A Critical Discourse Analysis of Fair & Lovely's Rebranding: Beauty Ideas and Ideological Shifts Through Fairclough's Model

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Abstract:
The study is an in-depth and critical analysis of the rebranding of Fair & Lovely to Glow & Lovely through the lens of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. The authors argue that the rebranding is a discursive move that off-resonates with localized cultural pressures taking form around colourism, gender stereotypes, and beauty fads. The paper employs a qualitative approach to investigate the stages of change in the ad language and visual appearance of the promotions made before and after the revamp of the logo. The authors collected the data from YouTube videos and a small focus group. The results show that although the brand has adopted more inclusive language, the underlying ideology is still fairness as an aspirational ideal. This paper is an illustrative case of a very difficult and bumpy road from marketing to authentic social change in the beauty industry.

Key words: CDA, Fair & Lovely, Glow & Lovely, Colourism, Rebranding, Media Representation, Beauty Ideas, Ideological Shift.

Introduction:
Glow & Lovely (previously Fair & Lovely) represents a major milestone in the South Asian skincare industry. It has been the case that for a very long period, Fair & Lovely was advertised as a remedy for the "perfect" skin colour, which at times went along with the idea of fairness as the only acceptable beauty standard. The brand was at the receiving end of some criticism from people who accused it of promoting colourism and of setting unrealistic beauty standards. The brand took the voices of the critics seriously and, among global movements for racial equality, Unilever changed the name of its product to Glow & Lovely, thus changing the main idea from fairness to skin radiance. The research aims to discover not only the reasons for the rebranding, public reaction to it, and, importantly, whether this change reveals the true face of the brand, its commitment to inclusivity, or is just a clever marketing ploy to get away with less criticism.

Research problem:
This study examines whether the rebranding of "Fair & Lovely" to "Glow & Lovely" is just a superficial strategic move or an authentic ideological change. It tries to find out how the new step has impacted the minds of consumers about the concepts of beauty, character, and diversity in media conversation.

Research Question and Objectives:

How does the rebranding of Fair & Lovely to Glow & Lovely represent or deconstruct the prevalent language about beauty, colourism, and gender stereotypes in the marketing industry?
This study aims to:

1. To examine changes in the advertising before and after Fair & Lovely's rebranding.
2. To investigate how consumers perceive Glow & Lovely and its idea of beauty.
3. To determine if the rebranding is an authentic ideological transformation or merely a marketing strategy.

Research Methodology:
The research is using a qualitative method, which is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Language is regarded as a principal instrument by which social changes and power relations are created and maintained. In this context, advertisements are seen as media discourse that have the power not only to mirror but also to create new societal ideologies of beauty, gender, and identity.

Data Collection: The main data set includes video advertisements of Fair & Lovely and Glow & Lovely, taken from the brand's official YouTube channel. The authors opted for purposive sampling and came up with six ads in total (three aired before and three after the rebranding). Furthermore, a focus group of 8–10 participants (both male and female) was conducted to collect public perceptions of the rebranding.

Advertising was analyzed using the Fairclough's CDA model in three ways: Textual analysis (linguistic choices, tone, taglines), Discursive practice (how the ads are produced and interpreted), and Social practice (wider cultural and ideological implications). To get the major perspectives and attitudes to the ideological shift of the brand, thematic coding was done on the participants' responses to the focus group questions.

Literature Review:
The media's influence on how people perceive beauty standards and their self-image is known to have been extensively documented in various disciplines.

Crasta (2020) surveys the intermediary roles between fairness cream ads and the loss of the concept of the lighter skin colour as an aspirational ideal. That study is the result of amplifying the media wrap that lays out a proposition that success and social approval are only possible when one has a good skin tone. These stories are usually the ones that are responsible for the exclusion of individuals with darker skin tones; thus, these stories are the ones that allow the advent of movements such as "Dark is Beautiful", which are the voices of self-acceptance and call for the deconstruction of colourist ideologies.

Sharma and Arya (2021) reiterate the concern raised by Crasta regarding how human psychological reactions are influenced by beauty product advertisements targeted at women. The results of their survey reveal that most women (77.6%) are unable to handle the emotional stress caused by unrealistic beauty portrayals, and that the beauty marketing is one of the contributors to the negative body image of these women. They advocate for a more inclusive platform, especially when it comes to the digital space that has a significant influence on public opinion at the global level.

In the same vein, **Gundala and Chavali (2012)** highlight that the marketing of fairness creams is a place where the morality of the industry is questioned, mainly because of the use of fear messages. The result of the empirical survey that the authors carried out shows that the main point of this issue

is that ads implicitly suggest that the fair-skinned are the ones who are the most wanted figures in the labour market, as well as in the social circle. Thus, these ads continue to promote racial and gender discrimination.

