

# Fuzzy World of Advertisements and the Hapless Consumer

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**Abstract**— *The din and noise of TV Commercials seem to be never ending and it has become difficult to take two winks in peace. What is interesting is that the viewers and the consumers seem to be unaware the advertisement content or claims nor do they seem to care. Such Consumer apathy has never been seen before and it is a wonder how advertisers get away with such ridiculous verbosity. The same story is repeated more or less in the same fashion with full page text advertisements in the news media. The funny thing is such advertisements are endorsed many times by famous film and sports personalities. I presume the VIPs in their hurry to earn a handsome return and busy schedules have short memories of what they are endorsing! This is going on a daily basis. If this is not a dizzy or fuzzy world of make belief then one wants to know what the circus is about. The younger generation can make a difference if they take their eyes and ears of the mobile and other digital devices for a moment to reflect on what is going on. In the meantime the hapless consumer wonders as to what he can do to make this world a better place to live!.*

**Keywords**— *TV Commercials and the din and noise of advertisements, the hapless consumer, VIPs endorsing ridiculous advertisement claims. Fuzziness, Advertising in English, Semantic Realization.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising has overwhelmingly affected every part of our life as a main communicative channel of the Information Age. Advertising in English language began in the medieval age and started thriving from the 1920s. No matter what advertisement content is and what media is selected, language is indispensable for advertising. Fuzziness is difficult to define because of the nature of language itself. Fuzziness can probably be explained as an uncertainty of the borderline of the subject matter in question while fuzzy linguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies the intrinsic uncertainty or vagueness of the linguistic units in a language. Fuzziness is resorted to establish images of products or services and is quite common in advertising English language. Advertisers often employ fuzzy expressions to grab consumers' attention, realize persuasion function, and to avoid lawful and ethical responsibilities.

Advertisement is a complex process and involves a wide range of people like artists, painters, copywriters, etc. The aim of advertisements is to persuade the potential consumers to take purchasing action. Thus advertisements are seen as deliberately and consciously designed messages. Advertising language is the communicating medium of advertising and plays an important role. It can arouse the interests and emotions of the consumers in favor of the advertised products

or services. What's more, it can reflect the attitudes the consumers and social values of the society. The language of advertising is used by copywriters establish good images for corporations or manufacturers by various kinds of language signs and symbols, with the hope to build an ideal atmosphere, to gain consumers' attention, to make them believe, and eventually to persuade them buy. But, the most important functions of advertisement, informing and persuading, always give rise to the question if trust and co-operation between the advertisers and the consumers are existing, limited or lacking.

Advertisers are often concerned about the way advertising language serves the function of advertisement effectiveness without causing the consumers' repulsion, resistance and ultimate rejection. In order to realize the persuasive function of advertisements, advertisers may employ various attention seeking techniques that make the consumers accept the information that the advertisers convey. Advertising language can be evaluated from a variety of angles and perspectives. This article mainly concentrates on fuzziness in advertising English, attempting to bring out the role fuzziness plays in advertising English and hoping that it will stimulate future research on fuzziness. To some extent, advertising is more like an art than a promotional strategy. Many copywriters turn to the choice of fuzziness to contribute to the aesthetic effect of advertising language. It is believed that fuzziness is extensively used in advertising English as an important strategy to persuade a customer for action. Since many advertisements are long, customers tend to consider slogans or headlines only of some commercial advertisements into consideration before taking any further action. Regarding this, we will explore its frequency, features and functions in advertising in practice. However it is not clear whether Consumers and advertisement viewers are appreciative of or reject these techniques. The growing number of such advertisements has prompted the author to research about the same and create more consumer awareness.

## II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this research paper have already been to some extent clarified. While Advertisements, particularly in the TV and internet and digital media have been proliferating, concerns have been raised on the fuzzy nature of the text and claims. The present research paper has been specifically dedicated to research the impact of fuzzy advertisements. While the advertisement claims have been somewhat fishy, the question is whether they are within the ambit of legal fairness. The Consumers need to be more educated and informed of

these developments. With these broad objectives in mind the following specific objectives have been identified for this paper:

1. A brief review of contemporary advertisements and their impact.
2. Trace the growth and effect of TV and digital Advertisements
3. A critical review of text and clarity of understanding
4. Consumer awareness and acceptance of fuzziness.
5. A futuristic projection and healthy action strategies.

