



Faculty of Language Studies and Communication Studies

**PORTRAYAL OF CHINESE CULTURE IN PETRONAS TELEVISION
ADVERTISEMENT: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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**PORTRAYAL OF CHINESE CULTURE IN PETRONAS TELEVISION
ADVERTISEMENT: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

by

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This final year project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to analyse Petronas Chinese New Year advertisement from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Fairclough 3 Dimensional framework was used to analyze the advertisements in terms of linguistic features, aspects that influences the production and consumption of the advertisement as well as the Chinese culture elements in the advertisement. 20 Petronas Chinese New Year advertisements from the year 1996 until 2016 were chosen as the sample for this study. The linguistic features found in the advertisements were pronouns, metaphor, repetition, active and passive voice, simple sentences and colloquial expression and words. The themes that stand out most were unity among different races and filial piety. The themes and the background of the commercials help to reconstruct audience's beliefs and advocate the change in behavior in them. The Chinese customs that appeared the most was reunion dinner while chopsticks and lion dance appeared only once in the respected commercials. These customs that were highlighted in the commercial were significant to the Chinese as it acted as a reminder of their Chinese identities.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis iklan Tahun Baru Cina Petronas dari perspektif analisis wacana kritis. Kerangka teori 3 Dimensi Fairclough digunakan untuk menganalisis iklan dari segi ciri-ciri linguistik, aspek yang mempengaruhi pengeluaran dan penggunaan iklan dan juga unsur-unsur budaya Cina dalam iklan. 20 iklan Petronas Tahun Baru Cina dari tahun 1996 sehingga 2016 telah dipilih sebagai sampel untuk kajian ini. Ciri-ciri linguistik yang terdapat dalam iklan adalah kata ganti nama, metafora, pengulangan, suara aktif dan pasif, ayat yang mudah dan ungkapan seharian. Tema yang paling menonjol ialah perpaduan antara kaum dan ketaatan kepada ibu bapa. Tema dan latar belakang iklan membantu untuk merekonstruksi kepercayaan penonton dan menyokong perubahan dalam tingkah laku mereka. Adat Cina yang paling menonjol adalah acara makan besar manakala *chopstick* dan tarian singa muncul hanya sekali dalam iklan yang dikaji. Adat yang diketengahkan dalam iklan adalah penting kepada orang Cina kerana ia bertindak sebagai peringatan bagi identiti mereka.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CNY	Chinese New Year
TV	Television
3D	3 Dimensional framework
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter is a discussion about the background, aims and objectives of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research Problem

In the recent years, the spread of globalization and marketing had prompted the increasing numbers of different advertising genres from print advertisements to television commercials (Vaičėnienė, 2006). Advertising is the most ideal approach to reach out to the clients. An array of useful products and brands that was available in the market can be made known to the public with the help of advertising. Advertising is for all regardless of everything. Ads in mass media are intriguing and imaginative in this universe of globalization (Kannan & Tyagi, 2013). Advertisements can be found around us and is a form of discourse. There are product and public service advertising, where product advertising helps the promotion of products and service, while public service advertising helps to spread awareness and value. However, product advertisements do play the same role as well as public service advertising.

When individuals want to expand their market to another nation, the advertisers must be familiar with different ecological contrasts that they may need to address, for example, media limitations and social and legal factors (Waller, 2000). Domestic market is distinguished from international markets by environmental factors and it should be incorporated into the product's marketing strategy (Cateora, 1990). Legal or politic, cultural and social factors are included into the environmental factors (Ricks, 1983; Root, 1987; Terpstra, 1987). Malaysia is known to be a multilingual and a multicultural society inherited with rich cultural heritage. Besides Chinese and

Indians, local Malays are the main ethnic in Malaysia. The ethnicities in Malaysia still hold on to their traditions, religions and lifestyles (Cultural Guide, 2015). Main festivals like Hari Raya, Chinese New Year and Deepavali are grandly celebrated every year by the whole nation. In Malaysia, families have a tendency to associate inside their own ethnic group, as part of holding their individual traditions and ways of life (Cultural Guide, 2015). Family is depicted as a crucial entity of a social structure. Therefore, there is a great accentuation on unity, loyalty and respects for the elderly. Home and family is the only place where an individual can be ensured both emotional and financial support. Regardless of different ethnics, we still share the common values as Malaysians. These are the environmental factors that need to be taken into consideration before coming up with advertisements.

The fact that language has the power to influence and manipulate an individual's mind is true when it comes to the advertising industry (Kannan & Tyagi, 2013). The selection of language choice is crucially important as it tends to deliver a message across effectively towards the audience in order to manipulate them. Although graphic and images are considered to have more impact on the consumers however it was language that assist consumers in remembering it (Kannan & Tyagi, 2013).

