

Advertising Slogan: A Creative Element Undergoing Frequent & Erratic Metamorphosis

P. N. Jha

D. Litt. (Advertising Management), Director, School of Management Sciences, Varanasi, India

Abstract

Slogan happens to be a true extract of the entire gamut of advertising message. In common parlance, advertisements and ad campaigns are identified by their slogans. Technically, it is a brief, repeatable, and memorable positioning statement. The creative design of slogans has varied with the time. It has been seen in a numerous creative forms during its peregrination. The present paper attempts to bring to the limelight an erratic and plural metamorphosis witnessed by this buzzword – slogan.

Keywords: Slogan ; Metamorphosis ; Peregrination ; Advertising Message ; Positioning Statement ; Content Analysis.

Management Insight (2021). DOI: 110.21844/mijia.17.1.2

Introduction

Slogan is a popular term in the vocabulary of advertising and media. It is often heard or visible by the people across generations, mostly in context to products' / services' advertising or political advertising of different genres. Technically speaking, a slogan is a significant and integral mechanical part of an advertisement. Also known as **tag lines**, or **theme lines**, or **signature lines**, or **urge lines**, slogans are frequently repeated phrases that provide continuity to an advertising campaign. They also intend to reduce an advertising message strategy to a brief, repeatable, and memorable positioning statement. However, what goes beyond the repertoire, and remained so far much lesser noticed by the relevant scholarly radar is the visibility of a frequent and erratic metamorphosis in the creative character and design of slogans over different decades during the life span of any form of associated product. Metamorphosis here basically talks about a transformation from a preliminary shape to a final or matured shape. It is merely a change in form or nature. Slogans have been found exhibiting a changing face in an irregular way in the undergoing process of their metamorphoses. The present academic exercise attempts to actualize the aforesaid proposition on the basis of a comprehensive content analysis of scores of publication advertisements collected from **3 selected**

Corresponding Author: P. N. Jha, Director, School of Management Sciences, Varanasi, India, Email: prof.pnjha@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Jha P.N. (2021). Advertising Slogan: A Creative Element Undergoing Frequent & Erratic Metamorphosis. Management Insight, 17(1) 12-20

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

Received: 18.06.2021; **Accepted:** 01.07.2021; **Published:** 14.07.2021

high profile brands—Lifebuoy, Air India and Amrutanjan, appeared over various decades of 20th Century.

A Look on Relevant Literature:

The publication ads have been found to be invariably using Slogans. The dictionary meaning (**The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary, 2001**) of slogan is a “short, memorable phrase used in advertising or associated with a political group”. **Otto Kleppner (1973)** opines, “The word slogan comes from the Gaelic *slughgairm*, meaning “battle cry”. Today, a slogan is used as the sales battle cry of the advertiser, trying to impress his main claim to its readers' acceptance. The use of slogans as a tool of copy has varied with the years. Slogans are also potent weapons in political campaigns, and in crusading for public causes. They are usually emotionally charged. **Jha, P. N. (2009)** mentions, “a slogan differs from all other forms of writing because it

is designed to be remembered and repeated over and over again word for word". The purposes of slogans are as varied as the purposes of advertising itself and should derive from the current advertising goals for a product." **Wright et al. (1977)** write, "Because an advertisement, unlike a personal sales call, is one-way communication, its closing efforts must supply all information, directions, and motivation necessary for the buyer's action. In addition, it must make that action appear as easy as possible, and present a final "stimulus" as well". **Dirksen et al. (1978)** suggest, "Although many devices exist for inviting action or for assuring early attention by means of **urge lines**, the concluding message in advertisements still offers opportunity for further improvement." **Jha, P. N. (2021)** comments, "Slogan refers to a standard company statement, a frequently repeated phrase in advertisements, giving continuity to an advertising campaign and which reduces a key theme to a brief & memorable positioning statement". **Wells et al. (1998)** write, "Slogans are frequently repeated phrases that provide continuity to an advertising campaign. Taglines are clever phrases used at the end of an advertisement to summarize the ad's message." The authors further mention, "Slogans and taglines are used for memorability. Product and campaign slogans are repeated from ad to ad. A tagline is a particularly memorable phrase that is used at the end of the ad to wrap up the idea. Copywriters employ a number of literary techniques to enhance the memorability of slogans and taglines. Some slogans use a startling or unexpected phrase ; others use rhyme, rhythm, alliteration (repetition of sounds), or parallel construction (repetition of the structure of a sentence or phrase). This repetition of structure and sounds contributes to memorability". **Arens and Bovee (1994)** opine, "Slogans become a battle cry for the company. In fact, the word *slogan* comes from the Gaelic term for *battle cry*. Slogans should be like old friends – recognized instantly year after year. Some slogans endure because they encapsulate a corporate philosophy". The authors further add, "Effective slogans are short, simple, memorable, easy to repeat, and most important, help differentiate the product or the company from its competitors". Sometimes, some slogans do not measure up to the lofty expectations. They fall into what **David Ogilvy (1985)** mentions the

