

# Discourse Structures in Bangladeshi Educational Advertisements: A Critique<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

It is virtually impossible to get away from advertising, yet we know so little about it. Visual (pictorial) and verbal (textual) elements in advertisements mesh to send the appropriate message to the target audience. At times the ethical/unethical divide is unclear, raising questions regarding the subtle distinction between persuasion and manipulation. In Bangladesh, private universities use specific discourse structures in their admission ads comprising linguistic and visual elements to advertise to their target audience. In order to convince and influence the target audience, sometimes advertisers resort to particular choices of discourse structures that at one level aim to attain a communicative goal by providing necessary information, but upon critical analysis, at another level intend to attain a communicative goal through manipulative means.

## **Key words**

*advertising in Bangladesh, ethics in advertising, three-dimensional discursive model (TDM), communicative goal, discourse structures*

## **Introduction**

Advertising is an unavoidable fact for a consumer living in this era of information explosion. From a linguistic point of view, advertisements seem to constitute a genre with distinct features whose function is not only to inform but also to persuade and influence. By using the linguistic system as a tool kit in a creative manner, advertising discourse has become a type of public and coexistent communication, manifesting and mediating a mass folk culture (Koll-Stobbe, 1994). Bangladeshi advertisements too have unique structures, patterns and features, which have been evolving over the years in order to keep pace with

changes in consumer culture, communication technology and media industries in this region. One such change, based on consumer culture is quite apparent in educational ads, especially in private university admission ads.

### **Critical Implications**

It seems that private universities in Bangladesh use specific discourse structures in their admission ads, comprising distinct linguistic and semiotic elements to advertise to their target audience. Such structures need to be analyzed and understood so as to be able to comprehend how ads communicate their messages to readers. In doing so, we as analysts need to deliberate, on the one hand, on whether advertisers breach the ethical boundaries of moral conduct, and on the other, whether such infringement depends on conscious or unconscious choice. From a Machiavellian perspective, it could be said that we need to determine whether the ads are based on the concept of 'the ends justify the means'. This concept is important because many universities tend to use unethical discursive strategies in their admission ads to lure student to their respective institutions under questionable pretexts for the profit, without trying to improve their quality of education. Bok (2003: 6) agrees with the commercialization of higher education; however, in order "to keep profit-seeking within reasonable bounds, a university must have a clear sense of the values needed to pursue its goals with a high degree of quality and integrity". On the other, the 'discursive techniques from advertising' (Fairclough, 1995: 6-7) seem to raise questions regarding the 'quality and integrity' of education in private universities. Fairclough (1995: 9-10) feels that there should be some degree of "accommodations and compromises between 'telling' and 'selling', reflecting the dilemmas of professionals in various domains faced with commodification and marketization and the pressure to use associated discourse techniques". This concept of 'selling' education seems to be quite prevalent in private university admission ads in Bangladesh.

This study investigates some private university admission ads using a three-pronged discursive model (TDM) to explain how linguistic discourse structures are employed to cater to the target audience, and to show why such structures could question the truthfulness of the claims made by these universities.

### **Advertising in Bangladesh: Scarcity of Local Literature**

It may seem surprising that although some advertising agencies such as Bitopi, Asiatic, (previously East Asiatic) and Interspeed (previously Interspan) were in existence even before the birth of Bangladesh, advertising still does not seem to enjoy the status of a full-scale professional industry in its own right in our country (see Anwar, 2003). Prior to independence, there was very little advertising in the country due to inadequate industrialisation (Anwar, 2003). What is more perplexing is that though 42 years have elapsed since independence, there is hardly any study of the development of advertising in Bangladesh. The few studies that have been conducted from a consumer perspective are hardly accessible even to academic researchers; there certainly seems to be a dearth of research from a communication perspective. The need for further academic research at this point in time seems, more than ever, pertinent.

Though there is a substantial literature on the discourse of advertising that have focused on the linguistic and semiotic aspects of advertising from a communicative perspective (see Tolson, 1996; Myers, 1994; Cook, 2001; Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985; Goddard, 2001; Tanaka, 1994), there is little such literature on Bangladeshi advertising. Despite the scarcity of local resources, some studies have been conducted in Bangladesh, but not specifically on advertising *per se* from a discourse perspective. Meher (1989) for example, only looks at the role of advertising firms in marketing, with special emphasis on some firms in Chittagong, while Kashem and Rahman (1994) consider the ethical criteria of advertising by exploring malpractices in Bangladeshi advertising. Hasan (1989) looks at consumer response to advertising and attitudes towards products. A similar study was conducted almost a decade later by Alam and Rahman (1997), where they investigated students' attitudes towards advertising in Bangladesh.

Academic understanding of advertising in Bangladesh is deficient in the sense that there has been hardly any major studies on the discourse of advertising from a sociolinguistic perspective. In fact, with the exception of one private institution (American International University Bangladesh), which started its 'B.A. in Advertising' programme in 2007, no institution of higher learning in Bangladesh, public or private, offers specific programmes in the field of advertising. In most BBA and MBA programmes, advertising is a small component of 'Marketing' or 'Principles of Marketing' course(s). In some Mass Communications programmes, it may be offered as an independent course, but the course contents primarily focus on issues derived from Western texts. There is hardly any academic published material on advertising in Bangladesh.

Till now, only Al-Azami (2008, 2004) has empirically analyzed Bangladeshi advertisements from linguistic and ethical perspectives. He looks at commercial ads and shows how certain linguistic persuasive strategies are employed to manipulate consumers. However, despite focusing on linguistic and ethical perspectives in Bangladeshi ads, he does not mention anything about the need of a specific advertising code of ethics; nor does he concentrate on analyzing educational ads.

### **Advertisements: A Reflection of Society**

Advertising is inescapable; it is everywhere—in streets, newspapers, the media, books and on transports, buildings, and so forth (See Goddard, 2001; Lewis, 2011; Bashir & Malik, 2009). Because it is everywhere, we probably do not pay that much attention or take the time to appreciate the amount of creativity that goes into creating effective advertisements. However, analyzing ads can be quite interesting in the sense that such attention could reveal contemporary thought and reflect the popular culture of a society. Ads may be transient and have short life-spans, but within a fleeting period they can mirror contemporary social life, even if they do so in an exaggerated manner.

However, at the same time, ads can reveal stereotypes that are prevalent and to some extent adopted, and practiced in a particular society. Stereotyping often arises from the generalization of a group of people based on a singular feature. Such stereotyping is

usually considered discriminatory, marginalizing and exclusionary in nature and can lead to the practice of racism, sexism, ageism and elitism.

### **The Language of Advertising**

Advertising is a form of communication that is transmitted by the media, be it print (newspaper, magazines), electronic (TV, radio) new (Internet) and/or social media (Facebook, Skype, blog, twitter, etc.). It is a process that is facilitated by a text, that is, the advertisement, which is made up of various elements that are meshed to communicate with a target audience. The grammar that constitutes the language of ads communicates through various discourse structures in the form of verbal, visual and textual elements, which help to draw the attention of the audience. Goddard (2001) categorizes them as image, verbal texts, and layouts; verbal texts can have their own paralinguistics, that is to say typographical and phonological features. However, the paralinguistics in print ads vary from the paralinguistics in audiovisual ads. The paralinguistics in Television Commercials (TVCs) may also vary, depending on co-text, situation, intertext, and participants (see Cook, 2001). Other attention-seeking devices comprise comparative reference, hook, intertextuality, buzzwords, logos, slogans and slogans (Goddard, 2001). Print ads can also communicate by employing elements of spoken discourse in order to achieve communicative goals with a target audience.

### **Appearance versus Reality: Ideological (Re) construct**

The gap between appearance and reality tend to be more extensive in consumer-commercial ads than in educational ones. However, the extensiveness in the gap between appearance and reality in educational ads is gradually becoming as wide as in commercial ads. The extensiveness between the real and apparent in advertising is brought about by construction and/or reconstruction. In *Mythologies* Barthes (1972) ideologically critiques mass culture in terms of everyday indulgences and/or necessities. The myth of the unreal is an ideological (re)construct—where the message is conveyed through discourse patterns. Advertisers tend to use patterns as attention-seeking devices such as image, text and layout, to draw the attention of the target audience, and to convey the “mythical” message. Barthes (1977) talks about these three messages his essay in “Rhetoric of the Image”, where he analyzes a Panzani ad and explains how it communicates with the target audience by means of image, which can be linguistic in nature and/or ‘a series of discontinuous signs’; although the signs may not always be linear. The image becomes operational by distinguishing between literal and symbolic messages; in advertising the literal image is never encountered in its pure state (ibid.). It is the symbolic message that tends to deviate from the real and literal meaning that consumer-commercial ads as well as private university ads tend to emphasize. Such deviation from the real to the unreal in advertising raises ethical concerns, particularly when institutions of higher learning endeavour to sell education to illiterate and/or intellectually illiterate societies.

