

Persuasive Language in Advertising: Linguistic Analysis of Stanbic IBTC and Access Banks' Online Advertisements

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Abstract

The study examined the linguistic features of the persuasive language employed by advertisers to lure customers/clients to their products and services. The researchers examined the linguistic features, figurative devices and the connotative use of language employed in advertisements. Using the research theories of content analysis and cognitive response as models of analysis, the researchers analysed 50 on-line advertisements from Access and Stanbic IBTC Banks. It was discovered that the advertisers used linguistic features such as adjectives, imperatives, questions, colloquialisms, syntactic parallelism to attract the attention of customer/clients and appeal to their emotions. Also the findings showed that these strategies were very creative, artistic and innovative. The linguistic feature and the figurative language were used by advertisers to influence customers' decisions and to make them patronize their goods and services. The advertisers were able to manipulate their language positively to appeal to the desires of their clients. Therefore, the researchers concluded that language of advertisements is powerful, persuasive and manipulative.

Keywords: Persuasive, Advertisement, Language, Features and Linguistic

Date of Submission: 01-06-2021

Date of Acceptance: 14-06-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising, especially as a marketing tool is very important in the business world. Hardly can any business firm do without advertising in this competitive age. Steuart Henderson Britt (1907-1979) on advertising says "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing but nobody else does." It is a powerful communication tool through which business firms draw the attention and arouse the interest of their existing and potential customers in their products and services. Apart from giving salient hyperbolic information on products and services, advertisements influence consumers to purchase products or accept different services which they need or may not need. Thus, advertisements are artistically woven to appeal of consumers' emotions, to persuade consumers and to induce sales. Kannan and Tyagi (2013) have asserted that advertising is the art of influencing human action and awakening of a desire to possess products and services. According to the writers, advertising is a mass persuasive activity duly sponsored by manufacturers, retailers or dealers for whom advertising is done.

Different researches have shown the significant roles of advertisements as means of communication, manipulation, persuasion and their power on human psyche. (Skorupa&Duboviciene, 2015; Nichofor, 2004; Kanan and Tyagi, 2013; Er, 2012).

Therefore, advertisements attract attention, persuade consumers and affect the decision of buyers & customers (Vaicennieme, 2006) Manufacturers relish in the use of advertisements to sell their products at all costs and they employ different linguistic strategies in their bid to induce sales. Kannam&Tyagi (2013) have stated also that advertising is aimed at promoting and selling not only tangible and physical goods, but ideas and services which are seen in banking and insurance. There are four main objectives of advertising as pointed out by Kanan and Tyagi (2013): trial, continuity, brand switch and switching back. The trial objective involves convincing the customers to buy new products and advertisers in this instance employ flash and attractive advertisements to lure customers into purchasing the item for trial. For continuity Kana and Tyagi (2013) have stressed that the objective is concerned with making the existing customers stick to the product and advertisers use the advertisements to induce customers to continue purchasing the product. Furthermore, the authors have reiterated that the brand switch objective is basically for those companies who desire to attract customers of other competitors to switch from their brand to their own. The switch back objective is for companies who wish to get back their previous customers. In this objective, the advertisers employ different strategies to lure their customers back like discount sale, new advertisement, new packaging and so on. (Kanan and Tyagi, 2013).

All these perspectives show that advertisements are creative, innovative, fascinating powerful, persuasive and emotional. The interesting tool employed in achieving all these apart from graphics and music is

language. Advertisements are intrinsically packed with powerful, persuasive and emotional language. So, language is one of the veritable tools used in advertising. It has been observed that some marketers and advertisers employ manipulative & hyperbolic expressions, connotative, rhetorical, flowery language, pseudo comparatives and semantically empty words to persuade consumers and to appeal to their emotions. Therefore, many advertisements are subjective in nature and some play on consumers' psychology. Furthermore Wassaga (2014) stresses that every advertisement exists within a social and cultural framework and communication is enhanced on the basis of readers' knowledge and experiences. Another object of interest is that advertisements contain a lot of connotations which may be social or cultural. Sometimes advertisements contain myths which when decoded realistically may mean nothing.

