Original Paper

Analysing Symbiosis between Advertising and Discursive Practices through Celebrity Endorsement in Selected Indian Gaming Apps

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Abstract

Popularity of gaming apps is gaining momentum across the globe. The locale of this paper is Indian scenario wherein the symbiosis of advertising and discursive practices has been gauged. The aim of this paper was to fathom the nuances of advertising praxis having celebrity endorsement as its locus. The paper uses Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as research methodology to analyse the linguistic (verbal and non-verbal) and ideological aspects of the selected eSports and Gaming advertising campaigns. A field survey was conducted on 500 college going students to study the impact of sample advertisements on the target audience. It was found that celebrity endorsers influenced lifestyle and buying behaviour of the target audience. The trends in brand endorsement are changing due to two reasons; first being the rising popularity of YouTubers over Bollywood stars and other sportspersons over cricketers and second being the guidelines issued by ASCI.

Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis, Advertising, Gaming Apps, Celebrity Endorsement.

1. Introduction

A sea change has been observed in advertising over the last few decades. The language of advertising has been growing more complicated and ambiguous day by day. The consumers largely remain unaware of the strategies and techniques like celebrity endorsement employed by the copywriters to lure them. The use of language (both verbal and non-verbal) in advertising is both interesting and complicated; hence, it is significant and worthwhile to study the magical tropes which lend advertising

uniqueness and persuasiveness.

People idolize celebrities, so when famous people are seen in advertisements promoting a new product, audiences are prompted to buy that product, either subliminally or directly. Endorsements are a powerful and useful tool that magnifies the effect of a campaign. The brand value added by celebrities is immediate and palpable. When a celebrity signs an endorsement deal with a product, an element of legitimacy gets created, simply because of the power of the name backing it up. Celebrities inspire consumer confidence. Most of the celebrities help in developing credibility and trust of the product being advertised on the audience. Many people hold certain celebrities in high regard, so an endorsement of a product instantly increases the amount of trust the consumer has in the brand.

The aim of this paper was to critically study the discourse of celebrity endorsement in advertising. The objectives of the study were to find out the hidden ideology and strategies that copywriters employ in advertisements and also to gauge the change in trends in endorsement over a decade in India. So a need was felt to explore an appropriate technique for analyzing the complex language and nuances of advertising. After having an overview of the related literature it was found that Critical Discourse Analysis provided a plethora of opportunities to study language in use and to explore discursive strategies that were used for persuasion. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis was used as research methodology for studying the nuances of advertising. The study will be useful for linguists, copywriters, advertisers, target audience, consumers and researchers in understanding how advertising shapes and is shaped by social and discursive practices.

2. Literature Survey

Celebrities are the figures well known for their accomplishments in sports, society, entertainment, politics, and business (Choi & Rifon, 2007; 2010). These accomplishments result in the celebrity being highly recognizable to mainstream consumers, having a fan base, and receiving media coverage (Patra & Datta, 2010).

Patra's study highlights that film celebrities accounted for a majority (81%) of CEs on TV in 2007, involving actors such as Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. A further 14% of endorsements involved athletes (e.g., Mahender Singh Dhoni), while the remaining 5% used TV personalities (Patra and Datta, 2010).

Endorser's credibility is the most commonly used technique in marketing to influence customer buying behavior (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). Research has proved that physically attractive endorsers are more influential in order to alter beliefs (Baker & Churchill, 1977) and creating buying intentions (Petty and Cacioppo 1980) than their unattractive equivalents.

3. Research Methodology

Broadly speaking, CDA is concerned with the relationship between discourse and society. It stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. The roots of CDA

lie in classical Rhetoric, Textlinguistics and sociolinguistics as well as in Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics. It deals with the ways in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power. CDA is a highly context sensitive, democratic approach which takes an ethical stance on social issues. The primary activity of CDA is the close analysis of written or oral texts that are deemed to be politically or culturally influential to a given society. A CDA analyst always takes into account the larger context in which the text is located. CDA is not a linguistic theory and does not provide a complete grammar of syntactic, phonological or other linguistic elements for any particular language. Nor does it aim to describe any text in exhaustive detail. Instead it tries to point out those features of a text that are most interesting from a critical perspective, those that appear to be textual manipulations.

