

## Effect of Women Representation in Lux Advertisement on Pakistani Women Identity

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### Abstract:

*Through interpretation of visual images in commercial advertisement of lux (a multi-national brand of toilet soap), representation of women in multi-national brand is taken as imposition of new identity. Objective of this article is to investigate that representations of women in such adverts are contrary to the women ideology and cultural norms prevalent in traditional Pakistani society. It is attempted to unfold the hidden meanings produced in our cultural landscape using semiotic analysis of selected TV advertisement employing Saussurian semantic model of interpreting signs. For this purpose, latest commercial advertisement of LUX 2014 starring Indian actors and actresses is selected. This study has explored how multinational brand of lux is utilizing representation of women for commercial benefits, consequently transforming traditional Pakistani women into modernized, bold and glamorous new age women, breed of globalized cultural hotchpotch. Examination showed that presentation of foreign culture in such adverts is contaminating Pakistani culture and its social values. It is assumed that majority of Pakistani population don't admire such representation of women and culture on Pakistani TV channels.*

**Key words:** Semiotic analysis, representation, women identity, TV advertisements

## **Introduction:**

Lux brand was founded by Lever Brothers (a British manufacturer founded in 1885, currently known as Unilever, company grew quickly to establish itself as first multinational company) in 1899 as a laundry soap named as “sunlight flakes” later a year after changed as “Lux” a Latin word for light and suggestive of luxury. Lux has always used popular movie stars as its brand endorsers. In 60s, the campaigns began highlighting the sensorial and emotional attributes of the brand along with the beauty quotient. Later during 70s the campaign focus began to highlight the multi-faceted nature of a woman. In 80s Lux had established itself as the soap of the stars and elite and its image became one of a must-have for beauty among all women. 2000s By this time, modelling and fashion industry had drawn a lot of dreams in the eyes of millions of women. Notable was the “Lux Haute Pink” advertisement, with the woman in the bath tub, flying over the world in a hot air balloon and spreading the beauty by blowing down bubbles from her tub. It focused not only on beauty but the confidence that beauty generates in a woman. The 2010s: Today, the focus is back on beauty – which has been the roots of the product. (Patel, 2012)

Advertising is probably one of the most important and influential products of television. Indeed, the average adult spends one and a half years of his or her life watching television adverts. For the amount of time we spend watching adverts, it stands to reason that it will have some kind of effect on those who watch (Inghem, 1995). TV advertisements have captured the attention of consumers and producers for it is most effective than any other form of earlier advertisement strategies thus utilized by majority producers or services providers. According to Elden’s (2007: 16) definition “Advertising is a substantial element which makes it possible for a product or service to be announced to broad masses of

people by describing it via press and broadcast media in exchange for money with the object of bringing brands together with consumers and making them comprehend the brand.

An advertisement is a particular form of communication that creates a social kind of encounter, semiosis is only one aspect of this social practice and it holds a unique power of meaning generation. By virtue of product image, the product is attributed various meanings. The combination of the product and personal codes ends up reflecting the features of a certain ideologies and group of people as well. In television advertisements, products are sold employing persuasive strategies by building need among consumers in non- personal way. Media and TV are approachable to masses at distant and unprivileged areas also, it is now an effective tool to make up mind of the people. Near past Elections campaigns also run through media for effective publicity because tag lines of advertisements, jingles rung in ads and visual imagery in ads inspire viewers more than anything else they experience.

Pakistani culture is altering by the pressure foreign popular culture brought through advertisements and by the purposeful attack of multinational brands to turn indigenous cultures into a homogenous global culture that consequently fades away cultural boundaries of many political territories. This cultural homogenization is a clear threat to local traditional cultures. Pakistani female viewership is more prone to such cultural attacks by advertisements of multi- national brands, internalizing alien culture and adopting it. In this respect change in female`s attitude towards their traditional identity is distinctively observable. Cultural and female representation in those ads is contrary to Pakistani culture and the concept of femininity. Constant exposure to foreign culture is a fair alarm to loss of Pakistani female identity.

Culture is the complex everyday world we all encounter and through which we all move. (Andrew and Sedgwick ; 2008, 82) every political territory has its unique cultural trends

displayed through their language, dresses, the way people keep and carry themselves, all these qualities blend to make identity for its people. Wearing this identity people can be recognized anywhere in the world. Wearing a shalwar, qamees and duppata (head wear) a female can be recognized as Pakistani woman in any corner of the world.

Representation of women on media especially advertisement is very important issue. Media represents culture, social status, moral values of certain group and the observed group is not representative of community in majority in Pakistan. This research is focusing on how advertisements of multicultural, multinational background are controlling cultural hegemony of foreign popular cultural on indigenous localized cultures. Distortion of women's identity is an important aspect of this paper.

