

Advertising Narratives of Society and Politics: A Semiotic Analysis of Amul's Print Ads

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Abstract

Contextual knowledge is the most important aspect of language comprehension. We define contextual knowledge as both general knowledge and discourse knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the situational context, background knowledge, and co-textual context. In this paper, we will discuss the significance of contextual knowledge in comprehending the humor found in Amul's cartoon advertisements in India. Throughout the process, we will analyze these advertisements and determine whether humor is an effective tool for advertising and, as a result, marketing. These bilingual advertisements also assume that the audience has the necessary linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary, morphology, and syntax in English and Hindi. Various techniques such as punning, portmanteaus, and parodies of popular proverbs, expressions, acronyms, famous dialogues, songs, and so on are used to convey the message humorously. The current study will focus on these linguistic cues and the necessary context for understanding wit and humor. This study will also employ semiotics and sign methodology to analyze the message provided by the cartoons. According to the research findings, cartoons serve two purposes: political communication and advertising; however, advertising is camouflaged and not placed in an obvious manner.

Key-words: Political Communication, Advertisement, Cartoons, Mass Media, Amul.

1. Introduction

Indian political history is wrought with controversies and scams. This study investigates the documentation of a few such controversies and scams through Amul's print advertisements. Amul has been making topical ads since 1969 (Varma, 1996). These ads have managed to create a long-running brand image for Amul. The ads about consumer content preference are also displayed

using contextual advertising. Amul or Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd is an organization of dairy cooperatives from Gujarat formulated in 1946. The mascot for this company, the 'Amul Girl,' was created by a team led by Sylvester DaCunha. The first 'topical' Amul Ad came around in 1969 when during 'the beginning of the Hare Ram Hare Krishna movement, Sylvester DaCunha, Mohammad Khan, and Usha Bhandarkar, the then creative team working upon the Amul account, came up with a clincher - Hurry Amul, Hurry Hurry' (Varma, 1996). Understanding advertising through the ideas of Frankfurt School, particularly through the concept of culture industry given by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, it is understood that advertising sells culture to create commercial benefits.

2. Review of Literature

David Ogilvy defines advertising as a medium of information, which the one finds so interesting that they end up buying the product. He lays special importance on maintaining this brand image by asking whether it can continually be projected for 30 years when recognizing the big idea for an advertising campaign. Amul's advertising campaign has been the same from 1969 to the present. It has become a well-defined feature of the company's brand image. Modern marketing works through segmentation which leads to targeting, which leads to brand positioning, which then leads to the development of advertising messages, wherein particular messages are made for specific target segments of the population, which aligns with the concept of 'contextual advertising,' which is defined as advertising that 'entails the display of relevant ads based on the content that consumers view, exploiting the potential that consumer content preferences are indicative of their product preferences.' While the original study has been done in the context of web-based content, the concept applies to Amul print advertising as well because of their topical nature, they require the audience to have an understanding of the context of the advertisement, which is supplemented by the newspaper based on which they advertise.

Advertisers emphasize the headline of an ad and how it attracts attention to the product and stimulates the consumer to give serious consideration to the product. For this, they recommend the use of puns and other rhetorical tools in the ad copy. Figures of speech like '*tropes*, which involve the transfer of meaning of a word, are a deviation from what it normally signifies. The *schemes*, which involve a word transfer that deviates from customary grammatical structure', are actively practiced in Amul print ads. However, advertisers like Ogilvy and Caplets recommend ensuring that the headlines are not 'too smart' or too hard to grasp. They also recommend a linkage between the textual and visual

elements of the ad so that both are mutually reinforcing. These aspects of an ad are created and consumed through a social process, reflecting the popular culture and stimulating or shaping it. Ogilvy wrote how often the advertisements in newspapers are read more than the news items them, thus clarifying that their reach would affect the ways people operate in their daily lives. Advertising interacts with other forms of communication and literature, film, music in various ways (through references as in the case of Amul). Advertising has also become intertwined with other forms wherein films and Television shows have started propping up products within the narratives. Because of their diverse effects, it becomes imperative to research advertising so that ads can be analyzed for their social and cultural impact.

The meaning and context behind a Figure can be understood through semiotic analysis. John Fiske defines semiotics as the study of signs and the way they work. Semiotics contains the sign itself, the codes and systems within which the sign has been organized, and the culture within which the code or sign operates. Semiotics recognizes the audience as readers and active participants in the meaning-making process, based on their life experiences and attitudes. The meaning, thus, is based on one's construction of reality, its interpretation, and representation in one's mind; most of these meanings are shared within a society.

As defined by Ferdinand Saussure, the sign consists of the signifier (the term as we perceive it) and the signified (the actual idea that the term represents). For instance, the word 'table' and the actual concept of the piece of furniture, while the word table is arbitrary, giving it no real characteristics of the idea of the table (1 or more legs and level surface) by the combination of the two that meaning is conveyed. The signifiers change as one moves from language to language. The signified remains more or less similar, however not the same, because of cultural differences. A European has just one word for 'snow'; however, because their lives largely revolve around it, an Inuit has 50 different words for snow. Saussure suggested that the meaning of a sign is also determined by how it is distinguishable from other signs of the system. 'According to this model of meaning, the signified are mental concepts we use to divide reality up and categories it so that we can understand it.'