CDA offers a powerful arsenal of analytic tools that can be deployed in the close reading of editorials, advertisements, and other public texts. It enriches the analysis further by insisting that such close reading be done in conjunction with a broader contextual analysis, including consideration of discursive practices, intertextual relations, and socio-cultural factors. To some extent, these activities resemble the sort of analysis done in cultural studies; but CDA puts more emphasis both on the fine-grained details of text and on the political aspects of discursive manipulation.

Norman Fairclough (1995a, p. 135) has defined CDA as discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to

explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

CDA examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. There have been many attempts to systematize CDA. The most notable work has been conducted by Fairclough (1992a, b, c, 1993, 1995a, b, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003), van Dijk (1993, 1997, 1998a, b, 1999, 2001), van Leeuwen (1993, 1995, 1996), Wodak (1996, 2000, 2001) and Scollon (2001). Though they differ considerably in technical specification, they share a common strategy.

Consequently, attempts to systematize CDA draw from theories and models of text analysis on one hand and from contemporary political and sociocultural theories on the other. Some approaches, such as Fairclough and Wodak, rely much on a linguistic analysis of texts, especially Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), beginning with systematic analysis of lexical resources, moving through an analysis of syntactic functions to the analysis of genre and text metafunction. In contrast with approaches of Fairclough and Wodak, van Dijk and Gee developed toolkits that are less oriented to lexicosyntactic features of texts and more focused on cultural and social resources and contexts. Van Dijk's approach is based on four categories: action, context, power and ideology, while Gee's methodological heuristics is based on six categories: semiotic building, world building, activity building,

identity and relationship building, political building, connection building. Fairclough, Gee, and Chouliaraki and Fairclough engage with a range of major social theories as they do this. There are still, however, many disagreements and arguments in this area.

This paper is based on Fairclough's approach to CDA. Discourse Analysis can be characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem or a text. In this sense, Discourse Analysis is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative research method, but a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Discourse Analysis does not provide a tangible answer to problems based on scientific research, but it enables access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a project, a statement or a method of research. Discourse Analysis enables one to reveal the hidden motivations behind a text or behind the choice of a particular method of research to interpret that text. It can be applied to any text, that is, to any problem or situation. It aims at allowing us to view the "problem" from a higher stance and to gain a comprehensive view of the "problem" and ourselves in relation to that "problem". It is meant to provide a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves and, therefore, enable us to solve concrete problems – not by providing unequivocal answers, but by making us ask ontological and epistemological questions.

3.1 Fairclough's CDA

Fairclough (1992a, 1995a) has developed an analytical framework for CDA drawing on the concepts of intertextuality (that is the relationship between texts before and after, interdiscursivity (that is the combination of genres and discourses in a text) and hegemony (the predominance in and the dominance of political, ideological and cultural domains of a society). He attributes these three dimensions to each discursive event.

According to Fairclough, a discursive event is simultaneously text, discursive practice (including the production and interpretation of texts) and social practice. For Fairclough (1989, 1995), analyzing discourse is a synergy of three levels of analysis (1) discourse as text (that is the actual text), (2) discourse as discursive practice (that is producing, distributing, transforming and consuming the texts) and (3) the discourse as social practice (which refers to the larger social context which may have influenced the creation of the texts). Fairclough tries to capture the simultaneity of his method of CDA with a model that embeds the three different kind of analysis one inside the other.
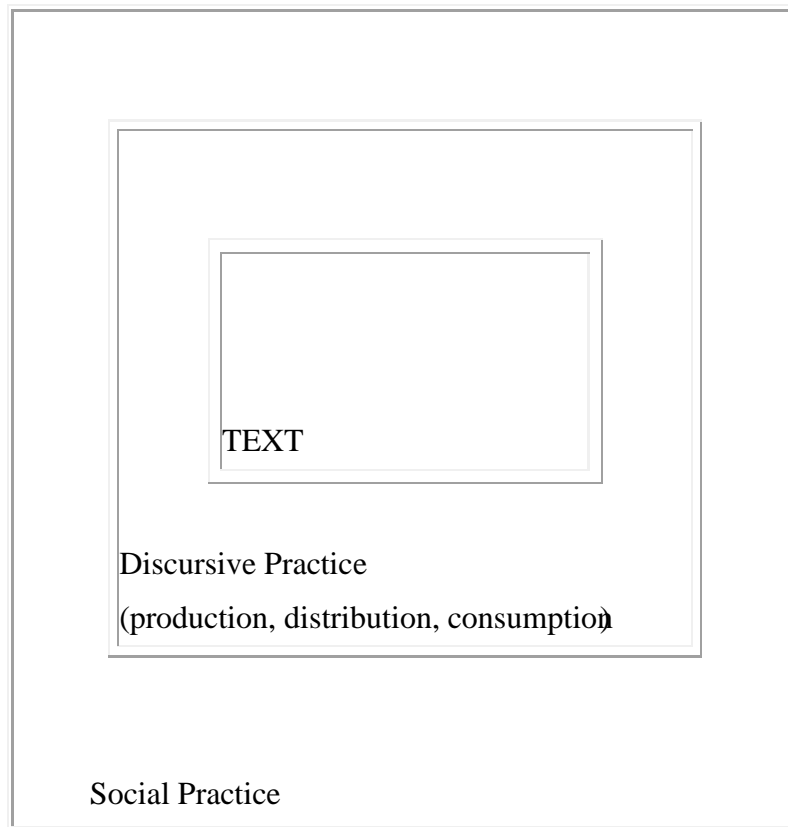
Figure 1. Faircloug Three-Dimensional Conception of Discourse

