Research
Semiotic Study on Bangladeshi Clothing Brands Advertisements

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Abstract: Advertised objects (e.g. texts, images, signs) have multidimensional meanings. Within the modern mechanisms of fashion advertising clients are being encountered by numerous adverts through walking, shopping, and overall each and every movement they do. In the light of semiotics advertisements are not solely images or written words, it has subtle meanings. Meaning may be too discontinuous and ambiguous that every time and every person will decipher those in a bunch of different forms. The term here seems much compatible with the characteristics of advertised images is Polysemy, an image entitles to many meanings at a time. Thus advertisements (e.g. rhetoric of image) create dynasty of myths over human imagination. This research will focus how consumers interpret and perceive advertisements disseminated by photographers and image designers for promoting their online products acceptance (i.e. marketing). Four advertisements will be studied based on Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis method. Also this study integrates other semioticians’ commentaries on semiotic analysis as the study of signs including words, pictures, and non-verbal expressions as well as their interrelationships to figure out how advertisements are mostly interpreted as the ends of encouraging vulgar consumerism, sexist mindset, and overall dehumanization of our society.

Keywords: Semiotics, Online Advertisement, Connotative Message, Denotative Message, Myth, Fashion Euphoria.

1. Introduction
Freeland, Sailor, and Tanjim Jeans are recent but popular business bodies in lifestyle accessories, retailing, clothing products, and e-commerce in Bangladesh. Advertisements of these fashion houses are not exotic now because we are encountering numerous numbers of adverts via sweeping online. Advertisements are all around us and nowadays the most powerful
communication methods with visual locutions, written words, and audio messages. In order to analyzing four advertisements the researcher collected from the retailers’ Facebook pages. The word advertisement comes from a Latin word ‘Advertere’ which is actually a verb form means ‘to turn towards’. The cause of this meaning is advertisements are bound to seek consumers’ attention. Additionally, to say directly advertisements are to take its clients towards them (i.e. the advertisers). According to Goddard (2001: 06), not all things people tend to pay attention are advertisements at all (e.g. traffic lights). The ubiquity of advertisements refrain customers to question about its discourses and contends. Goddard doubts which element does advertisement spread over the customers, is it an idea, a product or an image? The image and ideas are supporting materials once turn to be chief convertor of human minds in selling products. The image and ideas are performing as the dreaming patterns for customers and thus customers think themselves as the Stars of shown models (Barthes 1990: 261). The indomitable forces of internet and thus the social media have enabled prosumers’ thinking ability fly to an unconscious level. Walter Benjamin coined that, communication created by advertised images and photographs entails as a nature of unconscious communication (Smith and Sliwinski 2017: 09). Shawn Michelle Smith and Sharon Sliwinski also report that, up to 2013 around 250 billion photographs have been uploaded to Facebook and this makes social networking services the world’s largest repository of photographic images (2017: 03). But the question is how customers are luxuriating in these advertised images. It’s also a social-psychological form of communication that reflects on the social and cultural thinking layout of a particular society. As Benjamin told the camera makes human sights to think those are not in front of human eye and too miniscule (Smith and Sliwinski 2017: 09). Customer faced with numerous images advertised through internet has also undeniable possibilities of thinking the unthinkable facets. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the myths associated with advertised image, texts, and signs. Here in this study Barthes Semiotics will be applied to analyze the advertisements of Freeland, Tanjim Jeans, and Sailor those are a list of prominent clothing retailers throughout Bangladesh.
2. Literature Review
The aired advertisements do not dishearten fashion houses and they got newer appreciations to advertise more about their products. Adverts designers are using multivariate phenomena to every separate creation. Therefore, nowadays it became a bulk of huge scopes of research within the approach of semiology termed by Roland Barthes. Among the various texts the researcher here picked some three most relevant studies to relate and validate the running study.

