



Article

Fresh air in a box: An eco-critical analysis of advertisements offering solutions to air pollution

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Abstract

This paper is an eco-critical discourse analysis of advertisements (including social and environmental awareness campaign posters) promoting products used for purifying or enhancing air quality. The study aims to identify the “stories we live by” (Stibbe, 2015) which influence how people think, talk and act in a consumption-oriented world. The relationship between language and ecology is brought to attention with a view to reveal, examine and question the underlying stories from an ecological perspective, and finding ways of resisting or upholding them based on whether they encourage destructive or beneficial behaviour with respect to the life-sustaining systems. The analysis of these advertisements aims at revealing the stories of our times and looking at the way in which the relation between humans and the natural world is represented by them. The analysis is aimed at creating awareness among those who are responsible for these discourses and those who are influenced by them, so that they are encouraged to build alternative stories that represent and acknowledge the healthy relation between humans and nature through more beneficial discourses.

Keywords: ecolinguistics; eco-critical discourse analysis; multimodal; air purifiers; advertisements

1. Introduction

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not every man’s greed” is what

Mahatma Gandhi said decades ago and it still holds true. The life we live today is fast-paced and revolves around the consumption of goods, which depends upon the usage of resources, natural and human-made. Even though there is an abundance of the basic necessities, humans are often on the lookout for more or better alternatives.

According to Howlett and Raglon (1992), advertisers generally attempt to present the corporate world as having environmental ethics by “green advertising” their products. This promotes the claim that environmental problems can have market-based solutions. The surge of “green advertisements” in recent times shows that manufacturers respond to the consumers’ changing tastes and meet the demands for “natural” or “eco-friendly” products. However, it is the advertisers that are involved in the construction of social realities that take different forms and they utilise different metaphors and analogies to map between corporations, their products, popular beliefs and the natural world. “Greening of the corporation” and the development of “green advertising” can be seen as one such construction of reality around the natural world.

This results in producers and sellers showcasing their products through “green advertisements” and “green discourses”, thereby encouraging people to buy them. Discourses can be beneficial, destructive or ambivalent. The discourses which promote safeguarding the environment or stopping the damage caused to the environment are beneficial; those which lead to destruction or disregard of the environment are destructive and the ones which are partially beneficial and partially damaging are ambivalent discourses (Stibbe, 2015). The discourse of advertisements can be one of three types, depending on the technique and the content the advertiser uses to convey the message to the consumers along with the truthfulness of the advertisement. The use of any of these types of discourses is very telling about the ecosophy (Naess, 1995), i.e. the values or principles one has with regard to the natural world and the relations one shares with the environment. With an ever-growing need to obtain new products, consumerism, an ideology that encourages the consumption of goods and services in large quantities, has become the norm nowadays. Using this trend to their benefit, the advertisers encourage people to buy their products through advertisements. These advertisers employ devices like frames, metaphors and facticity patterns to advertise their products. Frames are mental structures brought to mind due to the use of certain trigger words. Metaphors use a frame from a specific, concrete and imaginable aspect of life to conceptualise a distinct area of life (Stibbe, 2015). Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe metaphor differently, in terms of the mapping of concepts across two distinct domains. One is the source domain, from which the idea is taken, and the other is the target domain, to which the idea is applied. For example, AN ARGUMENT IS A WAR is a metaphor where argument is the target domain and war is the source domain. This particular metaphor implies that having an argument is like being part of a war. Facticity patterns define the descriptions of world as true, uncertain, or false. Some words like “must” and “should” may be used to build the facticity, or words such as “likely” and “possibly” are used in a context to lower the facticity. The use of such devices triggers a story in the minds of the readers motivating them to consume more and

more.

This paper analyses advertisements that promote products for improving the quality of air and for increasing oxygen in the air we breathe. It discusses the underlying stories that the advertisers promote through the product names, the language used in ad slogans, and through visuals. The paper also takes a look at some positive discourses that highlight the issue of air pollution and offer solutions through social and cultural changes that humans need to undertake for protecting and preserving the natural world.