Apart from this, Das (2015) also points out that the fairness products market is nothing to him, the increasing consumers of those products who are not necessarily only of one gender, but both males and females and are especially from the rural areas. The issue of product choice, as he sees it.
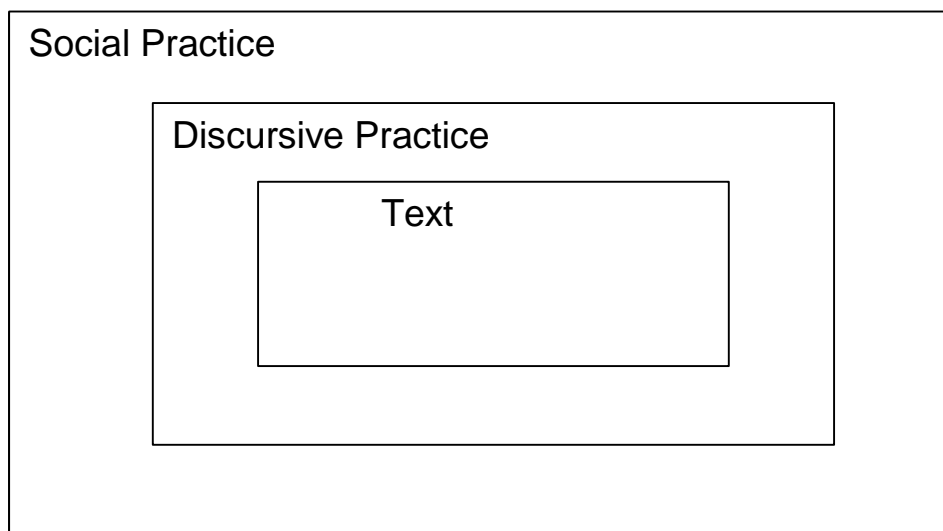
The studies are interconnected by the common ideological leitmotif in fairness cream advertisements: a lighter complexion is assumed to be of higher value, more fashionable, and winning in the market. On the other hand, the efforts of rebranding that took place recently, such as Fair & Lovely changing its name to Glow & Lovely, seemed to be aimed at severing the ties of the product with its colourist history. Are these endeavours bringing a change, or just cunning rebranding tricks? Are these still the main issues to be solved, and does this research go into that matter by applying Fairclough's CDA framework?

Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis:
Norman Fairclough is widely acknowledged as an individual who has significantly transformed the domain of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). His study highlights language as not just a means of communication but also a force that shapes social realities, which are subsequently either reinforced or transformed. In his book (1989), Fairclough defines CDA as the "critical study of language," to reveal the ideologies hidden in discourse and to see how these become the basis of either the continuation or the challenge of power relationships in society.

Fairclough's model follows a three-dimensional framework for analysis, which includes:

1. **Textual Analysis (Micro-level):** Focuses on the selected linguistic features of the text, such as vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, the use of metaphors, and the application of rhetorical strategies.

2. **Discursive Practice (Meso-level):** Studies the methods that a text uses to be created, circulated, and understood. It is also very important to consider the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity while doing this.

3. **Social Practice (Macro-level):** Probes the socio-cultural and ideological context on a large scale, in which the discourse is still only a part; hence, it can reveal how discourse is interrelated with the social structures and power.

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Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

The model helps scholars to link language analysis with broader societal issues like gender, race, and ideology. In this research, Fairclough's CDA approach is employed to investigate how beauty ads echo and carry forward dominant memes of skin tone, beauty, and gender identity, especially comparing the old brand name Fair & Lovely with the new one, Glow & Lovely.

Data Analysis:
The ads are analyzed using the Fair & Lovely 3D model. The analysis is used to elucidate the relationship between discursive practices and social practices and to understand how advertisements manipulate consumers.

Advertisement #1 (Pre-Rebranding – Fair & Lovely)
https://youtu.be/LDlj8CnxWrw?feature=shared
Brilliant, tum main dancer aur tum side se parda
itna talent ho K bhi pardy K peechay sai
amavas sa chehra Jo hai
Ye lo special tees din wali tube, Roz Igao phir dekho chand waha yan yaha
Fair & Lovely ki nae tees din wali tube roz Igao aur pao chand jesa nikhar
ujla ujla roop he Tera chand bhi Sharma jaye
In this ad, the tagline "chand jesa nikhar" (glow like the moon) was the main theme people are used to seeing for a period, and it was referring to the beauty of the lunar appearance.

Textual Level: The main language is related to the sun, the nature of the characters, and the change of the characters; the association of beauty with the words of light and the sky is thus implicitly put forward. The cream is represented as a means of solving one of the beauty problems - "moon-like" skin, thus positioning fair skin as too good to be true.