Hughes (1987) uses the term 'linguistic capitalism' to refer to advertising and asserts that linguistic forms used in advertising are dubious manifestation of free enterprise in which language becomes a natural resource exploited by agencies in the sectional interest of their marketing projects. It is imperative, therefore, to examine the language employed by advertisers/marketers to persuade and manipulate buyers. This research paper intends to unravel the powerful language use in persuasion and in appealing to consumers' emotions. It specifically examines the powerful language employed by advertisers to manipulate buyers. It also assesses the rhetoric and figurative use of language that appeals to consumers' emotion and psyche.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researchers employed the cognitive response theory and content analysis for the study.

The cognitive response theory is a model of persuasion which postulates what an attitude change takes place as a result of the belief and thoughts a person has while receiving a persuasive appeal (http://www.psychology.com/cms/gossary...cognitive_responses_theory.html). Therefore cognitive theory states that advertising has the capability of influencing the significance people attach to various products and purchase decision (Thorson & More, 1996). In the same vein, cognitive response theory states that attitude change occurs primarily as a function of peoples' evaluative response to attitude -relevant information. However, it is primarily the number and valence of these responses that determines the magnitude and duration of attitude change (APA).

Another theoretical framework for this study is the content analysis which is used by analysts to examine patterns in communication in a systematic way. According to Luo (2020) content analysis is a research method used in identifying patterns of recorded communication. The writer stresses that content analysis is employed by researchers to find out the effects of communication content on the audience. In the same vein, influences are made about the audience of the texts while doing the analysis. For qualitative analysis, researchers employ content analysis to determine the presence of certain words, concepts & themes' and then make inferences about the messages within the text, the writers and the audience. Thus, Bengtsson (2016) remarks that the purpose of content analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and to draw realistic conclusions from it. Therefore, Allen (2010) opines that content analysis is a descriptive approach to communication research used in describing communicative phenomenon and analyzing the content or meaning of communicative messages. That is, in using content analysis, researchers build an objective interpretation of the content of a text/article/message in a systematic way.

The researchers employed these frameworks to analyze the language of advertisements selected from the internet which are in the forms of sentences and phrases.

III. MATERIALS

The materials employed for the study are advertisements found in the internet: Fifty on-line advertisements from Access and Stanbic IBTC Banks from the period of January- August, 2020.

IV. SELECTED DATA

Access Bank

- 1) Join 500 + women who have won ₦500 each in the lucky woman draw. Buy airtime or transfer funds using *901# before 30/07/2020 to qualify.
- 2) You are 5 transactions away from qualifying to win ₦1,000,000 in Xtra win July mega draw. Buy airtime and transfer funds via *901# before 30/07/2020.
- 3) You are 4 transactions away from qualifying to win ₦1,000,000 in Xtra win July mega draw. Buy airtime and transfer funds via *901# before 29/07/2020.
- 4) ₦1,000,000 up for grabs this July. Maintain ₦5K balance and transfer funds 5 times via *901# or Access Mobile App before 20/07/20 to qualify.
- 5) Do more transfers and qualify to win ₦100K in the Xtra win weekly draw on Friday. Dial *901# now on your mobile app to get started.
- 6) Grab your share of the ₦50,000 prize money when you make a transfer using the Access Mobile App.