Another important model for semiotics was given by CS Pierce, which was largely similar to the one by Saussure, with the addition of dividing a sign down into three separate categories, icon (which resembles the object in some way); index (where there is a direct link between the object and the sign) and symbol (where there is no connection or resemblance between the sign and the object). A photograph is an icon, smoke is an index of fire, and a word is a symbol.

Like any other text, ads is made up of these various categories of signs and can therefore be polysemic or have multiple meanings. Amul advertisements fit in the diachronic polysemy category, which can be defined as 'multiplicity of meanings during advertising reception. When advertising polysemy occurs in the same individual-such as on first viewing an ad or viewing an ad on repeated occasions' The multiplicity of meanings is possible because of how words are used; words carry attitudes and beliefs, convey meanings and associations, and bring out specific ideas. Thus, using the word obese/fat/well-built/chubby may mean the same things but convey different ideas to the consumer.

Polysemy aligns with the concept of Mythologies [1] by Roland Barthes, an extension to the way Saussure perceived semiotics. Barthes specified how the meaning of a text could be broken into two categories the first level of signification (denotative meaning [2]. 'Myth' was the second level of signification (connotative meaning) [3], implied in popular texts. For Barthes, 'myth was a culture's way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualizing and understanding it. Words could then have multiple meanings depending upon cultural contexts; say the word dog could mean the canine or could be used to refer to an unpleasant human being. Similarly, advertisements or any other kind of visual imagery has multiple meanings as well.

2.1. Context and Comedy Behind Amul Advertisements

Originally, the central part of the Amul advertising campaign was the 'Amul Girl,' the innocent commentator on popular culture and social issues; over time, the focus shifted from making her the central character to the covered event. In her article titled '*An Advertising Metamorphosis: Amul Butter Girl*,' Dr. Rashmi Mahajan describes this as advertising metamorphosis, wherein the creator's reason for creating the campaign and what the campaign turns into overtime is distinctly different. 'By incorporating current events in the Amul advertising campaign, the brand remains fresh and evergreen. Whatever may be the issue or the subject matter of the campaign, whether national or international, we always find a flavor of Indianans which allowed it to connect to people in good health.' This 'Indianans' is conveyed through the use of Hingis [4], or 'chutnification of language,' which adds humor by mixing similar-sounding phrases from the two languages. The message of Amul ads requires cognitive processing on the audience's part, increasing memo ability. Suppose the message in the ad is indirect and intellectually satisfying. In that case, the audience enjoys solving it, which increases their positive attitude towards the product endorsed.

Amul ads tell the story of changing India, both in its (people's) priorities and over time, irrefutably documenting every step of the way. However, these ads 'will not be understood, as we do not have the requisite contextual information that helps in the deeper cognitive processing of the ads.' The ads rely on the public's memory of the events occurring in a given space and time, making the audience relate to the idea presented. They encourage thinking, making the ad memorable for the audience. While they require information on the topic at hand to be understood, they are a way to study both the time gone by and the current era. This review helps to understand how Amul's campaign aligns with ideas of market segmentation and contextual advertising, positioning to the segments of the population well versed with the socio-cultural events referenced in them. Advertising affects not only sales but also consumers' choices and lifestyles. An alternative understanding of advertising is that it equates success and prosperity with acquiring goods, fuelling the culture industry, which uses the same goods to keep workers stuck in the same work cycle to fund the consumption of goods. Due to their multifaceted effects, it is important to research advertisements to understand how advertising affects society and how it incorporates other forms of communication (like news in Amul's case) and finds its way into them.

To understand the context of the ads, one needs to look at the various theories used to read media texts. One such theory is 'semiotics,' wherein the sign is divided into a signifier (the actual word or piece of text) and signified (the abstract idea conveyed using the text). When this is understood in conjunction with the multiplicity of meaning, as conveyed by the diachronic polysemy (different readings by the same individual over time) and 'myth' (the implicit meaning of a text) tends to provide a holistic understanding of the media text. While attempts have been made to understand the comedic effect of the Amul ads (the usage of Hingis) and to understand the topical nature of the ads or to study changes in the campaign strategies of an organization, research on the context of the ads has been limited.