As we have seen in many cases the reversal of events in their chosen growth paths is difficult. Growth is always a way of life and we need to assure as humans in this planet that such growth is healthy for the future generations. Future generations accept their own ways of doing things and the present generation has only a responsibility to see that this is done conscientiously and whole heartedly. The present generation cannot impose their views on the future but can only guide them from their experiences in life! The regulatory bodies like the Advertising Councils etc. are perhaps clueless because the whole thing is legally fuzzy!

### III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At the end of World War II the Allied Powers sent a message to the Japanese demanding surrender. The Japanese responded with the word mokusatsu, which translates as either "to ignore" or "to withhold comment". The Japanese meant that they wished to withhold comment, to discuss and then decide. The Allies translated mokusatsu as the Japanese deciding to ignore the demand for surrender. The Allies therefore ended the war by dropping the bomb and transforming the world we live in forever. The effect that words can have is of incredible proportion: to inform, persuade, hurt or ease pain, end war or start one, kill thousands or even millions of people. They can get your point across, or destroy any hope of your ideas ever being understood. A major element of advertising is the words, which ones to use and in what order. The following is a discussion of words and how to use them to the greatest effect in advertising.

We see that the frequency of the online ads and the time for viewing these ads reflect the amount of users and their consideration towards online advertisement. The interest and integration of users towards online advertisement is also seen during research. To determine the viewership of ads, fuzzy classification technique has been used and it is found to be an effective method to find users with similar interest for online advertisements. Once the fuzzy classifications of the user are achieved it would be easy to facilitate the online marketing by posting the ads by seeing the interest of the users and so the success rate for the sales could increase.

Fuzzy logic is an approach to computing based on "degrees of truth" rather than the actual reality. The idea of fuzzy logic was first advanced by Dr. Lotfi Zadeh of the University of California at Berkeley in the 1960s. Fuzzy logic includes 0 and 1 as extreme cases of degrees of truth (or "the state of matters" or "fact") but also includes the various states

of truth in between so that, for example, the result of a comparison between two things could be not "fat" or "thin" but ".38 degree of fatness." 'Fuzzy logic seems closer to the way our brains work. We aggregate data and form a number of partial truths further into higher truths which in turn, when certain thresholds are exceeded, cause certain further results such as motor reaction'. Fuzzy logic is essential to the development of human-like capabilities for Artificial Intelligence: the representation of generalized human cognitive abilities in software so that, when faced with an unfamiliar task, the AI system could find a solution.

Fuzzy logic is used for surveys through mobile and hand held devices. The use of mobile and other mobile based internet users is on the increase as is indicated by the Exhibit1.

### Future estimate of Mobile Internet Users

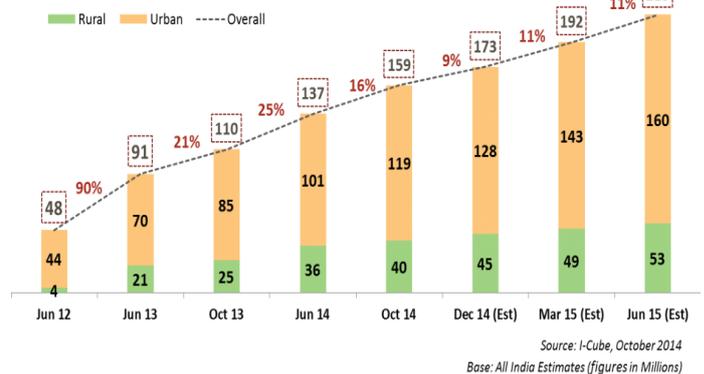


Exhibit 1: Shows how the number of internet users is increasing rapidly in India.