Source: Fairclough, Norman. (1992a) Discourse and Social Change. Cambridge: Polity.

A) *Text*: The first analytical focus of Fairclough's three-part model is *text*. Analysis of text involves linguistic analysis in terms of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion organization above the sentence level. Fairclough (1995b, p. 57).

Linguistic analysis is applied to text's lexical-grammatical and semantic properties, two aspects that have mutual impact on each other. Following SFL, Fairclough also views text from a multifunctional perspective. According to Fairclough, any sentence in a text is analyzable in terms of the articulation of these functions, which he has relabeled *representations* (particular representations and recontextualizations of social practice (related to ideology), *relations* (a particular construction of the relationship between writer and reader (as, for instance, formal or informal, close or distant)., and *identities* (particular constructions of writer and reader identities for example, in terms of what is highlighted—whether status and role aspects of identity, or individual and personality aspects of identity). Fairclough (1995b, p. 58) In Fairclough's (1995a, p. 58) opinion, linguistic analysis is concerned with presences as well as absences in texts that could include "representations, categories of participant, constructions of participant identity or participant relations." Futhermore *Discursive processes* can be best explained through discussing a core concept in his approach: *intertextuality*.

B) *Discursive practice:* This dimension has two facets: *institutional process* (e.g. editorial procedures), and *discourse processes* (changes the text go through in production and consumption). Fairclough (1995a, pp. 58-59). Also the "discourse practice straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other" Fairclough (1995a, p. 60), as shown in figure 2.1.

C) *Social practice*: Analysis in this dimension pertains to three aspects of the sociocultural context of a communicative event: economic (i.e. economy of the media), political (i.e. power and ideology of the media), and cultural (i.e. issues of values). (1995b, p. 62). It is not necessary to carry out analysis at all levels but any level that might "be relevant to understanding the particular event".

Regarding media Fairclough also argues that "media output is very much under professional and institutional control, and in general it is those who already have other forms of economic, political or cultural power that have the best access to the media" (1995b, p. 40) because "the economics of an institution is an important determinant of its practices and its texts" (abid). The mass media are no exception. Like other profit making institutions, the media have a product to sell. Their product is the audience of interest to advertisers (Fairclough, 1995b). As a result the mass media "are very much open to the effects of commercial pressures" Fairclough (1995b, p. 42). This issue of the effects of the economic aspects of media, particularly its advertising practices, has been the center of much discussion in critical media studies.

In nutshell the first type of analysis covers the description of text: linguistic and semiotic indications. Second step covers the processing analysis- asking questions like who are the producers and what are their objectives? What is the context of production? And the third one seeks to answer questions like: with what kind(s) of discourse(s) or social practices is the object of investigation interrelated? Moreover as suggested by the schematic diagram, a text is assumed to be the product of discursive practices, including production, distribution, and interpretation, which themselves are embedded in a complex mosaic of social practices. The meaning of a text derives not just from the words-on-the page but also from how those words are used in a particular social context. When more than one user and one social context are involved, a given text will typically have more than one meaning.