### **Ethics in Advertising**

The concept of ethics of course varies from context to context, individual to individual

or society to society. The criteria of ethical conduct might reflect one's personality or the ideology of an organisation, a culture, a society, a nation or even a group of nations. At a basic level, ethics in advertising can be defined as a set of prescriptive rules, principles, values, and virtues of character that inform and guide *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* conduct: that is, the conduct of people towards each other and the conduct of people towards themselves (Spence and Van Heekeren, 2005: 2).

In terms of *universal public morality*, Kant's Categorical Imperative and Gewirth's Principle of Generic Consistency suggest that the concept of universality applies universally; this being the case, universal public morality claims that unethical advertising is universally wrong, both locally and globally, and not morally wrong relative to local customs, or to cultural, religious, social, or political norms (Spence and Van Heekeren, 2005: 11-12). Hence, advertising practices that deceive consumers about products or services advertised would count as unethical irrespective of the idiosyncratic and specific cultural, social, religious, or political norms of the country in which the deception takes place (Spence and Van Heekeren, 2005: 12). In this respect, the discourse employed by private universities in their admission ads that tend to influence and/or invite consumers, that is potential students, under false pretext or exaggerated circumstances may be considered unethical, because (un)consciously deception is being practiced. The unethical discourse practice in Bangladeshi admission ads is no doubt prompted by the fierce competition among the 80 private universities to rope in students.

### **Tertiary/Higher Education in Bangladesh**

The first public university of Bangladesh came into being before the birth of this nation. The University of Dhaka was established in 1921 while Bangladesh was born in 1971 (see Karim *et al.*, 2008; Chowdhury, 2003). In the early 1990s, a growing number of students who wanted higher education could not be accommodated by the public universities then existent; consequently, many students went abroad for higher studies. For example, 75,000 of them went to India each year (see Karim *et al.*, 2008; Haque, 2004). Hence, the Private University Act (PUA) 1992 was implemented; it was then amended twice—in 1998 and 2010. The first private university was established in 1993 (see Haque 2008). Since then, 80 private universities (78 local, 2 international) have been approved by the Bangladesh Government and the University Grants Commission (UGC), as opposed to 34 public universities (see <http://www.ugc.gov.bd/>). Among the 80 private universities, 50 of them are in Dhaka. In the mid-2000s, many off-shore campuses of foreign universities started emerging in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka; 56 of them were identified by UGC as illegal private universities (see '56 Private', 2007). In 2008 there was talk about legalizing off-shore campuses (see 'Bangladesh Will Allow', 2008; 'New Ordinance', 2008); however, nothing has happened so far. The rivalry among private universities is quite intense, as they compete for tertiary level students. This rivalry seems to have prompted private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh to publish admission ads which employ distinctive discourse structures to promote their respective universities as unique or special to entice students (see Haque, 2004; Haque 2008).

## Methodology

The study follows a non-experimental, exploratory, descriptive research paradigm. In doing so, the research endeavours to describe the linguistic / semiotic discourse structures in Bangladeshi educational advertisements. Data was collected over a period of three years (September 2007-August 2010) from four national daily newspapers. Furthermore, 100 personnel from 41 advertising agencies were interviewed in Dhaka (78), Chittagong (13) and Sylhet (09). The data was compiled, selected and then analyzed according to a three-dimensional discursive model (TDM) (see Figure 3.1).

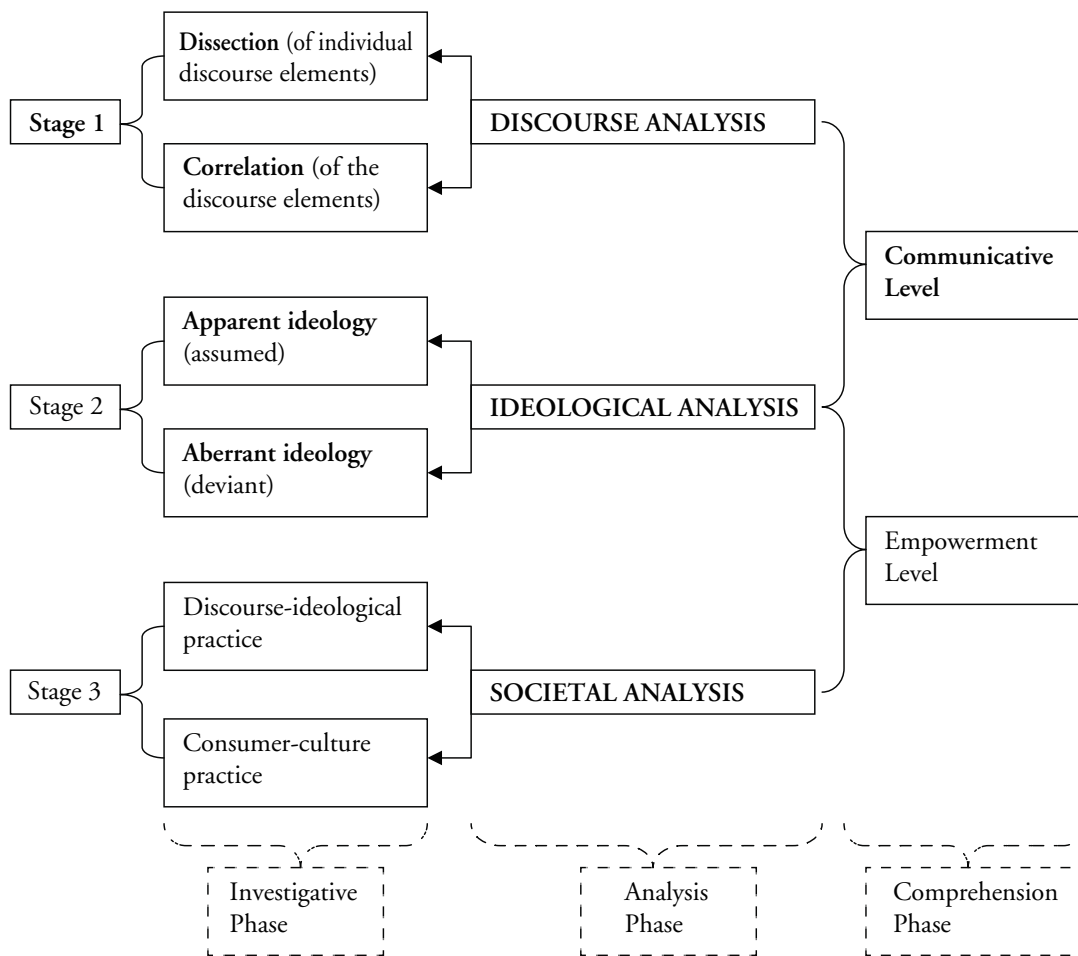


Figure 1: Three-Dimensional Discursive Model (TDM)<sup>2</sup>

## Theoretical Framework

This study intends to understand the discourse of advertising from a socio-cultural and ideological point of view. In order to do so, a three-dimensional discursive model (henceforth, TDM) was developed to analyze the data (Figure 1). This model was devised to analyze the data of this research, as other existing models do not comprehensively cater to the nature of the data under investigation. The TDM comprises three phases—investigative,

analysis, and comprehension (see Figure 1). The investigative phase consists of three stages, each with its own investigative elements. The analysis phase has three steps: discourse, ideological and societal analysis. The last phase comprises two levels of comprehension, that is, communicative and empowerment levels. This is a trans-disciplinary model, which has various stages, phases and levels, but one should keep in mind that all of these (i.e. stages, phases and levels) work simultaneously.

The first stage of TDM consists of two steps—dissection and correlation. In the first step a piece of discourse is dissected into its basic components. In this study, the ads are from private and public institutions of higher learning; more specifically, university admission ads. The ads are dissected in terms of attention-seeking devices—image, verbal text (linguistic features), layout, hook, comparative reference, and so on (see Goddard, 2001; Cook, 2001). Once the ads are dissected, the correlation among the dissected discourse elements can be explained; that is, how all these elements are connected with each other to convey the message of the ad.

