equally Van Dijk's (2006) concept of manipulation in CDA and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) will be employed in analyzing the data.

### 3.2. *Description of Data*

The data for this research paper is the advertisement placed by the FC BEAUTY COLLEGE in "THE MIRROR" dated 26<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. The advert is a full pager with three distinctive segments. The first part of the advert advertises admission of new students into their school of cosmetology (FC BEAUTY COLLEGE) stating their programmes and specialties. The second part deals with the 'FC Beauty Klinik', here the advert expatiates on a subtopic: "Chase Your Pimples Away", intimating various steps of getting

rid of pimples as well as the means of acquisition. Here, the producer makes it so obvious that, pimple is every ones concern since very one stands the chance of having it. The last segment advertises the quest of the advertisers to help people have quality beautiful skin and body, this they do by indicating where they can be located. In all the three cases of advertisements there are other linguistic features like pictures of ladies undergoing training at the FC College, faces and bodies of ladies who were suffering from pimples and have received good skin and body care from FC Beauty Klinik. Finally the advert displays two beautiful ladies who have gone through all the procedures of FC and have come out refined.

#### 4. Data Analysis

- Research Question One: How does language play a role in enacting power and ideology in advertisement?

In the process of enacting power and indicating ideology in the selected advertisement for this study, the following linguistic resources were used to enact power and ideology. These are: vocabulary, pronouns, clause types or sentence structures and prosodic features. The focus of this paper narrows the analysis to three of the linguistic features recognized, and these are: vocabulary, clause type or sentence structure and pronouns.

##### 4.1. Vocabulary

Words create an identity for a lot of people, vocabulary as a linguistic resource is used in this advertisement to enact power. To explain the relation between power and discourse as pertaining in this paper Norman Fairclough's *language and power*, is imperative, here he distinguishes between power in discourse and power behind discourse.

The advertisers employ a lot of "Focal vocabulary" which are specialized set of terms, words and distinctions that are particularly important to a certain group or discipline. The table below contains the focal vocabulary used in the adverts.

Type of Vocabulary	Examples of the Vocabulary	Field or Discipline
Focal vocabulary	Thermal, Aromatherapy, Shiatsu, Acne,	Cosmetology
	Demystified, Hyperkeratosis, Follicle, Sebum	
	Clogging, Bacterium, Demystification,	
	Inflammation, Micro-organism, Genetic and	
	Anaerobic	

Table 1: focal vocabularies used in the advert

It can be observed that the dense of the lexicon used in the advertisement seems to wield power and authority over the reader or the public. From this there are two distinctive classes produced: the position of the producer and the position of the receiver. In media communication which stands in contrast with face-to-face communication, the producer and the viewer or the receiver of an advertising are spatiotemporally separated from each other (Kress 1996). The choice of the focal vocabulary:

(*Thermal, aromatherapy, shiatsu, acne, demystified, hyperkeratosis, follicle, sebum, clogging, bacterium, and anaerobic*)

puts the producer in this case FC Klinik in the position of being knowledgeable in the field or subject being advertised. The eleven lexicons manifest clearly that FC Beauty College has 'power behind' in the discourse (Fairclough 1996), since the formation of the orders of social practices, which are themselves shaped and constituted by power relations are controlled by the producer. Again the receiver is portrayed as an ignorant individual who knows nothing about the issue in the advert. In another light, the receiver can be seen from the perspective of the advertisement, that he/she is put in a powerless state who would seek help or power from the producer as a result of the advert and the command exhibited by the producer through the use of the focal vocabularies.

##### 4.2. Pronouns

This paper considers pronouns as another source of enacting power in the FC Beauty College advert. The advert uses personal pronouns and possessive pronouns in predominantly exerting power on the readers or the receiver. Among the personal pronouns include: *you, they* and *it*, these are strategically used to place the reader in a particular context of: (*you*) referring to the one at risk, which could be the reader or the person being communicated to. (*They*) in the data refers to either the reader or the 'ace' being talked about and (*it*) representing several ideas within the text but predominantly referring to the pimple.

- Extract: 1

[*You*]:

→ "...chances are that **you** are likely to have **it** too". "If **you** suffer from acne **you** may have a hereditary factor known as retention hyperkeratosis"

From the extract the reader is placed in the position of the personal pronoun **you**, indicating the possibility of the reader having to suffer from the problem (acne) being discussed.

Beside the personal pronouns the text uses few possessive pronouns which support the enactment of power as displayed in the advert. Among the possessive pronouns used include: "*our, your, and their*".

- Extract: 2

[*Your and Their*]:

→ "This means that if **your** parents suffered from acne in **their** youth chances are that you are likely to have it too"

The extract illustrates the likelihood of the reader acquiring the acne especially with traits of it from their parents. Here the reader seems not to have any power over the possibility of being affected by acne.

- Extract: 3

[our]:

→ “Visit **our** FC Beauty Spots for all **your** skin care needs”

This extract explicitly indicates the power enacted by the producer or FC Beauty College over the reader or the general public. Here the possessive pronoun represents FC hence giving them the power and authority in providing the needs of the reader. While the reader is referred to in this context as the ‘*your*’ who has the problem but has no power over the problem or (acne)

## 5. Findings and Result

- Research Question Two: What strategies do/does advertisements employ to manipulate the public?

Manipulation as intended here is a communicative and interactional practice, in which a manipulator exercises control over another person, usually against their will or against their best interests. Those often manipulated are human beings, and this typically occurs through the manipulation of their ‘minds’, so that a cognitive account is also able to shed light on the processes of manipulation. (Van Dijk 2006: 360)

Van Dijk 2006 postulates that ideology is often used as a tool of manipulation and this will be evident in the text being analysed.

