

# De/Construction of Gender Stereotypes: A Semiological Discourse Analysis of Electronic Media Food Advertisements

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**Abstract**—There are various means of ideological investment, and electronic media commercials are among the best sites to invest in ideology for long-lasting effects. At present, food advertisements have become a popular genre to de/construct gendered ideologies because, most often, electronic media discourses mirror prevailing social reality in a particular context. The current research aims to decode the linguistic and semiotic content of food company advertisements. The data for the present study were collected from food advertisements of the Dalda Company from 2021 to 2022. The food advertisements of the mentioned company, which were aired during the mentioned time span, have been linguistically and semiotically analysed with respect to the concept of gender de/construction. The present study utilizes an integrated research approach that has been devised by drawing upon the research models of Kress (2006), Barthes (1974), and Kruger (2000). The rationale behind using the triangulation technique is that the data used in the study comprises three modes: linguistic, semiotic and Focus Group Discussions. The Focus Group Discussions have been conducted and analysed to validate the researcher's findings of semiotic analysis. The study contends that the concept of patriarchal norms and observance of gender stereotypes has been brought out through the analysis of the collected data. Besides, the study highlights that electronic media advertisements are one of the important sites to de/construct existing gender stereotypes. The concept of word-picture conjunction has been deftly used to propagate desired ideology to affirm patriarchal norms.

**Index Terms**—electronic media, food advertisements, gender stereotypes, gendered ideology, visual and verbal practices

## I. INTRODUCTION

The influence of technology on human life cannot be denied in an era of 3-D technology. Media discourses, both visual and verbal, shape our perceptions and ways of thinking. It is observed that people tend to make their lives trendier, and the concept of being trendy is often imparted through print and electronic media (Stanley, 2004). Eisend (2010) believes that electronic media advertisements are among the sites that can be used for ideological investment in contemporary societies, and their impact is long-lasting in the distribution of gendered ideologies. They play a decisive role in de/constructing existing gendered norms in a particular society.

Advertisements are a paid form of communication and are designed to achieve desired goals. This is done to win general consent and to make people behave in a desired manner (Taflinger, 1996). The purpose is to sell the product and ideology associated with it. On the one hand, they serve the purpose of a capitalist, and on the other, they are meant to impose an ideology over the consumers in a subtle manner.

Similarly, the advertisers of cooking oil ads propagate a desired ideology by using both visual and verbal forms to create a lasting impact on the audience. In the postmodern era, advertising agencies not only use typical linguistic and

semiotic forms for advertising the product, such as connotative words, slogans, symbols, colours, backgrounding, and foregrounding but also use ambiguity, irony and humour (Goddard, 2002).

Advertising is a source of communication between the producer and consumer of an ideology in the form of a particular product and therefore, an attempt is made to make the product innovative and eye-catching (White, 2005). After a product is created, the next step is to promote it through persuasive advertising. At this stage, highly loaded visual and verbal practices are employed to sell the product. The target audience, context of production, and content of information are the most significant features of food product advertisements.

#### A. *Semiotics and Semiology*

Saussure (1994) states that the signifier and signified are combined to form a sign in which the signifier represents the form, and the signified transmits its concept. Humans use visual and verbal means of communication. It is believed that a picture speaks more than a thousand words, and our sense of sight is usually regarded as more reliable than our sense of hearing. Fawcett (2014) argues that signs are more influential because they are accessible to everyone. Even those who are considered illiterate can understand them. Signs are culturally oriented and carry a plethora of interpretations. In order to decode them comprehensively, one needs to have one's senses culturally trained. According to the rules of semiology, the rules of visual grammar are contextual, and no finality can be had about them. The use of visual signs in ads is a more persuasive technique as compared to the verbal practices used in the ads. Advertisements are loaded with multiple ideologies that are imparted to the consumers. In semiology, the concept of word–picture conjunction is of vital significance. It means that in certain cases, words can not be understood without pictures and vice versa.

#### B. *Gender Stereotypes and Food Advertisements*

The concept of gender de/construction is very much popular in media advertisements for food items. One thing that is important to know is that the concept of gender is not static rather dynamic. The term gendering of food advertisements implies that the concept of gender is an ongoing process. Language used in food advertisements is one of the significant means of assigning gender roles.