Fuzzy logic is a technique for representing and manipulating uncertain information. In the more traditional propositional logic, each fact or proposition, such as 'it will rain tomorrow,' must be either true or false. Yet much of the information that people use about the world involves some degree of uncertainty. The important distinction between probabilistic information and fuzzy logic is that there is no uncertainty about the age of the 'PERSON' but rather about the degree to which he matches the category 'young.' Many terms, such as 'tall,' 'rich,' 'famous' or 'dark,' are valid only to a certain degree when applied to a particular individual or situation of comparison. Fuzzy logic tries to measure that degree of truth and to allow computers to manipulate such information. Despite its commercial success, fuzzy logic remains a controversial idea within the artificial-intelligence community. Many researchers question the consistency and validity of the methods used to 'reason' with fuzzy logic.

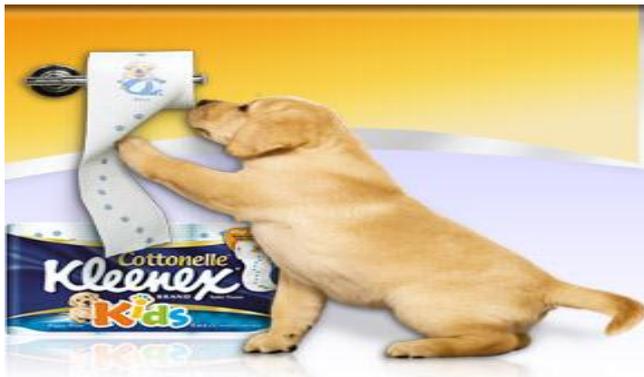


Exhibit 2: Advertisement for Kleenex Soft tissues – Suggesting as soft as the puppy skin

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in fuzzy logic, both in industry and academia. Current applications include modeling, evaluation, optimization, decision making, control, diagnosis and information. In particular, fuzzy logic is best suited for fields such as control-systems. For instance, fuzzy logic has been applied in areas like breakdown prediction of nuclear reactors in Europe, earthquake forecasting in China, and subway control in Japan. One prominent application of fuzzy logic is in the anti-lock braking system found in many modern automobiles. The control rules that describe an anti-lock braking system may consist of parameters such as the car's speed, the brake pressure, the brake temperature, the interval between applications of the brakes and the angle of the car's lateral motion to its forward motion. The range of values of these parameters is all continuous, open to interpretation by a design engineer.

The aim of advertising is to draw attention to something, as derived from the Latin *advert ere*, to turn towards. In order to buy and sell something, we needed a currency a commonly accepted medium of exchange. Attention is a complex and analogue aspect of consciousness which makes it a small part of the most complex system in the known universe and this complex, fundamentally analogue, nature of attention, which has many different facets, is converted into the simple, inherently binary, impression. In this digital age, the chain of substitutions and rounding errors is extended into the seemingly unlimited and uncertain number of impressions served. People start thinking of the numbers as real, because we can measure every unit served from a server to a browser. Here is where it all gets even messier. Digital display advertising is increasingly sold and allocated programmatically. This means that algorithms are used to bid for and then serve advertising to websites in fractions of seconds via blind auctions across vast networks of publishers and sites. Additional software is needed to report on how this happens because it is very big data indeed.

Understanding what makes for this gap between intention and action is one of the most fertile areas for marketers—and for researchers in a number of fields. Israeli-American psychologist Daniel Kahneman, winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize for Economics, brought us the best-selling book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* in which he sheds light on the ways in which people make choices—most often, automatically and

not necessarily in line with their best intentions. In *The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life* celebrated evolutionary biologist Robert Trivers probes people's tendency to think that they're better looking, smarter, more competent, and more honest than they really are. This leads people to say and believe they are doing something (for example, cutting back on the doughnuts) even when observable evidence says otherwise. *The digital world is such a make belief arena where analogous nature of things is digitalized into uniform patterns.*

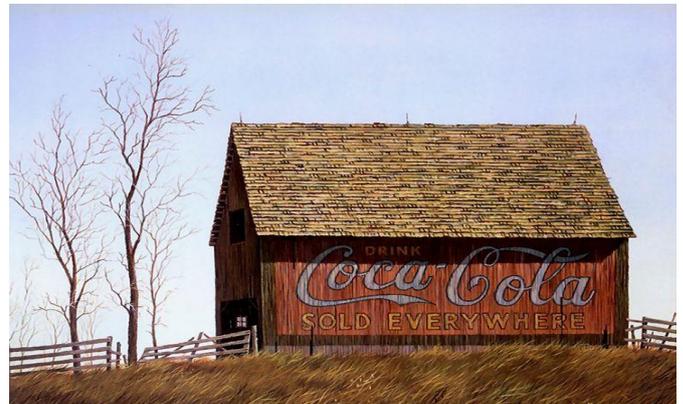


Exhibit 3: Coca-Cola Advertisement attracting customers, Who have a soft corner and love for barns