category of 'interchangeable fatuous bromides'.

IIMC, New Delhi-literature says, "Briefly, a good slogan should be:

- easy to understand and remember ;
- pleasant to repeat ;
- able to express in a few words the fundamental sales argument for the idea / service / product advertised ; and
- helpful in developing in the mind of the reader a favourable association pattern between the wants of the idea / service / product advertised.

The slogan should, in short, touch a responsive chord in reader / listener. Though the slogans seek to explain, to extol and to exhort, they are designed to be remembered and repeated and therefore such memory-aiding features as rhymes, alliteration, metrical cadence and parallelism as are found in old maxims are often employed. The ideal slogan therefore is the one that combines the qualities that make them easy to remember and those that motivate a person to act in the desired way. As few actions take place immediately after an advertisement is read, remembering is most important, and remembering becomes positive if it also has an in-built drive towards action. All this should be achieved with the minimum number of words and that is what **Prof. Ronald Shunman** meant when he said in *Identification Elements of Advertising Slogans* that the ideal slogan should have not more than four words". **Jha, P. N. (2001)** mentions, "Slogans / taglines are written to be highly memorable, often using mnemonic devices. Publication ads, even during thirties & forties, were found to be using them. However, their use during later decades of the 20th Century have become more pronounced".

Research Plot :

The present descriptive study, based on an acclaimed research technique in social sciences – Content Analysis, intends to look into a selective dimension of creativity of the publication advertisements, belonging to the 20th Century. It would further be incorporating a 'time-trend' design also in as much as ascertaining the trend followed by the ad creativity towards designing the slogans in the ad copies during the said century.

Sampling and Data Management :

Three popular Brands - Lifebuoy, Air India and Amrutanjan, representing both the product and service categories, and equally enjoying one of the longest life span, have been conveniently selected for the investigation. The population areas account for the publication advertisements (national recall ads) of the said brands available in the general interest magazines carrying ads. Such general interest magazines included, The Indian Review, The Orient Illustrated Weekly, The Illustrated Weekly of India, Dharmayug, Saptahik Hindustan, Bhavan's Journal, Khel Bharti, Maya, Sarita, Navneet, Sportstar, The Modern Review, Vishwamitra, Caravan, Himmat, Link, Probe India, Ravivaar, Nutan Kahaniyan, India Today, Reader's Digest, and Sports Week.

A large number of libraries, that include National Library, Calcutta (Kolkata) ; Vikram Sarabhai Library, IIM Ahmedabad ; Central Library, IIM Lucknow ; Maharaja Laxmishwar Singh Public Library, Darbhanga, Library of IBM, Bela, Darbhanga ; Library of SMS, Varanasi ; Personal Library of (Late) Babu Kaladhari Singh, Raghapur Deorhi, Darbhanga ; Library of Mithila Research Institute, Kabraghat, Darbhanga ; and Personal Library of (Late) Pt.

Laxminath Jha 'Artist', Sarisab-Pahi, Madhubani, remained the source of the above magazines. The national recall advertisements, used in respect to these brands and appearing in above magazines more often and more frequently over different decades since their launch in the Indian market have been selected as per the guidelines of 'Convenience Sampling'. All the 3 selected brands, Lifebuoy, Air India and Amrutanjan account exclusively for various decades of 20th Century.