3. Research Objectives and Methodology

This study uses semiotic analysis to understand the various underlying meanings in the text of Amul print ads and interviews to get a deeper insight into the semiotic analysis. The research aims to look at how Amul advertisements documented scams in two different political regimes - United Progressive Alliance (UPA 2 from 2008 to 2013) and National Democratic Alliance (NDA -1 from 2014 to 2019). 10 ads covering the controversies between this period were selected as the primary text for semiotic analysis. The research focuses on how the socio-cultural context of said scams is

conveyed in the ads, the positive or negative attributions attached to them, and their ability to act as a cultural artifact. The researchers also interviewed experts in marketing and brand communication to get better insight through which the company's advertising could be understood. This research aims to analyze 'Amul topical' about political scams and controversies between the periods of 2008-2019 and attempts to answer the following questions:

- Said visuals and text can convey how the ads can be broken down into visuals and text and the multiplicity of meaning.
- The differences (if any) in the way the two government's scams have been documented.

3.1. Sample Selection

Amul ads cover a wide array of socio-cultural topics. For this research, the sample has been narrowed down to 10 advertisements over 10 years to study how politics, particularly political follies, have been represented in the advertisements. The researcher has picked the governance of two different political groups to understand how the coverage has changed over time (if at all). The researchers narrowed down the number of scams from the UPA and NDA coalitions to those that affected the entire country and were not specific to a state or union territory. The ad images have been taken from Amul's web archives. Sample of Ads under Study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1- Sample of Ads under Study

Issues covered	Year (s) of coverage	Number of ads
2G Spectrum Scam	2010, 2011	3
Common Wealth games-2010 (controversy attached with them)	2010, 2011	3
Augusta Westland Scam	2013,2016	2
Rafale Controversy	2016,2018	2

The interviewees were chosen using purposive sampling and comprised two academics, who teach Brand Communication at the postgraduate level one and the head of the agency behind the Amul ad campaign.

4. Analysis and Findings

The ads were segregated based on political controversies. Using semiotic analysis, they have been broken down into denotative, connotative, Syntagmatic, and paradigmatic categories. The key

features observed in each ad include- the presence of the Amul girl and/or the character she takes up; any other characters in the ad; the comedic phrase/headline of the ad; the ad line at the bottom; and elements visually referencing the event.

Figure 1 - Amul Girl Holding a Phone



Figure 2 - Amul Girl Walking Away

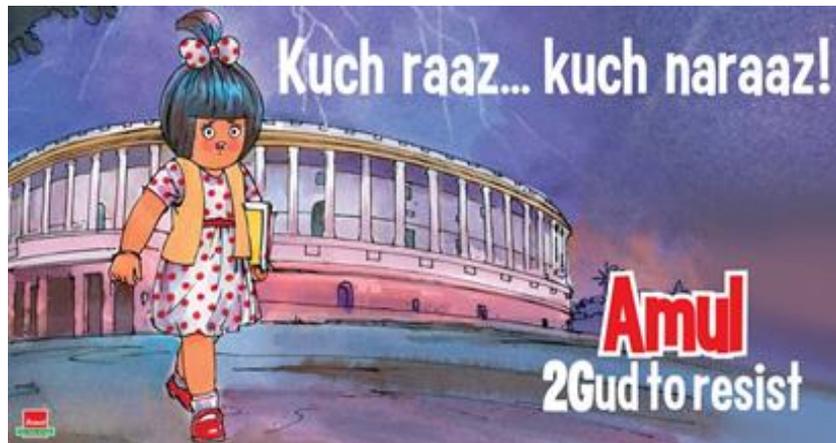
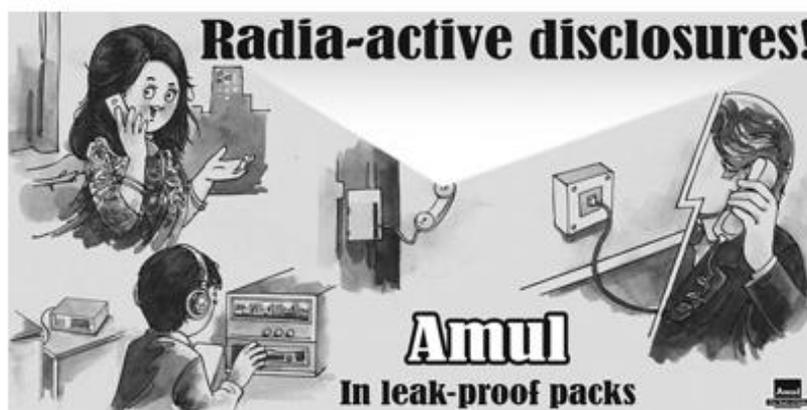


Figure 3 - Amul Girl Dressed in a Sari



Background of the Scams: According to a report by News 18, the scam came to light in 2010, when the Comptroller Auditor General (CAG) in their report found that the Department of Telecom had issued 2 G licenses to telecom operators at such low prices that they caused India a loss of Rs. 1.76 lakh crores. The licenses had been provided to applicants, who had 'deliberately suppressed facts, disclosed incomplete information, submitted fictitious documents and used fraudulent means for getting licenses.' These license owners sold stakes to foreign companies at a high premium. The News 18 report mentioned that the key accused in the case, A Raja (then Telecom Minister), bent the rules of the auctions to favor specific applicants. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in its charge sheet, accused him of getting Swan's Shahid Balwa to invest in Rs. 200 crores into Kalaignar TV Pvt Ltd (controlled by some members of the DMK), which he was affiliated to as a minister in the UPA government.