Language, according to Poole (2021), is a site of competing perspectives on how gendered life should be lived. Thus, the dominance of a language always favours a particular conception of life and, by implication, those who believe in it. The language used in food advertisements is ideological in the sense that it represents a specific ideology with regard to men and women. It is a part of the struggle between male and female genders for supremacy in domains of authority.

Electronic media food advertisements, as a medium, play a major role in shaping the individual's perception of reality in a particular context. Electronic media discourses are taken as powerful tools in the dissemination of gendered ideologies. Mills (1995) argues that the order of gendered discourse in society is centuries old, and one must face resistance in deconstructing it. However, through subtle means, it is being done through media discourses and linguistic moves used there are consciously employed to achieve the desired results slowly but gradually. However, the way both male and female genders are constructed and represented through electronic media food advertisements reflects the social values of that particular context (Huda & Ali, 2015). In this regard, the present study attempts to decode visual and verbal practices employed in food advertisements to understand how traditionally constructed views about gender roles are affirmed or challenged.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section deals with the critical review of previous research conducted in a similar domain. This has been done to justify the rationale for the present study.

Umar (2012) analysed the visual and verbal practices used in food, clothing and cosmetic brands. The data for the study was collected from the Facebook pages of these brands. The sampling technique used in the study was purposive. The researchers used an integrated research method to analyse the data. The study finds that the use of visual and verbal practices in electronic media advertisements is ideological context and time-specific.

Sajid and Buzdar (2020) conducted a study on the gendering of semiotics. The data for the study was collected from the visual discourses of ELT books. The researchers used the triangulation research technique to analyse linguistic and semiotic data. The findings of the semiotic analysis were validated through focus Group Discussions. The study contends that word- the word-picture conjunction technique is helpful in conveying the message comprehensively. The ideologies propagated through this technique are long-lasting. Besides, the study highlights that the concept of gender is dynamic.

Behnam and Zamanian's (2014) research on gender and discourse demonstrated that people from various backgrounds and societies interpret messages differently. The study examined the advertising language in Persian and English magazines. The research revealed that the discourse structures of Persian and English magazines are identical. It utilized multiple repetitive devices. In addition, it explained how various forms of language are employed for various purposes to make advertisements' messages more significant. It may have been because the purpose of such advertisements is to persuade the target audience to purchase the desired ideology in the form of the advertised product.

Furthermore, the study revealed that gendered stereotypes vary from one society to society. Female representation in magazines varies, with Iranian women most frequently focusing on the performance of the roles assigned to them by their society.

Nasir (2017) researched the representation of gender in Pakistani television advertisements. The research revealed that advertisements have a significant impact on the attitudes of their intended audience. The media portrayed men and women according to their stereotypical gender roles. Additionally, the research investigated the semiotic representation of gender in advertisements and what visual and verbal practices are employed to sell the desired ideology to the target audience. Additionally, the study found that women in television advertisements were more often portrayed in domestic roles. Their occupational roles were restricted. Thus, patriarchal ideology was most often propagated through electronic media advertisements. This is the most common method of propagating patriarchal ideology to the intended audience by hegemonizing their minds through media discourses. The study suggests that males and females should be represented equally in media discourse without marginalizing one gender over the other.

Daalmans et al. (2017) investigated the differences in gender representation on two TV channels in Norway. It contends that the ideological power behind these discourses also controls the representation of males and females in electronic media. The ideology related to male or female gender that should be disseminated is predetermined by the capitalists. The visual and verbal contents of the advertisements are designed accordingly. In addition, the study found that women were misrepresented on men's TV channels, whereas the opposite was true for men's TV channels. Moreover, it was proposed that television viewers internalized gender ideologies via visual literacy. It was observed that gendered ideologies prevailed among the consumers and they started behaving as desired by those who control media discourses and channels.