- 7) ₦5,000 up for grabs when you perform 3 transactions within an hour using *901# or the Access Mobile for bills, airtime or transfer.
- 8) Join 5000+ winners in the Xtra win draws. Do 2 transfers using *901# or Access Mobile App and qualify to win ₦100,000 this Friday.
- 9) Grab your share of the ₦50,000 prize money when you make a transfer today using *901# or the Access Mobile App.
- 10) Congratulations! You are closer to winning ₦1,000,000 in XtraJune Mega Draw. To qualify, buy airtime and transfer funds 5x via *901# before 29/06/2020.
- 11) You can be one of the 250 Xtra lucky women to win ₦5,000 this June. To qualify, just buy airtime and transfer funds using *901# today.
- 12) Tick Tock! Time to stock up! Dial *901*11# to enjoy a 50% interest rate slash on Pay Day loans for women before March 31st, 2020.
- 13) To celebrate women this month, we're giving you 2% cashback on Pay Day loans. Dial *901*11# to get this offer.
- 14) It's international women's day. To celebrate, we're giving you 21% cashback on Pay Day. Dial *901*11# to get this offer.
- 15) Need a flexible loan? Select option 2 or 3 when you dial *901*11*1# to get up to 200% of your salary and repay over 3-6 months.
- 16) The solution to your financial needs is just a button away. Dial *901*11# to get instant loan within minutes.
- 17) A sleek smart phone plus airtime can be yours for ₦2,750 per month. Download the Quick Bucks App to get started.
- 18) A perfect gift can be smart. Gift your loved one a smart phone for Valentine. Download the Quick Bucks App to get started.
- 19) Free rent for 1 year. Simply fund your Diamond Xtra account with a minimum of ₦5,000 to qualify for a ticket to win.
- 20) Celebrate the New Year with a free Infinix Hot7 Pro with ₦10K airtime bundle. Download the Quick Bucks App to get started.
- 21) New Year, New You. Get a smart phone today and pay later from as low as ₦1,500 per month. Download the Quick Bucks App to start.
- 22) Smart phone plus MTN bundles are yours for as low as ₦3K per month with device finance. Download the Quick Bucks App to get started.
- 23) Big plans this month? Bring them to life today. Get up to ₦300K with an instant digital loan. Simply dial *901*11# or visit Quick Bucks for more info. T&Cs apply.
- 24) Have any last minute expenses? We've got you. Access up to ₦300,000 with an instant personal loan today. Dial *901*11# or visit Quick Bucks to get started. T&Cs apply.
- 25) ₦1 million could be yours in this season of love. To qualify, perform transfers or buy airtime 5x daily with Access Mobile App or dial *901# now. T&Cs apply. The solution to your financial needs is a button away.

Stanbic IBTC Bank

- 26) You've got needs. It's got powers! Update your Stanbic IBTC Mobile App today on the Android or IOS App Store and be your own #appyness 2.0 hero. You can also get the chance to enjoy 5 free transfer charges on 5 local transactions when you upgrade.
- 27) Time to be a Hero! Upgrade your Stanbic IBTC Mobile App today on the Android or IOS App Store to experience the amazing features of the Super App #appyness 2.0.
- 28) Be your hero. Open an Ease Wallet account directly from your super app.
- 29) You've got needs. It's got powers! Be your hero with the upgraded Stanbic IBTC Mobile App which now comes with voice banking, stock broking, insurance and many more.
- 30) Defend your treasures with the supper app. App so powerful. It shields you. Be your hero with the upgraded Stanbic IBTC mobile app.
- 31) A supper app that champions all financial needs. Your one-stop financial service partner.
- 32) The new Stanbic IBTC Mobile App is a true all-rounder.
- 33) Using your Stanbic IBTC master card, stay connected to your favourite show from your favourite couch.
- 34) Would you like to download a super power? Watch this space.
- 35) What if you could install a special ability? Watch this space.
- 36) Make a smart investment decision with just a click on Happyess 2.0
- 37) Take a leap into a successful new year.
- 38) Download the Stanbic IBTC Mobile App today on the android or IOS App store and be your own #appyness 2.0 hero.
- 39) Enjoy peace of mind in your pocket with the new insurance feature.

- 40) Trade like a legend with the new stocks feature.
- 41) Make investments with a few taps on the mutual funds features.
- 42) Rescue tomorrow with the pensions feature. What are you waiting for? Upgrade to the super app in the goggle play store or the app store today.
- 43) App so powerful. It can shield you.
- 44) Get 50% off your showing subscription for the first 6 months using your Stanbic IBTC mastercard.
- 45) Get up to 10% off on Jumia with your Stanbic IBTC mastercard.
- 46) Tomorrow, we bring true innovations home. Stay connected to the things you need from where you need to be.
- 47) Do you know you can choose to pay less while using your Stanbic IBTC cards for web related transactions and subscription? Just a click.
- 48) Do you fancy pocketing a renewed super hero? What this space.
- 49) What are you waiting for? Upgrade the support app on the goggle play.
- 50) Bank as quick as you speak with voice banking. Bank as quick as you speak with voice assistance on the mobile app.