Based on a report by Deccan Herald, around the same time, the Directorate General of Investigations Income Tax Department allegedly tapped the conversations of Niira Radia, a lobbyist for industrialists. The CBI probed these tapes about the scam. They had 'rocked the corridors of power with the transcripts revealing a cozy nexus between policymakers/ministers, corporate honchos, middlemen, and scribes.' This cozy relationship with politicians, including a leaked conversation with A Raja, made Niira Radia a witness in the case.

4.1. Figure 1 Shows the Amul girl holding a phone, staring at it with shock is a 'symbol' of the general public and their disbelief about the scam. The mobile phone placed next to her in the ad is an 'index' meant to represent the scam. The ad also shows a caricature of A Raja, which is an 'icon' sign meant to represent the main accused directly.

4.2. Figure 2 Shows the Amul girl is walking away from the Indian Parliament, her waistcoat and files suggesting she is an 'index' for a parliamentarian. The lightning in the sky behind the Parliament is a 'symbol' of chaos.

4.3. Figure 3 Shows the Amul Girl dressed in a sari and holding a phone acting as an 'icon' for Niira Radia, whose conversations had been leaked, Another figure shown with his face hidden is an 'index' of whom she conversed. The third figure wearing headphones in front of a recorder turning dials is an 'index' for the phone tapping that had been conducted. The telephone with the receiver end emitting light is a 'symbol' for how these conversations shed light on corruption.

4.4. Denotative and Connotative Analysis

The denotative meaning of Figure 1 is a girl looking at her phone with a shocked expression, with a phone separating from her from the other figure in the ad; the other figure is that of a man with a hand held up to the viewer. The connotative meaning of Figure 1 is connected to the 2G scam. The ad copy '*Phone Banega crorepati*' is conveyed by the ad copy, a commentary on how telecom operators earned large amounts of money by selling their shares to international stakeholders. The denotative meaning of Figure 2 is a girl walking away from the parliamentary building, the sky behind the building is deep blue with lighting streaks. The connotative meaning of the ad is conveyed when understood in the context of the time when it came out, with the 2G scam, the leak of Radia Tapes, the controversy attached with the Commonwealth Games all leading to public distrust conveyed through the ad copy which reads '*Kuch Raaz... Kuch Naraaz*'. The denotative meaning of Figure 3 is a girl having a conversation with a man. At the same time, a third figure in the ad listens to a recording. The connotative meaning of the ad derived in the context of Radia tapes, the two figures (of the Amul Girl and the man) are meant to convey the conversations between Niira Radia and her high profile acquaintances, the reason the man's face is hidden is that the conversations leaked were between her and a wide array of people. The latter half of the ad copy, 'Amul, in leak proof packages,' is meant to comment that the taped conversations were leaked instead of being revealed and meant to assure the viewer of Amul's product quality.

4.5. Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis

The use of the paradigm of 'body language can be observed in Figure 1, which is visible in the presence of syntagms, such as 'the shocked expression' on Amul Girl's face and the way A Raja's caricature is turned away from the viewer and is showing a hand to avoid questions. The ad also uses the paradigm of 'rhyming words' visible in the use of 'Phone Banega crorepati' instead of the name of the popular game show Kaun Banega Crorepati (Who wants to be a Millionaire?). Similarly, in Figure 2, the advertisers chose the syntagm of a sleeveless beige waistcoat, from the paradigm of clothing, due to its resemblance to a typical politician's attire. The ad also uses the paradigm of 'rhyming words' in the ad copy using the syntagm 'Kuch Raaz... Kuch Naraaz,' as well as in the phrase '2 Gud' where the word 'too' has been replaced with the number 2. In Figure 3, the advertisers chose the syntagm of long straight hair and a sari from the paradigms of clothing and hairstyle to disguise the Amul girl as Niira Radia. The ad uses the paradigm of 'rhyming words' in the ad copy

using 'Radia-active' instead of radioactive, which conveys the dual ideas of the explosive nature of Radia tapes as well as the use of the paradigm of 'puns [5]' to add that telephonic conversation occurs through radio waves subtly.