2. Ecology and linguistics

One might wonder how ecology and linguistics are related. Simply put, the way in which we humans treat the natural world is influenced by our ideas, thoughts, and world view, which are formed through the use of language (Stibbe, 2015). On the one hand, language enables humans to build economic systems which often lead to ecological destruction, while, on the other hand, language also allows humans to work towards the preservation and protection of the ecology. Ecolinguistics uses a variety of linguistic theories to analyse different texts in order to expose the underlying ideologies and belief systems, while considering how they encourage us to act. Through ecolinguistics one can understand the use of language which either promotes an eco-centric idea of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living organisms and ecosystems, or an anthropocentric idea of human dominance of the natural world. These views are evident in the various kinds of discourses we find in modern-day advertisements. The kind of language that is used reflects how neo-capitalism, which is characterised by increase in global trade, technological advancements, and financial markets, encourages consumers to think in a way that helps the sales grow, leading to consumerism (Fairclough, 2003), no matter what the cost to the natural world.

3. Methodology

Discourse is a way in which several factors come together for one to be able to speak or converse (Foucault, 1972). In order to study the discourse of advertisements, we need to take into consideration the fact that most of the times they are multimodal, i.e. involving images, texts, video, audio, etc. Such a discourse analysis requires “inter-discursive analysis” (Fairclough, 2003), which involves looking at the context, genres and styles being used. One thing that plays a major role in such analysis is the knowledge of the ideologies, beliefs of the people of the society in which the discourse comes about. Other features that need to be considered include vocabulary, grammatical structures, portrayal of the events and participants, literary devices (like metaphors, metonymies, etc.) being used and the notion of presupposition.

Modality (Richardson, 2007) might also provide insight into what is being said in the discourse. Facticity or fact construction (Potter, 1996) also helps in deciding whether the

discourse is true or not based on the facts. It ranges from being completely true to being completely false, and here the use of modals such as *can*, *could*, or *might* signifies lower facticity and mentioning claims signifies higher facticity.

This paper follows the idea of “the stories we live by” as described by Stibbe (2015), wherein the stories are represented through ideologies, frames, metaphors/metonymies, evaluations, identities, facticity patterns, erasure, and salience, to examine advertisements focused on products designed to enhance air quality and increase oxygen levels in the atmosphere. This study analyses advertisements using the methodology and framework of eco-critical discourse analysis in order to reveal the underlying stories that particular types of advertisement tell about humans and their relationship with the natural world. The advertisements for this study have been collected from various sources, such as newspapers, online shopping sites, product websites, campaign billboards, and online platforms for creative art. Recognising the multimodal nature of advertisements, this paper investigates textual and visual components of the narratives conveyed by advertisers. Given that advertisements are also multi-dimensional, it is not possible to analyse every aspect of the ads, and hence this paper focuses on analysing visual and linguistic features that are prominent and central to each text and which tend to recur and reveal patterns across the texts.

4. Analysis of advertisements with destructive discourses

In this section, we take a look at various advertisements which endorse products such as oxygen cans and air-purifiers, as alternatives to natural, clean air/oxygen. The discourse of advertisements uses the technique of “greenwashing” to promote sales of products. They do so by declaring certain products as being eco-friendly when in fact they are often the very cause of the ecological issues (Stöckl & Molnar, 2018).

4.1. Oxygen cans

During the time of COVID, oxygen became less of a life-sustaining element and more of a commodity. The demand for “pure” oxygen increased and oxygen cans became a source for people to get oxygen. The following are advertisements selling portable oxygen. These advertisements claim that even if clean and pure oxygen is unattainable from natural sources, one need not worry, as it can easily be replaced with the artificial variants available in the market. The text in all the three ads influences and encourages people to buy an alternative for clean air.

