

# **Critical Discourse Analysis: Analysing Pakistani**

## **Real Estate Print Advertisements**



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Dedicated

to

my parents

for their endless love, support and  
encouragement.

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## ABSTRACT

The current study presents the critical discourse analysis of real estate print advertisements to examine and report the discursive and social practices exercised by the recipients and the producers of real estate advertisements (confined to the sale & purchase of small houses only) in Pakistani socio-cultural context. The framework applied for the analysis of eighteen Pakistani real estate advertisements is that of Fairclough's (1989) which is integrated with Halliday's (1985) *Systemic Functional Grammar*, Schrank's (1974) *Language of Advertising Claims* and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) *Grammar of Visual Design* to ensure theoretical triangulation.

The manipulative moves of real estate companies are unveiled by analysing data gathered from different sources (questionnaire based on close ended and open ended questions, interviews and the text of eighteen print ads) with the application of mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach to ensure methodological triangulation. The findings reveal that all three income groups (Upper-middle class, middle-middle class & lower- middle class) do not significantly differ as regards their perception of the real estate ads. However, the lower-middle, middle-middle classes are more attracted towards the real estate ads as compared to the upper middle class. The study also points out that the main focus of the most of the real estate companies is upper-middle class- the one which could not afford posh areas like Defence.

The role of coloured images and code-mixing in capturing the customer's attention, thereby revealing the discursive practices, has also been discussed. The current study has followed the theoretical perspectives such as multi model discourse analysis and applied linguistics, thereby highlighting this important issue through the critical discourse analysis of real estate print advertisements.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Statement of Purpose**

The current research intends to present the critical discourse analysis of real estate print advertisements to expose the manipulative moves of the advertisers in controlling people's minds through linguistic and visual devices. The study aims at exploring the discursive and social practices executed by real estate companies, advertisers and the receivers of the ads by examining the processes of production and reception of the text. Moreover, the pivotal role of code mixing in attracting readers as well as lucidly conveying advertisers' messages to them is also highlighted. In addition, it not only takes into account the socio-economic context reflected in these ads but also finds out which section of the middle class feels attracted towards them.

#### **1.2 Rationale of the Study**

Manipulation in advertisements has been the subject of research in media studies and critical discourse analysis. An enormous amount of research has been carried out uncovering the crucial role of advertisements in exploiting customers' desires and creating unwanted necessities. However, the manipulative role of the advertisements related to real estate business which is a 'highly serious business' as rightly put by a real estate advertiser (S. Anwar, personal communication, September 3, 2012), has not been given its due attention. The importance of real estate business lies in the fact that it is one of the most expensive investments requiring customers' hard-earned money which they have saved their whole life. Therefore, the researcher intends to study not only the advertising text but also the processes of production and reception of the text to highlight the exploitative moves of real estate and advertising companies.

### **1.3 Background of the Study**

The importance of advertising cannot be overemphasized as it is ubiquitous and exerts immense influence on consumers' minds, lifestyle and behavior patterns through verbal and non-verbal signs. According to Himmelstein (1994), "Ads are not selling us a product...they are selling us a life-style. And they have become the engines that drive our way of life" (as cited in Pajnik & Lesjak-Tušek, 2002, p. 280). Therefore, the function of ads extends from conveying information to persuasion and, more often, manipulation of customers.

Advertising discourse has been the subject of interest for many linguists, sociologists, psychologists as well as the proponents and students of media studies. During the last two decades, a number of studies on manipulation in advertisements related to various products, especially beauty products, have been conducted examining the crucial role of advertisements in creating unwanted necessities in young generation as well as the exploitation of women in and through advertisements. However, real estate business in general and advertisements in particular have received little attention by researchers.

The real estate market encompasses "all transactions which involve dealings in rights or access to land and buildings" as defined in a survey report on *Real estate in Pakistan* commissioned by the Ministry of Commerce (n.d.) as part of the larger study on *Domestic Commerce* (Niazi & Khetran, n.d., p.8). The survey report discusses that the real estate market in Pakistan is not transparent; standards are not uniform as well as there are loopholes in property transaction and legal system. The current state of the real estate market has inspired the researcher to analyze real estate ads which are the means of exploitation of the Pakistani people who are befooled by the deceptive claims made by real estate companies and advertisers.

