

Social Stratification

Aim

To explore social stratification with a linguistic perspective

Method

The easiest data to observe social stratification is advertisements, as they target the audience based on their background. Advertisers often frame their advertisements, presuming that their audience belong to a particular social class.

Another method to observe is in real life, but for documentation purposes, the scenes in movies and TV shows are easier to obtain and cite.

Dimensions

The members of society are divided into different social classes based on several different factors. We explored the different dimensions of social stratification:

- Age
- Gender
- Region
- Language
- Religion
- Occupation
- Wealth/Income

Data Collection

1. Manual Advertisement Collection(video ads, printed ads,etc) [Total=45]
2. Form to find the background of people and the advertisements they relate to [Total=92]

Analysis

- Analysis of manual collection of advertisements
- Analysis of form responses data
- Explored the relatability of ads among different social classes in the form responses data

Future Work

- Another form for better understanding of the trends of social stratification.
- Data collection and analysis of scenes in Movies and TV shows where social stratification is visible

Sample Form Response Analysis

Response 1

- Gender - Female
- Region - City
- State - Delhi
- Mother Tongue - Hindi
- Religion - Hinduism
- Occupation - Dentist
- Income - Less than 5 Lakhs
- Advertisements:
 - Kia: Relatability = 1
 - Lifebuoy: Relatability = 5

Response 2

- Gender -Male
- Region - City
- State - Kerala
- Mother Tongue - Malayalam
- Religion - Christianity
- Occupation - Student
- Income - Prefer not to say
- Advertisements:
 - Kitkat: Relatability = 4
 - Kia: Relatability = 1

Response 3

- Gender - Male
- Region - Town
- State - Andhra Pradesh
- Mother Tongue - Telugu

- Religion - Hinduism
- Occupation - Business
- Income - 5 - 10 Lakhs
- Advertisements:
 - Kia: Relatability = 1
 - Netflix: Relatability = 5

Analysis

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjD7MjzjG0k> - Kia

The advertisement displays successful people, exemplifying their elegance and luxury. The innovative technology owned by them is shown as in the case of smartwatches, for wearing sophisticated clothes. It also tries to give minimalistic appeal by not making use of any dialogues, and just throwing in a witty punchline in English at the end.

The relatability of this ad for the above responses is 1, which is primarily because Kia cars are targeted for people in the higher earning range of people, as their pricing range begins from ~15 Lakh, while the above 2 responses are from people with earnings in range of 5-10 lakh, and one is a student.

Advertisement 1

Source

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCUGSesNhRs> – Kent (Hindi)

Setting

It clearly wants to appeal to the middle class/upper middle class people. Also the way the ad begins, we sort of relate it to the issue of parents being disrespected in their old age, which grabs a lot of eyeballs, especially the mother and son relationship. So in a way, it will persuade the son to have KentRO for his parents.

Language

It is mostly in Hindi, with some code mixing involving English. Though we can say that even some of those words nowadays can be considered as part of hindi itself(borrowing), like 'please', 'doctor', 'cartoon', etc are used.

The man uses very polite words while talking with his mother, like he addresses her as 'maa', which can be considered having high emotional attachment.

The words of his mother are pure hindi, like she says "sab samajhti hun main teri tarqeebein".

Sound Effects

There is a background song running, which has a very soothing, slow tone.

Even the song's lyrics "maa tham le meri ungliyan, dikhaun tujhe main duniya" appeal to every relationship among a son and his mother. Even here "tujhe" isn't disrespecting; rather, it is decreasing the emotional distance between the son and his mother.

The whole motto of the son to forcefully send her mother to go for a walk, because he knows she would definitely do it for his son just adds to the love between them.

Advertisement 2

Source

<https://youtu.be/dfarEq6trCw> - Synergy Pesticides (Telugu)

Setting

The ad is targeted towards lower class people(farmers,agricultural workers). The ad was shot in a farming land. The two people who were discussing the problems of their land were small farmers which is reflected by the clothes they wear(gochi & talakattu) and the sarpanch/landlord is wearing a pancha & kandava(The long cloth on the side of his shoulder). Visually the first part has a darker tone to it compared to the second which signifies the problems and obstacles they are facing and also the economic position of the farmers.

Language

The language used is perfect Telugu which is because of the fact that the ad was targeted towards lower class. There is a high chance that farmers and workers cannot understand English which explains why the company didn't even bother about code-mixing. This connects people to their advertisement. We can also observe how the landlord and the farmers refer to each other in the ad.

a) 0:02 - Farmer1 -> Farmer2 -- "Entra Ramudu!"

b) 0:04 - Farmer2 -> Farmer1 -- "Orey Balraju!"