Figure 4 - Amul Girl Resting her Trophy Cup

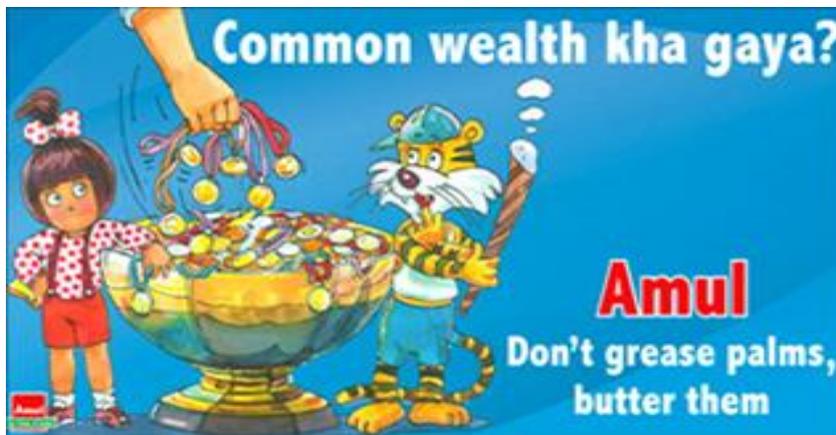
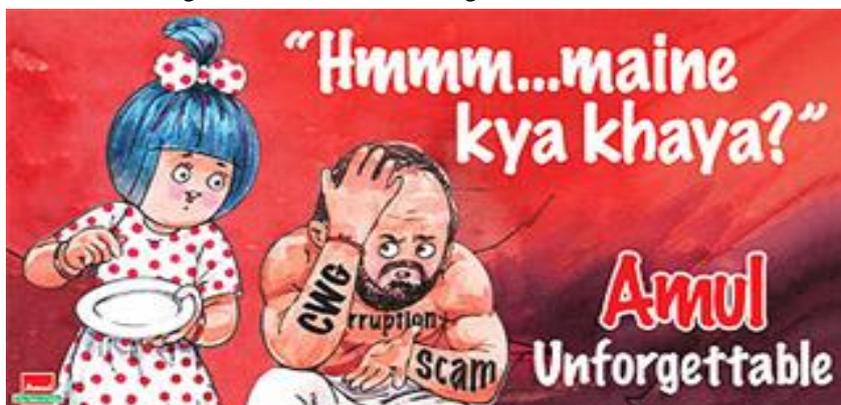


Figure 5 - Amul Girl Holding a Plate in One Hand

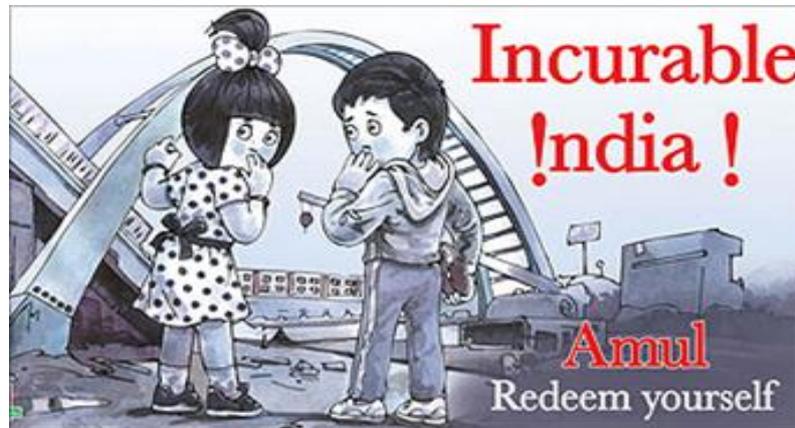


4.6. Background of the Ads

Figure 6 shows India played host to the Common Wealth Games (CWG) in 2010, and according to a report by The Times of India, when the Central Vigilance Commission investigated the preparations of said games, it was found that inflated contracts of equipment had caused India a loss of Rs. 70,0000 crores. The chairman of the organizing committee (OC) of the games, Suresh Kalmadi, emerged as the key accused in the matter. 'But Kalmadi and the OC are not the only ones to be held answerable for the blatant loot of public money. Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, Lieutenant Governor Tejindra Khanna, and the chief secretary, who oversees and ensures their implementation, are part of the accountability matrix,' which could be attributed to the collapse of the

pedestrian bridge near Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium where the games were held, as well as the athletes being allegedly housed in shabby housing, according to The Times of India.

Figure 6 - The Advertisers use the Paradigm of 'CWG Scam'



4.7. Signs Present in the Ads

Figure 4 shows Amul girl resting her arm on a trophy cup; she acts as a 'symbol' of public reaction to the news of the scam. The hand shown reaching in to grab medals from the cup is again a symbol meant to represent the organizing committee behind the games responsible for the scam. The tiger was 2010's mascot for the Common Wealth Games and is, therefore, an 'index' meant to represent the games themselves. In Figure 5, Amul girl is shown holding a plate in one hand and pointing towards it with the other; as she looks at the caricature next to her, she acts as a 'symbol' for the public opinion observing as the case unfolds. The caricature next to her is an 'icon' meant to represent the minister. The tattoos and muscles he is shown with are an 'index' meant to symbolize his dementia. In Figure 6, Amul girl is shown looking back at the viewer with disbelief, pointing towards a fallen structure; she acts as an 'icon' representing Amul looking at how the public reacts. She stands next to a caricature who looks at her with worry; this caricature is an 'index' meant to represent the sportsmen, understood by the discus in one of his hands and the track pants, sweatshirt, and sports shoes he is wearing.