Apparent and aberrant ideologies constitute the second stage of TDM. Apparent ideology deals with the set of values that are responsible for creating positive images of universities that advertisers (universities in this study) wish to project to the target audience. Aberrant ideology is based on the set of values that the advertisers do not wish to project to the audience, since such values may raise questions as to the claims made in the admission ads.

The third stage is probably the most important one because it explains the ongoing practices in society. In other words, it deals with societal practices, more specifically, ‘discourse-ideological practice’ and ‘consumer-culture practice’. The discourse-ideological phase explains how discourse (in this case advertising discourse) is strategically employed to create the anticipated ideologies (i.e. positive images) in order to manufacture consent from the potential target audience. The consumer-culture practice is dependent on the creation of a good or perfect consumer through advertising, which Fairclough (2001) feels is based on the amalgamation of economic, technological and cultural conditions. Private universities in Bangladesh tend to be dependent on such consumer-culture practice; the evidence is everywhere to be found in university admission ads.

### 3.2 Sampling

The private and public university admission ads being scrutinized here cover a period of three years, that is, from September 2007 to August 2010, and were collected from four prominent national dailies. These include two Bangla (*Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Ittefaq*) and two English (*The Daily Star* and *New Age*) newspapers. *Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Ittefaq* were selected because they are among the most prominent Bangla newspapers and have the most ads and readership (see Rahman and Chapal 2009). Among English newspapers, *The Daily Star* and *New Age* were selected, as they are the preferred English national dailies for publishing ads. A sampling population of over 1000 ads was gathered, from which one fourth, that is, 250, were selected via lottery (see Kumar, 1996) for critical

analysis. It should be mentioned that the total number of university ads published during the data collection period could have exceeded 1000, because many ads were published repeatedly. Such ads were not, however considered as part of the data. It should be mentioned that the official duration of the East West University Centre for Research and Training (EWUCRT) funded research project was supposed to be from September 2007 to August 2008. Therefore, the print educational ads were initially collected, over a period of eight months (i.e. September 2007-April 2008), but subsequently when the data collection period was prolonged, the collection of ads continued for another 28 months (i.e. May 2008-August 2010). Thus, the entire data (i.e. university admission ads) was gathered over a period of three years, more specifically from September 2007 to August 2010.

Interviews were conducted with 100 personnel from 41 advertising agencies from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. Among the 41 agencies, 29 were from Dhaka, 7 from Chittagong, and 5 from Sylhet. Out of the total of 100 media personnel who were interviewed, 78 were from Dhaka, 13 from Chittagong and 09 from Sylhet agencies. Convenience sampling was used to select the agencies; that is to say, the agencies were selected based on their accessibility and the availability of their personnel. The media personnel comprised 52 copywriters, 11 art directors, 5 creative directors, 4 producers, 4 photographers, 3 media planning managers, 2 managing directors, 3 chief executive officers, 2 vice presidents, 3 general managers, 4 media researchers, 3 customer service employees, and 4 human resources executives. The interviews were short as well as elaborate, the duration depending on how much time interviewees could spare. However, between small talk, certain key questions relevant to the present study were asked.

## Results and Discussion

### Stage 1: Discourse analysis—dissection / correlation

If we analyze the ads studied, we can see two general emerging patterns—one from private university ads and the other from public university ones. Based on the collected data, the findings seem to suggest that public university admission ads do not publish coloured admission ads. In other words, they only publish black and white ads, with lots of text providing necessary information, apparently required by potential applicants sitting for the admission test. The language used was predominantly Bangla and was written in black with white background. The layout is very formulaic, with the name of the university or institution on the top written in large font along with the logo, and the rest of the information given below in smaller font. Some private medical colleges affiliated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University tend to use black and white pictures of their campuses. From the findings, it was apparent that public universities never publish images of their campuses.

Public university admission ads also never refer to their faculty members, libraries, cafeterias, or include anything regarding scholarships to lure students. They merely give relevant information about admission tests, with reference to:



- Details regarding various units, e.g. ‘K Unit’, ‘L Unit’, ‘M Unit’, etc.
- Where admission forms are available/sold
- How much they cost
- When the deadline for submission was
- When the admission test would be held
- When the results would be published

On the other hand, most private university ads are printed in colour. However, private university admission ads like public university ones are informative as well as communicative, so and appear to be more interesting. But a critical reading of the ads and interpretation of them in terms of the apparent and aberrant ideologies (see Stage 2 of TDM), suggest implied patterns of deception, half-truths, and commodification / commercialization of higher education. Such patterns are discussed in detail in Stage 2.

The first stage comprises dissection and correlation. Upon dissecting the data (i.e. admission ads), it was found that private and public universities used specific attention-seeking devices to attract and inform their target audience:

- textual elements
- visual elements
- layout
- hook—problem-solution format
- comparative reference

Some of the attention seeking-devices appear generic (common), suggesting that they are employed more frequently than others, while others are not so generic (uncommon), as can be seen from Table 1.

**Table 1: Generic (common) and non-generic (uncommon) linguistic and semiotic attention-seeking features (private university admission ads)**

Sl.	LINGUISTIC (AND/OR NUMERIC) FEATURES		SEMIOTIC FEATURES	
	Common (Generic) attention seeking features	Uncommon (Non-generic) attention seeking features	Common	Uncommon
1.	<b>Scholarships:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>5% students will be awarded full free studentships</i></li> <li>• <i>Chancellor scholarship</i></li> <li>• <i>University president scholarships</i></li> <li>• <i>100% IUB Merit Scholarship: —GPA of 4.8 (without 4<sup>th</sup> subject) at HSC</i></li> <li>• <i>—Two ‘A’ grades in minimum 2A’level</i></li> </ul>	ISO 9001: 2000 certification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>First and Only ISO 9001: 2000 Certified University in Bangladesh</i></li> </ul>	Colour combination	Different coloured internal baubles & shapes

2.	<p><b>Tuition waiver/discount:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tuition Fees Waiver: 10%-100% on HSC GPA</i></li> <li>• <i>One of the two siblings 50% tuition fee waiver</i></li> <li>• <i>Special waiver for brothers/sisters, husband/wife (25%)</i></li> <li>• <i>Full tuition fee waiver for top ten students in admission test</i></li> <li>• <i>10% to 100% tuition waiver for meritorious students</i></li> <li>• <i>10% special tuition waiver for female students</i></li> <li>• <i>10%-100% tuition waiver based on semester result</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Tuition Fee Discount:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—<i>100% tuition fee discount for top 3 students in IUB Admission Test</i></li> <li>—<i>30% tuition fee discount for students having GPA 5.0 in both SSC &amp; HSC (with 4<sup>th</sup> subject)</i></li> <li>—<i>50% financial discount for siblings</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Rating/ranking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rated as the best private university in Bangladesh by Television Dorshok Forum</i></li> <li>• <i>Graded as one of the top universities in Bangladesh by Govt.</i></li> <li>• <i>Ranked No. 1 Private University in Bangladesh by “Webometrics”-Spain</i></li> </ul>	<p>Pictures/ images of campus(es), convocation, students, potential business executives, etc.</p>	<p>Pictures/ images of students, staff, equipment, etc.</p>
3.	<p>List of graduate and/or undergraduate programmes</p>	<p>Questions</p>	<p>Layout</p>	
4.	<p>Sometimes programmes are highlighted in different combinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All undergraduate level programmes</i></li> <li>• <i>All graduate level programmes</i></li> </ul> <p>Sometimes only a particular programme is highlighted, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>MA in ELT</i></li> <li>• <i>MA in TESOL</i></li> </ul>	<p>Questions-answer or problem-solution format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Want world class education?</i></li> <li>• <i>Want excellent environment?</i></li> <li>• <i>Want to be taught by renowned Professors?</i></li> <li>• <i>UIU-the right answer to all your questions.</i></li> <li>• <i>Want to have a degree in Business Economics just on time for a very modest price?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Different fonts &amp; typefaces</p>	<p>Size of the ad— full page (Stamford)</p>