Advertisement (1) for OXY99 has the slogan “*Use Oxy99 Oxygen for Relief from Air Pollution*”. It suggests “daily” use of the product to maintain or restore the required oxygen level in one’s body without any mention of alternative ways of improving oxygen levels such as taking morning walks, staying hydrated, growing more trees, etc. The appraising terms such as “instantly”, “easy” and “safe”, in the expressions “works instantly”, “easy to

use”, “100% safe”, give rise to positive evaluation about the product as something good and desirable. Also, the facticity of this discourse is increased by using words like “No. 1 trusted brand”, as well as a seal certifying that it is “100% effective”, convincing the reader to trust in the product and the benefits of its use.

OXY99
Breathe Pure Oxygen

**USE OXY99
OXYGEN
FOR RELIEF
FROM
AIR POLLUTION**

Works Instantly

Light Portable & Easy to use

100%
Safe

MRP-450/-

OXY99 PORTABLE OXYGEN CAN
Pollution lowers our body Oxygen levels and affects our Brain, Body & Heart. Use OXY99 daily to recover from effect of air pollution by restoring Oxygen to normal & safe levels.

ORDER NOW
OXY99 Portable Oxygen Cans.
Instant relief for Breathlessness, Heart, Asthma & recovering from Air Pollution

INDIA'S NO.1 TRUSTED BRAND ING. BOSCHI ITALY

For COD/ Home Delivery across Delhi/ NCR within 24 hours
Call 8130925678

To learn more, visit www.oxy99oxygen.com

Also available on **amazon.in** and **snapdeal**

To become a dealer Call 9650804044

Advertisement (1)

The visual in ad (1) focuses on the demand picture (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) of an anxious woman, where the subject of the photograph looks out at the viewer and thereby demands a relationship with the viewer. She is seen covering her nose and mouth with a hand of smoke, looking out at the reader as if asking for help. It seems to make an extreme case for using the canned oxygen, where there is no escaping the smoke and pollution other than by using it. The image of the woman is foregrounded as the main point of focus by its relatively larger size as compared to the product image. The background is blue with a blurring grey effect most likely suggesting the pure air mixed with polluted air.

In advertisement (2) for MYOXY, the text is minimal and reads “*Rejuvenate from Inside*”, encouraging people to reverse the effects of pollutants from one’s lungs by using the canned oxygen as an alternative to natural oxygen. The product name MYOXY itself uses the possessive pronoun “MY”, putting the readers in the position where they imagine themselves as already owning the product. This is a strategic use of the possessive pronoun to convince the reader that the product and its “good” effects are theirs for the taking.

Advertisement (2) has a pale blue background with the image of the human lungs in the form of an inverted tree. This image gives rise to an ambivalent metaphor HUMAN LUNGS ARE TREES by mapping the lungs onto a tree, with the trachea mapped onto the branches and the lungs onto foliage. It is an ambivalent metaphor because, on the beneficial side, it suggests that both lungs and trees are important since they provide oxygen as a life source, and therefore, they should be protected from destruction. However, the destructive aspect of the metaphor is that it encourages consumerism by suggesting that lungs will blossom like a tree if the advertised product is used.



Advertisement (2)

However, the product image below the lungs and the text “*Medicinal Grade Oxygen*” suggest an artificial alternative to keep failing lungs healthy, thereby erasing any attention to nature or natural remedies. The floral lungs are made salient by their size, position and colour contrast against the pale blue background; and despite the attempt to incorporate nature in the image, there is in fact an erasure of nature through the abstract and narrow representation of it.

A similar use of a possessive pronoun as in ad (2) is seen in advertisement (3) which has the slogan “*Take back your freedom with portable oxygen can*”. The use of the pronoun “your” puts the readers in the role of an “actor”, with the power to take back what is rightfully theirs, in this case their freedom to breathe pure air. However, the way to regain this power is through the purchase of a product, rather than through actively working towards reducing air pollution and improving the quality of the surrounding atmosphere. This puts humans in a position of power, but one that comes through consumption.