2.1 Pro-violence Expressions of Bangladeshi Jeans Advertisements
A-Al Mamun (2019: 227) has opined that, the advertisements are provoking the instincts of human irrational mind which drive them to extremism and sexism. After studying two adverts of world clothing brand Levi’s Mamun (2019: 223) coined the advertisements are provoking people to live undisciplined lives. Also the advertisements inner meaning represents that people must live a life which is penis or sexuality centered. Likewise A-Al Mamun running research also studying on four advertisements of separate three fashion houses that are popular in Bangladesh. Mamun applied the representation and some of Barthes’s works on semiotics. On the other, the running research studied comparatively bigger samples and gathered almost all the writings of Roland Barthes regarding semiotic analysis of advertisements.

2.2 Decoding Contemporary Visual Advertisements
Mirza Dzanic (2013: 475), researched on two advertisements and one visual to decode the messages. Two advertisements are basically fairness adverts and the visual poster if the cover page of Paris Match magazine which one was described by Roland Barthes also in his writing Myth Today. In his study Dzanic shows that, advertisements are the enriched sources of various discourses comprehended by the encountering customers (2013: 476). The first two visuals were derived to inject the ideologies that all the black subordinates are very satisfied and cooperative under the flag of French colony (i.e. the whites). The last advert of full naked female as the symbol of beauty, perfumed figure, and slimness shows how the photographers have created the mythic concept of feminine beauty. According to Dzanic advertisement persuasion is defined as the process of inducing a voluntary change in customer’s attitudes and behaviors only through the transmission of message not selling the products (2013: 483). However, the researcher in his study took only two advertised contents and analyzed within semiotics the analyzing units are too small to create limitations to investigate contents qualitatively.
2.3 Effects on Customers brought by Fairness Advertisements
In Bangladesh some private university students and faculties have contributed here in terms of semiotic analysis of advertisements. One of them Shubarna Rosul (2011: 03) studied the fairness products of both men and women in the sheds of critical discourse analysis (CDA). She opened a new dimension of exploring the hidden messages of Bangladeshi brand advertisements. The research was conducted over some TVC’s and print advertisements of fairness brands of Bangladesh. Rosul (2011: 77) explored that, like hypodermic needles advertised messages are believed by customers and convinced to buy at once by the advertised products. And even people know about the manipulations of media advertisements they are being subjected of which are shown in the adverts. This tendency she called as difference against reality. The running research on Bangladeshi clothing brands also similarities with the dissertation done by Rosul. Clothing brands advertisements are more or less similar with fairness advertisements full of rhetoric and enticing objects (i.e. image, sings, layout, texts, and special symbols).

2.4 Exploring the Intentions of Bangladeshi Telecom Advertisements
Another study has done by Shatabdi Dasgupta (2015: 04) in order to reviewing Bangladeshi telecommunication advertisements. The researcher has tried up to inspect the linguistic tools inserted within the telecommunication advertisements.

According to Dasgupta, the advertisements persuade the clients to shape the belief psychology, attitudes, and ideology injected within every advertisement created by telecom companies. She opined effect is totally psychological which then converts itself to other continuous processes (Dasgupta 2015: 83). Study with clothing brands adverts is not the same rather requires much application of fashion psychology and related writings of prominent theorists. The running study accommodates possible enough data and tries to explore hidden meanings behind advertisements in terms of customer’s psycho-social aspects.

3. Data Analysis Methods
3.1 Thematic Analysis: Semiotics analyses include the discussion of all things an image or advertised image contains. Theme analysis is the best process of analyzing fashion advertisements. In theme analysis a researcher tends to explore under which theme an advertisement is made and conceived by the target customers. Thematic analysis for example is the headline of any analysis of signs, sound, music, texts, and special characters.
3.2 Message Analysis: Within the method of theme analysis an exploratory researcher tries to find out the Denotative easily understood meaning (i.e. explicit meaning) and Connotative explicit meaning (i.e. coded iconic meaning) of the advertisements. Every sign or text has both denotative and connotative meaning of its own.

3.3 Non-verbal Attitudes Analysis: The settings of models photographed in the adverts and their body languages (e.g. gestures and postures), expressions, and eye directions are all singly subject of analysis. The dress code analysis will be also an analyzing task of this part. This analysis also depicts how a particular dress, particular surrounding persuades the customers to a great extent.

