

# Fighter Brands and Indian Consumers : A Study of Brand Narratives Using Ad Content Analysis

\* *Surjit Kumar Kar*

\*\* *Tina Dasgupta*

## Abstract

Following the American Marketing Association, 'flanking' is understood as an indirect strategy aimed at capturing market segments (geographical or consumer groups), whose needs are not being well served by competitors, or when the competitors are unwilling or unable to retaliate. Flanker or fighter brands are mostly second-order brands after the main or flagship brand to have their own identity and deter competitors to introduce lower priced substitutes of the main brand of a company. The entire rationality of the flanking strategy rests on competitive strategies of a company and the intended positioning of a brand from consumer perceptions and behavior. There are many such success stories that are available in marketing literature. For example, Pentium & Celeron from Intel; Pampers & Luvs from P&G; Lays & Cheetos from PepsiCo; Nirma Beauty & Nima Rose from Nirma Limited, and so forth. However, flanker brands have their own set of challenges as far as proper positioning is concerned. If not done properly, it may cannibalize the flagship brand as confirmed in few unsuccessful stories. The current paper discussed different dimensions of consumer perceptions regarding the fighter brand (Nima Rose) vis-à-vis the flagship brand (Nirma Beauty) of Nirma. A qualitative ad content analysis (ACA) using qualitative analysis package AQUAD 7.0 was conducted to understand different dimensions of the brands under study. Brand narratives from the audio-visual ad copies were gathered, transcribed, and re-storyed into meaningful frameworks across a comprehensive four dimensional model as suggested by Ringer and Thibodeau (2009) of The Verse Group. Brand stories have meanings and persuasions; however, images and aesthetics have feelings and immersion values embedded in the copies. A logical segregation of these elements from the copies could rightly explain the positioning variables of the brands. This paper explored strategic intent of Nirma for positioning flanker brands in an Indian context through a set of predesigned variables.

**Keywords:** Flanking, content analysis, brand narratives, fighter brands, flagship brands

Paper Submission Date : February 5, 2015 ; Paper sent back for Revision : June 18, 2015 ; Paper Acceptance Date : July 23, 2015

**S**tories have power. They delight, enchant, touch, teach, recall, inspire, motivate, and challenge. They help us understand. They imprint a picture on our minds. Consequently, stories often pack more punch than sermons. Want to make a point or raise an issue? Tell a story. Jesus did it. He called his stories parables (Litherland, 1991). There exists a variety of means through which a company can communicate its image: stories, individuals, advertising, products, or even signs (McLellan, 2006). Storytelling in advertisements is the most powerful weapon when you think of conveying your story and creating a brand image. Here, in this paper, we talk about how the art of storytelling in an advertisement helps positioning a fighter brand of a company. A *fighter brand* (flanker brand or fighting brand) is a lower priced offering launched by a big company to actually take on specific competitors. These brands are not launched like other brands, which keep the target segment in mind ; these are created specifically to fight a threatening competitor and save the company's flagship brand. Flanker brands are positioned in the market in a way totally different from the flagship brand, keeping various reasons in mind.

---

\* *Assistant Professor*, Department of Marketing & Strategy, IBS Hyderabad, IBS Hyderabad Campus, Shankerpalli Road, Hyderabad, Telangana. Email: surjitkar@yahoo.co.in

\*\* *Student*, Semester-II MBA (2013-15), IBS Hyderabad, IBS Hyderabad Campus, Shankerpalli Road, Hyderabad, Telangana. Email: tina298461@gmail.com

The goal of communication is to stimulate a favorable attitude in consumers arising through cognitive, affective, and behavioral stages. Although cognitive evaluation is suggested to be the common approach in evaluating brand image in the past, recent brand image studies have been centered on more affective or emotional attributes, specifically using the metaphor of personality traits to portray brand image (Keller, 2003). Marketers and advertisers are familiar with such advertising techniques and messages sent by the brands, where their expertise becomes an instrument of power (O'Donohoe, 1997 ; Wright, 1986). In reaction to this, it has been necessary to find new, innovative ways to manage brands.

A content analysis helps in studying the content of the ways these brands communicate specifically via advertisements. Content analysis is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages; it is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on scientific method, and is not limited to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented; it is a technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 2004 ; Neuendorf, 2002). The advertising strategies on linguistic and semiotic platforms used for flagship and fighter brands clearly describe the difference intended to be created in the minds of the people for a successful positioning. It is through qualitative content analysis that such differences can be more analytically explained, and their effectiveness studied.

## Literature Review

American Marketing Association (AMA) (n.d.) defines *flanking* as an indirect strategy aimed at capturing market segments whose needs are not being served by competitors. Flanking can be executed by targeting either a geographical segment or a consumer segment (group) that is not being well served by the competitors and/or when the competitor is unwilling or unable to retaliate. *Flanker brand* is a line extension, sometimes is meant to cover only those line extensions that are not premium-priced or low-priced. A fighting brand is a line extension of a main brand that is marketed by one producer to compete directly with the lower-priced products of other producers in a given market, and usually has a separate brand identity and a low price. Its quality is usually lower than that of the main brand; it may only be temporarily in the market; and its purpose is to hold customers without having to lower the price of the main brand.