Afshan's (2018) research on de/constructing gender stereotypes demonstrated that the media can be used to portray women in TV commercials to propagate desired gendered ideology. The study examined whether or not media can play a significant role in making gendered stereotypes common sense. Using a multimodal analytic approach, the study explored the meanings embedded in advertisements. To make the analysis more valid and inclusive, the research also employed questionnaires for data collection and to incorporate as many voices as possible from the general population. According to the study, women play a significant role in every aspect of life, so they should be treated equally.

Ellemers's (2018) research on gender stereotypes from a psychological perspective is a significant study in which it is asserted that gender stereotypes are not absolute truths but rather socially constructed. Different factors such as economy, religion, social class, formal literacy, age and socio-political conditions play an important role in de/constructing gender stereotypes. The study also questions whether or not gender stereotypes can be avoided. By modifying gendered expectations, it is possible to combat the existing gender stereotypes. It is society and language that assign gender-specific roles. In many instances, the continuous repetition of constructed gender stereotypes shapes the cognition and behaviour of individuals. However, they are neither natural nor created through language. In addition, the research signifies that the emotions expressed by men and women reinforce gender stereotypes. The same emotions experienced by men and women are communicated differently by various agencies. In terms of conforming to or challenging gender stereotypes, the role of parents and social structure is of vital importance.

Nasir (2018) conducted a study on the semiotic analysis of gendering discursive patterns in Pakistani television commercials to investigate the gender roles assigned to men and women in contemporary society. The research utilized a multidisciplinary approach to analyze data about the semiotic, linguistic, and cultural representations of gendered roles in television advertisements. It highlights that electronic media, like other forms of media, played a central role in propagating the desired ideologies to the target audience. The research argues that ideologies are disseminated through various means, including signs and symbols. They serve to reinforce our beliefs regarding gender roles. In addition, the study found that advertisements represent male and female culture, appearance, behaviour, and activity.

Waseem (2023) conducted a study on the visual and verbal practices used in cellular network companies in Pakistan. The research revealed that advertisers employ various visual and verbal spins to promote their ideology and frequently alter their slogans with targeted consumers after gaining their approval. On the one hand, news media is a significant tool for propagating gendered ideologies and, on the other, it serves as an insidious weapon to make gendered ideologies common sense.

#### A. Framework

Barthes model of Semiological Analysis (1974):

According to Barthes, Semiotics refer to how signs and their various interpretations are used to de/construct the ideologies among masses. Barthes model of Semiological Analysis has been employed in the present study to analyse the selected advertisements of Dalda (a cooking oil company) to locate de/construction of gender stereotypes. This model develops meanings from simple to complex levels at linguistic and semiotic levels, respectively. This model works at the following levels:

At the first level (iconic level), meanings are self-contained and can be understood through the pictures of well-known celebrities and leaders.

At the second level (indexical level), society assigns meanings to signs, and are primarily associated with cultural associations of signs.

The third level is the complex stage at which socially constructed meanings become common sense and are associated with the dominant values of the particular time.

Barthes (1974) asserts that societal norms or beliefs are represented through signs. He also states that meanings are acquired in society by combining various myths and connotations linguistically and semiotically. In short, meanings are socially constructed, and they are interpreted according to the context. Then, meanings become common through the social representation of society, and in this way, they exert power in accordance with the prevailing belief pattern of a particular time.

### *B. Operational Definitions of Key Terms*

#### *Gender*

Gender is a social construct that refers to the cultural and social norms, roles, and attitudes assigned to male and female members of society. Butler (2002) defines gender as the socially determined distinctions between males and females. It is something that we perform in society as opposed to something that we are born with. A stereotype is an overly generalized view of a particular image, concept, or person. It refers to what men must do and what women must not do.

Gender Stereotypes refer to the perceptions of gender differences, individual characteristics, and societal roles. Sometimes stereotypes are positive and sometimes negative, but most of the time, they convey erroneous ideas about others. In Pakistan, the stereotypical role of women is to marry and have children, while the stereotypical role of men is to provide for the family. The purpose of this study is to decode food advertisements in electronic media to determine whether they affirm or challenge gender roles.