V. FINDINGS

| <u>Linguistic Feature</u> | <u>Data no.</u> | <u>Items</u> | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Adjectives | 1 | <u>lucky</u> woman | |
| | 2 | <u>free</u> rent | |
| | 11 | <u>250 extra lucky</u> women | |
| | 15 | <u>flexible</u> loan | |
| | 17 | <u>sleek smart</u> phone | |
| | 18 | <u>perfect</u> gift <u>smart</u> | |
| | 20 | <u>free</u> Infinix hot7 | |
| | 27 | <u>amazing</u> features of the <u>Super</u> App | |
| | 31 | <u>supper</u> app, <u>one-stop financial service</u> partner | |
| | 32 | <u>true</u> all-rounder | |
| | 33 | <u>favourite</u> show from your <u>favourite</u> couch. | |
| | 34 | <u>super</u> power | |
| | 35 | <u>special</u> ability | |
| | 36 | <u>smart</u> investment | |
| | 37 | <u>successful</u> new year | |
| | Imperatives | 1 | <u>Join</u> 500 + women |
| | | 3 | <u>Buy</u> airtime or <u>transfer</u> |
| | | 6 | <u>Grab</u> your share |
| | | 8 | <u>Join</u> 5000 + winners |
| | | 18 | <u>Download</u> quick bucks |
| | | 19 | Simply <u>fund</u> |
| | | 20 | <u>Celebrate</u> the New Year |
| | | 21 | New Year, New You. <u>Get</u> a smart phone |
| | | 27 | <u>upgradyour</u> Stanbic |
| | | 28 | <u>Be</u> your hero. <u>Open</u> an ease wallet account |
| | | 30 | <u>Defend</u> your treasures |
| | | 33,46 | <u>Stay</u> connected |
| | | 37 | <u>Take</u> a leap |
| | | 38 | <u>Download</u> the Stanbic IBTC |
| | | 39 | <u>Enjoy</u> peace of mind |
| | | 40 | <u>Trade</u> like a legend |
| | | 41 | <u>Make</u> investments |
| | | 42 | <u>Rescue</u> tomorrow |
| | | 44 | <u>Get</u> 50% off your showing subscription |
| | | 45 | <u>Get</u> up to 10% off on Jumia |
| | 50 | <u>Bank</u> as quick as | |
| | Questions | 15 | Need a flexible loan? Select option |
| 34 | | Would you like to download a super power? | |
| 35 | | What if you could install a special ability? | |
| 47 | | Do you know you can choose to pay less | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|----|---|
| | 48 | Do you fancy pocketing a renewed super hero? |
| | 49 | What are you waiting for? Upgrade |
| Colloquails | 26 | . . . be your own #appy ^{ness} 2.0 <u>hero</u> |
| | 27 | . . . features of the Super App <u>#appy^{ness} 2.0</u> |
| Figurative Language | | |
| Metaphor | 27 | Time to be a <u>Hero!</u> |
| | 30 | Defend <u>your treasures</u> |
| Simile | 50 | Bank <u>as quick as</u> you speak |
| Hyperbole | 1 | Join 500 + women who have won ₦500 each |
| | 2 | win ₦1,000,000 in Xtra win July mega draw. |
| | 6 | Grab your share of the ₦50,000 prize money |
| | 7 | ₦5,000 up for grabs when . . . |
| | 10 | You are closer to winning ₦1,000,000 |
| | 16 | solution to your financial needs is just a button away |
| | 42 | Rescue tomorrow with the pensions feature. |
| | 46 | Tomorrow, we bring true innovations home. |
| Personification | 29 | You've got needs. <u>It's got power!</u> |
| | 43 | App so powerful. It can shield you. |
| Onomatopoeia | 12 | Tick Tock! Time to stock up! |
| Conotation | 7 | N5,000 for grabs |
| | 9 | Grab your share of the N50,000prize money |
| | 28 | Be your hero |
| | 46 | Tomorrow, we bring true innovations home |