Aperia (2001) stated that brand building is an activity with the purpose of differentiating a particular brand through building a relationship between brand and buyers or consumers. Thus, two brands of the same company position themselves at different platforms so as to serve their own segments rather than to take on that of the other. Brand theorists take an interest to know how consumers recall and recognize brands (Keller, 1993) ; how brands relate to perceived quality and price (Zeithaml, 1988) ; and what types of associations brands evoke (Rossiter & Percy, 1998). Brands are the first and foremost providers of experience; they are products, communications, and marketing campaigns that dazzle their consumers' senses, touch their hearts, and stimulate their minds (Schmitt, 1999).

*Storytelling* is a narrative mode of communication aiming at creating meaning. However, the language of brands to a high degree is pictorial; and brands are to be understood as symbolic images. Goods often take on the properties of sign-value through the process of "branding," in which marketers and advertisers attach image to goods (Lash & Urry, 1994, p.15). If stories are connected with meanings and persuasion, images are more an issue of feelings and immersion. In the narrative perspective, brands are seen as stories about values. Brand management rests on a strategy and an integrated vision, where brand identity, not brand image, is at the centre (Kapferer, 1992); the junction between the company and the consumer perspectives gives rise to the value of brand equity (Melin, 1997). The identity of a particular brand is reflected by a holistic impression (Melin, 1997). Ads are - to greater extent stories - as the story as a narrative form requires at least three elements, that is, an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs (Czarinaawska, 1998).

Distinction between stories and visual images is based on "discursive" and "figural" sensibilities. In the

discursive mode, words are given priority over images, and the focus is on the creation of meanings. The figural, on the other hand, is visual, and is not concerned with what a sign means, but what it does (Lash, 1988). Brands are cultural artefacts in the aestheticisation of everyday life (Featherstone, 1991). Stories primarily speak to our senses, and images are more concerned with our senses.

Aesthetics is not a concept denoting a quality of art ; rather, it is a sensory experience (Strati, 1999). Consumption is in a process of becoming less functional and increasingly aestheticized (Lash & Urry, 1994). The way consumers use brands might be read as a form of aesthetic reflexivity, where self-interpretation and realization are performed through the use of signs. Consumption is thus not only utilitarian, but also expressive in the sense that the use of brands provides individuals with possibilities of creating identities (Lash & Urry, 1994). Thus, advertising can be argument-based to present fact-based information based on logical arguments and lectures (Lien & Chen, 2013), or narrative-based to tell a story about product consumption or related experiences for appealing to the consumer's affective and emotional responses (Boller & Olson, 1991 ; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010).

Narrative transportation theory has been proposed as the underlying mechanism that drives narrative-based persuasion (Escalas, 2004). Transportation is conceptualized as a viewer's experience of being lost in context or immersed in a story's plot (Gerrig, 1994). Captivating experiences have a favorable effect on consumers' attitudes, moods, and behaviors (Demangeot & Broderick, 2006) and are able to match consumers to products by evoking consumers' feelings (Frost, Chance, Norton, & Ariely, 2008). According to Verma and Saranya (2014), gender does not significantly influence attitude towards online advertisements, and preferences majorly reflect price sensitivity and preference to animation. Narrative advertising has attracted considerable attention and has been proposed as an effective means to instill a positive experience and favorable attitudes toward an advertisement and brand (Keng, Ting, & Chen, 2011; Kozinets, 2010). Narrative advertising involves storytelling or communicating a lived experience that unfolds in a sequence of events, conveys the storyteller's reactions to the events, describes the location and time, and captivates the audience (Padgett & Allen, 1997). Narrative advertising can take the form of drama, transformation, or a slice-of-life (Mick, 1987; Stern, 1994; Swatman, Krueger, & van der Beek, 2006). The narrative should deliver an involved, self-relevant experience and should call upon the consumer to interpret the narrative to understand the storied stimuli (e.g. actors with motives, an event sequence and setting that has physical, social, and temporal components) (Bruner, 1986; Padgett & Allen, 1997).

Narrative advertising is processed through appeals to viewers' subjective feelings and empathy (Deighton, Romer, & McQueen, 1989), allowing viewers to construct mental simulations of hypothetical and self-relevant scenarios that elicit transportation and narrative persuasion (Escalas, 2004). In advertising research, transportation refers to a conversion process in which viewers of a narrative advertisement have the experience of being lost in the drama or story and get deeply immersed in the narrative world (Escalas, 2007; Green & Brock, 2000; Wang & Calder, 2006). The stories create scenarios in which viewers assume the role of a main character, vicariously living the experience (Escalas, 2004) and performing the drama (Bruner, 1986). Escalas (2004) proposed that the underlying mechanism of narrative transportation is mental simulation, which is the "cognitive construction of hypothetical scenarios" (Taylor & Schneider, 1989, p.175) that generates a high degree of transportedness in viewers.

A vivid and consumer-relevant narrative story can offer better elaboration of details (Keller & Block, 1997), increase the realism of the experience, facilitate mental imagery and simulation (Escalas, 2004), and thereby induce transportation and increase the effectiveness of persuasion (Petrova & Cialdini, 2005). The superior effect of narrative advertising hinges on the consumer's cognitive capability (Chang, 2009) and the continuity of his/her pleasurable immersion experience (Wang & Calder, 2006). Perceived advertisement vividness is one of the most prominent attributes of advertising that contributes to a consumer's emotional response (Mooradian, Matzler, & Szykman, 2008). A vivid advertisement is likely to attract a viewer's attention, emotionally engage him/her, provoke concrete imagery, and excite the imagination (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Five waves of change, that is, change in consumer culture for better life, change to succeed, change in traditions, change in the concept of globalization, and change in the perceptions of value for money have transformed the culture of Indian consumers (Swaminathan & Bansal, 2014).