3.4 Graphics and Special Icon Analysis: Semiotic analysis also required the analysis of color, ornaments, inscribed symbols as well. Here in this study graphics background, color impression, and color saturation will be analysed in the light of semiotic analysis. The researcher also investigate the behind causes of special color, icons, and ornaments.

3.5 Texts and Rhetoric Analysis: According to Barthes (1977: 38) we are living within an era named the civilization of text rather than image. Therefore, text associated images have secret influences on human thinking patterns. Semiotics requires the analysis of those written cloths and their denotative and connotative meaning. How they are shown and how the customers are receiving them regarding different socio-cultural orientations will be depicted in this study.

4. Findings and Analyses
Clothing advertisements represent human body as gallant as heroes. If one wears the products s/he will be accepted everywhere s/he wants to encroach. Also fashion wears are to make them attractive, bold and super-active. But beside these advertisements are making oneself undisciplined and uncontrolled that’s why this researcher here extensively searched for the representation functions of selected advertisements. How they represent objects and what are the inner meanings. The inner meanings are whether negative or positive is being explored here by this researcher also. First of all, the researcher has designated objects associated with the adverts and goes into them according to Roland Barthes’ semiotic analysis. Here also the connotative and denotative meanings will be explored based on various themes of analysis step by step.
In sequence, first one advertisement of Sailor, then Tanjim Jeans brand’s one and after that Freeland brand’s two advertisements.
At first there are three faces of photographed models. But one of them is not satisfied much as the girl is not giving her attention to him. Then the faces of other two engaged models are very close and looks shiny. Secondly, the locket hanging with two male model’s neck also creates special meanings for who dreams the models. Another special sign of a STAR painted on female’s wrist is actually connoting towards the females, how Sailor makes females stars and seductive to males. Where are the hands of two males located? Left hand of female model’s right sided male model is grasping her jean’s hook very closely. On the other, left sided male model is doing what? It seems he is feeling her brassiere’s knots. Fabric stripe front-side of the female model’s vagina shows us the replication of penis and moreover stimulating human eyes to watch calmly. Unusual spacing between two thighs of male sitting on the right side of female are showing something special about his sex organ. This concept associated with the showing of muscled hand. It seems to the author that the muscled and sturdy flesh of his hand is indirectly indicating the bigger and well-developed dick of the male. At last the rooming is not natural at all. It seems the place used for animal husbandry and their rearing. But this dirty place is using now for showing the starts’ activity.
These above mentioned exemplifications may apparently seem as untrue or fallacious. But in lights of semioticians’ contributions photography has made numerous meanings though some are ignored and some are accepted in time of persuasion regarding various types of customers (Barthes, 1977: 39). Barthes coined the term POLYSEMY to introduce the multiple-meaning traits of advertised image, text and music. Every object such as star sign, sturdy hand, extra stripe of fabrics indicated in the above advert has the ability to be conceived with several meanings. But what are the types of meanings and what are the characteristics of meaning? As Benjamin quotes, photographic technology as many thinking patterns those are exceeding (i.e. avoiding) level of consciousness of human beings (Smith and Sliwinski 2017: 09). Benjamin (2017) also opines technology has allowed spectators to see through the ways deny the human consciousness. It’s not unusual to imagine the stripe of fabric as penis, muscled hand as muscled sex organ.

