

# **The Power of Competition: A Pragmatic Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Competitive Digital Advertisements**

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## **Abstract:**

Competitive ads try to exercise social power over both the original ad consumers and the competitor's consumers. According to Fairclough's (1989) concept of consumerism, by building a relationship with the competitor consumers, a new ideology in ads could be displayed away from just fulfilling the consumer's needs. Consequently, competitive advertisements are not only selling a product but are also trying to engage different types of consumers. Such engagement can build both social power and a high standard position for the advertised brand in the market. The present study aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine two competitive digital ads in an attempt to explore how these types of ads exercise social power and decode their social ideology. The two selected advertisements, which were posted on the social media platforms on Halloween, belong to the Western brands Pepsi and BMW. To conduct the CDA, the study employs Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, presupposition, and opposition (Jeffries, 2010), through which the social power and ideology are represented. The study concludes that competitive advertisements resort to comparative, humorous, persuasive, and ironic notions on social events in order to acquire and build relationships with consumers on both sides. It is also found that the attempt of increasing engagement with consumers sheds light on the social power of the discourse of competitive advertisements.

**Keywords:** *Critical discourse analysis (CDA), Competitive ads, consumerism, Power, Opposition, Presupposition, Grice's cooperative principle.*

## **Introduction:**

It is common in advertising, generally, to share with their consumers the celebration of social events through posting felicitations on their social media platforms. However, some brands benefit from occasions, like Halloween, to post an ad which contains comparatives and direct challenges to their competitors. This type of advertisement is called competitive advertisement. Moore (1999) defines competitive advertisement (or comparative advertisement) as a persuasive method of verbal and visual communication of the top brands in the marketplace to convey a competitive notion. Usually, competitive advertising is a persuasive campaign through which the advertised brands establish a relationship with consumers of both brands. Moreover, these advertisements manifest their dominance of the market, Williams and Page, Jr. (2013) affirm, through challenging their competitors directly. Therefore, competitive advertising manipulates, through language and images, their consumers to achieve such purposes.

The linguistic features that competitive advertisements employ can depict the intent and power they hold. In this regard, examining competitive ads can be conducted under the framework of CDA. van Dijk (2001) believes that CDA focuses on the means of exercising social power and ideology in discourse. He further illustrates that its concern is featuring values and shaping the identity of a certain society through verbal language. The perception of a receiver of an intended message can be depicted by following the CDA approach and by implementing some pragmatic tools. In addition, Fairclough's (1989) concept of consumerism explores how the power of a certain entity could be demonstrated by changing an ideological focus of a certain society or even creating a new one. He adds that establishing a relationship with a specific community, and building consumers are the rationale for creating needs and acquiring power over this community.

Furthermore, the implementation of pragmatic tools in CDA depicts the power and ideology in any discourse. The pragmatic tool of Grice's cooperative principle, for example, could reveal the embedded methods of communication with consumers. It reveals, through implicatures, the relationship, and power over consumers. The presupposition scrutinizes the constructed facts in a discourse through which the hidden social ideologies of discourse and the creation of needs are uncovered; thus, Fairclough's concept of consumerism is achieved. Opposition explores how comparatives are proposed in languages through lexical and structural triggers. It conveys the elements of persuasion in a discourse. Pragmatic tools hereof represent, under the CDA framework, the concept of consumerism.

Accordingly, this study aims to conduct a CDA to explore Fairclough's (1989) concept of consumerism in competitive ad. The study is based upon van Dijk's approach of CDA and borrows pragmatic tools like cooperative principle, presupposition, and linguistic tool like opposition that can unfold the embedded manipulative meanings and ideologies in a discourse. The analysis represents the power and ideologies of the two competitive advertisements by BMW and Pepsi. By following Van Dijk's CDA approach and Fairclough's concept of consumerism, the study attempts to explore how

the ads instantiate the acts of social power as well as uncover the ideology of attracting attention and acquiring a prior position in the market in competitive ads. In addition, the implementation of some linguistic tools in the analysis would help in inferring intended messages in the discourse of ads. First, the use of Grice's cooperative principle could depict how the discourse of competitive advertising is building a relationship with consumers through communication. Second, the pragmatic tool of presupposition reflects the constructed facts and hence ideologies in the two advertisements. Third, the linguistic tool of opposition is used in analysis to delineate how the use of direct comparatives could leave a persuasive impression on consumers.