## Research Problem and Purpose

The concept and strategy of flanking has been used by companies since long. As a marketing warfare strategy, it is practiced both by leading and challenging companies in an industry as a strategy of defense or attack. In the Indian context, no substantial literature is available in this area. In a majority of the cases, it has just been an extension of Western practices into India. Use of qualitative content analysis for such a study itself is unique, especially with respect to brand narrative dimensions. The purpose of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of television commercials which are used in the positioning of flagship and flanker brands. The flanker brand, which is created in order to safeguard the main brand, has certain objectives and whether these objectives were successfully met or not can be understood from this study. The contents of the television commercials were closely observed and analyzed so as to understand how the entirely two different types of positioning are achieved.

## Objectives of the Study

This study takes the Indian market into consideration and aims:

- ✎ To explore and explain different ways in which a company positions its flagship and flanker brands,
- ✎ To qualitatively analyze contents of advertisements across brand narrative dimensions of these brands, that is, setting, cast, narrative arc, and language,
- ✎ To corroborate findings of such an analysis with that of a subsequent empirical consumer research as a second stage of the research through survey/ experimental design.

## Research Methodology

An ad content analysis was carried out on the advertisements of flanking brands across different industries in India to find out how interestingly and deliberately it was formulated in a different way from the flagship brand of the same company. Secondary database analysis was conducted in the month of December 2013. The framework of brand narratives given by Ringer and Thibodeau (2009) was used to evaluate the advertisements of various Indian flagship and flanker brands. This framework talks about four basic elements - setting, cast, narrative arc, and language. Setting includes time, place, and context; cast describes the brand as a character, its role in the life of the audience; the narrative arc - the way the narrative logic unfolds over time; and language includes voice, metaphor, symbols, and so forth. As a basis of the proposed qualitative ad content analysis, focus group discussions (Appendix Table 1 depicts the FGD participants' details) were conducted somewhere around the second and third week of December 2013, and groups were shown the television commercials of both the flagship and flanker brands. After the discussion was over, the participants were asked to discuss what they understood from the advertisements and also the difference between both the types of advertisements that were shown. The moderator conducted the discussion in line with the brand narrative framework of Ringer and Thibodeau (2009) for moderation to make the discussion progress unobtrusively, but within an insightful logical frame (Refer Table 1 for analysis of coding & themes of observations found in the FGDs).

Ad content analysis was done on three sets of ads for a combination of flagship-fighter brands across industries/ product categories. The current paper includes details based on only one set of such ads. The code and theme table (Table 2 and Table 3), and the brand narrative dimensional comparisons of the brand-duo (Table 4) are discussed under the data analysis section. The ad audio-visual files were used to transcribe narratives depicting the Setting (time, place, and context), Cast (brand as a character & its role), and Narrative arc (voice, metaphor, symbols).

To make it comprehensive, both narratives (written or spoken using words, sentences, or paragraphs) and images (with structural elements like color, location, people, subject) (Refer to Appendix Figure 1, Appendix Table

2, and Appendix Table 3) were used for qualitative ad content analysis as units of analysis. The themes/ categories are comprehensive, mutually-exclusive, and non-instances type.

## **Sample**

For carrying out this study, television commercials (TVCs) from various industries were chosen from various sources. These were the advertisements of various flagship and flanker brands in the Indian context. The advertisements contained contents which made it possible for the brands to position the flagship and the flanker brands successfully in the minds of the Indian consumers. The number of such advertisements is low as not many flanker brands have been launched in the Indian market. The sample consisted of ads which were directly related to the flagship and flanker brands. The advertisements that were used were very clear about the idea that they intended to convey to the viewers. The advertisements used in the present paper pertain to the FMCG industry.

Focus group discussions were held under the controlled environment of a B - School, and the participants were chosen from different age groups, had different financial status, had different educational backgrounds, and belonged to different geographical locations of India (Please refer to Appendix Table 1 for the details of the FGD participants). Each group had eight participants, four boys and four girl students. Thus, the sample was quite suitable for the study. However, the fact that they all belonged to the same business school can be considered as a limitation of this study.

## **Research Plan**

The advertisements for the purpose of the study were taken from YouTube.com and were downloaded using YouTube downloader. Special care was taken in selecting the advertisements of the flagship and flanker brands which belonged to the same period of time, that is, both the advertisements were broadcasted during the same time. Only those television commercials were chosen which were aired in India.

Computer aided package AQUAD 7 (Huber & Gürtler, 2012) was used for qualitative content analysis. Typical phases of qualitative analyses of data were followed - such as reduction of the original database (texts, sound or video recordings, graphic files), the reconstruction of linkages (between units of meaning in data, as characteristic for a person and/or his/her situation), and the comparison of findings (comparing individual systems of meaning or cases). Validity of the generalizations was affirmed deductively, where inferences of the particularities were made from general findings, and evidence in form of specific information was found in the data (e.g. statements in texts or recordings, sequences of actions in video, etc.). The flagship and fighter brands of the same company were then compared on four brand narrative dimensions to explain their positioning success.