Chinese New Year (CNY)

Malaysia is known to be a multiracial country where there are three main races namely, Malay, Chinese and Indian besides the indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak. Each of these races has their own festival celebration. Chinese New Year (CNY) is one of the most important festivals and has been widely celebrated by the Chinese. CNY is celebrated according to the lunar calendar

instead of a Gregorian calendar (Ministry of Tourism & Culture, 2016). The festival is celebrated “on the first day of the first month in the Chinese lunar calendar and lasts until the Yuen Xiao celebration which is also known as Chap Goh Meh in the Hokkien dialect” (Goh, 2015, p. 137). Furthermore, it is celebrated for 15 consecutive days where visiting of friends and family can be done during the period of time. The Chinese still appended immense significance and festivity of CNY. The reunion dinner for every family during CNY eve is the accentuation of this festival as this is the time where family members gather no matter from near or far (Ng, 2008).

Petronas

PETRONAS is a short abbreviation of *Petroleum Nasional Berhad*. The company is established in 1974 and is wholly owned by the government and Tengku Razeleigh Hamzah was the first head of the company (Mehden & Troner, 2007). Petronas is Malaysia's wholly incorporated oil and gas multinational situated among the biggest organizations as according to FORTUNE Worldwide 500®. In order to achieve society's developing needs, Petronas investigate, create and convey vitality as the sole caretaker for Malaysia's national oil and gas assets (Petronas, n.d.). There are two main sectors in the company. The first is the upstream sector where it engages locally and globally on the exploration, development, production of oil and gas assets. The second is the downstream sector includes refinery of oil, petroleum refined products marketing and trading (Petronas, n.d.). It also acts as a key in elevating the worth of Malaysia's oil and gas assets through their incorporated operations.

For two decades PETRONAS has been launching many Chinese New Year commercials with different titles but with the same intentions which is to honor traditions and values, appreciate our common values as Malaysian and to stay united even though we came from different cultural backgrounds. Besides that, for two decades, Petronas' festive communications have welcomed Malaysians to stay united and anchored in common values, customs and culture, and to ponder what is vital to unite Malaysians said by Petronas Senior General Manager of Group Strategic Communications, Zahariah Abdul Rahman (Petronas, 2015, 2016).

The researcher will be looking at Petronas Chinese New Year television commercial because Petronas would release television commercials according to festive season celebrated in Malaysia. Petronas uses festive TV commercials to remind the audience of their culture identity and their roots. Hence, the advertisers used this advantage to tap into the audience's thoughts by highlighting the Chinese culture during CNY is a good strategy to persuade the viewers as they remind them of their roots.

1.2 Statement of Problems

The nature of advertisements during festive season is to share happiness and meanings to the lives of Malaysians who share the common values. Here is the question do viewers really perceived the intended message of the ads or do they simply enjoy ads as they are? Various studies have been done taking concrete samples more often from printed advertisements of various products and non-products (services, information and etc.) to investigate the power, ideology, and identity (Abid, Ahmad, Ahmad, Batool & Ijaz, 2015). It can be beauty products (Arumugum, Kaur and Yunus,

2013) and bank advertisement (Kalkhajeh & Tahmasbi, 2013). This study aims to investigate the ideology in Petronas Chinese New Year television commercial. Television commercials were considered as one of the methods when it comes to advertising as being one of the significant source of marketing in the present world because of their widespread of scope through the media. In spite of the fact that there were different sorts of advertisements including both printed and electronic media, yet because of the television commercial's entrance to mass viewers, these commercials receive wide receptions.

Giant corporations like Petronas, TM, Tenaga and others had incorporated local touch into their television commercials when greeting their clients who came from different ethnic backgrounds. In order to comprehend the implementation and feasibility of Malaysia's multicultural society, comprehension of ethnicity was considered important (Abraham, 1999).

Although Malaysian is diverse in ethnicity and language, Malaysians have come to grasp the idea of the 'open house', which is apparent during the time when the different races celebrate their important celebrations (Lean, 2011). This phenomenon can be experienced whenever the festive season is near and on the day of the festive itself there will be public holidays.

According to Lean (2011), the inspirations to reach out to customers in accord with the ethnic group to which they belong during their respective festival had been adopted by numerous companies and corporation. It was believed that, through this way, both their customers and potential customers may be attracted towards their company and to be more open to their product or service they were offering.

Greeting their clients amid the festive season can likewise be seen as a type of social obligation by the organization to boost ties among the diverse ethnic gatherings in Malaysia. As clients turn out to be progressively demanding, both as far as cost and quality, and in addition to the firm's social obligation (Cunningham, 1997; Ptacek & Salazar, 1997; Sen & Morwitz, 1996). Giant corporation particularly need to demonstrate that they do consider the society other than dealing with the benefits of the organization.

The purpose of producing a television commercial was to achieve “communication goal or to transmit messages to target audiences” (Chen & Wang, 2006, p. 43) as cited in Lean (2011). Some TV commercials that had touched the hearts of Malaysian were sponsored by Petronas and produced by the late Yasmin Ahmad. In the late Yasmin Ahmad’s work, ‘colour blindness and racial unity’ (Pharmy, Tan & Tan, 2009) were themes that were constantly used in producing her work. Petronas was approached by Yasmin in 1995 “to propose a new concept of communicating their messages in line with their values, beliefs and philosophy as a company” (Yoga 2009: T23) as cited in Lean (2011). In this study, the researcher will focus on the values of Chinese New Year that were portrayed in the commercials.