Content Analysis :

Content analysis is a well-known research technique in social sciences for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use. According to **Krippendorff (2004)**, "As a technique, content analysis involves specialized procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher. As a research technique, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Content analysis is a scientific tool". All the sample national recall ads in respect to the three chosen brands have been subjected to content analysis for drawing objective inferences by means of observation.

Table – I : Sample Brand : LIFEBOUY

Decade(s)	Year(s)	Sr. No.: Sample Ad	Ad Vehicle (Magazine) Details	Visible Slogan
1930's	1938	LB 01	The Indian Review – Oct.	“LIFEBOUY TOILET SOAP – Stops ‘B.O. : (Body – Odour)’”.
	1938	LB 02	The Indian Review – Sep.	Similar to LB 01
	1938	LB 03	The Orient Illustrated Weekly – May	“LIFEBOUY TOILET SOAP – Prevents ‘B.O. : (Body – Odour)’”.
	1938	LB 04	The Orient Illustrated Weekly – Jun.	“LIFEBOUY TOILET SOAP Protects health”.
1940's	1942	LB 05	The Ill. Weekly of India – Apr.	“LIFEBOUY is more than a good soap – it's a good HABIT”.
	1942	LB 06	The Ill. Weekly of India – Sept.	Similar to LB 05
1950's	1952	LB 07	Dharmyug – May	“haath dhone aur nahane ke liye sada lifebuoy sabun upyog kijiye. Yah mail ke keetanuon se aap ki raksha karta hai”.
	1955	LB 08	Dharmyug – Mar.	“lifebuoy sabun harroj ki gandagi ke keetanuon se aap ki raksha karta hai”.
	1957	LB 09	Dharmyug – Apr.	Tandurust log harroj lifebuoy sabun se hee nahatehain – yah harroj kee zindagi ke keetanuon ko dho dalta hai ! is sabun ke istemaal se aap chust aur tarotaza bane rahtehain.
1960's	1961	LB 10	Dharmyug – Feb.	“lifebuoy hai jahan, tandurustee hai wahan !”
	1964	LB 11	Dharmyug – Nov.	Similar to LB 10
	1966	LB 12	Saptahik Hindustan – Apr.	“lifebuoy hai jahan, tandurustee hai wahan”.
	1967	LB 13	Saptahik Hindustan – Oct.	Similar to LB 12
	1969	LB 14	Bhavan's Journal – Jul.	Where there's Lifebuoy there's health. LIFEBOUY washes away the germs in dirt
1970's	1970	LB 15	Dharmyug – Sept.	Similar to LB 12
	1971	LB 16	Bhavan's Journal – Oct.	Similar to LB 14
	1971	LB 17	Dharmyug – Dec.	Similar to LB 12
1980's	1980	LB 18	Saptahik Hindustan – Aug.	Similar to LB 12
	1982	LB 19	Khel Bharti – Dec.	“lifebuoy hai jahan, tandurustee hai wahan” – nauvenasiad ke liye swasthya sabun
	1983	LB 20	Maya – Oct.	Similar to LB 12
	1983	LB 21	Sarita – Oct.	Similar to LB 12
	1985	LB 22	Saptahik Hindustan – Sept.	Similar to LB 12
1990's	1992	LB 23	Sportstar – Jul.	“WHERE THERE'S LIFEBOUY THERE'S HEALTH”