According to Goddard (2001: 15), body position, clothing, gesture, touching and proximity, and eye contact actually create paralanguages. Thus in the image above two male models covered female model has utmost possibilities of creating enormous paralinguistic meanings. Room atmosphere including stack up straws, wooden walls all are creating nostalgic environment. Roland Barthes opines the advertised places and objects very often resemble with simple but fresh which reflects homeliness among the customers (Barthes 1990: 232). The homeliness causes weakness to purchase the advertised products. On the other, room atmosphere in the above mentioned image expressing that it’s not well decorated for residing some time at all means. By the way the place is very suitable for confidential close relations among the advertised models or basically for the spectators. Also photographed models become the dreaming desires for the targeted customers (i.e. spectators). As Barthes (1990: 261) points out, readers of advertisements imagine themselves as photographed models. Thus a reader turns oneself to model. One most real scenario Barthes recalls that, advertised models don’t have headache about clients’ budgets to possess the products. Fashion teaches only how to adapt the garments irrespective of anyone’s financial ability. Advertises create Fashion Euphoria onto the brains of real customers (i.e. readers). Euphoria takes over a customer and s/he obviously thinks of being so close and if possible smell her/his companion’s breath as the advert shows above. Or in terms of women one may learn how to satisfy both males at a time and build the habits of polygamousness. All the models are only fair complexioned rather black or grey. Then what
happens when grey skinned customers encounter this advert? The sale of fairness products will increase or a crude level of long lasting inferiority complex will set into his/her mind.

![Diagram with red annotations]

Figure 02: Tanjim Jeans Makes You Ready to Sex

Tanjim Jeans’ logo expresses something out of real world rather an alien’s skull. As advertisements allow customers think out of their consciousness, they might dream themselves like aliens and so that disavow the rights and principles of their surroundings. Secondly the paralinguistic meaning omitted by two models’ gloomy facial expressions is like they have no emotion to each other but they are having a warm-up for sex. The room environment is totally shabby like the first analysed advert of Sailor fashion house. The models are youngsters and thus room atmosphere will influence young folk most. Here two models are planning to engage in very close relationships (i.e. having sex). The female model is touching male model’s sex organ to induce his sexual feeling.

According to Saussure (1959: 24), graphic forms of writing (i.e. words) affect human imagination and better lasted than sounds. The visual impressions created by images and written words are stronger than audio clips. Thus the word Tanjim and the special sign have lasting
effects and created own epistemology in human minds. The faces, postures, and proximity (i.e. touching) of two models here endow themselves with a paralinguistic meaning (e.g. Connotations). Barthes (1972: 57) put his thought in his article ‘The Face of Garbo’ that, model’s face implied a platonic ideation of human emotion. However, here the platonic ideation goes through great and obvious change that entitles to sexual instinct and desires. Alike last one this advertisement also chose a place which is not natural but very suitable for model’s activity in the image. In true words the models are actually flirting after a long separation and the place is secret enough to do this.

As a whole the models are the dreamed girls and boys for millions of spectators of the advertisements through social media (Smith and Sliwinski 2017: 02). Like a reader of this advert one female will imagine herself as a proxy model. Alike this process a young will substitute himself with male model such ways reflected in the advertisement (Barthes 1990: 261). Regarding body language of the models customers are most possible subjects of unconscious concepts and behaviors. Also photographed image teaches more things than direct human sights. Thus photographed models might be causes of unlimited abstract thinking patterns. Every object used to advertise the Tanjim jeans has discontinuous and several meanings (i.e. Polysemy). Every time from enormous numbers of connotations customers picks one and gets persuaded. Moreover, the designers who create the advertisements do not indicate the signifiers and signified specifically and it’s only the duty of spectators to decode them as their own (Barthes 1990: 263). Therefore, decoding very often does not follow naturalism and reality rather succumbs onto unconsciousness. Models in this advert are recruiting euphoria in their minds. One young girl may think the Tanjim Jeans will make her engaged with his lost sexual affections. Likely to this imagination one young male may think that, Tanjim Jeans will help to get touched by her lover’s fingers in his penis.
Figure 03: Freeland Jeans Born Tough