Arumugam, Kaul & Yunus (2013) points out that advertiser play with the usage of language as a marketing strategy to manipulate and influence consumers towards their products. They also used Fairclough’s 3D model to analyze the collected data to investigate how beauty product advertisement as a platform for the ideology to be produced and reproduced. In addition, language is seen as a device to convince, influence, have power over on their minds, thus advertising language is utilized to manipulate minds of an individual.

In Esmae'li and Vahid's (2012) research, they studied on product/ non-product print advertisements where they analyzed visual and text using Fairclough's 3 Dimensional framework (3D framework) and Kress and van leeuwen's grammar of visual design to study the objective and technique used by consumer product company to catch the attention of customers and vend more of their products. The samples used contained more visuals with less text to investigate the ideology behind the visual and how the message is being relayed through those images.

There were many researchers done on print advertisements on beauty products, food and beverage products, billboards, posters and services using CDA (Vahid & Esmae'li's, 2012; Arumugam, Kaul & Yunus, 2013), however, little research was done using PETRONAS Chinese New Year TV commercials. The main purpose of this research was to investigate how the advertisers (PETRONAS) instill ideology towards the audiences. PETRONAS is a government entity that is taking a cultural approach by releasing cultural-related television commercials, and it was seen as an act of giving back to the society by reminding us of the cultural and traditional values that were inherited by the people of this nation.

1.3 Aim of study

This present study attempts to analyze Petronas Chinese New Year advertisements from the perspectives of critical discourse analysis.

1.4 Objectives of Study

The study was based on finding answers to the following research objective

- a. To identify the linguistics features in the advertisements
- b. To determine aspects that influence the production and consumption of the advertisement
- c. To identify Chinese customs portrayed in the advertisement

1.5 Operational Definition

1.5.1 Advertisement

According to Goddard (1998, p. 6) “At the root of the word ‘advertisement’ is the Latin word ‘advertere’, meaning ‘to turn towards’”. In a general understanding, advertising was not just to promote or influence the consumers to buy certain products of companies but they “also amuse, inform, misinform, worry, warn, ... though it may be argued that these functions were all in the service of the main function” (Cook 1992, p. 5). For example, a religious poster might not sell anything in a sense of products, however it is the idea, or ideology they were trying to sell or imply towards the audience (Goddard, 1998).

1.5.2. What is discourse?

According to Cook (1992, p. 2), discourse is text and setting together “interfacing in a way which is seen as significant and brought together by the participants (which are part of the setting and observers of it)”. Besides that, discourse was also known as a communicative event (Jaworska,

2011). Karim, Mahmood, Musa, & Onn (2008), stated that discourse is a language unit which is above the sentence, they also added that:

Discourse can consist of a sentence, a paragraph, subsection, dialogue, chapters, books, book series, and so on, which shows the relationship and the development of the mind. In a discourse, the relationship between language units which are involved in to express unified whole. A discourse, whether in verbal or written form, is uttered to deliver a piece of information about a topic. (Karim et. al, 2008, p. 523)

1.5.3. Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

“Discourse analysis studies written discourse and speech that occurs naturally, the usage of language in social settings and language beyond sentence or clause” (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1). While discourse analysis studies both written and spoken discourse in the surface, critical discourse analysis is a much more in depth study of those discourses.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) originates from a critical theory of language which sees the utilization of language as a type of social practice. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practice is tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served. It is the questions pertaining to interests - How is the text being positioned? Whose interests are served by this positioning? Whose interests are negated? What are the consequences of this positioning? - That relates discourse to relations of power. Where analysis seeks to

understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power, it is called critical discourse analysis. (Janks, 1997, p. 329)

Fairclough trust that the foundation of his model was that language is a part of social life (Rahimi & Riasati, 2011). According to Fairclough (1995, p. 57), CDA concentrates on the connection between three interrelated occasions “namely *text*, *discourse practice* and *sociocultural practice*”. “Text” is either composed of written or spoken discourse, while discourse practice is the way that “text” is being created and received by addressees. Sociocultural practices refers to the social and cultural going-on where the communicative event is part of” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 62).

1.6 Significance of Study

This research of studying PETRONAS festival advertisement is of immense importance in a country like Malaysia where diverse cultures can be found due to the cultural diversity. As Malaysia is known as a multiracial and multicultural country, the need of studying the text of the advertisements will enhance and uphold the understanding of Chinese culture in Malaysia. This research is also significant as it also focused on how the advertisers portray Chinese culture with the use of text and visuals in the advertisements. It also signifies the efforts of Malaysian trying to uphold their roots via advertisements.

1.7 Scope of Study

This study was limited to only Petronas Chinese New Year television commercial. There will be 20 Chinese New Year videos taken from the official youtube page of Petronas within the period of the year 1996 till 2016, but there were 2 years that PETRONAS did not produce commercial which are the year 1998, and 2004. This research studies the text as well as the visuals of the videos without looking at other aspects such as the position of the visual, intonation and etc. as the researcher needed the visual to aid in the analysis of text