The text is a record of an event where something is communicated and involves the presentation of facts and beliefs (often ideological), the construction of identities of participants discussed in the communication, and strategies to frame the content of the message. Discursive practice refers to rules, norms, and mental models of socially acceptable behavior in specific roles or relationships used to produce, receive, and interpret the message. They are the spoken and unspoken rules and conventions that govern how individuals learn to think, act, and speak in all the social positions they occupy in life. Finally, the social context comprises distinct settings where discourse occurs (marketplace, classroom, playground, church, conferences), each with a set of conventions that determine rights and obligations—what each is allowed and expected to do.

3.2 Proposed Model

Derived from Fairclough's CDA, the following model would be used in this study to critically analyse the discourse of celebrity endorsement in advertising:

<u>Text</u>

1)   Selection, placement and framing specific tools like photographs, diagrams, sketches, and other embellishments to attain the reader's attention, for example pop-ups/ while browsing.

2)   Omission of details, the absence of which, is not generally questioned by the receiver of the information.

3)   Deconstruction of selective voices, angles and slant of the message which convey legitimacy and neutrality of language.

<u>Discursive Practices</u>

4)   Choice of celebrity as a tool for manipulation.

5)   Context of production

<u>Social Practices</u>

6)   Impact of celebrity endorsement on target audience/consumer's attitude and buying behaviour.

7)   Power and ideology of media.

3.3 Sample

Popular Winzo and MPL advertisement campaigns have been randomly selected from the internet keeping in view the various endorsers featuring in them ranging from celebrities to commoners. 500 college going students of various degree colleges of Himachal Pradesh were interviewed to probe into their responses in order to study the impact of endorsement on target audience/ consumer attitude.

The following are the sample advertisements on which the study was based:

4. Critical Discourse Analysis of the Sample Advertising Campaigns

4.1 Text

1)   Selection, placement and framing specific tools like photographs, diagrams, sketches, and other embellishments to attain the reader's attention, for example pop-ups/ while browsing:

Esports and mobile gaming platforms Mobile Premier League and WinZo use a range of endorsers to promote themselves. Bollywood and cricket have traditionally been influencing the Indian consumers' choices and buying behaviour. An analysis of the sample advertisements shows the changing trends in endorsement wherein brand ambassadors range from the traditionally trusted icons to other sportspersons (excluding cricket) and the new fame—webstars and YouTubers. CarryMinati, a YouTuber enjoys a massive cumulative fan following of over 50 million. He complements WinZO's reach across 75 million users. WinZO has also signed principal sponsorships for two major Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) teams. WinZo had earlier chosen famous cricketer MS Dhoni as its brand ambassador. Dhoni's life experience immediately connects to WinZO's fundamental value proposition of instilling the principles of reletable, performance, and winning. Along with a gaming behemoth in the form of WinZO, the 'Captain Cool' will be seen beginning on a voyage to the top of the Global Gaming Industry by breaking down boundaries and changing views with relevant, inclusive, and targeted advertisements. As a brand that aspires to establish India as the world's Gaming Powerhouse, WinZO's collaboration with a household name and revered star in Dhoni is bound to raise awareness and engagement in the country's social gaming community to new heights, paving the way for

social/interactive gaming to become the most preferred form of entertainment. WinZO has also secured the principal sponsorships for two major Vivo Pro Kabaddi League

MPL ropes in YouTube star Amit Bhadana as brand ambassador Alongside Bhadana, MPL has also brought other YouTubers such as Ashish Chanchlani and Elvish Yadav on board to launch marketing initiatives. Previously, MPL had collaborated with Virat Kohli and actor Tamannaah Bhatia, and is now on the lookout for young digital influencers to boost presence and increase consumer base. One of MPL's campaign promotes esports culture with Leander Paes and Geeta Phogat . MPL also features its users as brand endorsers.

2)   Omission of details, the absence of which, is not generally questioned by the receiver of the information.

The consumers are nowhere reminded about the betting or gambling apps. They are termed as gaming apps but they differ from simple gaming apps. The Supreme Court declared rummy as a game of skill and that playing games of skills for cash doesn't constitute gambling. Games of skills are exempted from penal provisions of most gambling acts in India, although various state laws do not permit playing these games for cash.