The present study aims at conducting a CDA on two digital competitive ads by the Western brands Pepsi and BMW. It employs three pragmatic tools in order to elaborate Fairclough's (1989) concept of consumerism in both ads. The study depicts the importance of each pragmatic tool in decoding the social power and ideology in competitive ads. It also aims to depict the social power of ads in engaging different consumers. Hence it answers the following questions:

- Using cooperative principle, presupposition, and opposition in analyzing the discourse of advertisements, how are social power and ideology of competitive ads represented?
- How do competitive advertisements attempt to engage the competitors' consumers by following Fairclough's concept of consumerism under a CDA?

## **2. Theoretical background:**

### **2.1 Competitive Advertising**

Dyer (1982) firstly defines advertisements as “[i]n its simplest sense the word ‘advertising’ means ‘drawing attention to something’, or notifying or informing somebody of something.” (p.1) This definition depicts the basic role of advertising which is shifting the focus of someone to a certain product, or even a belief or a value. Therefore, advertising discourse, with its textual and visual features, provides certain identities to consumers in different aspects and for various intentions or reasons.

Competitors are those who share the same marketplace with each other; each competitor usually tends to put oneself ahead of the others in various ways. This is how competitive advertisements may have begun. Competition is a common feature in any marketplace, nevertheless, competition between advertisements has expanded, all over the world, lately. This might be a result of the strong competition between brands and the need to establish a stronger relationship with the consumer. Additionally, consumers may classify themselves into groups to defend their favorite brand; consumers might sometimes reply to the competitor to show the love and defense for their favored

brand. This defense from consumers portrays not only how a strong relationship between consumers and advertisers can be established through advertisements, but also the great influence this type of advertisement could have. Moreover, Lewis and Nelson (1999) reinforce such viewpoint by stipulating that any message or idea will be within competitive messages too, so as to have a proper and effective medium. They maintain that

[within] the proper medium, a message that is noncompetitive with other messages has too weak an impact to generate response. So the relationship between medium and message gains importance as we begin to analyze optimal means of communicating with the customer. (Lewis & Nelson, 1999, p.31)

The employment of pragmatic and linguistic tools, therefore, depicts the embedded notions of competition and challenge to competitors. Content writers of advertisements use sounds (in visual ads), images, signs, and language as their manipulative tools of persuasion, which are used as a method of communication. Thus, advertisers take a great interest in the language used to convey challenging moves to their competitors or persuade and establish a powerful relationship with consumers. Linguists, in return, employ a different set of linguistic tools in order to decode the meanings behind the messages delivered in the competitive advertisements and to shed light on how these ads reflect the power the ad producer may have over consumers and in the marketplace.

## **2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

CDA is an approach that focuses on the abuse of power and dominance in different aspects of society. In that sense, van Dijk (2001) defines CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 352). This definition explains how the CDA approach depicts the use of language in order to serve certain ideologies and exercise power in social or political contexts.

The importance of exercising power using language influences a change in a certain society. Power, van Dijk (2007) defines, is a type of relationship between groups in a society. Part of this social group may have special authority in a certain aspect or scope (media, law, politics) that results in exercising power over the other members of the social group. The authoritative can abuse power not only through physical force but also through controlling their minds. Moreover, van Dijk believes, Power of such groups in society can influence the change in discourse; the structure of a certain text can be directed to serve the desired ideology.

A certain organization can exercise or abuse its power over its members or the members of another group. Such practices, van Dijk (2007) describes, are social power that can suppress the actions of the dominated group, whether directly or indirectly. He postulates that such limitation of actions is a huge influence on the knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies of the dominated group. The power of such dominant group appears in discourse and communication as ‘symbolic resources’ of social power. Social power can, therefore, change the values and norms of a certain society and the dominated groups can only have limited resistance to such power.

Critical practices of discourse analysis are introduced by Locke (2004) under three main categories which are: “critique as revelation, critical practice as self-reflexive, and critical practice as socially transformative” (p.26). First, critique as revelation is the practice where the writer is considered to be unnaturally positioning subjective viewpoint as Locke (2004) states:

Discourses are naturalized for individual subjects, who, viewing the world through their discursive lenses, regard their position as 'common sense' rather than a particular construction of reality. Second, Revelation occurs when these 'common sense' positions are demystified or denaturalized and exposed as discursive constructions. (p.32)

Furthermore, critical practice as self-reflexive differs from critique as revelation in the sense that it deals with being aware of the ideologies and presuppositions that inform the subjective, in-subjective, and normative claims (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Third, on a closer look at the critical practices as social transformative, Locke relates the power of discourse to the base of contribution to such discourse; to explain, he suggests that the more discourse is powerful the more powerful are the subscribers than those who contribute in the ‘non-powerful’ discourse and vice versa. Likewise, the discourse of advertisements, and especially competitive advertisements, depends on the contribution and response of consumers to the advertisement. Thus, the top brands that compete are probably stated to be the most powerful with a powerful level of consumers who contribute and interact with such advertisements.