At a preliminary stage, it was mostly found that the advertisements positioned the flagship brand [Nirma Beauty soap] in such a way that it continued to enjoy a strong awareness among consumers and also, at the same time, they did not give the impression that the flanker brand [Nima Rose soap] was of any lower quality as compared to the flagship brand. Flanker brands help in distinguishing flagship brands from their competitors. Furthermore, a focus group discussion was held where the ad of the flanker brand was discussed in order to understand the implications of the ad on the minds of the people. The focus group discussions were conducted under the controlled environment of a B - School in South India.

## **Coding**

Coding was done by eight to nine coders and inter-coder reliability was checked. The coders analyzed the content of the focus group discussions which were held under the controlled environment of a B - School in South India. The television commercials were also carefully analyzed for content analysis by the coders using the AQUAD 7 tool. The results of the analysis were found out separately by all the coders, and finally, those results were



compared for reliability. It was found that there was high correlation amongst the results produced by all the coders.

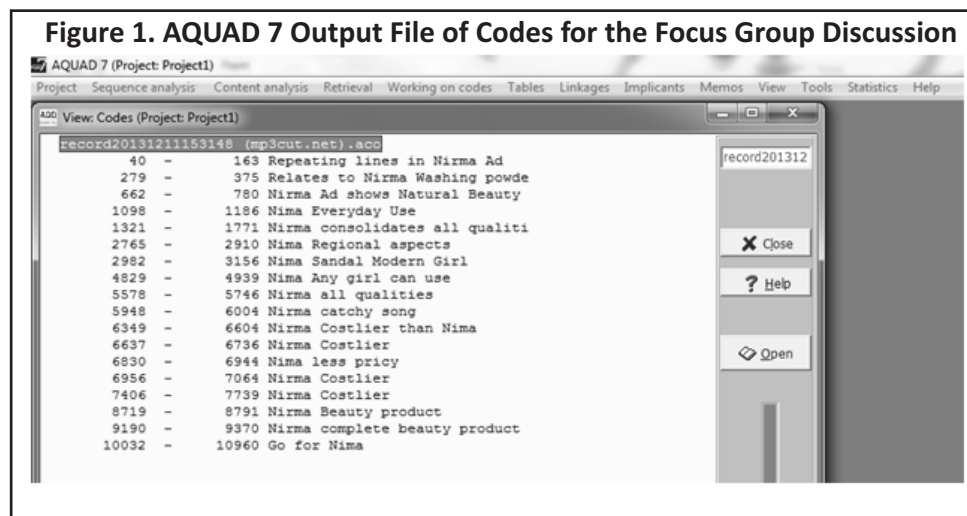
The advertisements of the flagship brand (Nirma Beauty) and the flanker brand (Nima Rose) were analyzed comparatively. The major differences in the advertisements of these two types of brands were observed. The ways in which the various features of a flagship brand are different from the flanker brand are portrayed in the said advertisements. The differentiation strategies adopted by the marketer with respect to each brand is pertinent in the advertisements. Now, for any marketing communication to be effective, it must reach the minds of the consumers and convey the same intention as it is rendered with.

The various differentiating features of the flanker brand that were observed in the advertisement are:

- [1] It had a lower pricing as compared to the flagship brand.
- [2] A different group of consumers was targeted.
- [3] The flagship brand is already an established brand in the same product category in which the flanker brand is launched.
- [4] It captured the “brand-switchers” category of consumers.

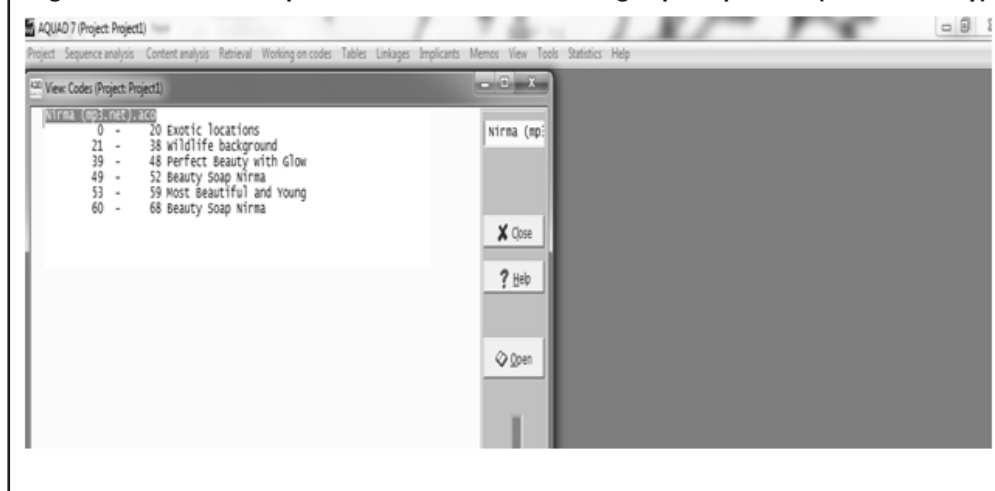
The coding consisted of two parts: In the first part, it was analyzed whether the advertisement of the flanker brand consisted of all the above-mentioned differentiating features or not. This was done by using AQUAD 7, where the contents of the ad were thoroughly analyzed. The comparison was made on four brand narrative dimensions as given by Ringer and Thibodeau (2009). In the second part, the findings from the focus group discussions were analyzed. The focus group discussions were recorded, and the audio files were analyzed using the AQUAD 7. The content of the recordings was studied on the same four brand narrative dimensions as was done during the advertisement content analysis.