4.8. Denotative and Connotative Analysis

The denotative meaning behind Figure 4 is a girl looking at a hand picking up medals as she rests one of her arms on a trophy cup filled with them. Next to her is a tiger caricature with a baton,

looking at the hand as well. The connotative meaning of the ad can be derived from the scam accusations embroiled in by the commonwealth games organizing committee, which is shown by the hand picking up medals, which represents funds being taken away from their original purpose. The look of confusion on the tiger or *Shera's* face is meant to represent the way the scam reflected on India. The denotative meaning of Figure5 shows a girl with a plate in one of her hands and her other hand pointing to it, with the caricature of a man sitting next to her, looking at her with a confused expression. The connotative meaning of the ad could be derived from the CWG scam investigation where the key accused minister was being tested for dementia on court orders. The advertiser uses the ad copy to connect the idea of him suffering from dementia to him forgetting what he ate by saying 'Hmm. maine kya khaya?' and how their product Amul is unforgettable. The denotative meaning derived from Figure 6 is a girl pointing to a fallen structure standing next to the caricature of a man who looks worried about the same. The connotative meaning of the ad is best understood in the context of the Common Wealth Games and the scam allegations attached to ways in which the funds allocated for their preparation had been spent, which explains the reactions on the Amul girl's face as she looks back to the viewer to see their reaction. The ad copy reads 'Incurable India,' calling the country unfixable or disease-ridden, perhaps due to the multiple scam accusations around this time [6].

4.9. Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis

Figure4 uses the larger paradigm of 'competitive sports' and narrowed it to the syntagm of the CWG 2010 by the use of the CWG mascot for the year *Shera*. The ad uses the paradigm of 'puns' as well in the ad copy, which reads 'Common Wealth khan Gaya?' which is a pun on the words Common Wealth, used for the association of countries formerly colonies of Great Britain and also for the literal meaning of the term as public resources. The ad uses the paradigm of 'idioms [7]' in the latter half of the ad copy 'Do not grease palms, butter them,' where the phrase 'grease palms' means bribery, allegations of which were present in the CWG scam. Figure5 uses the paradigm of 'film references' with the syntagm of 'Ghajini' [8] and its main character that tattooed information on his body due to issues with memory loss and shows the minister (Suresh Kalmadi) exactly like him with the scam mentioned on his body like tattoos. The ad uses the paradigms of facial hair and hairstyle to enable the audience to understand the reference. In Figure6, the advertisers use the paradigm of 'CWG Scam' established by the syntagm of the fallen pedestrian bridge displayed in the ad, attributed to the improper usage of the funds allocated for the games. The ad copy reading 'Incurable

India' uses the paradigm of 'popular culture is referencing' and 'rhyming words' to compare how the preparations were being conducted against India's tourism campaign 'Incredible India' [9].

Figure 7 - Amul Girl Watches as a Man Reaches Out of a Helicopter to Grab Yellow Boxes

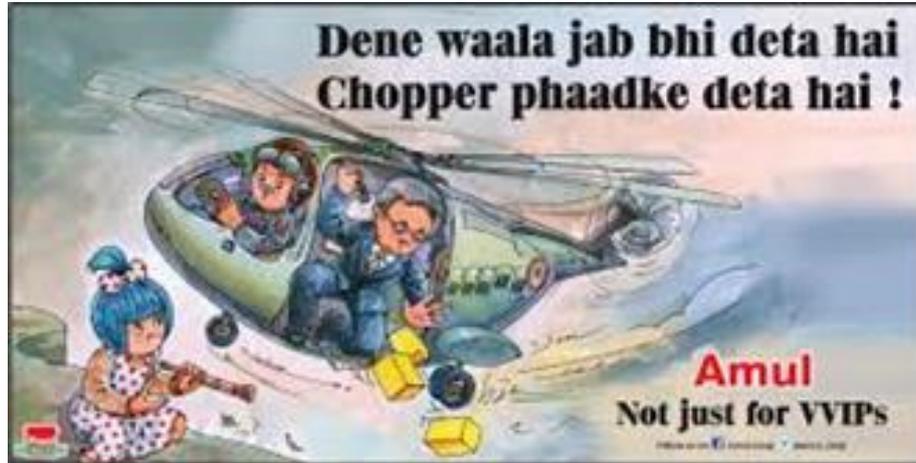


Figure 8 - Three Men Running away from a Helicopter, which is Chasing them



4.10. Background of the Ads

The news of the scam broke out in 2012, when Agusta Westland, who had been given the contract for VVIP choppers AWA101 choppers by the UPA government, was allegedly facing allegations of using intermediaries, who took kickbacks for the contract [10]. According to an explainer in The Quint, UPA rejected vendors who offered cheaper deals and went with Agusta Westland for Rs. 3,546 crores. In a report by The Business Standard, Bruno Spagnolini's CEO was arrested in conjunction with the scam. Several politicians and bureaucrats allegedly accepted bribes to swing the deal [11].