Therefore, CDA aims mainly at applying modes of analysis in social and political contexts. It also focuses on how challenging relations of power and dominance in society are employed. There are some principles and tenets of CDA that are discussed and summarized by Fairclough and Wodak(1997: 271–80) as the main tenets of CDA, which are:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture

4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

(as cited in Van Dijk,1993, p.353)

Moreover, Fairclough (1989) focuses on the terms ‘interpretation’ and ‘explanation’, whilst elaborating the principles of the CDA, to determine that these are strategies followed by the analysts and participants respectively. Interpretation is usually made by participants like readers in novels or audience in the theatre, but for advertisements, and specifically competitive advertisements, there are three participants (advertisers, consumers, and competitors). The role of advertisers is to convey a message while consumers and competitors comprehend this message; however, in competitive advertisements, competitors are usually the ones who react to such direct or indirect messages by replying in the form of another advertisement and it may continue to make a series of replies between the two competitors. Explanation, however, is the role of analysts or critical analysts; analysts tend to explain and elaborate the role of such advertisements, the influence and the power of the intended meaning by advertisers, and relate the meaning to the social structures such as power and ideology.

Another perspective presented by Locke (2004) is that critical activities or critical discourse are always linked with power and control. Hence, competitive advertisements are made by top brands and the most popular ones in which they tend to depict their power on society and control over other competitors through conveying certain ideas and in order to control the society. This power may have been a cause for establishing a new type of advertisements which is competitive advertisement. “The tendency for critical practice to be linked to a socially transformative agenda stems from a view of discourse (and ideology) as involving power relations” (Locke, 2004, p. 37).

### **2.3 Fairclough’s concept of consumerism:**

Creating a need and establishing a relationship with consumers are the main notions advertisers tend to convey. Advertisers usually establish the idea that the product they sell is a need that consumers have been searching for and will be a solution for all their problems, as well. This idea of creating a need indicates a great power for such type of discourse; moreover, establishing a relationship with consumers might affect positively the rate of consumption as advertisers gain consumers’ trust in order to persuade them easily that such product is one of their essential needs.

Moreover, Fairclough (1989) represents further dimensions of such idea through the concept of consumerism. Fairclough (1989) defines consumerism as a characteristic of modern capitalism that includes the change of ideological focus from economic production into economic consumption, and it develops and grows through sets of conditions which are economic, and cultural conditions. Economic conditions are related to two aspects which are: capitalist commodity production and the position of a workforce that deals with the wage levels of population and the reduction of working hours. Moreover, Fairclough asserts that advertising can establish a 'consumption community' through persuading a specific community that a certain product or a service is an integral need in their life. This is how they create the need, value, and identity as advertisements manage to substitute real communities with 'ersatz communities' after the destruction of real communities by capitalism. He also adds that such notion of creating a need for a community is achieved through some strategies which are: a) building relations with consumers, which is not an easy task because the advertisement is, supposedly, a one-way type of discourse; b) building images as well is a crucial part to convey an idea and it can take place through using some linguistic tools and image-ries; c) finally, building consumers or establishing 'subject position' for consumers.

## 2.4 Grice's Cooperative Principle

Normally, advertising discourse is known as a one-way type of discourse; however, competitive advertisements construct a type of conversation in three dimensions (one form of a dialogue between competitors through a series of ads., the dimension of represented participants in advertisements, and another between the advertiser and the consumer). Therefore, these three dimensions or conversational levels can be analyzed through conversational tools like Grice's cooperative principle. The present section focuses on Grice's contribution to the cooperative principle in addition to other opinions developing such tool of analysis. It also focuses on how cooperative principles can be implemented in the discourse of advertisements.

Grice (1967) states as principle that in any conversation, the participants, normally, tend to cooperate to successfully understand each other. He also states that in order to have a successful conversation, participants follow four maxims which are: the maxim of **quality**, the maxim of **quantity**, the maxim of **relevance**, and maxim of **manner**. However, the four maxims are either flouted or violated most of the time because people do not usually follow these four maxims either intentionally to mislead (violation) or to attract the attention of the listener to another idea embedded in the utterance (flout) to convey an extra message or an additional meaning (implicature) that is to be interpreted by a listener or reader.