5.	<p>University Grants Commission (UGC) and/or Government approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UGC &amp; Government Approved</li> <li>• Govt. &amp; UGC Approved</li> <li>• Gov. &amp; UGC approved since 2003</li> <li>• Government Approved</li> </ul>	<p>Tag lines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We bring out the best in you</i></li> <li>• <i>Discover a good degree accepted all over the world...</i></li> <li>• <i>Education for tomorrow's world</i></li> <li>• <i>Future will be better than the past</i></li> </ul>	Explicit logo(s)	Implicit logo(s)
6.	<p>Accreditation with foreign universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Collaboration with:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Winona State University, MN &amp; University of Texas, USA</li> <li>—TAFE, South Western Sydney Institute, Australia</li> <li>—AIT &amp; SIAM University, Bangkok, Thailand</li> <li>—JNU Delhi &amp; IIT Allahabad, India</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Academic collaboration maintained with many reputable foreign universities</i></li> </ul>	<p>Quality education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Quality Education Guaranteed at Affordable Cost</i></li> <li>• <i>Quality Education Ensured Career</i></li> <li>• <i>Quality education at affordable cost</i></li> <li>• <i>Everyone promises quality... Who keeps it truly? Visit UIU before you take a decision...</i> (Paralinguistic features to appeal to our emotion)</li> </ul>		Guarantee seals for (quality education, ensured career)
7.	Foreign trained faculty members / academics	Tuition fees of graduate & undergraduate programmes		
8.	Guest lecturer	<p>Cafes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lake-view cafe</i></li> </ul>		
9.	Prominent public university academics/professors	<p>Hostel facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>HOSTEL FACILITIES FOR BOTH MALE FEMALE STUDENTS</i></li> </ul>		
10.	<p>Narrative/descriptive passage:</p> <p><i>Explore a job-oriented degree in English.</i></p> <p><i>Designed in North American model, this degree boosts you career in a number of ways. With this degree you can become a business executive, liaison officer, banker, teacher, editor, interpreter and many more.....</i></p>	<p>Separate campus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SEPARATE &amp; SECURE FEMALE CAMPUS</i></li> </ul>		

11.	<p>Digitized libraries and labs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Has the first fully automated and online digitized online library in Bangladesh with over 33,000 books, 5700 bound volumes of journals and magazines, 1269 CD-ROM, DVD and good number of other information resources</i></li> <li>• <i>Computer labs for each school/Digital Electronic</i></li> </ul>	<p>Sense of urgency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LIMITED SEATS – HURRY UP!</b></li> </ul>		
12.	<p>Credit transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worldwide credit transfer—accepting up to 42 credit transfer for Diploma Engineers</li> <li>• Credits completed at NSU are transferable to reputable foreign universities</li> </ul>	<p>Numerous campuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kakrail Campus, Gulshan Campus, Motijheel Campus, Chittagong Campus, Rajshahi Campus</li> </ul>		

Textual elements are based on not merely, what is said, but more importantly the ‘font’, ‘font size’ and the ‘style’ of the written text. Goddard (2001) does not categorize the three elements, but uses the general term ‘typographical’ to explain the different type faces in written texts, which she refers to as ‘verbal text’. The reason why the ‘font’, ‘font size’ and the ‘style’ are important is that these factors prioritise textual information. Hence, these textual elements determine the order in which a reader or potential consumer will read/interpret an advertisement.

*Happy New Year 2008*

**We Bring Out The Best In You**

Discover A Good Degree Accepted All Over The World...

**Our Programs:**

- ◉ Bachelor of Architecture
- ◉ B. Sc in Civil Engineering
- ◉ B. Sc in Electrical & Electronic Engineering
- ◉ B. Sc in Computer Science & Engineering
- ◉ B. Sc in Computer Science & Information
- ◉ M. Sc in Computer Science & Engineering
- ◉ Master in Computer Application (MCA)
- ◉ Bachelor of Arts in English (4 Years Hons.)
- ◉ Master of Arts in English (Final)
- ◉ Master of Arts in English (Preliminary & Final)
- ◉ Bachelor of Environmental Science
- ◉ B. Sc in Microbiology
- ◉ Bachelor of Pharmacy
- ◉ Bachelor of Laws (4 Years LL. B Hons.)
- ◉ B. S. S in Economics
- ◉ B. S. S in Journalism for Electronic & Print Media
- ◉ B. A in Film & Media (4 Years)
- ◉ M. A in Film & Media (2 years)
- ◉ Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)
- ◉ Master of Business Administration (MBA)

**Non-conventional Features of Stamford:**

- ◉ Largest campus among all private universities
- ◉ Well equipped labs, high speed campus backbone network
- ◉ Six modern & rich libraries with sufficient stock of books
- ◉ Visiting professors from renowned North American universities
- ◉ Nationally renowned professors of our own and from Dhaka University & BUET
- ◉ Non-smoking and non-political environment
- ◉ Free doctor's service
- ◉ Credit transfer facilities

**Head Office & Dhanmondi Campus**

744, Satkhaj Road  
 Dhanmondi, Dhaka  
 Tel: 9124161, 9124569  
 8156122-3, 8153168-9  
 (Dr - 110, 118, 119, 120, 124, 125,  
 126, 128, 129, 294 & 461)  
 Fax: 9143531  
 Mobile: 01773062407/1-03

**Siddeswar Campus:**

51, Siddeswar Road, Dhaka  
 (Behind Monowar Hospital)  
 Tel: 9143531, 9143532, 9143533  
 (Dr - 114, 116, 118, 121, 122, 191 & 180)  
 Mobile: 01773062404-05

**Accreditation:**

- ◉ 5% student will be awarded full free studentship.
- ◉ Chancellor Scholarship
- ◉ University President Scholarship

**Awards:**

- ◉ Rated As The Best Private University in Bangladesh By Television Durand Forum
- ◉ First & Only ISO 9001 : 2000 Certified University in Bangladesh
- ◉ Graded As One of The Top Universities in Bangladesh By Govt.

**STAMFORD UNIVERSITY**  
 BANGLADESH (Govt. Approved)

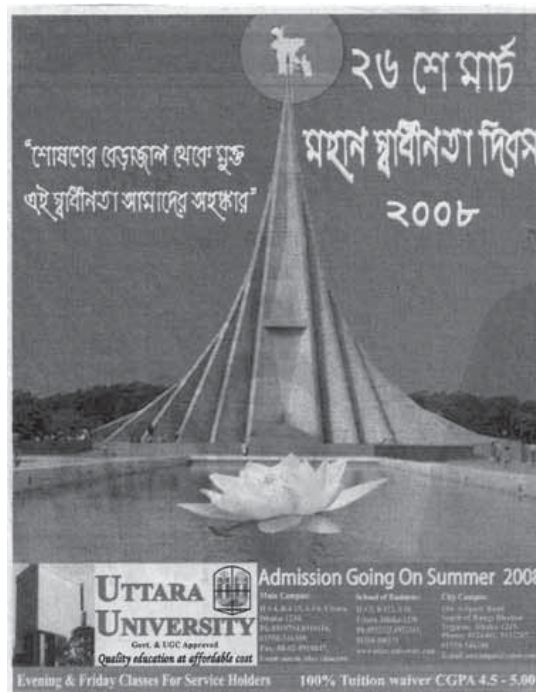
E-mail: [stamford@stamforduniversity.ws](mailto:stamford@stamforduniversity.ws), [admission@stamford.ac](mailto:admission@stamford.ac), Web Page: [www.stamforduniversity.info](http://www.stamforduniversity.info)

Ad 70

Figure 2: Prominence of textual elements— ‘font’, ‘font size’ and ‘style’

All ads tend to use textual elements to a greater or lesser extent to draw the attention of the potential target audience. Figure 2 (Ad 70) is a good example, in which the three textual elements ('font', 'font size' and 'style') can be distinguished. This advertisement uses six different types of font—Times New Roman, Arial, Arial Black, Ariel Narrow, Albertus Extra Bold, Monotype Corsiva. These fonts have been used in different sizes; in this particular ad (Ad 70) the font sizes range from approximately 20-8. The text has been written in different styles—for instance 'Normal + Monotype Corsiva, 20 pt, Bold, Orange'; 'Normal + Arial Black, 20 pt, Bold, White'; 'Normal + Arial Narrow'; 'Normal + Albertus Extra Bold, 14 pt, White'; 'Normal + 20 pt, Bold, White'; 'Normal + Ariel Narrow'; 'Normal + Arial, 14 pt'; 'Normal + Arial, 8 pt'; 'Normal + Arial, 14 pt, Italic,' and so on. Apart from various combinations of the three elements ('font', 'font size' and 'style'), the text can adopt various cases—like Sentence case, lower case, UPPER CASE, Title Case. Furthermore, the texts may be written in bullet points, and complete sentences, and with or without appropriate punctuations (Figure 2).