4.11. Signs Present in the Ads

Figure7 shows the Amul girl holding a telescope, acting as a ‘symbol’ for the public observing the scam unfold. The helicopter she is looking at is an ‘icon’ for the scam [12]. The man reaching out of the helicopter is an ‘icon’ for Bruno Spagnolini, the CEO of Agusta Westland, which was given the contract. Figure8 shows a helicopter with its search lights on is an ‘icon’ for the scam. The three men running in the foreground are an ‘index’ for the politicians who allegedly received bribes in the scam [13].

4.12. Denotative and Connotative Analysis

The denotative analysis of Figure7 suggests the meaning that a girl watches as a man reaches out of a helicopter to grab yellow boxes. In contrast, the pilot of said helicopter looks at the man in shock [14]. The connotative meaning of the ad is understood in the context of the Agusta Westland scam; the helicopter and the man shown in the back of it are meant to convey how the scam led to the reveal of bribery allegations against UPA. However, the use of the yellow boxes is meant to represent butter visually and the showers of allegations coming out with the scam [15]. The denotative meaning of Figure8 is three men running away from a helicopter, which is chasing them. The connotative meaning is meant to convey how those who had accepted bribes were running away from the investigation, which was also conveyed in the mention of the term ‘kickbacks’ in the latter half of the ad copy [16].

Figure 9 - Amul Girl Dressed in a White Kurta-pajama



4.13. Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis

Figure 7 uses the paradigms of 'popular culture referencing' and 'proverb' [17] in the syntagm 'Dene wala jab bhi deta deta chappar fad ke,' which has been shortened to 'Dene wala jab bhi deta' and used as a song title in two Hindi films 'Funtoosh' (1956) and Hera Pheri (2000), which is paraphrased and used as 'Dene wala jab bhi deta, deta chopper fad ke' using the paradigm of 'rhyming words' are replacing the word chopper (roof) with chopper (meant to reference the helicopters under question in the scam). Figure 8 again uses the paradigm of 'rhyming words' in the ad copy, the first half of which read 'Chopper Choppat?' conveying that since bribery and middlemen had been revealed, the entire plan became stumped. The same paradigm is used in the latter half of the ad copy, 'Amul, no kickbacks Just lick backs,' reinforcing that the kickbacks (or bribes) had been stopped

Figure 10 - Amul Girl Dressed in a Uniform Similar to that of a Fighter



4.14. Background of the Ads

NDA government announced that India would buy 36 French manufactured Rafale fighter jets from Dassault in 2015. This deal had been made in 2012 during the tenure of the UPA government but had fallen through due to the NDA government deeming it too expensive. After a; notation, the NDA government agreed to purchase 36 (as opposed to the previous agreement of 126) 'ready to fly' jets, which, according to a report by NDTV, was deemed a failure to NDA's 'Make in India' program by the opposition [18], which was because unlike the original deal wherein 18 jets would be bought ready to fly at the rest would be assembled in the state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). In 2016, NDA confirmed that Dassault and its partners would share technology with Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), HAL, and some private companies under its offsets under

the deal. According to a report in India Today, the deal requires Dassault and its partners to source Rs. 30,000 crores worth of purchases from India's local industry. The company they chose to source from was Reliance Defense Limited, a company, which did not have any experience making defense equipment, which added to the fact that the NDA government was allegedly paying a higher price for 36 jets than the UPA was for 126 were the central reasons for controversy [19].

4.15. Signs Present in the Ads

Figure 9 shows the Amul girl dressed in a white kurta-pajama with a red waistcoat; she acts as an 'index' for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The man sitting opposite her is an 'icon' for French President Francois Hollande. The plane they dine over is an 'icon' for the Rafale aircraft at the center of controversy. Figure 10 shows the Amul girl dressed in a uniform similar to that of a fighter pilot is a 'symbol' for the Indian Air force in need of new jets. The anthropomorphized [20] jet she rides on is an 'icon' for the controversy.

4.16. Denotative and Connotative Analysis

The denotative meaning behind Figure 9 is a girl having a meal with a man using a fighter plane as a table. The connotative meaning behind the ad comes from the confirmation of the Rafale deal; this is visible in the first of the ad copy, which reads 'Pass Dassault please,' which references the company Dassault Rafale fighter jet deal was made [21]. The latter half of the ad copy 'Amul, Maska Beaucoup' implies the French origin of the company. The denotative meaning behind Figure 10 could be understood as a girl riding on top of a fighter jet as if surfing with it. The connotative meaning of ad 2 is understood when put in the context of the controversy around the deal when the ad came out in 2018. The ad copy reads 'Pass or Rafail?' brings attention to the controversy, which is reinforced in the latter half of the ad copy 'Amul, eat at jet speed' [22].