### **Literature review:**

Jean Baudrillard, the French cultural theorist, has been very critical of mass media due to its impact on democratic society. He is of opinion that the contemporary world is dominated by signs, images and representations and this domination is of such a degree that the line of distinction between the sign and its referent—the real world, has blurred. (Baudrillard; 1990)

Modern semiotic analysis can be said to have begun with two men—Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914). Peirce called his system semiotics, and that has become the dominant term used for the science of signs. Saussure (1915/1966) wrote, “The linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image....I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a sign, but in current usage the term generally designates only a sound-image” (pp. 66–67). His division of the sign into two components, the signifier (or

“sound-image”) and the signified or (“concept”), and his suggestion that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary were of crucial importance for the development of semiotics. Peirce, on the other hand, focused on three aspects of signs: their iconic, indexical, and symbolic dimensions. From these two points of departure a movement was born, and semiotic analysis spread all over the globe. Important work was done in Prague and Russia early in the 20th century, and semiotics is now well established in France and Italy (where Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, and many others have done important theoretical as well as applied work). Semiotics progressed in England, the United States, and many other countries.

Semiotics has been applied, with interesting results, to film, theater, medicine, architecture, zoology, and a host of other areas that involve or are concerned with communication and the transfer of information. In fact, some semioticians suggest that everything can be analyzed semiotically. They see semiotics as the queen of the interpretive sciences, the key that unlocks the meanings of all things great and small. “Semiotics tells us things we already know in a language we will never understand”, (Paddy Whannel)

Danesi, Marcel. (2002) Danesi, who is the director of the Program on Semiotics and Communication Theory at the University of Toronto, uses insights from semiotic theory to deal with topics such as print and audio media, film, television, the computer, the Internet, and advertising.

Eco, Umberto. (1976) This book contains an important theoretical analysis of semiotics that deals with its range of applications; it is an advanced text for readers with a good background in the subject. See also Eco’s *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Indiana University Press, 1979).

Fiske, John, & Hartley, John. (1978) This is one of the most useful applications of semiotic theory to television to be

found. The authors devote a good deal of attention to codes and to specific texts.

Goldman, Robert, & Papsen, Stephen. (1996) Using semiotics and other methods of cultural criticism, the authors “decode” advertising in general and various commercials and ad campaigns in particular. They also discuss, from a critical perspective, advertising’s role in U.S. culture and society

Culler, Jonathan. (1976) Culler provides an excellent discussion of the basic principles of semiotic analysis and application to literature.

Guiraud, Pierre. (1975) This is a very brief but interesting explication of semiotic principles, originally published in the French “Quesais-je?” series. It focuses on the functions of media, signification, and codes.

Berger, Arthur Asa. (1998) This book is intended for people who have no familiarity with semiotic thought. It offers an exploration of the basic concepts of semiotic theory, along with applications of these concepts to various aspects of contemporary society. Each chapter contains both discussion and application of a semiotic concept.



How texts are made meaningful through production, dissemination, and consumption, and how do they contribute to the constitution of social reality by making meaning (Phillip & Brown, 1993)

“One picture is worth a thousand words. Yes, but only if you look at the picture and say or think the thousand words”  
William Saroyan.

### **Methodology:**

This research is a multi-disciplinary research intertwining cultural studies, media communication and identity crisis. Data is taken from an advertisement of multinational brand running on Pakistani TV channels during 2014. Semiotic analysis of the visual images is done using Saussure's model. Qualitative analysis is favoured for digging out the ideologies hidden in the women representation in commercial advertisement. Focus of the analysis is the images drawn from the advertisement for media focuses on visual representation more than the textual representation. Furthermore, very little verbal or written text is added in ads giving comparatively small number of threads for deep analysis while analyzing images deeper digging is possible where extracting denotative meaning is obvious while connotative meanings of signs are also brought to the surface. Saussure divides sign into two components, the signifier (sound image) and signified (the mental concept) that leads to signification i.e. external reality or meaning. Saussure suggested that relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary and of crucial importance for development of semiotics.

### **Analysis of commercial advertisement of Lux 2014:**

Lux, the brand name is signifier that signifies the concept of beauty. Lux enterprise has associated number of adjectives to interpret its sense of beauty like alluring, bold, cheerful, confident, flirty, glamorous, gorgeous, indulgent, invigorating, irresistible, mesmerizing, sassy etc. The kind of adjective associated to beauty is not ordinary beauty but for

sensuousness and feministic appeal. This is how advertisement of lux works on a huge number of customers (both male and female) around the globe. People purchase the product and assume that use of this product will signify change in their lifestyle and growth in their social class and sensual appeal. This is in a way an effort to assign female new kind of gender role exploiting feminine aspect of personality for the sake of lime light and glamorous lifestyle.

### **Setting:**

*This advertisement is picturized in some modern and developed city not likely to be a Pakistani setting. Camera opens in a bath room where a youthful pretty woman in her twenties is shown enjoying bath in the bath tub seems to be inspired by the fragrance of Lux soap. In next scene the same woman is shown again with a youthful man in the door way of a hotel approaching to a dining hall. Male partner is holding woman from waist and woman is trying to inspire him by her alluring feministic presence. In the meanwhile they enter the dining hall where four of their friends are waiting for them to have a dinner as darkness outside can be seen from the windows of the hall.*

Setting in the advertisement itself suggests that this is not a lifestyle that is representative of whole Pakistani culture. A very small strata of elite is enjoying such luxury of bubble bath and continental meals in expensive hotels .Aura of the advertisement is romantic and soothing , suggestive of an unrealistic situation for a common Pakistani who never felt such vibe in his life.