In the early stage of modern print advertising, there was more emphasis on text and less on visuals. However, in the last couple of decades with advancement of media technology, the fast pace of life and increased competition, visuals have become a vital component of commercial advertising. This may be because good, unexpected, shocking visuals, and sometimes images unrelated to the dominant themes of ads can almost instantaneously draw the attention of the target audience. The strategy of using visuals or images is quite common in private university admission ads in Bangladesh, although public university ads never use them.




Ad 59

Figure 3: Image that is not directly related to education

In Figure 3 (Ad 59), the image of the Jatio Smriti Shoudho (National Martyrs' Memorial) symbolizes the courage and the sacrifices that Bangladeshis made in the 1971 Liberation War, in order to break free from Pakistan. 26<sup>th</sup> March 1971 is considered the official Independence Day of Bangladesh. Since Ad 59 (Figure 3) was published in the month of March, the administration of Uttara University decided to use the motif of nationalism to highlight its national responsibilities, implying that such awareness and concern for the country is altogether commendable. However, a sceptic is bound to ask how is Jatio Smriti Shoudho (National Martyrs' Memorial), Independence Day of Bangladesh or the theme of nationalism related to education, more specifically tertiary education? If the university had an image of Buddhijibi Smriti Shoudho (Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial) commemorating the genocide of intellectuals of Bangladesh in 1971, such an image could have been indirectly related to education and the sacrifice that was made by our intellectuals. The big colourful image of Jatio Smriti Shoudho, which takes up more than three-quarters of the advertisement, is no doubt designed to draw the attention of the audience surreptitiously.

**Vision of Excellence**  
*"Moving Teaching Excellence from Good to Great"*

**We Bring Out The Best In You**



**What did  
Socrates  
Know  
About 21st Century?**

Probably nothing. But he was right about the skill needed for it, when he said,  
**"There is only one good, knowledge. And one evil, ignorance."**

How true, do you think, are those words today? Very? We agree. As the technological pace continues to accelerate, your personnel need even more knowledge than before. New skills on new machinery and software, in new and ever changing environments.

But each business is unique, with different staff and skill levels. Your needs are diverse. So who can offer the appropriate prospect to cover these different needs?

Enter Stamford University. We haven't been around as long as the wisdom of Socrates, but we do have a long history of global academic and corporate training programs from 1943 to the present day and beyond. As a member of internationally reputed Stamford educational group since 1994 in Bangladesh, Stamford has been continuing academic and training programs with the flexibility and adaptability to excel and train the latest in techniques by using the latest technologies.

Choose from a wide range of programs designed to improve and enhance the skills of your greatest asset. We have schools in all major fields of business including engineering, science, arts and computer education. Each school exists with one aim - to equip today's fresh students and working adults with the knowledge that will help your business run more efficiently. Courses that work for students and working people.


What's more, you can dictate the syllabus. Custom made courses can be designed and tailored to precisely fit your training requirements. Save money and staff out-time by precision targeting of learning needs. Call us today for a talk. We can't take your business into the next millennium. But we can help you get your people there.

**Head Office & Dharmoad Campus:**  
 74, Sainoid Road Dharmoad, Dhaka  
 Tel: 8153168 - 88, 8159122, 8156123,  
 8156834. Ext - 110, 124, 126, 127  
 Mobile: 01713082401, 01713082402,  
 01713082403

**Siddhohar Campus:**  
 53, Siddhohar Road, Dhaka  
 Tel: 8355812-14, 8354577,  
 8333333, 8334722 (Ext-110, 118,  
 121, 125, 126)  
 Mobile: 01713082404, 01713082405,  
 01714021278

**Our Programs:**

⊗ Bachelor of Arts in English	⊗ Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) (4 years Hons)	⊗ B. Sc in Computer Science & Engineering (CSE)
⊗ Master of Arts in English (Final)	⊗ Master of Laws (LL.M)	⊗ B. Sc in Computer Science & Information (CSI)
⊗ Master of Arts in English (Preliminary & Final)	⊗ B. A in Film & Media (4 years)	⊗ M. Sc in Computer Science & Engineering (MCS)
⊗ B. Sc in Architecture	⊗ M. A in Film & Media (2 years)	⊗ Master in Computer Application (MCA)
⊗ Bachelor of Environmental Science	⊗ B. A in Theatre & Music	⊗ B. Sc in Microbiology
⊗ B. Sc in Civil Engineering	⊗ M. A in Theatre & Music	⊗ Bachelor of Pharmacy (B. Pharm)
⊗ B. Sc in Electrical & Electronic Engineering	⊗ Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA)	⊗ B. S. S in Economics
	⊗ Master of Public Administration (MPA) (Executive)	⊗ Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSA)
	⊗ Bachelor of Journalism for Electronic & Print Media	⊗ Master of Science in Business Administration (MSA)



**STAMFORD UNIVERSITY**  
**Bangladesh**  
 Education For Tomorrow's World

E-mail: [admission@stamford.ac](mailto:admission@stamford.ac), [stamford@stamforduniversity.we](mailto:stamford@stamforduniversity.we) Web Page: [www.stamforduniversity.info](http://www.stamforduniversity.info)  
**Graded As One of The Top Universities in Bangladesh By Govt.**

Ad 73

Figure 4: Image connoting knowledge

The image in Figure 4 (Ad 73) is indirectly related to education and directly to knowledge. Socrates of course was a Greek philosopher and the embodiment of knowledge. But one should keep in mind that not everyone in our country can recognize Socrates merely from the image, and without a written discourse/text. Nevertheless, like Figure 3 (Ad 59), the big black and white sketch of Socrates' bust has been designed cleverly to attract the attention of any audience.

Private university admission ads in Bangladesh thus primarily employ a combination of images and texts to draw the attention of the target audience. Besides textual and visual elements, layout is another important attention-seeking device that is used especially in commercial creative advertisements to draw the attention of the audience. However, in public university admission ads, very formal and symmetrical layout is used. Private university admission ads in general are formal and symmetrical, but occasionally they use asymmetrical layout in order to be noticed. For instance Figure 5 (Ad 46) uses seven different shapes with various colours containing different information.

**Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)**  
 PROGRESSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE 1993

**Undergraduate Programmes**

- Business BBA**  
Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Management, Management Information Systems (MIS) & Human Resources Mgt (HRM).
- Engineering BSc**  
Computer Science, Computer Information Systems (CIS), Computer Engineering, Electrical & Electronics Engineering, Electronic & Telecommunication Engineering.
- Environmental Science BSc**  
Environmental Management, Population Environment, Land & Water Resources Management.
- Media BSS**  
Media & Communication.
- Economics BSc**  
Economics.

**Admission Enquiries For Spring 2008 Open**

**Admission eligibility**

- HSC & SSC pass Certificate with a minimum GPA of 3.00 in both.
- 3 'O' Levels in O/A GPA 2.50 & 2 'A' Levels with a GPA of 2.00.
- International Baccalaureate or other equivalent degrees.

**Special Consideration**

- Students with minimum 1250 in SAT 1 and minimum 550 (213 Computer based) in TOEFL or 5.5 in IELTS will be exempted from admission test.

**Full Tuition Waiver to Student with**

- Grade point average of 4.8 (without 4th subject) on a scale of 5.0.
- Two "A" grades in minimum 2 "A" level subjects.

**Financial Assistance**

- Discount on tuition based on performance during the 1st semester.
- 50% Financial discount for concurrently admitted siblings on entry.
- Campus job & other financial assistances.

Student with major in any of the above subjects other than Engineering may sign-up for Anthropology or Sociology as their minor.

**INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH**  
 House 1, Road 33, Baridhara, Dhaka 1212  
 Tel: 881681, 881917, 882386-90 Fax: 288, 269  
 Email: info@iub.edu.bd  
 Website: http://www.iub.edu.bd

**Chittagong Campus: Mirbae Complex,**  
 12 Jural Khan Road, Chittagong  
 Tel: 031-611362, Fax: 031-611203,  
 Email: info@ctg.iub.edu.bd

Ad 46

Figure 5: Layout containing seven different shapes with various colours containing different information

The different shapes take up more than three-quarters of the advertisement. Due to their unique shapes and internal colours, the ad catches the eye of the audience. Figure 6 (Ad 106) shows two rectangles overlapping each other. The bigger rectangle contains information regarding the university, its tuition fee waiver criteria, and admission date, while the smaller rectangle, which overlaps the bigger one, provides information regarding the graduate and undergraduate programmes of Eastern University.