#### *Gender Roles*

Gender roles differ across cultures. As in other societies, they are acquired through our socialization process. Socialization determines how and why men and women should speak, dress, and behave following gender roles. Various factors, including household responsibilities and economic resources, determine gender-specific roles.

In this study, "gender" refers to how male and female characteristics are socially constructed to be performed. It seeks to understand how the term has evolved throughout various eras. Being acutely aware that gendering is a continuous process. This study seeks to determine how and to what extent gender stereotypes have been de/constructed through the discourse of selected food company advertisements.

#### *Slogans*

Stevenson (2010) defines slogans as distinctive, brief, or memorable forms of language used in advertising. Slogans are typically comprised of five to six words that are used repeatedly in advertisements. Goddard (2002) asserts that a company's marketing slogan will be associated with the product descriptions used in its advertising campaign. According to Lim and Loi (2015), slogans are memorable, succinct, and have a captivating effect on the audience. Slogans consist of mottos, memorable phrases, and taglines. Advertising slogans are typically short and memorable. It is an effective method for attracting customers' attention to the product. Advertising slogans differ across cultures. Typically, they consist of declarative phrases replete with rhetorical devices, such as alliteration, metaphor, and rhyme.

It is observed that the purpose of a slogan is to differentiate the product from others on the market. It is important to relate the product to the customer's fundamental needs. Additionally, slogans help customers remember the company when they are shopping for the company's products.

In the present study, the term is operationalized in terms of how a selected food company uses slogans through various visual and verbal practices to attract customers' attention and propagate the desired ideologies by encouraging the purchasing of the advertised food items. This is how the selected brands persuade the target audience to become consumers using catchy words and phrases.

#### *Semiotics*

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, as well as their interpretation within human cultures. It is linked to various sign systems. It is used to comprehend the hidden meanings reflected at the surface level. According to Chandler (2017), the text contains numerous signs. It can take the form of photographs, gestures, body language, facial expressions, and other visual cues. Semiotics is also the scientific study of the significance of signs in everyday life (Saussure, 1994). Signs are deeply rooted in our values and norms, and sign interpretations are influenced by culture. In various cultural contexts, various signs convey distinct meanings. For instance, each colour signifies something different; for example, a Pakistani bride typically wears a red dress on her wedding day, whereas in Western culture, the bride typically wears a white dress. Therefore, it is essential to understand that a single sign can have different meanings in different cultures. Pierce (1931) states that semiotics is the "formal doctrine of signs." He believes that thinking and interpretation are accomplished through signs. For instance, the pronoun "I" is a symbol that people use to represent themselves to the rest of the world. His conception of signs encompasses both psychological and physical aspects.

In the present study, semiotics is operationalized in terms of how Dalda food company propagates ideologies through linguistic and semiotic discourses. Semiotic discourses teach the audience not to take reality for granted, but discerning reality requires a critical eye and analytical thought.

#### *Ideologies in Advertisements*

Ideology can be defined as a set of guiding beliefs, values, and principles. Althusser, a Marxist philosopher, introduced the concept of ideology. Ideologies are not pure illusions but instead represent existing practices and

institutions; therefore, he employs a more neutral definition of ideology. According to him, ideology is the relationship between men and their world, both real and imagined.

Dijk (1995) argues that ideologies are communicated through discourse and visual practices. However, advertisements affect our perceptions of social realities. Significantly, advertisements depict social realities. William (1978) asserts that advertisements are filled with depictions of ways to be. It implies that our ideologies are shaped or reshaped through the visual signs of advertisements. Undoubtedly, electronic media plays a significant role in reinforcing or altering our worldviews. Because advertisers represent prevalent beliefs of the time by focusing on pertinent trends, this is how people are persuaded in terms of their religious, political, and cultural views. Advertising is considered an art of persuasion because it aims to present a product to satisfy the social needs of the customer.

Ideology creates a bond between the producers of the advertised product and the consumers (Fairclough, 2013). Advertisers persuade their audience to purchase their products by establishing desired ideologies, as advertisements play a significant role in shaping or reshaping customers' social beliefs. In the present study, the term is operationalized to encompass food advertisements that contain both implicit and explicit ideologies, as well as various discursive moves, including visual and verbal practices employed to persuade the target audience.