The reader in the text is placed in a position of being at risk to acne demystified, and can do nothing than to visit the FC Klinik for help. In this context the reader is mentally weakened, hence the producer appealing to the readers mind, making FC the source of the solution to the problem of the reader.

- Extract:4

→ “The presence of the acne on the skin can be **disfiguring** causing **pustules, swelling** and in some cases **scarring**”.

→ This acne demystified is not complete without the mention of a key causative micro-organism, the acne bacteria *P.acnes*.

The advertiser in a bid to manipulate the minds of the reader employs technical terms or focal vocabulary rather than using basic vocabularies which will relay the same information to the reader. Again the advertiser in my view injects some kind of anxiety into the reader, which at the end will serve as a force to seek for help. The words: *disfiguring, pustules, swelling and scarring*, are strong words that indicate negative associations that the reader may want to prevent.

Without these negative associations, manipulation in discourse could be a form of (legitimate) persuasion (O’Keefe, 2002).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) posit three dimensions of studying multimodality in text. For the purposes of this work the *Informational value* process will be used in the analysis. From this perspective Visual elements, depending on the structure of the visual composition, have specific informational value. Thus, in ‘*Given and New* structure’ the initial information is placed on the left side of the two-dimensional surface (printed text or screen), through an image or a text, while the new information is placed on the right side, through an image or a text.

The producer, FC Klinik, in the bid to send its information across uses a lot of visual aids in supporting the text, which includes the figure below:

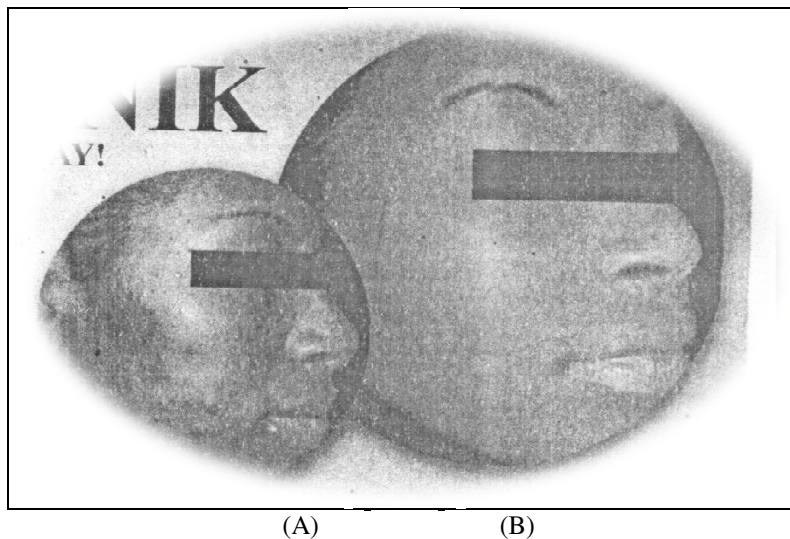


Figure 1: Transformation of face infested with Acne.

The figure illustrates the informational value process of using visual in discourse or communication. The ‘Given’ in the figure illustrates what the reader is likely to know (A), a face or a person suffering from the acne demystified. On the right side of it is the New (B) which gives the reader the *New* information or the outcome of visiting the FC Beauty Klinik, hence a pimple free face. This visual as used in the advert enhances the manipulation device and strategies used by the producer to appeal to the mind of the reader.

## 6. Findings and Implications

The study has a number of significant findings and implications. First, the study identifies some serious socio-cultural flaws. The producer in the text is seen to be more powerful and the reader less powerful in the discourse, hence exhibiting 'power in the discourse' and 'power behind the discourse'. The reason for the flaw can be seen from the perspective that the reader(s) is/are undefined or non-specific. The reader may hold power behind the discourse, in that, he or she may be a specialist and could be knowledgeable in the area of acne demystified. Again, genetically some people by no means can attract the acne demystified due to their genotype. It is in light of this that such adverts and their producers should try and tone down their language of authority and also use hedging devices. Secondly, the study has implications for critical linguistic theory since it validates that language is more ideological. Also language in advertisements displays social dominance, power and manipulation in discourse. Another important implication through the power relation in advertisement between the producer and the audience is that the face of the reader is always threatened.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the integration of findings from all the levels of analysis, it can be assumed that the FC BEAUTY COLLEGE advertisement exhibits more visual and linguistic components. This study applied the Critical Discourse Analysis approach in analyzing an advert placed in THE MIRROR, a Ghanaian newspaper on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. In the analysis, three theoretical frameworks were used, the concept of power and ideology from Norman Fairclough (2001), the theory of manipulation in discourse from Van Dijk (2006) and the theory of multimodality in textual analysis by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996).

From the analysis, it is realized that the use of the linguistic devices such as the high sense of focal vocabulary and pronouns (personal and possessive) make evident that the advertiser in the media discourse (advertisement) wields power over their intended readers or audience. Fairclough (2001) says that when a person assumes such a position in discourse, that person assumes the "subject positions". In this instance, the producer in that discourse poses as more powerful in and behind the discourse leaving the reader(s) in a more powerless state.

Again, the analysis clearly brings to light several strategies and techniques employed by the advertiser in manipulating the mind of the reader. It was realized that the advertisers employ focal vocabularies, complex sentences or complex clauses and other semiotic elements which in turn appeal to the inner motions of the reader. The strategy eventually gives the producer a 'positive face' or saves the face of the producer while placing the reader in a "negative face" as identified by Brown and Livingstone (1987).

Socially, language in advertisement clearly positions the producer and the receiver in two different identities. Since advertisement has become an integral communicative device in this modern era, it study must be critically looked at to investigate other linguistic features that come with it.

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