The two parts of the coding revealed the way the flanker brand differentiated and positioned itself. The positioning strategy was critically examined for its potential to be successful. Certain themes were crafted from the messages that the advertisement contained. For example, the theme on “low priced offering” was used from certain messages in the advertisement like “offered for everyone,” and “everyday use”. The FGDs which were carried out after showing the participants the advertisements of both the flagship brand and the flanker brand were recorded and were then used as an input into AQUAD 7.



**Table 1. Classification of Focus Group Discussion into Themes**

Focus Group Discussion Codes	Themes
Everyday use	Low Priced
Nima- Any girl can use	
Nima less expensive	
Customized	No compromise on quality
Great Benefits	
Nima Regional aspects	Targeted different market segment
Go for Nima	Leads to cannibalization of the main brand
Nima less expensive	

**Figure 2. AQUAD 7 Output File of Codes for Ad of Flagship Soap Brand (Nirma Beauty)**

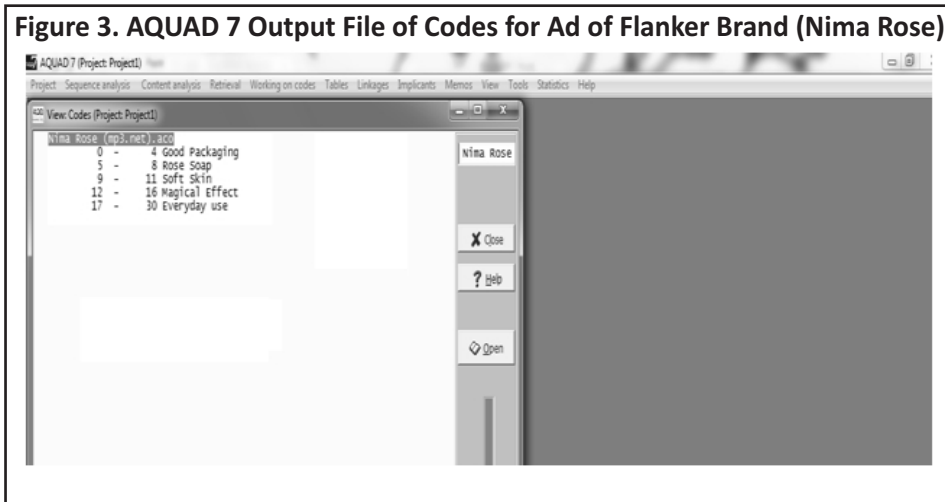
## Data Analysis and Results

This study explicitly reveals the effectiveness of the television commercials which are used for positioning both the brands. The Table 3 shows the themes that were exactly the features of the flanker brand. As a result, we can say that the advertisements were made keeping all these in mind, and they successfully portrayed the same.

The next part of the study analyzed what the consumers understood of these advertisements, and whether they received them in the same way in which they were delivered. For the second part of the study, the focus group discussions were conducted and the images that the concerned advertisements created in the minds of the

**Table 2. Classification of Advertisement of Flagship Brand (Nirma Beauty) into Themes**

Ad of Flagship Brand	Themes
Exotic locations	High Priced
Total Beauty Soap Nirma	
Beauty Soap Nirma	High Brand Value
Most Beautiful and Young	
Perfect beauty with glow	



**Table 3. Classification of Advertisement of Flanker Brand (Nima Rose) into Themes**

Ad of Flanker brand	Themes
Everyday use	Low Priced
Offered for everyone	
Good Packaging	No compromise on quality
Soft Skin	
Magical Effect	
Rose Soap	Targeted different market segment
Customized product	

participants were studied. The audio recordings of the focus group discussions were used as an input for the AQUAD 7 tool, and the results of the content analysis are given in the Table 1. After comparing the results from both the tables, we observed that the concepts behind those advertisements were successfully conveyed to the audience. The themes developed from both the content analyses are more or less the same. An observation on cannibalization was also perceived and interpreted as shown in the Table 1. The Figure 1 shows the output file of AQUAD 7, giving the coding details as analyzed based on the FGDs observations.

As an analysis of the Figure 1, the FGD codes have been categorized into themes in the Table 1. Thus, the Table 1 gives the themes that were derived/ shaped from the codes obtained from what the participants observed in the flanker brand's (e.g. Nima Rose) television commercial. The interpretation is as follows:

- [1] As the soap is of everyday use and can be used by any girl, that is why it is considered as a low priced offering.
- [2] As the soap offers great benefits, hence there is no compromise on the quality.
- [3] Also, due to the lower pricing, and as it is a new product, so there are chances of cannibalization of the main brand.

The Figure 2 and Table 2 show the output file and codes for the flagship brand (Nirma Beauty) and its classification into themes/ categories respectively. This Table is derived from the codes where a particular theme is shaped depending upon the codes. The interpretation is as follows :

- [1] Shooting in exotic locations and Nirma being the total beauty soap gives the idea of it being high priced.