Moreover, the text redefines “freedom” through the use of the metaphor CLEAN AIR IS FREEDOM. Pure air is mapped onto freedom to breathe in the pure air. There is a presupposition that at some earlier time people had free access to pure air before it was polluted by human activities. The sub-context is that simply with the use of this product the readers can take back their “freedom” to inhale clean air with higher oxygen levels.



Advertisement (3)

The image in advertisement (3) depicts three people on top of a mountain, arms spread wide, expressing a feeling of exhilaration at inhaling pure mountain air after what seems like a trek or hike. It depicts a sense of freedom experienced in the midst of nature or after some rigorous exercise. The blue wavy lines represent an incoming source of fresh air which appears to be coming from the oxygen can in the backpack. It puts forward the portable can of oxygen as a convenient substitute for the natural freshness of the air on a mountain top and that it has the same exhilarating effect too.

4.2. Air purifiers

With a steady rise in pollution, air purifiers have now become a common commodity. Advertisements for air purifiers promote their products claiming that they improve the air quality indoors by removing pollutants and cleaning the air. Rather than motivating people to keep a natural and cleaner environment and growing more oxygen producing trees in the surroundings, these advertisements package and promote their products as an easy and

quick substitute for the freely available fresh air in nature.

PHILIPS
Air Purifier

**Removes 99.97%*
air pollutants in
just 6 minutes*.**

Get home a Philips Air Purifier and help
your loved ones breathe healthy.

innovation + you

Philips
KA CHAUKA

- Free Filter Pack***
- 2+3 years Warranty
- 0% interest EMI**
- **₹1000** Cashback

No 1

Range starts
at ₹12,995/-

Removes 99.97% particulates upto the size of 0.3µm. **Removes is valid for 22,000h for a standard room size of 220 sq ft. *Applicable with AC/CEP only. **Applicable in select States.

Advertisement (4)

The text in advertisement (4) for the PHILIPS Air Purifiers has the headline “*Removes 99.97% air pollutants in just 6 minutes*”, which tries to catch the attention of the reader by focusing on the speed and efficiency of the product. The facticity of these descriptions is increased by the high modality of their claims and by stating numbers that translate into measurable results, such as “99.97%”. This builds the consumer’s trust and conviction in the product. The tagline “help your loved ones breathe healthy” puts the reader in the role of an “actor” who helps others in the family to stay healthy. It encourages consumerism through the destructive story THE WAY TO GET A HEALTHY LIFE IS BY PURCHASING OF A PRODUCT. *Philips ka chauka*, meaning “a straight four from Philips”, is a conceptual blend that combines the high score of cricket with the high performance of the brand, entrenching the story further in the mind of the reader.

The visual in advertisement (4) depicts the brand ambassador for the Philips air purifier, a popular Indian cricketer known for his good performance in cricket. The juxtaposition of the high scoring cricketer and the air purifier entrenches the conceptual blend of the “high scoring” product/brand. He is pictured meditating, eyes closed, and the air purifier placed behind him, to suggest that the use of the product has the same relaxing effect as meditating. This tells the destructive story PURCHASE OF A PRODUCT IS A SHORTCUT TO WELLBEING (Stibbe, 2015). Rather than walk or meditate in the fresh outdoor air, buying an air purifier is positioned as an easier substitute allowing one to enjoy clean air within the confines of closed rooms. The relation between the brand ambassador, the product and the natural world is evident in their layered representation in the image. The brand ambassador is foregrounded and positioned near the centre of the page. The product is right behind him, occupying a smaller size and peripheral position in the image but clearly

visible. The natural world is represented through a vague semblance of green foliage seen outside the window, further back in the background. This layered representation shows how nature is used as a prop for achieving higher sales, while focusing mainly on products and those who endorse them.