**Eastern University**  
UGC & Government Approved

## Admission Spring 2010

*A Leader in Quality Education*

**Fee Waiver**

- ◆ 10% to 100% tuition waiver for meritorious students\*
- ◆ 10% special tuition waiver for female students
- ◆ Special waiver for brother/sister, husband/wife (25%)
- ◆ 10% -60% tuition waiver based on semester result\*
- ◆ Special waiver for physically disabled/acid victims

**Vice Chancellor**  
**Professor Dr. Rahim B. Talukdar**  
Former Director, IBA, Dhaka University

**Pro-Vice Chancellor**  
**Professor Dr. Abdur Rab**  
Former Director, IBA, Dhaka University

\*Conditions apply

**Admission Test for Undergraduate Programs on 19 December, 2009**

**Admission Office Open Everyday**

**Programs**

**Faculty of Arts**

- B.A. (Hons.) in English
- M.A. in English
- M.A. in English Language Teaching(ELT) 1-yr
- M.A. in English Language Teaching(ELT) 2-yr

**Faculty of Business Administration**

- BBA
- MBA (Regular)
- MBA (Executive)

**Faculty of Engineering & Technology**

- B.Sc. in Computer Science & Engineering (CSE)
- B.Sc. in Electrical & Electronic Engineering(EEE)\*
- B.Sc. in Electronics & Telecom. Engineering(EET)

\* 3-year for Diploma Holders

**Faculty of Law**

- LL.B. (Hons.)
- LL.M. (1-yr.)

14 Dec, 2009, 21

Main Campus : House 15/2, Road 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka, Phone : 9676031-5,  
Ext-101/102, Mobile : 01741 300002, 01823 660833, Web : www.easternuni.edu.bd

Ad 106

Figure 6: Layout—Admission ad using overlapping rectangles

Even though Ad 106 (Figure 6) is a simple black and white advertisement, the unusual shape (i.e. the overlapping of the two rectangles) helps to make it stand out and attract the attention of readers.

The 'hook' uses a problem solution-format to advertise a product, service, organization or institution. Figure 7 (Ad 28) raises the issue of quality education, which a number of



**SPRING 2008**

**ADMISSION OPEN**

Admission Test on 1st February 2008

UIU is run by a team of  
**NATIONALLY RENOWNED PROFESSORS**

Advisor  
**Prof. Dr. Golam Rahman**  
 Founder VC, Khulna University & UIU

**Prof. Dr. M. Rezwan Khan** (Vice Chancellor)  
 Former Professor, Dept. of EEE, BUET

**Prof. Dr. Chowdhury Mofizur Rahman** (Pro-VC)  
 Former Professor & Head, Dept. of CSE, BUET

**Prof. Dr. Habibur Rahman** (Dean, School of Business)  
 Former Professor of Marketing, DU & NSU

**Prof. Dr. M. Musa** (Professor, School of Business)  
 Former Professor of NSU, Former Pro-VC, EWU

**Prof. Dr. Saleh Uddin** (Professor, School of Business)  
 Former VC, Shahjalal University, Former Chairperson, BBA Program, EWU

**Prof. Dr. Md. Sadiqul Islam**  
 Coordinator, MBA Program (Part Time)

Registrar  
**Prof. A.S.M. Salahuddin**  
 Former Director (College & Admin.), DSHE, MOE

**BBA**  
**MBA**  
 B.Sc. in CSE  
 B.Sc. in CTE  
 B.Sc. in EEE  
 B.Sc. in ETE  
 M.Sc. in CSE  
 M.Sc. in CE

**SPECIAL PROGRAM**  
**CCNA**  
 Admission going on  
 Class Begins  
 Jan 19, 2008  
 Forms Available  
 Up to Jan 10, 2008  
 Last Date of Admission  
 Jan 12, 2008

Everyone promises quality...  
 Who keeps it truly?

Visit UIU before you take a decision ...

**UNITED INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

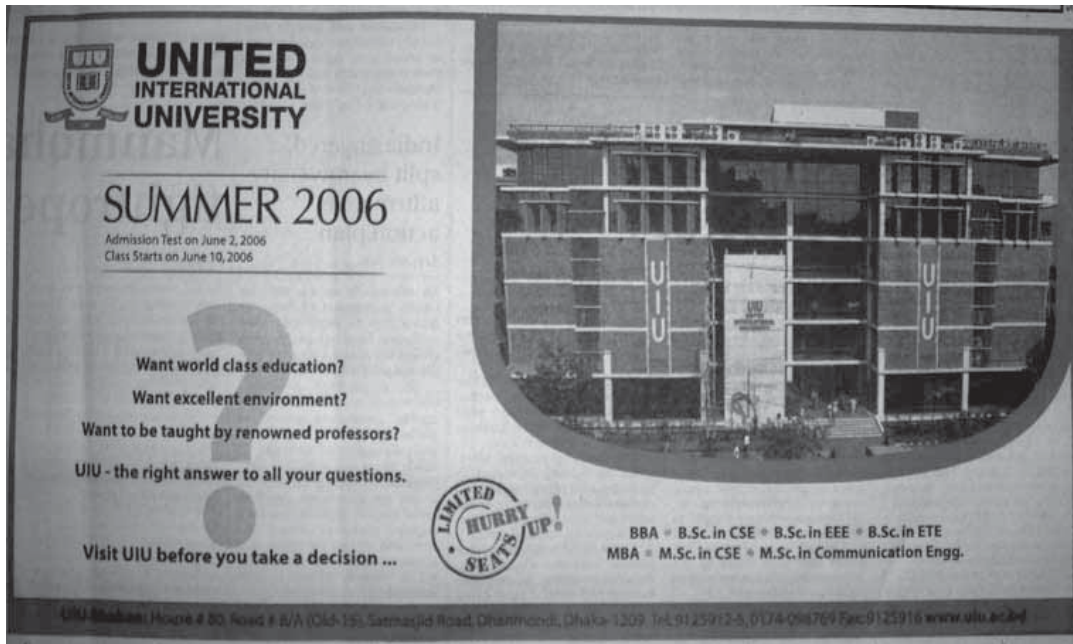
UIU Bhaban:  
 House # 80, Road # 8/A (Old-15), Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi,  
 Dhaka-1209, Tel: 9125912-5, 01914-001470, Fax: 9125916  
[www.uiu.ac.bd](http://www.uiu.ac.bd)

**CISCO SYSTEMS**  
 Local Academy

Ad 28

Figure 7: Implicit hook—Admission ad employing an indirect problem-solution format

private universities have been accused of not dispensing or maintaining. Ad 28 (Figure 7) makes a statement “Everyone promises quality...” and then asks the question “Who keeps it truly?”. By asking this question, the reader is presented with a problem, to which the answer is obvious. In other words, the university is raising the issue of quality of education (“Everyone promises quality...”) by framing a question (“Who keeps it truly?”), and presents itself as the indirect answer or solution with the words “Visit UIU before you take a decision ...” (Figure 7). The hook or problem-solution format is even more obvious in the admission advertisement published by the same university a couple of years back, which can be seen in



**Figure 8: Explicit hook—Admission ad employing a problem-solution format**

Figure 8. This is an example of an explicit problem-solution format because the answer has been clearly suggested by the ad. The advertisers or the concerned university asks the reader(s) a series of questions and then gives the one answer to them by mentioning its own name:

*Want a world class education?*  
*Want excellent environment?*  
*Want to be taught by renowned professors?*  
*UIU – the right answer to all questions.*

This advertisement tries to create a sense of urgency by using a seal stamped onto the ad that says ‘LIMITED SEATS – HURRY UP’. By using a hook, the advertisers not only arouse the curiosity of the readers, but also indirectly project the name of the university into the minds of readers.

Comparative reference uses linguistic attention-seeking devices to compare a product or service with other products and services, but without making any direct or specific comparisons. For instance, words like ‘brighter’, ‘cheaper’, ‘brighter’, and so on, may be used to compare a particular product or service being compared with the rest of the products/services in the market (see Goddard, 2001). In Ad 69 (Figure 9), such comparative reference is implied. The responses to the question “*Why study ELT in East West?*” in Ad 69 (Figure 9) invite implicit comparison with other ELT programmes in the market. In other words, the question prompts a comparison between EWU and other universities, and justifies the reasons for studying the “MA in ELT” programme in this university over other ones.