Gaming apps are not illegal, especially games that are based on skills. Nagaland, Sikkim, and Kerela allow online gaming apps in their respective states however they are strictly regulated (only skill-based games are allowed) The apps must have licenses to operate in the said states. Telangana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu have banned gambling apps in their territories expressively.

West Bengal has no laws which could prevent online gambling apps and although gambling apps are illegal in Goa, people still play them. Every state has its gambling laws whereas the Public Gambling Act, of 1867 is the only central act.

The Mobile Games and the services available on the Platform are open only to persons currently residing in India. People residing in the States of Assam, Odisha, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, as well as the state of Gujarat for the game of Poker("Restricted States") are prohibited from participating in any Mobile Games on the Platform, unless otherwise set out in the Special Rules/Terms or Agreement. Further, there may be certain games that may be restricted in some additional states.

Trends in endorsement are changing due to two reasons; first being the rising popularity of webstars and YouTubers over Bollywood celebrities and other sportspersons over cricketers; the second reason being the guidelines issued by ASCI. It was in 2017 when the advertising regulator ASCI released a set of guidelines on celebrity endorsements. As per these guidelines, celebrities from all industries endorsing products must conduct due diligence ensuring that the claims made in their endorsements are not misleading. Endorsers must ensure that all claims made in their ads. Ads must be capable of being objectively ascertained; especially for products/services, which can cause serious financial and physical loss. Celebrity testimonials must be based on their adequate knowledge/experience of the

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product/service being sold. Celebrities are also barred from promoting any products, which are prohibited from being advertised or carry a health warning. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has the authority to give orders to withdraw or amend the content of inaccurate advertisements as well as impose a penalty of rupees ten lacs on both the manufacturer and the endorser. If the given guidelines are not followed, ASCI can issue a ban on the celebrity for endorsing any products/services up to 1 year, extendable to 3 years in case of subsequent contravention..

3)   Deconstruction of selective voices, angles and slant of the message which convey legitimacy and neutrality of language.

Winzo customer ratings and claims to be a safe app in the forms of flash messages and new pop ups appear wherever you are browsing. In this way the brands condition the minds of the target audience. Using the term 'gaming app' is a safe choice.

4.2 Discursive Practices

4)   Choice of celebrity as a tool for manipulation.

Celebrity endorsements have huge impact on sales. It is not just the product that arrests consumer attention but the advertisers and copyrighters' nuances to expose the brand. Endorsements increase brand recall and have mass appeal. A need for consumption is created for the target audience and then the product is offered as a solution. Celebrities have demographic effect on people when their journey of success is witnessed by them. Everyone wants to be like them. So a trust factor works and credibility for the product gets established.

5)   Context of Production

Brands use facts and beliefs to influence the consumers. Sports players have a universal appeal in India. Through sports stars, a brand can bring out the values of grit, determination, hard work and spirit of sportsmanship. These are good and inspiring values for any brand to stand for. In India cricket and Bollywood are sub-religions of their own. The stars from these realms rule the mindset of consumers. Both of them are arenas and spaces into which the consumers escape from their mundane lives and thus it is these two spaces which give us our brand endorsers. As Bollywood is going through a downside today, it is the sports stars and the Southern celebrities that are rising once again.

Change in trends: Cricketers and Bollywood stars are being replaced by other sportspersons and social media influencers. There are several brands that are roping in sports celebrities as brand ambassadors or endorsers. Not just cricketers, but with the rise and rise of Olympians such as MC Mary Kom, Neeraj Chopra and others there has been a tremendous shift of endorsements from Bollywood stars to athletes and players who dominate the international scene in other sports such as badminton, football, and more. In recent times, several other sports personalities such as Neeraj Chopra for Under Armour, Abhinav Bindra for Gillette, Mirabai Chanu and Hima Das for Adidas, and PV Sindhu for Bridgestone, and more have proven their mass appeal and become hot properties for brands. According to Rutu Mody Kamdar, Founder of Jigsaw Brand Consultants, "Bollywood celebrities have been losing their sheen for some time now, owing to the slump in the film industry and a lot of other controversies and

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issues that they've been embroiled in. For brands, sports stars are more stable and reliable as endorsers than celebrities. One bad movie or negative role or controversy could throw off a Bollywood celebrity's reputation, thereby also affecting the reputation of the brand.