An alternative approach to the management of uncertainty is based on the use of fuzzy logic, which is the logic underlying approximate or, equivalent, fuzzy reasoning. A feature of fuzzy logic which is of particular importance to the management of uncertainty in expert systems is that it provides a systematic framework for dealing with fuzzy quantifiers, e.g., *most, many, few, not very many, almost all, infrequently, about 0.8*, etc. *In this way, fuzzy logic subsumes both predicate logic and probability theory, and makes it possible to deal with different types of uncertainty within a single conceptual frame work.* In fuzzy logic, the deduction of a conclusion from a set of premises is reduced, in general, to the solution of a nonlinear program through the application of projection and extension principles. As the name suggests fuzzy logic is used to project an image of approximate value rather than the real value!



Exhibit 4: Ha-ha here comes the brand that unites everyone: Perhaps IPL was one of their greatest brand promotion initiatives

As we have seen earlier fuzzy logic is being used by advertisers more and more. If one looks at the Indian Premier League advertisement for Kingfisher beer it is clear that the claim is true to some extent as the teams come together by virtue of match fixtures. Kingfisher is the promoter company of one of the Bangalore based teams. So, their claim as ‘good times’ partner cannot be entirely refuted, but it is still Fizzy! They may not come together to drink the kingfisher beer! (How interesting is advertising fuzziness!) – But do we as common consumers and watchers of advertisements think about it?

With broadcast Television (TV) going digital, the number of channels and the programs aired has increased tremendously. Millions of audiences of various categories such as adults, children, youth and families watch these programs. Advertisements (ads) aired during these programs are targeted to reach these varied audiences and are the main revenue earners for TV broadcasters. While TV broadcasters have the task of scheduling hundreds of ads during the various ad breaks of programs, it is important that the ads shown during any ad break have a good impact on the viewers. A fuzzy categorical data clustering technique is then applied on the categorized data for grouping the best suited ads for a set of pre-defined program classes such as *News, Sports, and Cartoons* etc. Since the same ad can be recommended to more than one program depending upon multiple parameters, fuzzy clustering acts as a well suited (and perhaps also the best suited) technique for ad recommendation. The relative fuzzy score called “degree of membership” calculated for each ad is an indicator of the number of program clusters to which the given ad belongs to. The clustered ads are then scheduled using an algorithm that takes into consideration parameters such as program popularity, program timing and available ad slots, to provide the best possible package for sponsors to show their ads. The scheduled set of ads if played randomly during an ad break might make viewers (sponsors) unhappy, for instance, when similar (competing) product ads get played consecutively. Hence, the system employs sequencing algorithm that takes into account the pre- and post-ad sequences in order to better order the scheduled set of ads in any ad break.

In India, the Code for Self-Regulation of Advertising established by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is applicable on Television Commercials (TVCs). If consumers see an advertisement which they consider misleading or offensive, they can write to ASCI. As per the provisions under The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995, and the Policy Guidelines for Up-linking of Television Channels from India (first introduced in 2000), give the government the power to block the transmission and re-transmission of any channel in the country. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has clear guidelines for TV advertising in India. The Indian television channels are widely segmented through Broadcast television, Cable television, Satellite television, Internet Protocol television. The Advertising Standards Council of India has defined the principles and guidelines for individuals, corporate bodies and associations engaged in or otherwise concerned with the

practice of advertising for a medium such as television. TV advertising means conveying a message, typically to market a product or service to consumers who will be interested. TV advertising allows you to show and tell a wide audience about your business, and benefits of product or service. It allows you to actually demonstrate the benefits of such Product ownership. Television advertising advantages are TV reaches a much larger audience than local newspapers and radio stations, and it does so in a relatively short period of time. It reaches viewers when they’re the most attentive. It allows you to convey your message with sight, sound, and motion, which can give your business, product, or service instant credibility. It gives you an opportunity to be creative and attach a personality to your business, which can be particularly effective for small businesses that rely on repeat customers.