**East West University**  
**Launches “MA in ELT” Program**

**EAST WEST UNIVERSITY**  
Aim for the Best by Applying to East West!

**Eligibility:**

- \* BA in English (4/3 years)
- \* At least BA/BSc/BCom or equivalent in any discipline or BA (Pass Course) with substantial teaching experience

**WHY STUDY ELT IN EAST WEST ?**

- \* Classes will be taken by leading ELT experts of the country
- \* Our curriculum balances theory and practice perfectly and supplements classroom work with practice teaching while teaching research techniques systematically.
- \* Our library subscribe to some of the most important ELT journals published anywhere and stock the latest ELT books and teaching accessories.
- \* EWU semesters run smoothly and results are always published on schedule and before the end of every semester.
- \* Our MA in ELT classes are offered in the evening and on weekends, and are ideal for teachers and working people full-time elsewhere.
- \* The Department organizes regular seminars and conferences and is at the forefront of ELT research and knowledge.
- \* EWU fees are reasonable and great value for the money; EWU itself is a non – profit organization.
- \* EWU offers a number of scholarships; MA students with outstanding results also have scope to work as Teaching Assistants.

**Application Deadline: 16 April 2009**

For information about admission eligibility & requirements visit us at [www.ewubd.edu](http://www.ewubd.edu)

Foreign students may apply directly to [admissions@ewubd.edu](mailto:admissions@ewubd.edu)

For information about admission procedures & forms please contact: Admissions Office  
**EAST WEST UNIVERSITY** 43 Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka 1212,  
Bangladesh Phone: 9882308, 9887989  
Fax: 880-2-8812336 E-mail: [admissions@ewubd.edu](mailto:admissions@ewubd.edu)

## Ad 69

**Figure 9: Comparative reference—Admission ad using implied comparative reference as attention-seeking device**

### Stage 2: Ideological analysis—apparent ideology/aberrant ideology

Intellectuals have defined ideology in different ways. It is usually seen as a set of beliefs believed or adopted by a group of people, organization/institution, community, country, and so on, to express or project a certain viewpoint/image (see Haque and Khan, 2004). This part of the analysis looks at the apparent image that are projected and the aberrant image that are not projected by universities. Each university wants to project a positive image in order to attract the target audience; it does so through various types of media discourse, be it the electronic media (television & radio), the new media (Internet—web-based discourse) or the print media (newspapers, magazines & brochures—advertising discourse of admission ads). This positive image in the context of this study is referred to as ‘apparent image’. The image that a university may not want to project, as it could be misread or misunderstood, is referred to as ‘aberrant image’.

Based on the data, it seems that some of the ways that private universities in Bangladesh try to create a positive image are by offering scholarships and tuition waivers/discounts. Most universities of course suggest that they offer quality education. This is done through a formula that Haque (2004) has pointed out in his earlier investigation of private university web pages:

*International atmosphere + state-of-the-art-facilities = quality education*

A critical analysis of the admission ad data indicates widespread use of this formula. An international atmosphere is explicitly and implicitly implied in a number of ways. Sometimes it is explicitly stated by naming accreditation with foreign universities, as can be seen from some of the following examples:

- Membership of International Accreditation Bodies—AACSB International; The Association of Advanced Collegiate of Schools of Business; The Association of Collegiate Schools and Programs, Kansas, USA (Ad 16, Ad 24)
- Collaboration with: Winona State University, MN & University of Texas, Dallas, USA; TAFE, South Western Sydney Institute, Australia; AIT & SIAM University, Bangkok, Thailand; JUN Delhi & IIT Allahabad, India. (Ad 20, Ad 36; Ad 129 )
- Academic collaboration maintained with many reputable foreign universities (Ad 41)
- Academic Collaboration: The University of Michigan-Flint, USA; The American University in London; Bangkok University; Kingston College, Canada; College of Hotel & Tourism Management, Cyprus (Ad 58)
- Overseas credit transfer facilities to University of Bedfordshire, University of Worcester (Ad 131)

International atmosphere is implicitly stated through the names of universities, which are predominantly in English, without any Bangla equivalents. When the data was collected, in total there were 56 private universities in Bangladesh, all approved by the Government and University Grants Commission. In the collected data, the admission ads of all private universities are not present. Nevertheless, it should be obvious that most have English names, as can be seen from Table 2.

**Table 2: Private universities with English names**

Sl.	Private Universities with English Names
1	Prime University
2	Eastern University
3	Northern University, Bangladesh
4	Primeasia University
5	Victoria University of Bangladesh
6	The University of Asia Pacific
7	American International University, Bangladesh
8	North South University
9	Independent University Bangladesh
10	Stamford University
11	International University of Business, Agriculture & Technology (IUBAT)

12	World University of Bangladesh
13	University of Information Technology & Science (UTIS)
14	ASA University of Bangladesh (ASAUB)
15	University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
16	Presidency University
17	The People's University of Bangladesh
18	United International University
19	East Delta University
20	Leading University
21	BRAC University
22	Bangladesh University of Business & Technology (BUBT)
23	Daffodil International University
24	Uttara University
25	Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology
26	Primer University
27	International Islamic University Chittagong
28	University of Science & Technology Chittagong (USTC)
29	Manarat International University (MIU)
30	Bangladesh University
31	The Millennium University
32	City University
33	Green University
34	State University of Bangladesh
35	Southeast University
36	Uttara University
37	East West University
38	Darul Ihsan University
39	Asian University of Bangladesh
40	Royal University of Bangladesh
41	University of South Asia
42	Sylhet International University
43	Dhaka International University
44	Eastern Medical College
45	East West Medical College
46	Central Medical College, Comilla
47	Central Women's University

Furthermore, some universities try to project an international atmosphere by advertising their accreditation with foreign universities, or by highlighting foreign-trained faculty members / academics, prominent public university academics/professors, rating/ranking, ISO 9001: 2000 certification, state-of-the-art facilities, and so on.

### **Stage 3: Societal analysis–discourse-ideological practice/consumer-oriented practice**

The third stage, that is, societal analysis, comprising the discourse-ideological and consumer-oriented practices of the three-dimensional model (TDM) is more complicated than the previous two stages. This stage combines the findings of the first two stages to explain how in a consumer-oriented society one is made to be the perfect consumer, and considered gullible enough to be attracted by admission ads of private universities, which can be based on half-truths.

In Bangladesh, even though most people are poor and the gap between the rich and poor is wide (see Khan *et al.*, 2011), the affluent few are predominantly the target audience of private universities. However, various types of scholarships, tuition waiver, and/or discounts are offered as enticements, although advertised to suggest the altruism of the university (see Table 1):

#### **Scholarships:**

- *5% students will be awarded full free studentship*
- *Chancellor scholarship*
- *University president scholarship*
- *100% IUB Merit Scholarship:*  
 —*GPA of 4.8 (without 4<sup>th</sup> subject) at HSC*  
 —*Two 'A' grades in minimum 2A'level*

#### **Tuition waiver/discount:**

- *Tuition Fees Waiver: 10%-100% on HSC GPA*
- *One of the two siblings 50% tuition fee waiver*
- *Special waiver for brothers/sisters, husband/wife (25%)*
- *Full tuition fee waiver for top ten students in admission test*
- *10% to 100% tuition waiver for meritorious students*
- *10% special tuition waiver for female students*
- *10%-100% tuition waiver based on semester result*
- ***Tuition Fee Discount:***  
 —*100% tuition fee discount for top 3 students in IUB Admission Test*  
 —*30% tuition fee discount for students having GPA 5.0 in both SSC & HSC (with 4<sup>th</sup> subject)*  
 —*50% financial discount for siblings*

While the above looks good, what needs to be noticed too is that all the scholarships, tuition waiver, and/or discounts that are being offered by the private institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh are conditional. These conditions are not mentioned in the admission ads, which give a partial view to parents or guardians who finance their

children's/ward's education. In general, the scholarships and tuition waivers are never for the entire duration of studentship. In many instances, students who cannot afford to study in private universities enter such institutions as they have been offered scholarships based on their secondary and higher secondary results, admission test results or freedom fighter quotas. However, after a couple of semesters, they lose such scholarships because they are unable to maintain a particular CGPA, which is a precondition of such scholarships. What is noteworthy is that such conditions were never mentioned to them before admission.