**Table 4. Comparative Ad Content Analysis of Brand Narrative Framework and Dimensions**

Brand Narrative Framework & Elements	Brand Narrative Dimensions	Comparison of Brands	
		Nirma Beauty (Flagship)	Nima Rose (Flanker)
<b>Setting</b>	Time	Day	Morning
	Place	Exotic Locations + Forest + Railway Station	Bathroom
	Context	Portrayed as a total beauty soap	The context here was emphasis on rose and its beautiful fragrance
<b>Cast</b>	Character	Beautiful, confident, independent	Beauty conscious
	Role	All time beauty soap	For a fresh and beautiful feeling
<b>Narrative Arc</b>	Logic	Keeps you beautiful over time	Keeps you beautiful as a rose
<b>Language</b>	Voice	Male	Female
	Metaphor	Like a beauty queen	The girls becoming rose like beautiful
	Symbol	Real beauty	Rose

[2] The name Nirma is associated with high brand value because of its highly popular Nirma Washing powder.

The Figure 3 and Table 3 show the output file and codes for the flanker brand (e.g. Nima Rose) and its classification into themes/ categories respectively. The interpretation is as follows :

[1] As the soap is offered to everyone and is a product for everyday use, it is considered as a low price offering.

[2] As the soap has a magical effect on the skin and makes the skin softer, so it has been considered that there is no compromise in quality.

[3] The soap is a specially customized product which has rose essence in it, and hence, it can be said that it targets a different segment of the market.

Hence, we see that the themes that were analyzed from the advertisements (Table 3), and those identified from the focus group discussions (Table 1) are very much in sync. The same has been corroborated from the comparative study using the brand narrative framework and dimensions of Ringer and Thibodeau (2009). The Table 4 presents a comparison between Nirma Beauty soap and Nima Rose using this framework. The respective TVCs, when analyzed in this framework for the two said brands, the findings match with that from the FGDs and ad content analysis (using coding in AQUAD 7).

## Discussion

Previously, many authors have found that viewers of any narrative advertising reflect on their feelings and empathy to construct mental simulations of hypothetical and self-relevant scenarios. A viewer's degree of transportedness defines the level of his/her experience of being lost in the drama or story portrayed in the advertisement. If the ad copy narrates a consumer-relevant story, it increases realism of such an experience, and facilitates mental imagery. As explained by few researchers, emerging markets like India currently are witnessing various waves of change, especially in the areas of tradition & culture, better life, success, globalization, and value for money. A brand offering higher value for money will mostly narrate its features through functionalities via the central route of positioning. However, one with an emotional or peripheral route of positioning will be focusing more on imagery benefits than functionalities. Marketers enhance the aspirational values of the brands using celebrity endorsements. In case of the brands under study, we can see a remarkable difference in the above lines.

Differentiation and positioning strategies of flagship vis-à-vis fighter brands can be well explained through the above mentioned critical observation. In both these contexts of uniquely crafted storytelling, narrative frameworks and settings are used majorly to differentiate the brands on three to four factors, for example, loyalty towards the brand (shifting or switching loyalties based on variety-seeking or habitual purchase behavior); functional and/ or emotional values offered by the brand; trust or credibility of the brand (based on awareness about the source company); and overall value for money (especially for consumers from emerging markets). The functional values can be offered through a portfolio of second order fighter brands (refer Appendix Table 3). By a concern towards the afore-mentioned factors, cannibalization can be pre-estimated and checked.

## Managerial Implications

The value of this research paper can be contemplated in the context of modern day branding strategies and brand management practices of organizations. The paper attempts to establish noticeable differences in the positioning strategies of flanker or fighter brands from mainstream/ flagship brands of the same organization. The ad messages across mass communication channels can be perfectly synchronized to the need of respective positioning of a brand a marketer aims for. This clear understanding of a thoughtful message strategy culminating in a specific positioning of a brand makes the paper suitable for budding marketers or advertisers as a reference.

The illustrations used in the paper give a picture of the industry practices with finer details and thorough analysis, which can enhance an organization's skill of creating and positioning second-order fighter brands as a part of the marketing and business strategy. The study of flanker brands in an Indian advertising & marketing context makes it more interesting as the whole world is shifting gears towards emerging markets. Thus, it identifies the imperative of advertising effectiveness on one side and creative advertising message design on the other side when it comes to differentiation and positioning of fighter brands in a different way as compared to a flagship brand.

## Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The selection of sample for the FGDs from a sampling frame of only one business management school in Southern India can be a limiting factor. The sampling units belonging to almost a same category of socioeconomic background may restrict the findings to be generalized. Being a qualitative perceptual study, the findings, because of the said reason, may appear somewhat skewed. A quantitative analysis in subsequence constitutes a platform for future research in the same area. As a normal practice, after a qualitative analysis, a quantitative validation of the findings is done. However, the current study being purely qualitative by nature remains subtle on it, presenting a scope for further research with criterion, content, and construct validity. The current research follows a descriptive research design to explore and describe observations of a phenomenon in advertising and branding. Zikmund (1984) opined that uncertainty of a research problem indicates the research methodology to be followed. Thus, future scope lies with the current research being made into an explanatory study to test the hypotheses and explain the relationships existing between variables.

## References

- American Marketing Association. (n.d.). *Flanker brand : Definition*. AMA Dictionary. Retrieved from [www.marketingpower.com/\\_layouts/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=F#flanker+brand](http://www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=F#flanker+brand)
- Aperia, T. (2001). *Brand relationship management* [Den varumärkesbyggande processen] (Doctoral Dissertation). School of Business, Stockholm University, Stockholm.