Post Tokyo Olympics, athletes like Bajrang Punia, Devendra Jhajharia, Neeraj Chopra and PV Sindhu added major endorsement deals to their brand portfolio. The majority of the endorsements were done in the financial services and the food and beverages segments. These included brands such as Apis Himalaya Honey, Mobil India, Natural Ice Cream, among others

4.3 Social Practices

6)   Impact of celebrity endorsement on target audience/consumer's attitude and buying behaviour

To study the impact of sample advertisements on consumer behaviour a field survey was conducted on 500 college going students. They were interviewed regarding their responses on these advertisements. The results of the survey revealed:

1. Celebrity endorsement influenced category A (18-22 years) more than the category B (22-25 years).

2. Endorsements do affect the attitudes and buying behaviour of the target audience. 60% respondents in both the age categories agreed of being influenced by celebrity endorsement.

3. In 30% cases the target audience just remembered the celebrity endorser but not the brand name. This was because the celebrities overshadowed the gaming apps and also because multi-brand endorsement dilutes the effect especially in case of Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni as they are brand ambassadors for many companies.

Our findings are line with Patra and Dutta. The popularity of Celebrity Endorsement in India is not without its difficulties, and carries with it two negative consequences: 1 celebrity overexposure due to multiple brand endorsements 2 the potential for celebrities to overshadow the brand (Patra and Datta, 2010).

7)   Power and ideology of media

Consumers not only consume the product but also the meanings associated with it, the effectiveness of a celebrity endorsement depends upon the cultural meanings which the celebrity transfers to the product. WinZo claims to have a vision of promoting the spirit of winning and culturally relevant content across Bharat.

The underlying ideology is, however, different. Gamification might be seen as a form of ideology and therefore a mechanism of the dominant class to set agenda and to legitimize actions taken by this very class or group. The panacea of gamification seems to have an unlimited range of possible application areas and unrestricted trust and loyalty by the consumers. It is difficult to prove any of the announced effects of gamification as false because the inherent logic of the apparatus of gamification is consistent. Gaming profoundly changed by evolving from a residual and forbidden affair into a mainstream leisure activity, legalized and sold on large scale under the control of national governments. Ever since the notion of gamification was introduced widely. With the aid of the unconscious motivational processes that an ideology like gamification can provide, many processes including economical, educational,

cultural and political ones can run more smoothly than when governed by persuasion, rational reasoning or brute force. Ideology works best when it distorts reality in such a way that we do not notice the distortion because everything seems to be alright. While in fact a mistaken identity and a unification of play and labour serve the needs of the economic system, the ideas of ideology make it appear natural. It makes the subordinate classes accept a state of alienation against which they would otherwise revolt. This state of alienation has also been referred to as 'false consciousness.' When the evangelists of gamification tell us that work must be play, that our personalities will be playful, that the whole economy is a game, and that each and every activity from cradle to grave can be turned into a game, we encounter false consciousness that is socially necessary. Today, gamification is used to tell people that if reality is not satisfactory, then at least play might be so. This in turn leads to lifestyle changes amongst people particularly the youth.

As a legitimate leisure activity, it is realistic to expect that children, young people and vulnerable adults will be exposed to some form of gaming advertising, marketing or sponsorship (this is currently most evident among gaming fans).

5.1 Conclusion

It can be concluded through Critical Discourse Analysis of the Advertising Campaigns of Selected Indian gaming apps that Gamification as an ideology and brand endorsement by youth icons influence lifestyle and buying behaviour of the target audience of the advertisements (especially the youth). The trends in brand endorsement are changing due to two reasons; first being the rising popularity of YouTubers over Bollywood stars and other sportspersons over cricketers and second being the guidelines issued by ASCI.

5.2 Recommendations

Continued efforts to improve education relating to gaming and risk are therefore imperative in helping young and vulnerable adults make better informed assessments about whether or not to spend money and time on gaming.

5.3 Limitations and Future Scope

This study was restricted to selected Indian gaming apps, more detailed studies could be carried out with different set of advertisements as the sample. Researchers may foray into other domains like opinion polls, customer ratings, etc. to explore more about advertising strategies and their influence on consumer behaviour. Future researchers may carry out exclusive studies on ideology of media and advertising.

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