In a consumer-oriented society, almost everything seems to be packaged and can be purchased with money. Before a transaction is made, universities endeavour to build a relationship between themselves and their clients, and try to maintain this connection through customer satisfaction, which in due course ensures continuous flow of income. In other words, a symbiotic relationship needs to be established and sustained over a prolonged period. Private universities often establish this relationship through admission ads, where they use advertising discourse to try to project a positive image about themselves by means of various strategies. At the same time, they try to assure readers that they offer quality education to students through an application of the following formula:

*International atmosphere + state-of-the-art-facilities = quality education*

Using these strategies, admission ads try to address some of the fears and concerns of their potential clients regarding private higher education in Bangladesh.

Sometimes parents and guardians have concerns regarding the legitimacy of particular institutions. To quash their fears, most private universities stress in their admission ads that they have approval from the Government and University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh. This is done to indicate that they are not one of the 56 illegal universities (see, '56 Private', 2007), which was published in national dailies by UGC. In order to address the concern that private universities do not have enough qualified teachers and operate with part-time public university teachers, specific statistics is provided by some (private) universities in their ads regarding the following:

- full-time and adjunct teachers
- Ph.D. holders
- Professors, and sometimes Associate and Assistant Professors
- countries from where higher degrees were obtained, with specific mention of North America, UK, and Australia

The competition for ranking has become a global phenomenon. Since there is no official ranking provided by the Government of Bangladesh or UGC, certain universities try to come up with their own ranking to magnify this image. Few tend to use texts like 'First private university in Bangladesh', 'The First Private University in Bangladesh established in 1989 by Darul Ihasan Trust'. In such a situation when two private universities both claim to be the first private university in Bangladesh, one might wonder as to which one has the right to claim such an honour, and which one is lying. Few universities might employ 'research'

as a selling point, as in the ad 'Leading 14 years in teaching and research', which claims top honours for research ('... is ranked the top private university in Bangladesh'). Some will highlight their ranking position according to Webometrics, a Spanish global university ranking website. However, the criteria that Webometrics employs to rank the universities has caused concern to the discerning since it tends to rank universities based on the number of 'web pages', which though important, may overlook other important criteria in determining the quality of education that more widely recognised ranking organizations employ. This concern is expressed by Obasi (2008) regarding the confusing ranking criteria of Webometrics:

Although 'web presence' of universities is important in today's globalized world driven by the forces of information and communication technology (ICT), it is not however the most critical measure of institutional success in benchmarking exercises. However, one undeniable fact that emerged from the publication of the Webometrics ranking was that it generated a significant level of confusion among many people, some of whom mixed its league table with those of the existing prominent world ranking bodies namely, *The Times Higher Education Supplement* of London, and the Institute of Higher Education of the *Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU)* of China. It therefore became clear that many academics do not understand the different ranking systems that now dot the international higher education landscape.

The problem with most ranking systems is that some universities will come up with their own ranking system/format that has no legitimacy, like 'Rated as the best private university in Bangladesh by Television Dorshok Forum'. In the Bangladeshi context, those who are socially conscious and are aware of quality education will know that the university which claims that it is the best according to 'Bangladesh by Television Dorshok Forum' is far from being one of the best in Bangladesh. However, not everyone has this knowledge. Most people in our country will be influenced by discourse-ideological and consumer-oriented practices based on the concept 'seeing is believing'. When they see that a university has been ranked the best by some body or forum, they will not investigate or assess the legitimacy of that ranking body or forum. For these people, 'seeing is believing'.

Universities which tend to use manipulative discourse do so because in Bangladesh there is no specific 'Advertising Code of Ethics', a document for protecting consumers/common people from malicious, manipulative, and discriminatory advertisements. This seems to support the responses of the majority of the 100 personnel from the 41 advertising agencies. A few have mentioned that Bangladesh Television (BTV) has an advertising policy, but not one advertising agency could produce the hardcopy of such a policy. If a policy is not made available to advertising agencies, how will they abide by the rules of such a policy when making an advertisement? Based on the interviews, the author can state that the Bangladesh print media has no 'general' or 'specific' 'Advertising Code of Ethics'. As a result, advertisers have the liberty to print whatever manipulative discourse they choose. Furthermore, the interviews reveal that the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB)



is almost non-functional, and seems to have very little leverage or power in challenging advertisers and protecting the rights of consumers.

Advertisers are quite aware of local and global consumer practices. They are also aware of the lack or improper implementation of policies needed to protect the ordinary consumer. Based on the evidence from the analysis of university admission ads and the responses of interviewees, one can conclude that advertisers are well versed in consumer interests and societal practices, especially in the Bangladeshi context. With this knowledge, they seem to be taking advantage of the ignorance of consumers, particularly people who are not alert or are uninformed of certain social practices. Due to the lack of proper policies of advertising in Bangladesh, they also seem to be taking advantage of the negligence of the lawmakers as well as UGC.

### Addressing the Critical Implications

Advertising is a complex phenomenon. In general, advertisements are not so easy to decipher. Advertising has many layers as is exemplified by Barthes (1977) in “Rhetoric of the Image”. Advertisers tend to use these layers to cater to their target audience, which can vary from community to community, and country to country.

The finding of this study suggest that advertisers use a number of linguistic and visual attention-seeking devices in different combinations to form various discourse structures. These structures in turn help advertisers to attain their communicative goals. In general, the linguistic and semiotic discourse structure through which a communicative goal may be attained can be represented by the following formula: *Verbal (attention seeking device) + textual (attention seeking device) + layout + hook + comparative reference = Communicative goal*. Very few of the collected admission ads employ the entire combination. Most (admission) ads use visual and textual attention-seeking devices to attain their communicative goals. Various attention-seeking devices are used to not only attract the attention of the potential target audience, but also to convince and influence them into taking admission into private universities. However, in order to convince and influence the target audience, advertisers sometimes tend to resort to particular linguistic and semiotic discourse structures that may at one level help to attain the communicative goal by providing necessary information, but upon critical analysis, at another level may be designed to attain communicative goal through manipulative means. The findings from the interviews and the discourse-ideological and consumer-oriented practices, along with the notion of ‘seeing is believing’, all seem to support the manipulative theory. The socio-ethical implications in the choice of linguistic and semiotic discourse structures may be based on a number of factors: lack of awareness of the manipulative consumer-culture practices of advertisers; lack of general and/or specific ‘Advertising Code of Ethics; lack of implementation of policies on behalf of the Governmental bodies as well as the UGC; and lack of initiatives taken by the very weak Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) to protect the rights of the common consumer. It is through research of the kind undertaken here that scholars can contribute in amassing a volume of critical and analytical communicative research-data that could serve the interest of the research community.

The use of attention-seeking devices such as textual elements, visual elements, layout, hook/problem-solution format and comparative reference in admission ads make consumers interested in a particular university, and are calculated and strategic measures employed by universities/advertisers to not only ensure that effective communication is taking place, but more importantly to also make certain that the advertisers' intended message is being conveyed to the target audience. However analysts or researchers can raise questions as to whether moral ethics is being breached, and whether claims made by private universities in admission ads are based on half-truths and exaggeration. In order to satisfy and accommodate the needs of consumers, private universities in general tend to adopt questionable discourse structures, which manipulate consumers into believing what may not be accurate or authentic.

### Conclusion

The discourse of educational advertising is a complex phenomenon. In Bangladesh, it seems that private universities use specific discourse structures in their admission ads, comprising linguistic and semiotic elements in order to achieve communicative goals, which at times tend to breach the ethical/unethical divide and adopt the concept of 'selling' quality education. The mechanics of such a concept dwell on the McDonaldization of society (see Ritzer, 2007) and contexts where termologies such as 'Commoditization' or 'McDonaldization' of education are unavoidable (Daniel, 2002). Higher education is a 300 billion dollar industry (see Dennis, 2007), which keeps growing globally, particularly in third world countries (see Cheung, 2003) and everyone wants a piece of that pie. Even though it is difficult to deny that education is a commodity, as is quite apparent in private university admission advertisements, should not society try to resist the advances of a commodified consumer-culture that screams out 'higher education is no longer a right but a product'?

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### Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup>This model has been developed by the author to analyze the data of this study, but is loosely based on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework.

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