Thomas (1995) defines implicature as the additional meaning that is conveyed beyond the semantic level of meaning in an utterance. Grice (1967) classifies implicature into two types which are: conventional implicature and conversational implicature. Conventional implicature is the additional meaning conveyed regardless of the context, for example: 'She is a girl but she is smart'. This example, regardless of its context, infers an additional meaning that people usually think that girls are stupid. However, conversational implicature is the additional meaning conveyed in a certain context only:

It would be absurd to argue that saying 'Great, that's really great! That's made my Christmas!' always generated the implicature that the speaker was furious because someone had just vomited over him! On other occasions a person producing this utterance might be genuinely expressing delight over a gift or event, or anguish because the dog has eaten the turkey. (Thomas, 1995, p.58)

Moreover, Thomas (1995) assumes that the way Grice represents his principle is stated as if it is a fact and a rule that everyone should follow, however, the opposite happens most of the time. In addition, she argues too that when a speaker flouts a maxim, a clash might happen between maxims which results in an inaccuracy of these maxims; to elaborate, if an addresser flouts a maxim, it might be confusing which maxim has been flouted and whether it is only one maxim or more that have been flouted at the same time. Added by Thomas is that the 'suspension' and 'infringing' of maxims are essential processes that should be added. She defines infringing of maxims as when the speaker does not observe a maxim with no intention to deceive or mislead the addressee while suspending a maxim happens when there is no need to opt-out and it is not expected from any participant to reply. However, Thomas also disagrees that violation is a type of non-observance of Grice's maxims, instead, she explores that violation is another form of observance of maxims.

## **2.5 Opposition**

Since the present study revolves around the type of advertisements that compete together, the language of such advertisements will probably represent the opposition in a way or another. Jeffries (2010) claims that opposition in language takes place within sentences or even words, not just a whole idea; it takes place in grammatical categories such as pronouns, tenses, and lexeme. She classifies opposition in discourse into conventional opposites and non-conventional (or constructed) opposites. She adds that opposition has different sub-categories and each sub-category has a different role.

First, Jeffries (2010) defines, conventional opposites as words (or lexemes) that are oppositely related with no need to be tied in a context in order to reflect that certain words are formally opposite to each other. However, Jeffries focuses on constructed

(or non-conventional) opposites where opposite relationships are constructed in a certain context and from the opposites' surroundings. In the example provided by Jeffries, "Labour says he's black. Tories say he's British" (p.2), wherein this context the words 'black' and 'British' construct a sense of opposition.

She also refers to the four main sub-categories of opposites which are usually identified by linguists as the main influence in the creation and interpretation of textually constructed opposite pairs. The four main categories mentioned by Cruse (1986) are mutual exclusivity, mutual dependence or converses, gradability, and reversibility categories (as cited in Jeffries, 2010). By classifying opposites into different categories, Cruse proves that opposition in a discourse can have different dimensions and meanings; in other words, it may have different interpretations as well. Jeffries (2010) adds that there are some triggers of opposition that can be structural or lexical. **Structural** triggers of opposition are negation and related triggers, parallel structures (and this may appear in slogans), coordinations, and comparative, while **lexical** triggers of opposition are explicit mention of oppositional relation and influence of conventional opposites in context.

## 2.6 Presupposition

The speaker or the text producer can depend on the knowledge of the reader in different aspects. There are some shared ideas or knowledge between the speaker and the addressee (text producer and reader) despite their different types and levels of explicitness. Usually, the speaker assumes and expects that the reader will understand such information, so it may be embedded in a text. Fairclough (1992) defines the ideas taken by the speaker as a given, where there are various signs on the surface level of a text that shows that, as a presupposition. He views presupposition in two aspects which are 'non-intertextual propositions' to which he referred as the general assumed shared knowledge, and 'intertextual propositions' which are the ideas that incorporate the texts of others. However, he states that the two aspects of presupposition can be manipulative and misleading in many cases.

Moreover, Simpson (1993) defines presupposition as the hidden ideas to which the speaker is expected to be committed. While Fairclough (1992) classifies presupposition into two aspects or views, Simpson classifies presupposition into two types which are existential and logical presupposition. Existential presupposition is the propositions that state the existence of a certain referent in the sentence. However, logical presupposition is the set of ideas that arises in a certain text through some triggers like the change-of-state verbs and factive verbs which presuppose grammatical complements. These two types of presuppositions can be easily interpreted and inferred through their triggers, yet they might be misleading to the reader in some contexts. Along with the existential presupposition, Goatly (2000) further adds, there are two

other categories of presupposition which are possessive presupposition and change-of-state presupposition.

Moreover, the interpretation of a presupposition, Goatly (2000) believes, is affected by the attitude of the speaker in the proposition along with the presupposed proposition, scientifically referred to as propositional attitude. To elaborate, if the presupposition does not provide a logical sense to the proposition of the speaker, therefore irony may arise. He adds that the way of proposing a notion (statement - question - command) influences the propositional attitude. The statement, first, provides the sense of certainty from the speaker's end that the notion proposed is a true fact; the question provides the sense of uncertainty towards the hearer attitude to like or respond to the notion proposed; the command provides a sense of belief from the speaker that it is preferred by the hearer to do the action which is asked for by the speaker.