Advertisement (5)



Advertisement (6)

In advertisements (5) and (6) for the SHARP QNET air purifier, the slogan “*Breathe Forest Fresh Air*” suggests that the purifier delivers fresh and clean air like that in a forest, but right in the confines of your home. The logo of the product uses the conceptual blend “SmartAir”. It sets up the identity of the consumer as someone “smart” but only so by breathing in clean air through the purchase of the product. So it suggests that only a smart person would buy this product and reap the benefit of purified air. The benefit of using

the product is a healthy life, as evident in the tagline “*Live Healthy*”. By associating the product with good health and forest air, the advertisement increases the conviction of the reader in the product and what it delivers. Advertisement (6) also points out that the product is “Wi-Fi enabled”, thereby enticing the reader into buying the product as it has advanced technology. It presupposes the identity of a consumer as someone who wants more technological features in the products they purchase and in turn influences how the consumer acts.

Advertisement (5) depicts a meditating woman sitting in her room enjoying the fresh air provided by the air purifier beside her. This ad is visually almost identical to the advertisement (4) of the Philips air purifier, and also conveys the same destructive story PURCHASE OF A PRODUCT IS A SHORTCUT TO WELLBEING (ibid.). The off-centre placement of the product and the meditating woman divides the page into two equal halves with the human and the product in the centre of each half. This brings them into salience as well as sets up a relation of equality between them, suggesting the importance of humans and the means to their wellbeing. The natural world and its importance are practically erased, except for a slight trace in the representation of the potted plants in the background. In advertisement (6) there is a hint of forest in the background, but it is abstractly depicted and it stands as a weak, tokenised representation of the natural world. The large and in-your-face image of the product fills up the centre of the page, giving it high salience and ensuring that the reader does not miss noticing it.

Advertisement (7) for HONEYWELL Air Purifiers has one of the most destructive stories among all the air purifier ads. Its headline “*The Air Outside Is Cleaner! Seriously.*” is a high modality statement that creates fear in the minds of the readers about the air they inhale in their own homes. The emergency conveyed through the emphasis on the word “seriously” increases the conviction of the statement with an added shock value. Furthermore, the text claims that “*indoor air can be up to 10 times more polluted than outdoors ...*”, where the use of the phrase “can be” shows a low modality, but the expression “10 times more” once again increases the degree of facticity with a view to convince the reader of the truth of the statement. This advertisement tells the destructive stories STAYING INDOORS CAN BE BENEFICIAL IF ONE USES AIR-PURIFYING PRODUCTS and OUTDOORS CAN BE DANGEROUS given there is no alternative to purify the outside air. These stories encourage the reader to engage in indoor activities, while being disconnected with nature and other human interactions.

The “free filter” and “1+2 year warranty”, and the various features of the product displayed in red, grab the attention of the reader, in the hope that they are getting more benefits while paying the same amount for the product. Once again, this presupposes the identity of the consumer as someone who wants more of things but at a lesser cost. Finally, the slogan “*Ghar mein HONEYWELL toh life very well!*” meaning “if there’s HONEYWELL in the house then life will be very well”, appeals to the reader’s idea of what constitutes a good life. The appraisal pattern of this statement suggests that life can only be very well if one has the HONEYWELL air purifier in their homes. This embeds the evaluation

PURCHASE OF A PRODUCT LEADS TO WELLBEING (Stibbe, 2015) even further.



Advertisement (7)

There is a use of different colours in the fonts of advertisement (7) to catch the readers' attention. The brand ambassador of the product is a renowned Indian film actress who appears to be sitting in her room, in front of a window that opens up onto the view of a very polluted and smoke-filled cityscape. The headline "*The Air Outside Is Cleaner! Seriously.*" seems counter-intuitive given the image of the polluted city in the background. But it is a strategy to shock and scare the reader into thinking that, despite the smoke and pollution in the outdoor air, if it is cleaner than the indoor air, how polluted the indoor air would be and what ill-effect it would have on the health of the inhabitants! This is a strategy to scare the reader into buying the product.