Table – II : Sample Brand : AIR INDIA

Decade(s)	Year(s)	Sr. No.: Sample Ad	Ad Vehicle (Magazine) Details	Visible Slogan
1960's	1963	AI 01	Saptahik Hindustan – Oct.	Udan ka thees varshiya anubhav
	1965	AI 02	Navneet – Mar.	Sabse tej hawai sarvis
	1966	AI 03	Bhavan's Journal – Jan.	10 Times A Week To London
	1967	AI 04	Bhavan's Journal – Jan.	--
1970's	1971	AI 05	LINK – Dec.	The airline that loves you
	1972	AI 06	Caravan – Oct.	Similar to AI 05
	1973	AI 07	Bhavan's Journal – Jan.	The airline that saves your money
	1973	AI 08	Sports Week – Jun.	The airline for youth
	1973	AI 09	Dharmyug – Aug.	Nishthawan Bhaarteeya Baniye - Air India se yatra keejiye
	1973	AI 10	The Ill. Weekly of India – Sept.	Be an Air Indian – Fly Air India
	1974	AI 11	Bhavan's Journal – Jul.	Similar to AI 10
	1975	AI 12	The Ill. Weekly of India – Mar.	The choice airline
	1976	AI 13	Bhavan's Journal – Jan.	Be a first class Air Indian
	1978	AI 14	The Ill. Weekly of India – Aug.	Stop dreaming. Start packing.
	1978	AI 15	The Ill. Weekly of India – Oct.	Something good going for you
	1978	AI 16	The Ill. Weekly of India – Nov.	Similar to AI 15
	1979	AI 17	Dharmyug – Dec.	Shubh yatra.....shubh sandesh
1980's	1980	AI 18	Dharmyug – Feb.	Similar to AI 17
	1980	AI 19	Reader's Digest – Dec.	More 747s. More direct flights. More cargo space.
	1982	AI 20	The Ill. Weekly of India – Apr.	The Bag is flying high
	1982	AI 21	Dharmyug – Nov.	Panchmahadweepon ke vistaar mein bharteeya aatithya satkar
	1984	AI 22	Bhavan's Journal – Jan.	Indian hospitality across five continents
	1985	AI 23	The Ill. Weekly of India – Mar.	The airline that treats you like a Maharajah
	1986	AI 24	India Today – Jan.	Similar to AI 23
	1989	AI 25	India Today – Jun.	The business traveller's best choice
1990's	1992	AI 26	India Today – Aug.	Fly With Your Very Own Air India
	1992	AI 27	India Today – Sept.	Similar to AI 26
	1997	AI 28	India Today – Jun.	Fly us to believe us
	1997	AI 29	India Today – Jun.	Similar to AI 28
	1997	AI 30	India Today – Jul.	A Skyful of Surprises
	1997	AI 31	India Today – Jul.	Similar to AI 30

Table – III : Sample Brand : AMRUTANJAN

Decade(s)	Year(s)	Sr. No. : Sample Ad	Ad Vehicle (Magazine) Details	Visible Slogan
1930's	1932	AM 01	The Modern Review –Sept.	Amrutanjan is the best Indian Pain Balm Sold everywhere.
	1933	AM 02	The Modern Review –Dec.	Similar to AM 01
1940's	1943	AM 03	Vishwamitra – Jun.	Amrutanjan – sarvashreshtha dardnashak – 50 varsh se prasiddh
1950's	1957	AM 04	Dharmyug – Apr.	1893 mein .. aur aaj bhee .. sardard ko mitane ke liye amrutanjan. Samool dard vinashak
	1959	AM 05	Dharmyug – Feb.	Amrutanjan dard ko nikaal deta hai gat 65 varshon se mashahoor
1960's	1961	AM 06	Dharmyug – Feb.	Sar dard? Jara sa amrutanjan lagadeejiye. Isase turant fayada hota hai.
	1966	AM 07	Dharmyug – Jan.	“Amrutanjan 10 dawayiyon kee eakdawa – dard aur jukaam mein ahookh”.
	1966	AM 08	Caravan – Sept.	“Amrutanjan is 10 medicaments blended in 1 to relieve pains and colds”.
	1968	AM 09	Bhavan's Journal – Dec.	Amrutanjan For Safe Fast Soothing Relief from COLDS & COUGHS. Famous for over 75 years.
	1969	AM 10	Bhavan's Journal – Dec.	“Amrutanjan - 10 medicaments in one, to relieve aches, colds and pains”.
	1969	AM 11	Navneet – Dec.	Amrutanjan – sardee-jukaam aur dardkeliye 10 dawaon ka eakapoorva mishran!
1970's	1970	AM 12	Dharmyug – Jan.	Similar to AM11
	1972	AM 13	Bhavan's Journal – Sept.	Similar to AM10
	1973	AM 14	Saptahik Hindustan –Oct.	“Amrutanjan - 10 dawaon ka eakapoorva mishran”.
	1975	AM 15	Himmat – Nov.	“Amrutanjan - 10 medicaments in one”.
	1976	AM 16	Saptahik Hindustan –Sept.	“Amrutanjan – 80 saal se adhik samay se eak nirbharyogya ghareloo dawa”.
	1978	AM 17	Saptahik Hindustan –Oct.	Similar to AM16
	1978	AM 18	The Ill. Weekly of India – Sept.	“Amrutanjan. A trusted home remedy for over 80 years”.
	1979	AM 19	LINK – Aug.	Similar to AM18