## **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

The objective of the study is to

1. expose the manipulation and exploitation of readers/customers through real estate ads
2. examine the role of language and images in persuading readers
3. find out whether language dominates image in the ads under analysis or vice versa
4. study the social and economic situation mirrored in the ads
5. throw light on the perception of middle class regarding the real estate ads
6. highlight the role of code mixing in making ads comprehensible and attractive

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The study aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

- 1 How do advertisers control people's mind by employing linguistic and visual devices in the Pakistani real estate print advertisements?
- 2 Does language dominate image(s) in real estate ads?
- 3 To what extent does code mixing make real estate ads more attractive and easily understandable?
- 4 How far is the socio-economic situation of the Pakistani society reflected in real estate ads?
- 5 Which section of the middle class feels attracted to real estate ads?

## **1.6 Research Procedure**

The current study employs mixed-methods approach which integrates both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative analysis of eighteen Pakistani real estate print advertisements is carried out by applying Norman Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse

Analysis propounded in his book *Language and Power* in 1989. Fairclough (1995a, p.44) believes that media discourses "contribute to reproducing social relations of domination and exploitation". Therefore, to study the manipulative power exercised through the Pakistani real estate print advertisements, Fairclough's *Three-Dimensional Model* (1989) is applied to the advertising text. The model includes the analysis of text, processes of production and reception and social practices. For text analysis, Halliday's *Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)* (1985) is applied for linguistic analysis while Kress and Van Leeuwen's *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996) is employed to analyse images. The language of the ads is also examined in terms of the advertising claims propounded by Jeffery Schrank (1974).

In order to study the process of the production of ads, the interviews of the Director Sales of *Valancia Homes* and the CEO of *Creative Consultants*, an advertising agency, are conducted. The process of reception of the ads is examined by conducting a questionnaire study to 60 participants. The questionnaire comprises questions related to the language, images, code mixing and socio-economic situation of the Pakistani society.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study would be a significant endeavour in exploring and uncovering the underlying principles working behind the Pakistani real estate advertising discourse (print). Modern day real estate advertisements influence the social lives of people with the help of the interplay of images and the verbal text. This study would contribute to the understanding of ads as means of exploitation of people's needs and desires in the context of Pakistani society. By applying Fairclough's *Three-Dimensional Model* (1989), Halliday's *Systemic Functional Grammar* (1985) and Kress and van Leeuwen's *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996), the strategies employed by the

advertisers to control customers' minds will be made explicit. Moreover, the quantitative analysis has been integrated to triangulate the results of the qualitative study.

### **1.8 Delimitations**

The delimitations of the present study are as follows:

- 1 The research focuses on the study of only print real estate advertisements published in the Pakistani newspapers.
- 2 It examines eighteen real estate ads with the exception of classified ads.
- 3 The study covers only those real estate ads which advertise houses, apartments and residential plots ranging from 3 marlas to 1 or 2 kanals because, presently, most of the housing schemes offer plots of the above-mentioned sizes.
- 4 The ads for shops or commercial plots are out of the scope of the present study owing to the fact that it would not be possible for the researcher to do justice with both kinds of ads. The ads for commercial plots are different from that of residential plots because the requirements of the customers are different.

### **1.9 Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into five chapters comprising multiple sections. Chapter 1 presents introduction to the topic and research study. Pertinent literature related to the topic is reviewed in Chapter 2. After an in-depth analysis of the literature related to advertising discourse as well as the theories applied in the present study, the methodology deployed for the current study is explained in detail in Chapter 3. The analysis of the current study with the application of selected theories and methodological tools is presented in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 carries the discussion of the results with respect to each research question. The dissertation closes on a short note of conclusion.

### **1.10 Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter provides a comprehensive introduction to the current study elaborating the purpose and rationale of the study. The background of the study is also given highlighting the importance of advertising discourse and the need for research in the area of real estate especially advertisements. The chapter also outlines the researchers' objectives and states the research questions which the dissertation aims to answer. The research procedure integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses has also been discussed briefly followed by the significance and delimitation of the study. At the end, the chapter provides a brief map outlining the organization of the dissertation.