The relation between human (represented by the actress) and the product becomes evident in the positioning of the actress (also the brand ambassador for the product) in the foreground, in the centre of the page, and the product placed beside her, on the ground, occupying a smaller size and peripheral place in the image but still clearly visible. However, there is complete erasure of the natural world, both inside the room and outside it. There is a sharp contrast between the polluted outdoors and the clean environment indoors. The camera is focused on the actress giving rise to a demand picture wherein she smiles directly

into the camera and has eye contact with the readers. Her direct connection with the reader shows her approval of the product and also seems like an appeal to them to buy the product for the sake of their own wellbeing and happiness.

4.3. Generalisation of linguistic and visual patterns

A common pattern found across these advertisements for oxygen cans and air purifiers tells the destructive story that NATURE IS REPLACEABLE. This story reduces the natural and freely-available life-giving force such as oxygen or clean air to a commodity. Rather than finding alternative ways of reducing air pollution and improving the quality of air that we breathe, these advertisements promote consumption of a product as the answer to this problem. The colour schemes used for these advertisements are more or less the same. Shades of blue are used in ads (1), (2), (3) and (4) as well as some greys except in ad (4). The ads (4), (5) and (7) use an earthy, pastel palette of colours. The blue colour is set off against the grey shades to contrast the pure air (apparently resulting from the use of the product) with the polluted air. This association of the blue colour with pure air is further entrenched by the blue packaging of the products and the texts in blue fonts. Similarly, some bit of green colour is used in ads (2), (4), (5) and (6), to give a slight indication of nature. While there is not any image of nature or plants as sources of fresh and clean oxygen, elements such as flowers and butterflies in ad (2), a mountain top in ad (3), potted plants in ad (5), and a green leafy background in ad (6) are used as abstractions and tokens of nature, to convince the reader that the product is natural and safe to use. The aim of ad (7) is to shock the reader and therefore has fonts and information in red, as if to catch the attention of and to warn the reader of the poor air quality in their house.

This story reduces the importance of the nature and the naturally available clean air, while positioning the air purifiers and oxygen cans as the best possible alternatives to the polluted air. They conveniently leave out the fact that these products cost a lot of money and provide momentary relief. Moreover, the production, packaging and disposal of such products only add to the problem of pollution. Growing trees, planting gardens, reducing the emission of pollutants in the air, etc., are various avenues for making clean air available naturally. But these have no place in the scheme of things as far as selling the products are concerned. Moreover, the story is a strongly anthropocentric one and can be expanded into two related stories HUMANS CAN FIND ALTERNATIVES FOR NATURE and HUMANS ARE NOT PART OF NATURE. These stories set up the identity of humans as self-centred, inconsiderate and greedy individuals, and encourage the reader to live up to this identity through the purchase of products even at the cost of harming the environment and the natural world. In a way, this sets up a mixed identity of the consumer as “greedy”, inconsiderate and someone who is always looking to get the most from their purchase, but also as someone who wants the product that replicates the benefits of nature as closely as possible. These stories also place the humans outside nature, as if they are the controllers and users of all that is part of the natural world. It makes humans believe that they have

the power to dispense of and replace the elements of nature through artificial means.

5. Analysis of advertisements with beneficial discourses

This section discusses various advertisement posters that speak about the issue of air pollution and offer solutions that do not rely on human inventions, but rather on the large-scale social and cultural changes that humans need to undertake for protecting and preserving the natural world.



Advertisement (8)

In advertisement (8) we see that the main focus is on the word “bad” which triggers a negative appraisal pattern indicating that the quality of air has deteriorated. The rest of the message asks the reader to engage in environmentally friendly activities like walking, cycling or running to reduce pollution and make the air quality “good”. The ad very cleverly uses the opposing appraisal words “bad” and “good” for air quality, as it is currently and as it could be if people took steps to improve it. Through the association of “bad” with the present state and “good” with the possible improvement, this ad creates an evaluation in the minds of the reader that NATURE WILL RESTORE ITSELF IF HUMANS MAKE LIFESTYLE CHANGES, the lifestyle changes here referring to walking, running or cycling instead of using vehicles or going to the gym. If the air quality improves, it will result in improved health of humans. While on the one hand this story encourages humans to take steps in the direction of reducing air pollution, on the other hand it puts the humans in the position of power by giving them the ability to decide the fate of nature.