### **3. Methodology:**

#### **3.1 Data collection**

The present study aims at analyzing two digital advertisements. These ads taken from official social media platforms of brands and websites. The ads are posted on the official social media platforms of the two brands during the Halloween festivities, The first ad by BMW is posted in 2019 and the second ad is posted Pepsi Co. in 2013.

#### **3.4 Framework**

By following two main approaches in the present study, the researcher aims at scrutinizing the power and social ideologies in the two ads. The present study follows Fairclough's concept of consumerism in conducting a CDA to examine a series of two competitive brands which were released on Halloween by deploying three linguistic tools. The set of tools includes Grice's cooperative principle, presupposition, and semantic opposition. This study is mostly concerned with the digital advertisements that are posted on Halloween. Finally, the study aims at arraying the importance of this type of advertisement.

##### **3.4.1 Cooperative principle**

- The cooperative principle, Grice (1975) assumes, is that people have the tendency to be cooperative in conversation and follow four maxims which are:
- Maxim of quality: to say the truth and to be clear.
- Maxim of quantity: to reply as required not more nor less.
- Maxim of manner: to relate words to the same content or subject of speaking.
- Maxim of relation: it requires to talk in a clear way.

Any violation or flouting in these maxims creates an additional meaning or an implicature that can be interpreted.

### 3.4.2 Presupposition

It is postulated by Fairclough (1992) that presupposition is a proposition or a notion that represents an additional information that is taken for granted by the addresser and can be interpreted in regards to intertextual relations with previous texts of the text producer.

Toolan (1996) claims that there are some structural and linguistic elements that trigger presupposition like:

definite article in noun phrase.

Lexical items (eg.: again, starts..etc).

Adverbial clauses of time, reason..etc.

Factive verbs (eg.: discover, regret..)

Implicative verbs (eg.: forget).

Restrictive relative clause.

WH- questions (eg.: What, When...etc.).

Goatly (2000), classifies presupposition into three types, which are:

#### I. Existential presupposition.

It is the proposition that states the existence of a certain referent in the sentence; one of the indicators of existential presupposition is the definite article (the) and the possessive pronouns (his, its, hers).

#### II. Possessive presupposition.

It appears when the author or the speaker uses the possessive ('s) or the pronominal adjectives (his, her, their, its).

#### III. Change-of-state presupposition.

It takes place when the speaker constructs a sense of un-fulfillment through a proposition that constructs a change in the future or an influence of a change, so such proposition might hold an influence on the hearer.

### 3.4.3 Opposition:

Linguistic opposition takes place in grammatical and lexical categories; nevertheless, there are many types of opposition in language which are, Jeffries (2010) states:

1- **Mutual exclusivity**, also known as complementaries, means there are no intermediate values. It is concerned with the opposites that have no intermediate values, such as 'dead' or 'alive', for they have nothing in between; however, sometimes this type acts as a complementary when mentioning the two opposites not for the sake of conveying oppositeness but to include the relevant whole semantic field. Thus, this category of opposites is divided into two parts only; by mentioning one part, one may presuppose the denial of the other. Nevertheless, mutual exclusivity sometimes cannot be applied unless it is used for a metaphorical purpose; for example, when someone mentions a fact like 'the pebble is not alive' he definitely does not mean that it is dead unless it carries a metaphorical meaning.

2- **Mutual dependance** (converses) are opposites that represent double perspective of an event or set of facts. It is concerned with the opposition that provides a double viewpoint; this may create a sort of ambiguity and the intended meaning may not be conveyed or may be misled due to this confusion in perspectives. However, Jeffries (2010) suggests that mutual dependence may be a relational perspective where the opposite ideas or words appear in pairs; if one pair only appears the other is presupposed. She adds that this type is directional and relational as it always refers to another dependent opposite; for example, whenever someone refers to a husband there must be a wife. Jeffries directs the attention to how some of the terms of this category represent an independent version of meaning, as referring to a doctor as 'a tall married doctor', the reference to the patients, who are the mutual dependent opposite of the term 'doctor', is not entailed.

3- **Gradability** refer to lexemes which have polysemous senses and complementary only in one sense. It includes the most commonly used opposites that can be used together to determine a scale, for example referring to something good or bad can be compared like 'this trip was not good but not bad as well'; in this example, it is referred to the trip as not good and it is not bad, which represents an intervening area that may distinguish this category than the mutually exclusive category. Jeffries (2010) assumes that mutual exclusivity and gradability can interrelate sometimes as they can have some common terms, for instance, the terms 'good' and 'bad' can be referred to as mutually exclusive in some context and gradable in other. The fourth type, which is reversibility, refers to one of the opposite pairs that can change the aspect of the other and direct the meaning to another way. This type is referred to as directional type,

where it can direct the reader or addresser to a certain direction like ‘up and down’, so whenever it is referred to something going up the reader may presuppose this thing was down first and went upwards.