Television advertising involves two main tasks: creating a television advertisement that meets broadcast standards and then, placing the advertisement on television via a targeted air time media buying that reaches the desired customer. While preparing such advertisement text and content Fuzziness is made use of to make it more attractive and credible. Exhibit 5 is an example of Fuzziness in advertisements (How whisky made a vocal person quiet – a doubtful proposition but believable!)

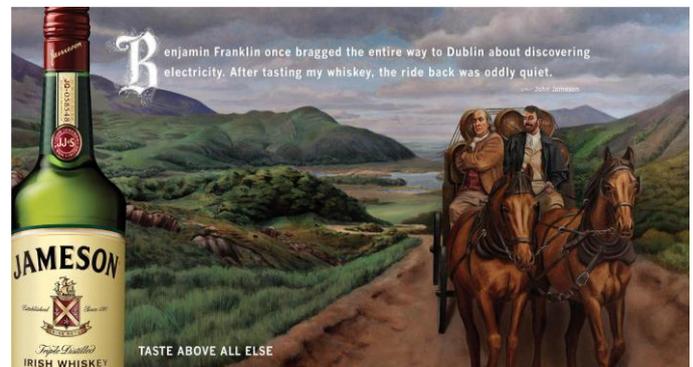


Exhibit 5: Benjamin Franklin once bragged the entire way to Dublin about discovering electricity. After tasting my whiskey, the ride back was oddly quiet — John Jameson

#### IV. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Through analysis of fuzziness in advertisements, the author has found the reasons for the extensive deployment of fuzziness in advertising---being attractive, purposeful and brief. The choice of fuzziness to establish images of products or services is quite common in advertising in English language. Advertisers often employ fuzzy expressions to grab consumers’ attention, realize persuasion function and avoid lawful and ethical responsibilities. The author has attempted to draw attention to the application of fuzziness in advertising and equip people with better understanding of it to avoid mistakes in interpreting and produce more successful advertisement.

TV and the digital media Advertisements have grown and are still growing exponentially. The change in the demographic composition of society and the need to work for both the husband and wife couples have made severe

constraints on the consumer time for evaluating the veracity of Advertisement claims and utility. This situation has been capitalized by Advertisers and the copy writers. The average consumer has no time to understand the fine print or the pun and fuzziness in advertisement content and intentions. But somehow relies on the content!

Text and clarity of Advertisements are very important since text has the responsibility to convey the right message and impressions about the product and company. In the various examples that have been used for illustration, particularly the five Exhibits in the paper, the clarity of the message is in no doubt. But if you look at Exhibit 4, you can have a doubt as to whether all the cricketers from the various franchises use the Kingfisher brand of beer. It is a clear example of the fuzzy advertisements of the day. They are together in supporting IPL though different franchises; but the moot question is whether all of them use beer or the Kingfisher brand; perhaps they are endorsing for a consideration- which we do not know and will remain fuzzy!

Consumer awareness of fuzziness in advertisements is not in question- unless they are too dumb to believe! The mute question is whether they use the God given discretion and brain power to separate the grain from the chaff! Expressions such as beautiful, fantastic, great and so on advertisement text have contextual meaning. Like the IPL advertisement cited in example 4, as individual consumer one may not be able to take action but collectively in consumer forums such issues need to be raised to prevent advertisers and sponsoring companies going overboard.

Futuristic strategies and action plans will need to consider evaluation of advertisement claims and legal remedies for false claims.

## V. RECOMMENDATION

Advertisements are here to stay and media like TV and mobile and other hand held devices are going to proliferate further. Consumers need to be educated (particularly the gullible ones without a proper education) and it is the duty of the knowledgeable consumer to protect the interest of others who are less fortunate to have a higher education or awareness of things. As the competition increases the marketing companies and advertisers will exploit all the loop holes in consumer education and understanding; the responsibility for educating gullible consumers rests with us.

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