Discursive Practice: The ad is a mere repetition of a stereotypical story where dark-skinned women are portrayed as socially excluded (e.g., they are shown as being given the lesser role in the dance), until they are in the process of lightening their skin. The repeated call to "use it daily" not only promotes consumer dependency but also allows consumers to continue believing that they must be changed to be valuable.

Social Practice: The ad is a clear example of colourism that is very deeply ingrained in South Asian

society, where light skin is often associated with good things, such as talent and visibility. The ad does not appear to be challenging, but it can earn recognition and success.

Advertisement #2
 - va pahale se kitni fair ho gaee Idhar aana
meree fairness duganee
- donon ne ek he numbar se start kiya tha na phir tumara agy kaise cheeting kee kya cheeting to tumane kee
pura result chaahie to Fair & Lovely roz lagaanee pary gi tumharie tarah nahin kabhee kabhee
Fair & Lovely roz lagane se do guna zyada fairness
This advertisement has been created to publicize the idea of "dugni fairness" (double fairness). It used the method of a competitive dialogue between two women to prove the point that fairness is a measurable and desirable property.

• Textual Level. The catch phrase "Fair & Lovely roz lagayein, dugni fairness payein" (use Fair & Lovely daily, get double fairness) utters an imperative language and quantified outcomes ("dugni") to depict fairness both as the one that can be and the one that should be. The tone here is quite persuasive and informal; it is arguing, and at the same time, it is like a friend talking to you, thus the mood of the habitual product usage is set.

• Discursive Practice. The advertisement speech activity constructs the meaning of fairness in the sign of success and the winner in the competition. One character accuses the other of "cheating" by getting to fairness faster — thus, light skin is a competitive advantage. Such a narrative implies that it is not only the case that it is natural to compare oneself with others based on skin tone, but it also implies that being disciplined in the endeavour is rewarded.

• Social Practice. The ad of the same topic reiterates colourist ideas, which still exist, by showing that if you are fair, you have the key to the love of others and to being different. It reflects the wider South Asian societal norm that equates beauty—and by extension, worth—with lighter skin.

From Fair to Glow:
Unilever officially rebranded a skin cream called Fair & Lovely to Glow & Lovely in June 2020. This is in line with their commitment to be a company that supports racial equality and is representative of all races in the beauty industry globally. The move was symbolically timed with and was interpreted as riding on the back of the Black Lives Matter movement that was then at its peak in awareness, support, and activism.

The company also concluded that the word "Fair" in their brand was one of the factors that pushed colourist beauty norms, which thus made light skin the only beauty standard and caused success, attractiveness, and social mobility, among other things, to be associated with it. By revamping the product line, Unilever was giving a new name to the practice of skin lighting and along with that came a new focus on skin wellness and holistic beauty. The new name, Glow & Lovely, was a fresh take on radiance and confidence, instead of fairness.

This initiative was one of many in a wave of change among the beauty industry that is aimed at getting rid of the color-based hierarchies that have been there for a very long time, and the establishment of a more inclusive and diverse standard of beauty. However, it is still very much open to question if this change is the core ideological change or just a selling point in response to the market.

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Glow & Lovely Campaigns: Rebranding Effort
Advertisement #1

https://youtu.be/xRe-gUULy04?feature=shared

The "Glow Ko Na Roko" campaign with rapper Dee MC was a part of the rebranding effort of Glow & Lovely to drop the fairness narrative and go in? The direction of self-confidence and individuality, 2021, which the company repeated. The repeated line—"Mera glow, meri pehchaan Mere rang ka na socho Pure ho iraade, khudse yeh vaada Mere saath mein aap ho toh Saara desh bolega meri bhaasha Mere glow ko na roko."

(Translation: "My glow, my identity. Don't judge me by my colour. Let my intentions be pure; this is my promise to myself. If you're with me, the whole nation will speak my language. Don't stop my glow.") This initiative is intended to reshape beauty norms by emphasizing self-assurance and uniqueness instead of skin colour.

These ads showcase the brand's changing perspective on beauty, shifting from endorsing fairness to honoring individuality glow and confidence. Signals a switch in the lexicon from "fairness" to "glow," reflecting a change in the perception of beauty from the race of the skin to self-worth.

From a textual point of view, to begin with, the first-person voice and empowering vocabulary used are aimed at creating a personal relationship with the viewer and eliciting an emotional response. The discursive practice of this rebranding campaign is the idea of joining forces with a female rapper through rhythm and verse. Both new modes of communication are related to the younger, urban audience.

On the other hand, on a social level, the campaign remains the marketing of a beauty cream, which implies that empowerment is accessible through appearance management. The word "glow" is less explicit in terms of colour bias than "fairness," but it is still a sign of noticeable change, and it does not consider visual beauty standards. Thus, while the surface messaging is in line with progressive values, the underlying beauty ideology has only been marginally changed.