- Boller, G.W., & Olson, J. C. (1991). Experiencing ad meanings: Crucial aspects of narrative/ drama processing. In R. H. Holman & M. R. Solomon (eds.), *Advances in consumer research* (Vol. 18, pp. 164 - 171). Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986). Ethnography as narrative. In V. M. Turner & E. M. Bruner (Eds.), *The anthropology of experience* (pp. 139 - 155). Chicago, IL : University of Illinois Press.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds. Possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press.
- Chang, C. (2009). "Being Hooked" by editorial content : The implications for processing narrative advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 38 (1), 21-34. DOI:10.2753/JOA0091-3367380102
- Czarniawska, B. (1998). *A narrative approach to organization studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deighton, J., Romer, D., & McQueen, J. (1989). Using drama to persuade. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (3), 335-343.
- Demangeot, C., & Broderick, A.J. (2006). Exploring the experiential intensity of online shopping environments. *Qualitative Market Research : An International Journal*, 9(4), 325 - 351. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13522750610689078>
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Imagine yourself in the product: Mental simulation, narrative transportation, and persuasion. *Journal of Advertising*, 33 (2), 37-48. DOI:10.1080/00913367.2004.10639163
- Escalas, J.E. (2007). Self-Referencing and persuasion: Narrative transportation versus analytical elaboration. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (4), 421-429.
- Featherstone, M. (1991). *Consumer culture and postmodernism*. London : Sage.
- Frost, J.H., Chance, Z., Norton, M.I., & Ariely, D. (2008). People are experiencing goods: Improving online dating with virtual dates. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 22 (1), 51-61. DOI: 10.1002/dir.20106
- Gerrig, R. J. (1994). Narrative thought ? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 712-715.
- Green, M.C., & Brock, T.C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79 (5), 701- 721. DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701>
- Holsti, O.R.(1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Huber, G. L., & Gürtler, L. (2012). *Manual zur Software AQUAD 7* (Erstveröffentlichung 2003, Tübingen: Ingeborg Huber Verlag). Tübingen: Softwarevertrieb Günter Huber. Online at: [www.aquad.de](http://www.aquad.de)
- Kapferer, J.-N. (1992). *Strategic brand management*. London : Kogan Page.
- Keller, K.L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22. DOI: 10.2307/1252054
- Keller, P., & Block, L. G. (1997). Vividness effects: A resource matching perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (3), 295-304.
- Keng, C.- J., Ting, H. - Y., & Chen, Y. - T. (2011). Effects of virtual-experience combinations on consumer-related 'sense of virtual community'. *Internet Research*, 21(4), 408- 434. DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10662241111158308>
- Kozinets, R. (2010). Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (2), 71-89. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.2.71>

- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2e). London : Sage Publications.
- Lash, S. (1988). Discourse or figure? Postmodernism as a regime of signification. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 5 (2-3), 311-36.
- Lash, S., & Urry, J. (1994). *Economies of sign and space*. London : Sage Publications.
- Lien, N. - H., & Chen, Y.-L. (2013). Narrative ads: The effect of argument strength and story format. *Journal of Business Research*, 66 (4), 516-522. DOI:10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.12.016
- Litherland, J. (1991). *Storytelling for the Bible*. Colorado Springs, CO: Meriweather Publishing Ltd.
- McLellan, H. (2006). Corporate storytelling perspectives. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 29 (1), 17-20.
- Melin, F. (1997). *The brand as a sustainable competitive advantage - On the art of building strong brands* (PhD-thesis in Swedish). Lund: Lund University Press.
- Mick, D.G. (1987). Toward a semiotic of advertising story grammars. In D. J. Umiker-Sebeok (Ed.) *Marketing and semiotics: New directions in the study of signs for sale* (pp. 249 - 278). Berlin, Germany : Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Mooradian, T.A., Matzler, K., & Szykman, L. (2008). Empathetic responses to advertising: Testing a network of antecedents and consequences. *Marketing Letters*, 19 (2), 79-92. DOI : 10.1007/s11002-008-9032-7
- Neuendorf, K.A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. London : Sage.
- Nirma Limited. (2011, October 16). *Nirma Beauty Soap [video file]*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUACh7CGktU>
- Nirma. (n.d. a.). *Commercial clips*. Retrieved from [www.nirma.co.in/commercial\\_clips.htm](http://www.nirma.co.in/commercial_clips.htm)
- Nirma. (n.d. b.). *Consumer products – soaps*. Retrieved from [www.nirma.co.in/soaps.htm](http://www.nirma.co.in/soaps.htm)
- Nirma. (n.d. c.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from June 10, 2015, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirma>
- Nisbett, R., & Rose, L. (1980). *Human Inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall.
- O'Donohoe, S. (1997). Leaky boundaries : Intertextuality and young adult experiences of advertising. In M. Nava et al. (Eds.), *Buy this book: Studies in Advertising and consumption* (pp. 257 - 275). London : Routledge.
- Padgett, D., & Allen, D. (1997). Communicating experiences: A narrative approach to creating service brand image. *Journal of Advertising*, 26 (4), 49-62.
- Petrova, P.K., & Cialdini, R.B. (2005). Fluency of consumption imagery and the backfire effects of imagery appeals. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (3), 442- 452.
- Phillips, B. J., & McQuarrie, E. (2010). Narrative and persuasion in fashion advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (3), 368- 392. DOI: 10.1086/653087
- Ringer, R., & Thibodeau, M. (2009). Research pinpoints CMO priorities. Top of the list: accountability, flexibility, and integration. *The Advertiser Magazine*. Retrieved from [https://narrativebranding.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/ana\\_theadvertisermagazine\\_may2009.pdf](https://narrativebranding.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/ana_theadvertisermagazine_may2009.pdf)
- Rossiter, J.R., & Percy, L. (1998). *Advertising communications & promotion management*. London : McGraw-Hill.
- Schmitt, B. (1999). *Experiential marketing*. New York, NY : The Free Press.