4- **Auto-evocation:** is the use of only one of the relevant terms and the dependency on the audience knowledge would invoke a conventional oppositional relationship.

Jeffries also adds that there are some structural and lexical triggers of opposition, that are:

**Structural**

**triggers:**

- 1- Negation.
- 2- Parallel syntactic structure.
- 3- Coordination.
- 4- Comparatives.

**Lexical triggers:**

- 1- Explicitness.
- 2- Influence in context.



**Fig.1** BMW advertisement on Halloween (2019).

## 4. Analysis:

The present screenshot is an advertisement posted on Halloween event by BMW company on Twitter platform in 2019. In the depicted advertisement BMW company, is supposedly, posting a celebration of a traditional holiday with the American society. In this holiday it is well-known that people celebrate it by dressing scary costumes or costumes of famous villains and tell thrilling stories; however, in the present advertisement BMW decided to clearly depict a car from a competitive brand (Mercedes-Benz) with a cover that holds BMW logo. BMW also attached the picture with the punchline “Now every car can dress up as its favorite superhero”. In the following sections the presented punchline in relation to the picture attached is discursively analyzed by using linguistic tools.

### 4.1 Cooperative principle

The above example of BMW advertisement **flouts** the maxim of quality by stating that BMW is every car’s hero and they look up to it “Now every car can dress up as their favorite superhero” while there is no evidence that the competitive brand sees BMW as a hero. The maxim of quality is also flouted by claiming that every car dresses up in a costume on Halloween while this is far from true. To elaborate, flouting of the quality maxim takes place by claiming that an inanimate product like a car can do an act of animates like dressing-up. Finally, the phrasal verb ‘dress-up’ means to wear formal and smart attire. This definition suggests that wearing the cover that holds the BMW logo, as depicted in the picture, means that the car of their competitor is presented in a formal and elegant appearance, which is another case of flouting the maxim of quality as well. The metaphor here suggests that Mercedes as a competitor is a common car like every other brand; it also suggests that Mercedes is a representation of every car. Moreover, the exaggeration by generalizing that everyone (every car brand) looks up to BMW as a hero as a truthful idea yet insufficient as a caption for a car advertisement especially with the picture displayed; this may leave the audience subconsciously convinced that BMW is the top brand in car industry. On another level, this exaggeration might also leave the competitor displayed in the picture challenged and directly attacked.

In the above example, the maxim of relevance is **flouted** when a car brand posts a Halloween wish to audience. To explain, cars in general is not something that is culturally related to Halloween. People in Halloween usually dress up in a costume of villains and not like cars. They do not dress their cars any costumes as well. Therefore, the flout of this maxim, can increase the engagement of the consumers of the advertised brand and their competitor’s. The display of the picture should be described as a car partially covered with a cover on which it holds the BMW logo, yet it is just a wish for happy Halloween by stating a new fact that everyone can get dressed as their favorite superhero. The present Caption may be irrelevant in a sense but is attached to this picture for intriguing the competitiveness, power, and challenge to another competitor on

another sense. This Caption may also add a sense of sarcasm or humor through the implicitness created by flouting several maxims.

## Presupposition<sup>1</sup>

In the present advertisement of BMW, the caption written includes a possessive pronoun ‘its’ and followed by ‘superhero’. First, ‘its’ indicates that every car has a superhero to dress like. By using the **possessive pronoun** ‘its’, one may presuppose that every car has a superhero. The present possessive presupposition may indicate that cars can dream and look up to another brand even though they are inanimate. It may also create, according to Goatly (2000) “assumptions which are debatable, controversial or simply inapplicable” (p.123). The use of possessive presupposition to induce an inapplicable fact might either create a sense of humor or indicate a marked choice for the audience to infer extra meaning. In the case of a BMW advertisement, with the picture attached of the cape of BMW acts as a hero costume, the audience may infer that BMW is atop of all car brands especially Mercedes-Benz where if it were animate it would look up to have all the extraordinary features BMW holds.