There are various means of communication, and the use of visual and verbal practices is important among them. Ideologies propagated by employing the technique of word-picture conjunction are long-lasting. Food advertisement discourses are an important genre for investing in gendered ideologies to either win general consent or deconstruct them. The present study critically decodes the food advertisements of the 'Dalda' company to reveal how visual and verbal practices are employed to make certain ideologies seem common sense regarding gender stereotypes. For this purpose, the data was collected in the form of advertisements for the mentioned food company. These advertisements were aired between 2021 and 2022. The selected data were analysed by employing an integrated research model to understand the concept of gender deconstruction through these advertisements. The data has been analysed at linguistic and semiotic levels. Moreover, the findings of semiotic analysis have been validated through focus group discussions. The analysis of the data collected for the study in hand reveals that the concept of patriarchy has been observed through these food advertisements. The study contends that electronic media advertisements are among the best sites to invest in gendered ideology.

In this study, data were collected from Dalda food company advertisements using the technique of purposive sampling. This type of sampling is used to stratify the population. The researchers have collected data from the Dalda food advertisements. The time span for data collection ranges from 2021 to 2022. The researchers conducted Focus Group Discussions to determine the general perception of the selected advertisements.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a mixed-methods research approach to analyse data that comprises both linguistic and visual modes. Creswell and Clark (2011) argued that this type of research approach is used to analyse data both qualitatively and quantitatively, aiming to gain a better understanding of the research problem. This method is also used to validate the study's findings through various means, one of which is Focus Group Discussions (FGD). FGD technique is used to have an in-depth ideological analysis of qualitative data (Hanson et al., 2005). This study employs a triangular research design that has been devised by drawing upon Kress, Barthe and Krueger's research models.

Triangulation	It includes the various methods to address the same problem.
Complementarity	It includes different methods to illustrate the various parts of research.
Development	It includes using the results from one method to help inform the other method.
Expansion	It deals with the in-depth analysis by using different methods.
Initiation	It includes the contradictions or results from one method with results from another method.

The present research has employed an exploratory sequential design to analyse data. It is a research technique that supports qualitative findings with the aid of content analysis techniques. This justifies the rationale of using a triangular research design. The data for the present research were collected through the internet and focus group discussions. The FGD research technique has been used to gather general perceptions about the use of visual and verbal practices in the advertisements of the selected food company, Dalda.

#### A. Research Questions

The following research questions have provided the framework for the present study:

1- How have male and female genders been portrayed discursively through food items commercials of Dalda from 2021 to 2022?

2- What impact do these food item advertisements have on the viewers?

In addition to employing the aforementioned research approach, the study also utilizes Kress' (2010) Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication. This theory of Multimodality works at the following levels:

*What is the significance of the text?*

*How is meaning constructed within the text?*

*What sources were utilized to create the significance in the text?*

*In what social context is meaning constructed?*

*What motives and agency are at play in the construction of meaning?*

#### B. Sample

In the present research, the Purposive sampling technique has been used to collect data from food company's advertisements. This type of sampling is done to divide the population into strata. The researchers have collected data from the food advertisements of the DALDA company. The time span for data collection ranges from 2021 to 2022. Another tool used in the present research to collect data is focus group discussions, which were conducted by the researchers to gauge the general perception of the selected advertisements.

##### *Kruger's Model of FGD (2000)*

Focus Group Discussions are held where in-depth ideological analysis is required. Most often in qualitative research, this is done to validate the findings of one type of analysis. This study aims to validate the researchers' findings from the semiological analysis of selected Dalda advertisements, a food company. Two groups were formed for the discussions. Participants with an M.Phil. in linguistics constituted one group, while those with M.Phil. qualifications in disciplines such as History, Management Science, Mathematics, Urdu, Education, Islamic Studies, and Psychology made up the other. These groups were formed to have various ideas about the selected semiotic texts of the Dalda food company. Each focus group discussion lasted for one hour. The participants were informed about the nature of the study a week ago and were given the selected advertisements for their brainstorming. These discussions have been analysed by applying Kruger's (2000) model at the following levels:

##### *Words*

Kruger (2000) maintains that words are loaded with explicit and implicit meanings. By decoding them, we can examine the ideologies embedded within them. Therefore, the keywords spoken by the participants have been contextualized to extract their meanings in the present study.