In ad (8) the image of lungs representing a dried up tree comes as a stark contrast to the image of the lungs representing a tree in full bloom in ad (2). This image constructs the same metaphor HUMAN LUNGS ARE TREES by mapping the lungs onto a dead tree, with the trachea mapped onto the branches and the lungs onto the dry foliage. It is a beneficial metaphor that suggests the importance of trees for the wellbeing of humans, as both lungs

and trees provide a life source of clean air, and if either of them should die or stop functioning, it affects the human health negatively.



Advertisement (9)

Advertisement (9) talks about preserving nature for future generations to come. We see the framing AIR POLLUTION IS A SILENT KILLER, implying that air pollution is killing people gradually without them even realising that it is happening. The framing is meant to be literal, because air pollution is, in fact, the cause of many respiratory illnesses and resulting deaths. In the text “*Future Deserve the Green*” the expression “the green” has a two-fold interpretation. One interpretation of “green” is its typical association with the environment and the natural world, which must be preserved for the future generations. The other interpretation of the phrase is a deictic one, where the text uses the definite article “the” to direct the reader towards the correct choice for the future generation from amongst the two types of lungs, one smoke-filled and one healthy “green” one. The text points the reader towards selecting “the green” one represented in the image.

The visual message in this advertisement comes in the form of an image of lungs. One lung is represented as green with trees, representing the natural world. The other lung represents an industrial landscape with factories emitting thick smoke and pollutants. This image presents a choice to the reader in terms of which of the two situations they would prefer to leave for their future generations. The picture is foregrounded, giving it salience by placing it against the grey background colour. Moreover, the bold green fonts bring the choice of a green and natural world into salience by connecting the text “*Future Deserve the Green*” with the green lung in the image, thereby entrenching the choice that the reader is expected to make from among the two possibilities.

Advertisement (10) conveys a lot of information through the minimal text and the image of a medicine packet to construct the metaphor AIR IS MEDICINE. The metaphor

maps clean and packaged air onto the medicine strip in the medicine box, but the medicine strip is represented by a piece of transparent bubble wrap. The name of the medicine, in this case “air”, is printed on the outer box and the image is made salient by placing it in the centre and as the only point of focus against the blue background. It seems to imply that the only way out from our problem of pollution is to purchase our share of clean air and consume it for our wellbeing.

The text “*Our daily dose.*” can be interpreted in two ways. First, it suggests that humans need medical intervention on a daily basis as an alternative to the natural air. Second, the image of the bubble wrap as a medicine strip suggests that humans prefer to consume artificial products in the form of daily supplements, which is actually a useless product that leads to more production, packaging, and disposal issues causing more pollution and health problems, which in turn leads to consuming more artificial supplements. In other words, this is a vicious circle where in order to find quick-fix solutions to health-related problems, more medicines are produced, packaged in plastic, which is later burnt or dumped into landfills, adding to the very problem that it set out to solve. Instead of finding solutions through benign activities like growing trees, taking walks in the countryside, or exercising, humans prefer shortcut means for their wellbeing which they can obtain through daily doses of medicine.



Advertisement (10)

The advertisements (8), (9) and (10) create awareness among the readers with regard to air pollution and use appraisal patterns, framing and metaphors to show why it is necessary to

improve the quality of air by reducing pollution and pollution-inducing human activities. All the ads (8), (9) and (10) use the framing of air pollution as a health issue, but ads (8) and (9) do so by metonymically associating the health of human lungs with the overall health and wellbeing of a person and relating it to the quality of the air, while ad (10) has a more literal framing of air pollution in the health domain. Here air is metaphorically but more vividly mapped onto medicine. The main purpose of these ads is to motivate the readers to act or work towards avoiding the deterioration of the air quality for their own health purposes and that of future generations.