Advertisement #2 (Post-Rebranding – Glow & Lovely 2022)
This ad has a young girl with her face hidden under a dupatta walking into the house. In response to a friend's question, she explains that the skin is no longer "glowing" because it was exposed to the sun. Her friend advises, "If you want to regain it, you should use Glow & Lovely. Glow & Lovely." ("Agar poora glow chahiye, toh Glow & Lovely lagao").

https://youtu.be/d-guoAdOX5E?feature=shared

• Text level: The word 'glow' is discussed as what is good for the skin or attractive, and is repeated. The word "poora" has been used in the phrase, which connotes that if the skin is not radiantly glowing, it does not seem to be acting articulately, it is not interpreting clearly, or it is incomplete. This is the first step in establishing a binary system of glowing skin versus dullness.

• Discursive Practice: Ad presents the utilization of the product as a vital habit that helps a person regain confidence and attractiveness in society. Emotional fragility concerning sunburns, which is reflected in the language used, is reminiscent of the latest discussions around skin damage and correction. The visual metaphor of the dupatta covering the face operates as a symbol of concealment or shame, which is resolved only through product use.

• Social Practice: At the large scale, the scene goes on to be a part of the representation of the current cultural order that dictates that beauty, in the form of the skin's radiance, must be preserved through an active marketing of products. While it avoids overt colourism, the rebranded message still results in the concept of beauty being the one which is achieved and kept in consumption. Therefore, the tone becomes milder; however, the underlying ideology remains unchanged as it places a high price on fitting in aesthetically and the availability of commercial solutions.

Comparative Analysis:
A comparative discourse analysis of Fair & Lovely and Glow Lovely advertisements shows us both constant and changing elements of brand identity. Earlier advertisements seemed to depend on highly evocative metaphors, both on a deeper animated and textual level. Words like "chand jesa nikhar" and "dugni fairness" were used to equate lighter skin with beauty, success, and social acceptance. Differently, post-rebranding advertisements soften with more inclusion-focused "glow", "identity", and "confidence" phrases. Nevertheless, these still serve as metaphors for a certain level of transformation, reinforcing the focus on appearance.

Within the level of discursive practice, femininity remains a construct within the context of beauty products. Earlier ad frameworks depict a fairness achieved through discipline and commitment to a certain daily practice. It romanticizes the subject as a distinctly preferable and competent individual. Although the rebranded campaigns shift to narratives of empowerment and self-expression, they uphold this austere, strict discipline of daily application, reinforcing consumerist fiction of worth and social standing through product application.

From social practice, the attempt to rebrand and reposition themselves within contemporary inclusion rhetoric, and post-world events, Black Lives Matter. The essential idea remains unfaltering; the propositioning of beauty and self-worth remains unchallenged. At the same time, fairness has been linguistically geared.

Focus Group:
This report analyzes public perceptions and awareness of the rebranding of the Fair & Lovely to Glow & Lovely by employing a focus group of 8 to 10 participants, both male and female. Their inputs were organized into three main categories.

Theme	participant Responses	Interpretation (CDA Perspective)
Awareness Differentiated by Gender	Most female participants were aware of the transition from Fair & Lovely to Glow & Lovely and seemed to appreciate the rebranding. Most male participants, however, were largely unaware of the change.	This demonstrates that beauty branding and marketing affect individuals differently and highlights that, depending on the cultural gender framework, the interaction with and the consumption of media differ greatly.
Perception of Ideological Change	Some participants were unduly critical and dismissive, believing that the change stemmed from	This illustrates the debate in society on the clash between commercial branding and

	customer feedback rather than an attempt at change. Others were more receptive and commended the attempt to focus on confidence and self-esteem.	marketing, a sincere attempt at ideological change, and the perceived intent of the company.
Continued Transformation of Beauty Standards	One participant also noted, "Even if it's not called fair, it's still about changing how you look."	Participants observed that the product still upholds the notion of beauty and physical transformation.

Taken together, the focus group reactions indicate that consumers are skeptical about the extent to which corporations can fundamentally rebrand themselves. While the lexicon has changed, symbolic messaging in this discourse still focuses on how external improvements contribute to empowerment and worth, hence reflecting the conclusions made from the CDA of the adverts.

Conclusion:
Fair & Lovely's rebranding to Glow & Lovely marks a history revision of sorts; this change in name does not undo their previous colorist branding. This change certainly does not erase its usage of visible metrics to frame beauty. Under Fairclough's CDA model, the brand's social practice suggests that a person's value remains based on their external beauty marks, which remain unchanged.

Discourse around beauty cannot only be limited to Fair & Lovely's name change, as it requires the removal of skin hierarchies, beauty as self-acceptance instead of transformation, as well as the unattainable aim to erase. Without such ideological changes, brands will be perpetuating the Cycle of symbolic fluidity, where the surface changes, but the deeper structures remain unaddressed.

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