- Stern, B.B. (1994). Classical and vignette television advertising dramas: Structural models, formal analysis, and consumer effects. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (4), 601- 615.
- Strati, A. (1999). *Organization and Aesthetics*. London : Sage.
- Surendranath, K. (2012, February 7). *Nima Rose [video file]*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwB-OYYpscE>
- Swaminathan, F., & Bansal, I. (2014). Indian culture and its reflection on advertising : A perceptual study of advertising practitioners. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 44 (12), 7-18.
- Swatman, P. M.C., Krueger, C., & van der Beek, K. (2006). The changing digital content landscape: An evaluation of e-business model development in European online news and music. *Internet Research*, 16 (1), 53-80. DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10662240610642541>
- Taylor, S.E., & Schneider, S.K. (1989). Coping and the simulation of events. *Social Cognition*, 7 (2), 174- 194. doi: 10.1521/soco.1989.7.2.174
- Verma, M., & Saranya, R. (2014). Role of gender in influencing consumers' attitude towards online advertising. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 44 (12), 32-46.
- Wang, J., & Calder, B. J. (2006). Media transportation and advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (2), 152-162. DOI: 10.1086/506296
- Wright, P.A. (1986). Presidential address schemer schema: Consumers' intuitive theories about marketers' influence tactics. In R. J. Lutz (Ed.), *NA - advances in consumer research* (Vol. 13). Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research.
- Zeithaml, V.A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, 52 (3), 2-22. DOI: 10.2307/1251446
- Zikmund, W. G. (1984). *Business research methods*. Chicago: Dryden Press.



## APPENDICES

**Appendix Table 1. Profiles of FGD Participants**

Respondent (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Family Income (p.a.)	Highest Qualification
R1	21	Female	> 5 Lacs (in ₹)	B.E
R2	21	Female	< 5 Lacs	B.C.A
R3	21	Female	> 5 Lacs	B.Com
R4	23	Female	> 5 Lacs	B.E
R5	28	Male	> 5 Lacs	B.Tech
R6	23	Male	> 5 Lacs	B.E
R7	21	Male	> 5 Lacs	B.E
R8	21	Male	> 5 Lacs	BBA

**Appendix Figure 1. Images from the Ads**



Source : Nirma Limited (2011) and Surendranath (2012)

## Appendix Table 2. Brand Differentiators

### Nirma Beauty Soap



View (67 sec)  
Download (10.9 MB)

- Brand promise: Better Products, Better Value, Better Living
- Introduced in the year 1992
- 3 different variants and pack sizes
- TFM content of 70% (higher)
- Admirable perfume
- 3rd largest selling brand in 5 years of launch in the toilet soap category
- Consistent outstanding performance

### Nirma Rose



View (30 sec)  
Download (4.92 MB)

- Remarkable and phenomenal market response within just two months of launch
- Company's commitment towards its consumers
- Exceptionally soft rose fragrance
- Fragrance remains around body for a long time even after bath
- High TFM content
- Pleasant bath
- Niche segment by achieving leadership position in two months of launch
- 100g and 150g pack sizes

Source : Nirma (n.d.a., b., c.)

## Appendix Table 3. Other Brands

### Nirma Bath Soap

The toilet soap market in India was dominated by a very few MNCs which could monopolistically price their products. In 1992, sensing a strong need to expand the market through Penetrative Pricing, Nirma entered this market with the launch of 'Nirma Bath Soap,' which is a carbolic (Red) soap. Although the carbolic soap segment is on decline, Nirma Bath has generated larger volumes each year. Packed in a red colour wrapper and available in 75 grams and 150 grams pack sizes, this soap has a Total Fatty Matter (TFM) of 60 %.

### Nirma Lime Fresh Soap

This product had created a sensational marketing history in the Indian toilet soap market, when it was launched in 1997. Seventeen million packs of Nirma Lime Fresh soap were sold in the very first month of its soft launch. Packed in a poly coated 75 gm carton, which is printed on the world's best Cerruti 8-colour printing machine, this soap is available in green colour. With a lime aroma that tingles in one's sensory buds for a long time, this soap contains 80% TFM. The product launch of Nirma Lime Fresh was extremely successful, being ranked as the Seventh Most Successful Brand Launch for the year 1998, as ranked by the Business Standard Marketing Derby, 1998 (as featured in The Strategist Quarterly, July-September 1998).

### Nirma Sandal

Over time, the Indian toilet soap market has fragmented & has seen the emergence of prominent floral fragrance segments as Sandal, Rose, Jasmine, etc. Nirma Sandal is one such product in the floral segment. This toilet soap has 80% TFM content, with rich & exotic fragrance. It promises benefits of Sandal oil & Turmeric powder. It is a premium product from Nirma's stable and is available in 100g and 150g packs.

Source : Nirma (n.d.a., b., c.)