### **Scene 1**

In first scene a girl is in the bath tub and enjoying her bath. Behind the window panes, high buildings can be seen that is not true picture of Pakistani context because a Pakistani bathroom is a place where no eye can peep into. Here the girl is representing a modernized lavish and luxurious lifestyle that cannot be generalized as every Pakistani`s lifestyle.



Such representation shows that women have power of their physical appearance to gain high status in society and using their mesmerizing beauty they can conquer any heart. This thought takes females to the unexplored world of glamour and lime light far from reality preventing them to fulfill their real life goals. Females prone to such ads also try to wear the looks worn by the girl in the ad. Rapidly changing dressing trends in Pakistan is example that more or less alien culture is getting its aim. The bathroom in the scene is on the high pedestal as the buildings at the background suggests. It signifies the high status of the woman in the bath tub. White curtains, white tub

and white foam of the soap are made to signify purity and cleanliness.

## Scene 2



Scene 2 is in the dining hall where a group of six members is enjoying the party. All are sitting on the table in couples. Suddenly a lady from the group bends down and picks up a purple piece of silk cloth. Purple cloth has a unique history of its own. This colour is considered as color of royalty that was banned for masses in olden times. It was also awarded to some female as acceptance from the Kings as favourite to share some personal time in privacy. Its presence here in the advertisement signifies the mutual acceptance between two main characters in the advertisement.

## Dress code:

Dress code is identity of any culture representative of complete set of socio-cultural ethics in Pakistani context. Shalwar qameez and dupatta are mandatory for every female connotes the modesty, chastity and gesture of protection for females and absence of dupatta signifies that excessive liberty has crossed the limits, or a sign of freedom from norms. Dresses worn by males and females do not confirm to Pakistani dress code. Women in the ad is wearing backless sleeveless short skirt and legs are also exposed, clearly suggestive of physical appeal, by the use of her bodily beauty woman is trying to seduce her male

partner and it would be read in Pakistani society as symbol of moral shallowness and vulgarity unacceptable in any condition. Male is wearing black suite signifying his successful life and self-confidence.

### **Colour:**

Colours have their own ideologies. They affect human behaviors noticeably. Red colour worn by the lady in the ad is bright signifying passion and strong emotions. It is associated with passions, warmth and love. It creates intense feelings of excitements. It speaks of the emotions of one who wears it. colour is symbolic of energy, passion and action. It is the color of sensuality and can stimulate deeper and more intimate passions, such as love and sex. Male is wearing black suite in contrast of the red by the female partner, signifying his attention and confidence in approaching her. It signifies his affluent and successful life. Black colour gives an impression of confidence, sophistication and elegance. it is often associated with seduction.

### **Expressions and body language:**

Many expressions are caught in camera in this ad are noteworthy. Lady in the ad shows less expression than her male partner signifying that male is enjoying more sensational attacks by female while female exploited much of her body language, her contact shows a kind of self-affirmation.

Pictures below shows a romantic situation, where parts of the body are slightly in contact in simulation of desired or suggested action by the other person.



In this image lady is making him feel her presence and he is feeling her fragrance by closing his eyes. Movement of her hand on male's forehead signifies her desire of physical relation between the two. The more erotic the parts being touched, the stronger the signal is sent.



Again the hand movement by female signifies her bold advancement to establish a relation.



First surprised by the action of lady, mild expressions later wearing a meaning full smile are consenting for establishment of intimacy.



Both sharing an eye contact signifying promise of intimate relationship between two.

### **Conclusion:**

This analysis based on one TV advertisement representing all those TV adverts which portray women as object of sensuality, such ads includes mostly multinational brands. They showed the picture of women just opposite to the one present in Pakistani cultural land scape. It is not a generalized study but focusing on cultural norms rooted in old traditions are exploited by the attack of an alien cultural.

In this advertisement glamorous life is depicted in party atmosphere where females are enjoying liberty to charm males with their physical appeal where as traditional Pakistani culture and religion do not allow heterogeneous gatherings in any land scape. Facing constant exposure to bold advertisements Pakistani females are adopting new trends in dressing and styling, use of popular language, dining and partying out with friends. Popular Euro-American culture is replacing old traditions effecting women particularly. New social trends are promoting career oriented glamorous women marginalizing traditional, out fashioned stay at home wives.

Another issue highlighted in this commercial is heterogeneous socializing and exceeding male female interaction. In Pakistani context, no females are observed behaving with males in physical manners as shown in the

advertisement rather females behaving in such manner is considered vulgar and her presence is condemned. Though such advertisements are trying to shape new social attitude more flexible and inclined to accept what is not accepted otherwise. Thus, following the melting pot ideology by washing off old indigenous colour and painting, new Euro-American modernized tinge of multi culture is forced to set in. Pakistan is a male dominated society where females are supposed to live within the boundary drawn by religion, cultural and traditional limits which could not be crossed in any condition.

This research is not based on mass opinion to award good or bad names but to highlight the transition Pakistani culture and Pakistani women is passing through.

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