Second, the present caption holds another presupposition in the phrase “Now every car can wear”, which is a **change-of-state presupposition**. The adverb of time ‘Now’ indicates or may presuppose that whatever comes next did not take place in the past; therefore, the audience may presuppose that cars before either did not have the chance to wear like their superheroes or did not have a superhero. This sense of unfulfillment, according to Goatly (2000), that could be constructed by using the change-of-state presupposition may indicate that BMW is the hero or the missing piece for perfection. Moreover, by mentioning that something has changed for a fact, it may be indicated that it was a dream in the past for every car to just put on a BMW cape. The table below role of lexical and structural triggers in establishing presuppositions.

	<b>Example</b>	<b>Lexical/ Structural triggers</b>	<b>Presupposes</b>
Possessive Presupposition	1- <b>Its</b> favourite superhero	- Its: possessive pronoun.	>> Every car has a superhero. >> (Based on the attached picture) BMW resembles a super hero.

<sup>1</sup> Presupposition will be referred to in analysis as (>>)

	<b>Example</b>	<b>Lexical/ Structural triggers</b>	<b>Presupposes</b>
Change-of-state presupposition	1- <b>Now</b> every car <b>can dress-up</b> like its superhero.	- Now - Can wear: factive verb	>> Every car is not like its superhero. >> Cars didn't have the choice or the permission to wear or not to wear.

**Table 2:** Lexical and structural triggers of presupposition.

### 5.2.1 Opposition

In the present advertisement, the caption attached to the photo post seems to reveal the constructed opposition intended to be established by representing a competitive brand on which it may exercise power and challenge. By mentioning ‘Every car’ and ‘Superhero’, a mutually dependent type of opposition is constructed. To explain, such opposition between these two terms presented in the same sentence may not be opposite in general or out of this context, yet the syntactic form of the sentence in addition to the structural triggers aid in the construction and oppositional sense. The syntactic form “Now ‘X’ can do/be like ‘Y’” indicates that ‘X’ is not ‘Y’. Therefore, an opposition could be constructed specifically for this certain context. When applying the same syntactic form to the present advertisement, the caption “Now every car can dress up like its favorite superhero”, refers that ‘every car’ is not a ‘super hero’ or that every car is not similar to superheroes. Therefore, ‘every car’ here is considered a constructed opposite to “superhero”.

Moreover, ‘every car’ here represents normal cars with normal capabilities and normal features while a ‘superhero’ represents the power and unique features. Therefore, with the present context and attached picture, the audience may interpret that BMW represents the superhero and Mercedes-Benz (its competitor) represents ‘every car’. Furthermore, structural triggers in the present caption play an important role in representing the mutually dependent constructed opposition and in indicating some implications. The structural triggers in the advertisement caption and their role in depicting opposition are summed up in the following table:

Structural triggers	Function	Role in constructing opposition
Now	Adverb of time	Refers to the present moment therefore to be contrasted with the situation in the past.
Every(car)	Determiner	Determines all cars with no exception.
Like	Preposition	Invoking that without dressing-up all cars have no common specification with the car representing 'superhero' (BMW).

**Table (1):** Structural triggers of opposition

First, by using an adverb of time like 'now', as Jeffries (2010) postulates, a pragmatic presupposition that the main action of the sentence 'can dress-up like a superhero' used to be different or opposite to that in the past; Jeffries refers to such phenomenon as an 'auto-evocation'. Second, coupled with the noun 'car', another structural trigger appears in the Caption which is the determiner 'every'. The determiner 'every' here refers to all cars without exception which is an auto-evocation that there is no exception except for what the car represents 'superhero'. Therefore, with the presence of the preposition 'like' after the verb 'dress-up', the audience may be led to believe that the car representing 'superhero' in the picture attached is opposite to every other car (or what represents 'every car', which is Mercedes-Benz).



**Fig. 2:** Pepsi advertisement on Halloween (2013)

Another screenshot of an ad is posted on Halloween event by Pepsi company on Twitter platform in 2013. In the depicted advertisement Pepsi company is supposedly posting a celebration of a traditional holiday with the American society. In this holiday it is well-known that people celebrate it by dressing scary costumes and wish each other a happy Halloween; however, in the present advertisement Pepsi which is a beverage company decided to directly wish its audience a scary Halloween with an attached picture of a Pepsi can wearing a cape that hold's its competitors logo. The post is attached to the caption "We wish you a scary Halloween!". In the following sections the presented punchline in relation to the picture attached is discursively analyzed by using linguistic tools.