##### *Context*

It refers to the participant's response provoked by a certain stimulus. It may be the researcher's question or comment on the participant's perception. In the present study, it has been observed in what context a focus group participant has given a particular remark. The remarks have been analysed likewise.

##### *Internal Consistency*

It is a notable technique in which a researcher examines whether participants' perceptions after listening to other participant's perceptions about a topic under discussion remain the same or undergo a process of change. It is believed that nothing is absolute in research but instead that everything is contextual. In this way, consistency in the focus group participants' views has been observed in relation to the ongoing discussion on the selected food advertisements.

##### *Frequency*

It refers to the frequency with which a particular theme occurred and was supported or negated by the number of participants. This is how qualitative findings are generalized quantitatively.

##### *Extensiveness*

This technique plays a significant role in validating the data. This technique focused on the number of participants who made a specific comment on a particular theme.

##### *Specificity of Response*

The concentration and distraction of participants are identified through this technique. The researcher has analyzed how specific or general the focus group participants remained during discussions on selected food advertisements.

##### *Intensity*

Kruger (2000) asserts that it is an analytical category that focuses on the stress with which participants comment on a topic under discussion. However, by employing this technique, the researcher has identified the particular themes that emerged during the focus group discussions.

##### *Finding Big Idea*

The dominant ideas that emerge during the discussion are identified through this technique. The researcher has identified all the dominant themes discussed during the focus group discussions. In this way, focus group discussions have been used as a research tool to collect data and validate the researcher's semiotic analysis.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kress (2006) argues that media discourses are one of significant sites for ideological investment and to de/construct gender stereotypes. They mostly affirm or challenge the existing gender stereotypes in order to make certain ideologies common sense. Similarly, the two advertisements of Dalda (cooking oil company) represent the centuries-old gender stereotypes about fe/male genders. It is an attempt to divide gender roles using visual and verbal practices employed in electronic media food advertisements. The very slogan of Dalda is as under;

**“Mothers who care, Use Dalda”**

It implies that the concept of taking care is often associated with the female gender, particularly with mothers. Being a mother means that a woman is entirely devoted to taking care of her family, and cooking is one of the important domains in this regard. Another implied message conveyed through the slogan of this cooking oil company is that only

caring mothers use Dalda Company's products, and Dalda cooking oil is one of them. It is believed that a good mother is one who continuously keeps on changing herself in terms of taking care of her family. One way to express love to one's family is to feed them well. Here, in this context, it can be inferred that food cooked in Dalda cooking oil and Ghee is healthy, and mothers who use Dalda products are indeed caring mothers in the true sense.

Barthes (1974) maintains that texts are designed to propagate desired ideologies to the target audience. They are layered and embody a bundle of interpretations in them. One of the functions of media discourses is to disseminate or affirm certain ideologies to the consumers. Similarly, the linguistic text used in the advertisement of Dalda (under analysis) is layered in nature. The very context used in the advertisement is of a home with a wife, husband and a son (stepson for the woman). The conversation between the woman in the advertisement and the son implies a distance between them. Fairclough (2013) asserts that language connotes and language denotes things. The use of language between or among the participants illustrates the concept of solidarity or distance among them. The use of the following words by the boy with the woman can be quoted in this regard:

**Boy-----It is Ok auntie. I do not want to eat”**

The line mentioned above illustrates the concept of distance between the woman and the boy. It could be inferred that she is not the real mother of the boy, and the boy's father married this woman after the death of the boy's mother. It is known later on when the woman shown in the advertisement admits that she has learned how to be a mother from his mother (who has died). At the same time, she has also learnt from the dairies of the boy's dead mother how to cook delicious food using Dalda cooking oil and other products of this company. The important aspect to note is that in both cases (either the dead mother of the boy or the second wife of his father), a woman's role has been shown stereotypically. She is supposed to be a good wife and a good mother. In both cases, she has to accommodate her husband's and children's preferences regarding food and social interactions. No side she can ignore. If she does so, she cannot be a good or caring mother. The important underlying message imparted is that this particular food company (Dalda), on the one hand, provides a healthy diet to the users and, on the other, trains women how to be good cooks, good wives and mothers. In this way, conventional gender roles have been stressed. A woman in the role of a wife should be good-looking and should know how to dress well in order to attract her husband. At the same time, she should be loving, caring and a good cook as well to please her son and husband. This particular advertisement is an attempt to affirm the existing gender stereotypes.