Decade(s)	Year(s)	Sr. No. : Sample Ad	Ad Vehicle (Magazine) Details	Visible Slogan
1980's	1982	AM 20	Probe India – Apr.	Similar to AM18
	1983	AM 21	Ravivaar – Mar.	“Amrutanjan – peeda se jalda aram hanikarak prabhav se mukt !”
	1984	AM 22	NutanKahaniyan – Mar.	“90 varshon se vishwasaneey – amrutanjan – peeda se jald aaram hanikarak prabhav se mukt !”
	1985	AM 23	Khel Bharti – Mar.	Similar to AM21
	1987	AM 24	Dharmyug – May	“Behatareen amrutanjan jald lauta laye ... aap kee muskaan !”
	1988	AM 25	Dharmyug – Sept.	Similar to AM24
1990's	1991	AM 26	Sportstar – Aug.	“Amrutanjan. Strong. For agonizing aches and pains.”
	1992	AM 27	Sportstar – Jul.	When you have an ache, who do you turn to ? Amrutanjan. Pain Balm
	1993	AM 28	Sportstar – Jan.	Similar to AM27

Discussion :

In the three Tables above, a detailed outcome of the content analysis, performed on 3 high-profile sample brands – Lifebuoy, Air India, and Amrutanjan, covering an altogether 82 sample national recall ads (23 for Lifebuoy, 31 for Air India, and 28 for Amrutanjan) has been posted. All the sample ads for the participating brands have been duly coded and have been subjected to their individual research treatment. The Tables also explain the respective Decade, Year, and details of the concerned Ad Vehicle for all the various sample ads applicable to the 3 sample brands. As projected earlier, the purpose of content analysis here is to explore the trend followed by the ad creativity towards designing the slogans in the ad copies during the 20th Century. The applied research tool aims to bring to the limelight the novelty or unique traits embedded to the verbal side of ad creativity relating to the semantic and syntactic design of the slogans, and the nature of metamorphosis visible in the slogans over different years and decades.

The **Table– I**, visible above, has housed the relevant details of content analysis in the creative design and implementation of the slogans by 23 participating sample ads for the brand 'Lifebuoy' (**Plate – I**). A mere perusal of the table suggests that covering a total period of 17 years under 7 decades, all the 23 sample ads, taken from 10 different ad vehicles (magazines), exhibit 12 types of slogans in the total group of 23 slogans. 11 slogans have been found repeating and thereby showing frequency in appearance of varying order. 1 slogan is found to have a frequency of 7 times appearance covering more than one decade. Further, variations have also been noted in regard to the language used (14 slogans in Hindi and 9 in English), location offered to the slogans, word-length-range and the typographical treatment provided to the slogans. Also, some of the slogans have been found to have undergone enlargement and enrichment while getting repeated. However, all the various slogans have been found revolving around one or more of the core theme of the ad message, viz., Body Odour, Germ Killer, Health Cause, etc.

Plate – I : A sample ad of 'Lifebuoy'



(Courtesy : The Indian Review , Sept., 1938)

Plate – II : A sample ad of 'Air India'



(Courtesy : Saptahik Hindustan, Oct., 1963)

The above exhibited **Table – II** reflects the pertinent details of content analysis in the creative design and implementation of the slogans by 31 participating sample ads for the brand 'Air India' (**Plate – II**). A simple perusal of the table suggests that covering a total period of 20 years under 4 decades, all the 31 sample ads, taken from 10 different ad vehicles (magazines), exhibit 22 types of slogans in the total group of 30 slogans, as one sample ad not carry a slogan. 8

slogans have been found repeating with considerably lesser frequency, and the repeated appearance is visible among years of a similar decade only. Further, variations have also been noted in regard to the language used (5 slogans in Hindi and 17 in English), location offered to the slogans, word-length-range and the typographical treatment provided to the slogans. However, the core themes of the ad message, guiding the make-up of the slogans, have been found numerous.