### **Cooperative principle:**

In the advertisement produced by **Pepsi**, the ad producer also flouts the maxim of quality and manner. First, it is expected to wear a costume of a scary character and wish other people a happy Halloween; however, Pepsi wishes the audience a scary Halloween while wearing a cape the just holds their competitor's logo. By referring to the Coca-cola cape as a scary costume that could be worn on Halloween, a metaphorical sense is raised; thereby, Pepsi **flouts** the **maxim of quality**. This may have a humorous effect on the one hand, but, on the other, it delineates the power of Pepsi as a brand that tries to associate Coca-cola with negative connotations to attract the attention of the competitor's consumers. Second, on an occasion like Halloween, people normally wear scary costumes and tell thrilling stories; they tend to greet each other with 'Happy Halloween'. However, in the present advertisement, using the adjective 'scary' is a **flout** in the **maxim of manner** by unclearly identifying the nature of Halloween that is well-known to Western society. By flouting the maxims of quality and manner, the ad producer may be directing the attention of their audience that their competitor 'Coca-cola' is an unwanted or unliked brand. Also, it might be directing their attention that replacing Pepsi with Coca-cola could be scary and unwanted.

### **Presupposition:**

On a holiday like Halloween, a wish is commonly posted by many brands. However, Pepsi, in the present ad, wishes its audience a 'scary' Halloween with the attachment of the Coca-cola cape as a costume. The marked choice of using the word 'scary' in a picture that contains the competitor's logo (Coca-cola) as a Halloween costume raises an existential presupposition. By wishing a scary holiday to the audience while wearing a Coca-cola cape, the audience may presuppose that Coca-cola is a representation of a scary character. Moreover, it may be presupposed that the disguise of Pepsi can in its competitor's look (red cape with Coca-cola logo) is an unwanted and scary idea to the audience. The representation of a competitor, which is an inanimate soda drink, in the

holiday as a source of thrill and terror can convey a sense of power and humor. The power of Pepsi, the original ad producer, can be represented in the propositional attitude of stating that Halloween is scary when Pepsi can appear in its competitor's look. The humor sense, however, is displayed when the proposition is stated in such context which is identified by Fairclough (1992) as an intertextual proposition.

## **Opposition:**

The opposition in the Pepsi vs. Coca-cola advertisement illustrates many intended and challenging meanings to the opposed brand (Coca-cola) and to consumers of both brands. In the present advertisement, there are some lexical triggers for the opposition in addition to the use of complementaries or mutually dependent opposites. First, the lexical triggers used in this advertisement is the use of the word 'wish' and 'scary' in the same sentence, which creates a **mutually dependent opposition**. The opposition in the words 'wish' and 'scary' is constructed as a wish in any holiday is expected to be hopeful and happy, yet scary expresses the opposite. Of course, the ad producer does not intend to wish their audience a scary holiday, therefore, it is a marked choice that may have some contextual references. Moreover, Pepsi refers to itself with embedded positive characterization 'we wish' as it shares with a vast amount of consumers the well-known holiday. The opposition constructed from this advertisement probably depicts the power of the top brands by explicitly mentioning competitors, not only on their advertisements but also in a social event; it may also depict how these advertisements strive to persuade more consumers and attract their attention to watch their advertisements. Hence, the idea of mutual exclusivity opposition postulated by Jeffries (2010) can be very manipulative in conveying different interpretations to the consumers.

## 5. Conclusion:

The present study analyzes two competitive advertisements (BMW and Pepsi) to answer the research questions. The study adopts Fairclough's concept of consumerism in a CDA to scrutinize how the power and ideology of competitive advertisements are conveyed. It highlights the importance of pragmatic and linguistic tools in inferring the act of power as well as decoding the hidden ideology in the competitive ads. Moreover, It observes how the two competitive advertisements use comparatives, humorous and ironic notions to convey and persuade consumers with the intended meaning as well as increase their engagement.

Both ads (BMW and Pepsi) try, through language, to embellish their positions atop of their competitors. The study finds that the advertised brands always portray the image of positive self and negative others; they achieve this idea by incorporating metaphorical and comparative notions. The study illustrates that both ads flouts the maxims of cooperative principles which depicts the implicatures of challenge and persuasion. The flout of the maxims of quality in both ads as a result of using metaphors raises a humorous effect. Thus, the engagement of not only the advertised brand consumers but also the competitor's consumers may increase. It is also found that the power of both competitive ads appears through oppositional structures. The lexical and structural triggers play an important role in depicting the act of power the advertised brand is trying to exercise. The use of mutually dependent in addition to the auto-evocation oppositions represents how the advertised brands try to convince the consumers with the ideology of positioning themselves ahead of the other competitors through constructed comparisons.

The present study suggests the need for examining more competitive advertisements through the employment of further linguistic tools to depict more features. The features found of such type of ads in addition to the fulfilled aims pave the road for discovering such type of advertising discourse from a different angle. Further linguistic and visual tools could be implemented in order to thoroughly depict all features of competitive ads. More ads that follow the same pattern can also be analyzed for granting the power of such type of ads and the depicting the importance of linguistic analysis.

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