Kress and Hodge (2006) maintain that power exists in various modalities, and the concept of physical power is often associated with the male gender. It is also stereotypically believed that men are daring and women are caring. Women are usually considered the weaker sex as compared to men. The same concept has been emphasized in the second advertisement (selected for the present study) of the Dalda cooking oil company. The role of the mother has been portrayed as secondary. She is there to please her children by narrating them different stories of powerful lions. It is important to note that the lions are portrayed as influential in the story narrated by the mother, not the lioness. The young boy in the advertisement asks the question from his mother which is as under:

**“What did the lions use to eat to be so powerful?”**

Moreover, the mother's answer is 'paratha' cooked in Dalda ghee or cooking oil. Once again, it is observed that the concept of power has been associated with male gender. The advertisement under analysis implies that in patriarchal societies, women are expected to be beautiful and well-mannered, whereas men are expected to be physically strong. At any cost, a woman, either wife or mother, is expected to please her husband or children. She has to perform multiple roles to prove her worth. It has been shown in the advertisement that she is supposed to keep waking during the exam days of her son or if her son is suffering from some disease. Nowhere in the selected advertisements of Dalda has a male been shown assisting with cooking oil. It has been internalized by patriarchal societies that all these things are only the responsibility of a woman.

Barthes (1974) suggests that media discourses play a significant role in making gendered ideologies commonplace. They are transferred from one generation to another and in this way, they seem natural. Similarly, in the selected advertisement of the Dalda company, a woman is shown performing stereotypical roles. When she was a mother, she used to please her husband and son doing her best. She is doing the same with her grandson. The message she is imparting to her daughter-in-law is that a woman's survival in patriarchal societies often requires her to serve and please the male members of her family. If a woman is capable of making her husband and son/s happy, she is a successful woman. The overall impression of the advertisement is that, throughout the ages, it has been proven that good mothers are those who use Dalda, and taking care of their families is the top priority for women in a patriarchal society.

#### **Semiological Discourse Analysis**

Barthes (1974) believes that colours are a powerful medium of communication, and connotations of colours are context-specific. The same colour carries different interpretations in different contexts. Similarly, the use of red and white colour in the selected advertisements for Dalda cooking oil and ghee is quite prominent. Love, passion, and beauty are some of the connotations associated with this colour. Similarly, the colour white connotes purity, peace, calm, goodness, and other positive attributes. When these colour connotations are correlated with the context under analysis, the implied message being conveyed is that the mothers who use Dalda are passionate about the health of their families. They are full of love for their children and husbands. They want to bring purity to food and relations. In this way, they can bring peace and goodness to their families. Moreover, a red-coloured strip runs around the bottles of Dalda, which

connotes that this food company, Dalda, brings happiness and pleasure to its users. Users are sure to find love, passion, and beauty in their lives. They are ever protected from the worries of life. In this way, Dalda products ensure purity, peace and goodness to its users. The use of bold font on the bottles of Dalda connotes that the product has something special for its users because using bold font is a typographic technique used to highlight something significant. Here, by using this typographic technique, Dalda company has been preferred to other food companies. In this way, the concept of the said vs. the unsaid has been highlighted here.