4.17. Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis

Figure 9 uses the paradigm of 'clothing' to connect Prime Minister Narendra Modi by dressing the Amul girl in a white kurta-pajama and red waistcoat. The ad also uses the paradigm of 'rhyming words' visible in the ad copy 'Pass Dassault please!' where the word 'Dassault' is a syntagm rhyming with the words 'the salt' [23]. The latter half of the ad copy also uses the same paradigm in 'Amul, Maska Beaucoup' where the word 'Maska' replaces the word 'Merci.' The paradigm of 'body

language' is also visible in the smiles on both the faces of the figures, representing a positive feeling from both figures. Figure 10 uses the paradigm of 'body language as well visible both on the face of Amul girl and the fighter jet. The ad uses the paradigm of 'anthropomorphism' where the fighter jet is a syntagm, shown visibly in the eyes, raised eyebrows, and smile. The ad uses the paradigm of 'rhyming words' in the ad copy, which reads 'Pass or Rafail?' where the word 'Rafale' (name of the jets involved in the controversy) has been spelled alternatively to complete the phrase 'pass or fail' [24].

4.18. Expert Interview Analysis

The research uses interviews to get a deeper insight into the semiotic analysis. Amul has advertised itself using topical ads for over 50 years with continued relevance. Mudita Mishra says, "Amul did something right." Josraj Arakkal stated, "They stuck to being a commentator. The commentary does not have to be just politics. They pick up any topical issue and seem to give it a humorous twist [25]. I think we should acknowledge the fact that the client and the agency have stuck to a certain winning formula." However, he also said that 'they (Amul) have lost their bite these days.' The ads with their comedic twists traverse the fine line between becoming overtly political. Mishra suggested that it could do so due to its long-term presence even in the pre-digital era. She added, "people have been conditioned to learn, to love something that was created so tastefully in terms of the content" [26]. DaCunha, however, explained that the way they have maintained the balance is due to the mission statement they have developed for the brand in their heads, which is "the Amul girl is never going to be malicious; something may not always be a joke, but she will always treat it in a light-hearted manner. So, suppose there is stress about something in the country. In that case, she is the one to break the tension" [27], while Mishra mentioned how the company has shifted to digital commentary and that maybe, because they were upping their digital presence, she also added, "there seems to be some correlation between the party in power and the reducing number of ads. Probably they found more meat there (UPA) than here (NDA),' which aligned with what DaCunha said, "While 2008-13 was extremely colorful when it came to controversies, one does not associate scams or controversies with this time (2014-19)". Arrakal, however, said, 'I think the environment is such that people are not expressing themselves." DaCunha, however, disagreed saying that the campaign had talked about every single party and that they had been fairly objective. He stated, "We have never gone after a particular party or a particular politician. We have never unduly

supported anyone in particular. The bottom line at the end of the day is that the Amul girl is not malicious."

5. Results and Discussion

The research aimed to understand the way scams and political controversies have been represented in Amul topical advertisements during the governance of two political coalitions, UPA and NDA, respectively. The semiotic analysis established the use of comedy to convey multiple meanings in many of the ads. The use of the Amul girl as a symbol of the 'common man' was observed. The ads pick specific iconic parts of every controversy and combine them with subtle hints to create an overall text which provides humor and may be understood differently by everyone based on their knowledge of the context of the add. This humor was largely derived from referencing other popular culture texts or phrases well known to the general public. The humor also provided commentary on the issue being discussed. The expert interviews helped to get further insight into the semiotic analysis of the advertisements.

6. Conclusions

As per the objectives, we have learned how these cartoons play a role in political communication by raising public awareness of these issues and adding a humorous, opinionated twist. The political messages are delivered in a light-hearted manner, with which the audience can easily identify, using puns. When we look at what the cartoons want to tell the audience about the political affairs it covers, it is a way to associate these affairs with the brand and see how Amul is like this political affair or unlike it. Amul, for example, used the flaws of the various politicians depicted to show the audience that Amul would never make such a mistake and is far more responsible. These types of messages help the brand stand out while also allowing people to enjoy a bit of humor alongside their dose of current events knowledge. Certain cartoons, such as the ban on using firecrackers after a certain time during Diwali, allow the audience, who may not be a regular newspaper reader, to go online and learn more about the news. It also serves as a repository for various current events over the years for those who want to study them through the eyes of cartoons.

Notes

1. *Mythologies* (1973) is a collection of essays on French popular culture.

2. The literal meaning of a word.
3. Feelings and ideas that might be connected to a word.
4. A mixture of English and Hindi.
5. The use of different possible meanings of a word to make a joke.
6. Common Wealth Games were held in 2010, 2G Spectrum scam was being investigated in the same year.
7. According to Merriam Webster's dictionary, these are expressions whose meaning cannot be derived from their elements.
8. Ghajni (2008) was a film about a business tycoon suffering from memory loss and using his tattoos and photographs to remember his girlfriend's killer and take revenge.
9. A well-known phrase or piece of advice.
10. Literal translation when God is generous, the showers of his gifts are bountiful enough to break through your roof.
11. Attributing human characteristics to non-human beings.

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