VI. DISCUSSION

The researchers discovered the use of different linguistic features in on-line advertisements from Access and Stanbic IBTC Banks. There was an ample use of adjectives employed to modify various items needed by the customers. These adjectives were used to beautify or add glamour to the products advertised that is, to make them attractive to the customers. The use of double or repetition of adjectives to qualify a noun is geared towards enhancing the quality of the item in question. Thus, most of the adjectives were evaluative ones which were employed to appeal to customers/consumers. Hence, Vaicenoniere (2006) asserts that linguistically, adjective pre modification contributes to the opinion formation and emotional appeal.

Another linguistic feature used extensively by the financial institutions was imperatives. Through the effective use of action verbs, the advertisers make their customers to start thinking about taking action in response to the advertisements rather than sitting and staring. However, the imperatives have a coercive undertone.

The researchers also discovered the use of salient questions meant to appeal to customers' emotions on the needs. These questions, though rhetorical, are meant to get the customers thinking. Like imperatives, advertisements in question form are aimed at inducing action.

Use of colloquial language was also discovered. Although sparingly used here, the advertisers used colloquial language as a weapon to entice their customers. Commenting on the importance of colloquial language, Kanam & Tyagi (2003) observe that colloquial language appeals to ordinary people though the use is often complex and deliberately ambiguous.

A lot of figurative expressions such as metaphors, similes, personifications, hyperbole among others were discovered in the advertisements analysed. These figures of speech appealed to customers'/subscribers' emotions. The writers deliberately used them to evoke positive responses from customers and subscribers. Just as Robert (2013) opines, advertisers make use of figurative expressions to add beauty to language use in advertising. Thus, Ogungbe (2011) notes that hyperbolic expressions in this context perform a pragmatic function- to amplify the degree of reality of expressions. Similarly, Vaicenoniere (2006) remarks that often the advertised object is attributed human qualities which makes it seem more attractive and familiar. In his view, Root (2019) asserts that advertisers employ figurative language to help consumers/clients feel that every product or service is created just for the customer/client and this draws the customers into the advertising by creating a personal bond. Also, figurative language is one means of making advertisements memorable and emotionally coloured. (Skorupa and Duboviciene, 2015). Figures of speech contribute to the beauty of advertisement and emphasize the key ideas in advertising. The aesthetics in advertising portrayed by figurative language attract the attention of consumers and clients.

The advertisers also resorted to the use of connotation to draw the attention of their customers/subscribers to their products and services. The marketers gave airs of possibilities through the use of empty statements. The expressions “grab your share”, “for grabs”, “be your hero”, “tomorrow, we bring true innovations home” are empty expressions geared towards making pleasant and great claims for products and services. However, in reality these assertions are only meant to arrest the interest of customers/subscribers and lure them to the products and services mentioned. The expressions are used here to connote pleasantness, greatness, goodness and the like. Hence Ogungbe (2011) asserts that these empty statements are mere fabrications which are used to arouse the curiosity of the subscribers or blur their view of reality.

VII. CONCLUSION

The language of advertisement is very persuasive, artistic and creative. It is a powerful tool used by marketers to influence customers to purchase or patronize their products and services. Through language, advertisers appeal to the emotions and desires of prospective clients. Linguistic features in the forms of adjectives, imperatives, questions, colloquial language and syntactic parallelism make it possible for advertisers to advertise, promote and market their commodities and services. Also, figurative language and the use of connotation are effective strategies which the marketers employ to induce sales and patronage. Thus, Emodi (2011) states that the novelty and freshness of the language of advertisements are for the purposes of attracting people’s attention, winning their trust and swaying their thinking. Furthermore, Pobert (2013) stresses that the language of advertisements is creative, productive, and these qualities centre on the choice of the advertisers. Therefore, the language of advertisement is powerful, appealing, and persuasive. Advertisers employ different language techniques to appeal to customers’ emotion, and psyche.

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