Kress (2006) believes that in certain cases, visual practices are more persuasive in conveying the underlying message as compared to verbal practices. It is generally believed that a picture is worth than a thousand words. Similarly, it is evident from the visual practices from the analysis of the selected food advertisements. At the end of the advertisement, mother and son are shown embracing each other. It implies that Dalda's food items are as pure as love. The users can overcome their differences and befriend very soon. The credit indirectly has been given to Dalda Food Company. Moreover, the families shown in the advertisement seem to belong to the upper class, and in this way, the middle and lower middle classes have been tempted to be the users of the same food company. It is believed that the ideology of the elite class becomes imperative ideology. The overall impression imparted through visual practices is that Dalda Food Company is leading the rest of the food companies. Its products are derived from nature, as is evident from the pictures of flowers and vegetables on the bottles. Its users are protected from diseases. Its products are in accordance with the changing needs of the human diet and are continually improving from generation to generation. These products of Dalda embody vim, vigour, passion and health for its users. Besides, the concept of patriarchal norms has been asserted through linguistic and semiotic discourses.

#### V. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

As mentioned earlier, in order to validate the researcher's findings of the semiological analysis, focus group discussions were conducted on the selected advertisements of Dalda company. The participants were asked to express their views after the advertisements. They were asked to express their views about the deconstruction of gender stereotypes as depicted through these advertisements. In this regard, one of the participants remarked as under:

*"As far as my perception of this particular advertisement of Dalda company is concerned, the concept of the observance of patriarchal norms is quite obvious. Though this has been done very tactfully, yet the underlying message is the strict division of roles in a patriarchal society. In such societies, roles are divided on who should do what. The mainstream media discourses are used to impose man-made norms in stereotypical patriarchal societies. The same message has been propagated through different styles in these two advertisements, utilizing persuasive visual and verbal practices".*

A female participant remarked as under:

*I think the same gendered division of roles has been played out. Such ideology is imparted from the very beginning that women are inferior to men, and they are at the disposal of men in male-dominated societies. The same thing is taught in the textbooks as well in different styles. Perhaps women have internalized this very ideology that their survival depends on being subordinate to male members. Various celebrities have also demonstrated this phenomenon. This is a technique to impose ideology from the top to win the consent of those who are at the bottom".*

Another participant expressed his views in the following words:

*From these advertisements, it seems that the upbringing and character building of the younger generation are the duties of only women/mothers. The male/ father has been excluded from this responsibility. In my opinion, it is the responsibility of both. Electronic media advertisements are promoting things in the wrong manner. Male superiority is still being asserted. The world has changed; the equality of both genders should be shown. These advertisements show a particular feudal mindset".*

All the participants were of the view that through a planned activity, an attempt has been made to assert male superiority in this company. According to them, ideology travels from top to bottom, and when such messages are conveyed through electronic media discourses, the consumers of the ideology start behaving likewise. On a surface level, we claim that there is gender equality, but in reality, it is apparent from these advertisements that patriarchal ideology is being asserted. All agreed that electronic media discourses are one of the best sites for investing in gender ideology among the common masses.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The present study was undertaken to analyse linguistic and semiotic discourses of Dalda Company's food advertisements that were aired from 2021 to 2022 with regard to the concept of gender de/construction. After identifying the research gap for the study, research questions related to the persuasive use of visual and verbal practices and their impact on the audience were designed. The data were analysed by employing a tri-angular research design. The analysis of data reveals that the food advertisements of Dalda Company from 2021 to 2022 affirm the concept of patriarchy through visual and verbal practices. A strict division of gender roles and observance of gender stereotypes have been propagated. It is inferred from the analysis of the data that in patriarchal societies, women are doubly marginalized. They are expected to be good-looking and good cooks simultaneously. The underlying message imparted

through the food advertisements of the selected company is that good mothers are those who are users of Dalda products, and those who are not otherwise. In this way, they are also persuaded to be the users of Dalda products. This is how electronic media discourse plays its role in shaping general perception.

Future research could be conducted to explore the evolution of gender representation in food advertisements, comparing Dalda's advertisements with others and analyzing audience reception. The impact of digital media advertising on gender representation could also be explored. Policy and industry recommendations could be made to promote gender-inclusive practices. An interdisciplinary approach can be used to understand the persuasive impact of gendered advertising. It is also suggested that a longitudinal study should also be carried out in order to examine how consistent exposure to gendered advertising shapes societal attitudes and consumer behaviour.

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