Plate – III : A sample ad of 'Amrutanjan'



(Courtesy : Dharmayug, Feb., 1959)

The **Table – III**, shown above, accommodates the relevant details of content analysis in the creative design and implementation of the slogans by 28 participating sample ads for the brand 'Amrutanjan' (**Plate – III**). An observation of the said table reflects that covering a total period of 25 years under 7 decades, all the 28 sample ads, taken from 15 different ad vehicles (magazines), exhibit 19 types of slogans in the total

group of 28 slogans. 9 slogans have been found repeating and thereby showing frequency in appearance of varying order. Maximum frequency of appearance of a slogan is found three times only, covering years of both similar as well as inter-decades. Further, variations have also been noted in regard to the language used (15 slogans in Hindi and 13 in English), location offered to the slogans, word-length-range and the typographical

treatment provided to the slogans. Also, some of the slogans have been found to have undergone enlargement and enrichment while getting repeated. However, all the various slogans have been found revolving around one or more of the core theme of the ad message, viz., Best Indian Pain Balm, Blend of 10 medicaments, Prolonged Service, etc.

Conclusion :

Slogans are indeed the integral part of the total gamut of advertising message, which make the closing statement, the reminder element and the memorable matter within the body of an ad. The use of slogans as a tool of copy has varied with the years. However, an ad without a slogan cannot be ruled out ; exception of such a proposition is not an exception. The above research treatment, through content analysis, makes it evident that a slogan, within the life-span of the associated brand, undergoes various erratic changes, on the dimensions of its verbal (semantic & syntactic) composition, range of word-length, use of languages (English and Vernacular), location within the ad space, varying frequency of appearance year wise, decade wise and inter-decade wise, and getting fully or partly enlarged or enriched in order to attract novelty to meet its basic aim effectively. Several kinds of slogans have been found in the life-span of the associated brand, and they use to exhibit different paths of metamorphosis in an unpredictable way with a view to avoid redundancy. It is certainly an on-going process. The process, however, does not come to a complete halt unless the associated brand along with its advertisements becomes fully obsolete.

References :

- Catherine Soanes. (ed.). (2001). *The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary*. Oxford University Press. Oxford New York. p. 790.
- Otto Kleppner (1973). *Advertising Procedure*. 6th Ed. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey. p. 353-54.
- Jha, P.N. (2009). *A Study on the Quasimodo Effect in Publication Advertising in India with special reference to Testimonial / Celebrity Endorsement*. D. Litt. Dissertation, BBA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, India. p. 171.
- John S. Wright, Daniel S. Warner, Willis L. Winter, Jr., & Sheril YN K. Zeigler. (1977). *Advertising*. 4th Ed. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. p. 419.
- Charles J. Dirksen, Arthur Kroeger, and Francesco M. Nicosia. (1978). *Advertising Principles, Problems, and Cases*. D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Ltd., Bombay. p. 231.
- Jha, P. N. (2021). *Advertising Beyond Etymology*. Excel Publications. Delhi.
- William Wells, John Burnett, & Sandra Moriarty. (1998). *Advertising Principles & Practice*. 4th Ed. Prentice-Hall International, Inc. pp. 258-59, 421.
- William F. Arens and Courtland L. Bovee. (1994). *Contemporary Advertising*. Richard D. Irwin, Inc. Fifth Edition. p. 263.
- David Ogilvy. (1985). *Ogilvy on Advertising*. New York : Random House. pp. 118-20.
- Selecting Slogans*. Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi. pp. 4-5.
- Jha, P. N. (2001). *A Study on the Changing Dimensions of Publication Advertisements in India with special reference to Magazine Ads*. Doctoral Dissertation, BBA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, India. p. 122.
- Klaus Krippendorff. (2004). *Content Analysis : An Introduction to Its Methodology*. 2nd Ed. SAGE Publications, New Delhi. p. 18.