But

c) 0:39 - Farmer1 -> Landlord -- "Ayya!"

d) 0:45 - Landlord -> Farmer1 -- "Enduku Ledu balraju!"

We can see how Farmer 1 and Farmer 2 change their slangs,tone of speaking and their postures when referring to their superior, this shows how economic factors change how people communicate.

Sound Effects

In the first half of the ad the sound slow and low which implies the conversion going on is about some loss/bad whereas the background music changes to an enthusiastic/confident tone when the two farmers meet the landlord with their problems signifying happiness.

Advertisement 3

Source

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSfZB4_N9Qk – PediaSure (Hindi)

Setting

The ad is set in an upper-middle class school's playground, likely during some event. The first half of the ad shows casual banter between kids, where one boy is being teased by a girl for being sickly. The view then shifts to the mothers of the kids. While the children are shown laughing it off, the boy's mother is clearly worried for her child and is told about PediaSure from another mom sitting near her. After this, a creative visualisation is shown regarding the product. Clearly, this ad is targeting upper-middle class mothers.

Language

The language is Hindi with English code mixed. Code-mixing with English is most-likely due to the English-medium education provided in middle to upper class schools.

Further, all the important highlights/talking points of the product seem to be in English : "growth", "immunity weak", "Thirty-Seven Nutrients", "Infection", "Fifty percent". In conjunction with Hindi function words, this makes for a relatable ad that makes the USPs stick in the viewer's mind.

Background song

Throughout the first half a kind of sad background tone plays, likely to get the target audience of upper-middle-class moms' sympathy towards the sick kid. When the product is shown off as a solution, the music switches to a more cheerful and happy tone. This doesn't seem to hold much linguistic significance here as it has no lyrics.

Advertisement 4

Source

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRGDqGm-FA> - Kisan Call Centre (Malayalam)

Setting

A farming couple can be seen to work in a field. The conversation continues and then different farmers on the phone can also be seen.

Analysis

The targeting of the advertisement can be done for the different dimensions

Language: The advertisement has been dubbed to pure Malayalam. The conversation is in a very casual register. The addressing of the wife by the husband as “dhey ketto” is pretty common among village people. Very simple language understandable by everyone is used.

Occupation: It is targeted towards farmers, as seen from the setting and the topic of conversation.

Wealth: It is targeted towards lower class. This can be seen in the usage of feature phones and traditional attire.

A point to note here is that since they are targeting the lower class farmers throughout the country, the government made the advertisement in one language and dubbed to the regional languages for reaching them.

Advertisement 5

Source

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeZXIElj_kM – Dhanya Seeds (Hindi)

Setting

It clearly wants to appeal to the farmers, who are the target audience for selling seeds . It also tries to show the imagery of green dense fields and crops and smiling farmers, in order to appeal that good crops can be produced with the use of these seeds. It also tries to show chemicals and labs, to give the appeal of modern science being used in the seeds.

Language

The advertisement is purely in Hindi, and uses the vocabulary that is more commonly seen in rural parts, like using कृषि instead of खेती, using कृतज्ञ.

It uses catchy and simple slogans, like 'कोई भी थाली नहीं रहेगी खाली', and glorifies the farmers, and praises it's target audience to attract customers.

Sound Effects

The background jingle, simply consisting of the namely 'Dhanya Seeds' tries to make the name of the brand embed in the farmers minds. Also , as it shows visuals of farmers laughing, it plays upbeat happy music, to give a sense of happiness being brought to the farmers by the seeds.

Advertisement 6

Source:

<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/7NeD/instaflex-most-powerful-joint-pain-relief#> - instaflex joint relief

Setting:

The ad mainly refers to people suffering from the joint discomfort and this ad targets the audience to buy their product. It shows the different situations in which people suffer from the joint pains. It also shows how their joints feel after using instaflex. Then seeing people enjoying their lives jumping and enjoying themselves after using instaflex. Then he says that there is no need to buy the product right away. You can buy it after using it as a trail for 2 weeks.

Laguage:

The advertisement is in very formal English and it is filled with encouragement towards buying the product and this mainly tries to attract people to buy their product and make people trust their product they are offering 2 complimentary weeks. And they even have an helpline for any issues regarding the instaflex. So basically here the advertizer is grabbing the attention of people by the free schemes by which people are usually mesmerized. The lines like "If you need joint relief don't miss this giveaway". And the phrases "Relieve discomfort", "Increase flexibility", and "Improve mobility".

Sound Effects:

The simple background song increases the enthusiasm in the people for buying the product and using it for relieving the everlasting joint pains. Then in the second half the sounds feel like the people are enjoying their lives without any pains.