6. Conclusion

The advertisements in this paper convey different stories which have a common pattern that runs across all of them. The products like oxygen cans and air purifiers are promoted as convenient and easy to use and therefore more desirable alternatives to fresh and clean air, despite the likelihood that consumption and manufacturing of these products might be the very causes of environmental degradation and destruction.

Most of the ads promoting consumption of products use the natural world as a prop or as a token. There is an erasure of the natural world in such advertisements (even those with apparently beneficial discourses such as ads (8), (9) and (10)), with nature represented as only a faint trace (Stibbe, 2015) through abstract images of trees, use of green fonts and green backgrounds, as well as the occasional use of lexical items like “forest fresh air” and “the green”. In the discourse of ads (1), (7) and (10) the form of erasure, called “the void” (Stibbe, 2015), occurs through the complete absence of any mention of the natural world both in the text and the images employed in the advertisements. Overall, the ads (1) to (7) put the product into salience through linguistic and visual techniques, while the environment and the natural world are erased and replaced with a “mask” (Stibbe, 2015) in the form of a background against which the product is foregrounded and set up for consumption.

The use of framing is also prevalent across the advertisements (1) to (7), where air pollution is framed as a problem, and the use of air-purifying products framed as the solution that is both a useful and a necessary alternative to clean air. Through the use of different images and employing lexical items that function as “purr words” (Alexander, 2009), such as “instant relief”, “rejuvenate”, “freedom”, “healthy”, “forest fresh”, positive appraisal patterns are constructed in the reader’s mind, encouraging them to buy the products in lieu of working towards an environment-friendly lifestyle change. These advertisements build the identity of the readers as consumers who want instant solutions for themselves, without working towards the larger issue of air pollution and its effects on all life-forms on earth. Facticity patterns are built in the advertisements to convince the reader about the advantages of buying the product that is advertised. This is achieved through the use of hybrid facticity patterns, including high modality resulting from expressing direct statements without the use of modals, call to authority of medical science

through the use of scientific specifications, as in ad (1), and through increase in the facticity by statistically representing facts as in “100% safe”, “removes 99.97% air pollutants” and “10 times more polluted”, in ads (1), (4) and (7).

Overall, ads (1) to (7) are highly anthropocentric, whereas ads (8) to (10) are apparently eco-centric, but have an underlying anthropocentric viewpoint. Even as they talk about the importance of protecting the natural world from destruction, the purpose of doing so is solely attributed to the wellbeing of humans and their future generations. The environment and the natural world are not looked at as important in themselves, but for the purpose they serve to humans.

This eco-critical analysis of ads was an attempt to reveal the stories of our times with a view to help those who are responsible for these discourses and those who are influenced by them, to become aware about the implications of these stories, as well as find alternative stories to represent the importance of the natural world in future discourses.

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Sources of data

Advertisement (1)

Times of India Newspaper, Delhi Edition on 11-11-2017

Advertisement (2)

<https://www.amazon.in/myoxy-portable-oxygen-can-family/dp/B07R5ZRCS5>

Advertisement (3)

<https://www.amazon.in/oxygen-liters-inbuilt-travel-altitude/dp/B0B4DT8VMQ>

Advertisement (4)

Times of India Newspaper, Delhi Edition on 02-11-2018.

Advertisement (5)

<https://qnetforlife.com/breathe-healthy-with-sharp-qnet-smart-air-purifiers>

Advertisement (6)

<https://qnetforlife.com/breathe-healthy-with-sharp-qnet-smart-air-purifiers>

Advertisement (7)

Hindustan Times City, South Delhi edition, November 2019

Advertisement (8)

Global Action Plan, the charity behind Clean Air Day, in partnership with Wonderhood Studios and Ocean Outdoor, launched the 'Breathable Billboard' with flowering lungs to visualise local air quality.

Advertisement (9)

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/120877485/World-Environment-Day>

Advertisement (10)

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/33690380/Air-is-Medicine>