Is he alone? This male model advertised in a way that he is very alone and segregated from the real world. Face here examples as he is thinking about someone else or another concept. EID COLLECTION is word associated with the sign of a tower (Minar) which signifies Mosque and Eid Celebration. The visual impressions are emerging from the text and tower sign are related with religious emotions. If the adverts designers only showed the special sign (tower) then it accentuated connotations of religious feelings of Buddha, Hindus, and Christians. Just like the advertisements investigated above this advert also has a secret but clean rooming atmosphere. Though room is clean and not dirty the open door exemplified by broad daylight connotes that, tough jeans brings an open world for you. Texts assembled in the image are having the vestimentary (i.e. clothing code) code of real world. The text is telling to its customers to be how freeland jeans originated itself to be tough. Additionally, tough jeans would definitely makes customers very compatible to the real world as Barthes described written clothing as Real Garment=Real World (Barthes 1990: 34).
Polysemy creates myths. Text that is telling ‘Freeland Jeans Born Tough’ is a myth of measurement adjective (Barthes 1990: 06). Myths emerge like what types of toughness the jeans belongs, how the tough jeans makes customers able to cope up with and so many forms of thinking. Rhetorical language shows the real world to its customers through the power of a specific word just like TOUGH. Ferdinand De Saussure (1959: 25), coined three influences of writing, first is graphic written words has stronger striking energy, secondly most spectators have impassions for visual impressions cause through image and text, thirdly advertised images contains such wordings those have own literary meanings and thesaurus. The third explanation is seemed too much effective to create myths for customers of a particular product. Depending on Freeland Jeans’ toughness young customers won’t hesitate to think themselves as this model. Fashion craziness will allow young people imagine as gangsters as the model’s body language reflects. The room is looks like a gang’s torture cell and the model is waiting to punish his wrecked apostles. The body muscles are enviable for any young who has nothing about developed muscles. This may leave them towards deepening inferiority feelings.

Figure 03: Freeland Jeans is the Cause of Love

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First the space atmosphere is a devastated bricks-made building or any wrecked heritage site. Background is dark as night. It seems one young model is rejected and he is now planning for revenge as his facial expression reflects. Body is not less than a six pack abs. At the lower verge of the image the pricing tag is used in bigger font size and set at the same level of model’s sex organ. Moreover, the font color is just like male sperm. The impression created here with the text means another form of euphoria.

‘Freeland Jeans Make You Fall In Love’ is inscribed in the advertised image with male model. The written clothing is associated with image clothing but the former one is far more effective than the later (Barthes 1990: 3). Location of this image makes homeliness and thus attractiveness for the product. One heritage lover client may think the location is a heritage site and by advertised this site Freeland Fashion house tries to promote national heritages. Most of nowadays advertisements are containing many objects of written cloths so that, Saussure called this trend as Civilization of Writing rather than imaging (Saussure 1959: 38).

Texts in advertisements are very often used as the vehicle of Polysemy. According to Barthes the designers of the advertisements never define the signifiers and signifieds among the objects and texts used in an advert. Barthes also points out advertisers apply poetry in terms of making texts in advertisement images. The poetry thus made up its own dictionary and meaning system. Here in this image the text also reflects one poetic word form is LOVE and thus creates a mythic system. In addition advertisers put in rhyming games on the plate of image adverts (Barthes 1990: 237). When customers encounter this image then they will try to run through the sentence as rhyme: Freeland Jeans Make You Fall In love. Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2006: 18) stated that, texts and image mean interchangeably. Sometimes texts add more concepts to complete the meaning of image and sometimes contrariwise. Texts connote something new and additional those help to comprehend the advertised image more easily. Every object and written word here has utmost probability of being mythical (i.e. polysemous).

5. Conclusion
Advertisements are now over-spreading by the flow of globalization by dint of unlimited helps of Internet. Today various types of advertisements we face in online and offline media and get influenced by them simultaneously. Similarly the advertisement makers are trying to sway us by using various technicalities. They use images, texts, special signs which are much catchy and
pieces of poetic devices. They also use attractive text colors, backcloth colors, and graphics give the customers chances of changing their minds. Sailor, Freeland, and Tanjim Jeans brands adverts are disseminated online throughout Bangladesh through social media especially Facebook. As Cook states, an image unfurled by internet is just a photo rather has manifold implications in terms of its connotations in human communication. He coined ‘Third Meaning’ which tells about the myths created by almost every object advertised in a fashion house advertisement of these above mentioned fashion clothing houses (Cook 2006: 33). The four adverts selected purposively are clothing advertisements. Semiotic analysis is very suitable to analyse advertisements of any kinds.

References


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