

**A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING IN NEWSPAPER:  
A STUDY OF SELECTED ADVERTISEMENTS IN DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPER**

Buiké Oparaugo, Nasiru Alhaji Salihu and Bilyaminu Bello Sokoto

**Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto, Nigeria**

[buikeoparaugo@gmail.com](mailto:buikeoparaugo@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

*Semantics is the study of meaning in language and can be approached in many ways. The meaning, however, can be connotative or denotative. Therefore, this paper analyzed semantics in the language of advertising in the newspapers, focusing on selected advertisements in the Daily Trust newspaper. The main focus areas in the analysis include imperatives, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, meaning of words in advertising, autographic modifications, punning, and ambiguity in captions. Advertisers use all these to achieve persuasion, which every advertisement tries to achieve. The writers analyzed three advertisements to enable them to drive home the meaning. Through the detailed examination of the terms advertising and advertising language, the writers were able to explain why copywriters make unique word choices when writing advertising copy. The authors concluded by stating that adverts mainly play on emotions, deploying images that arrest the would-be buyer's attention, thus leaving no doubts in the minds of existing and prospective consumers on why they should stick to/switch to the advertised product.*

**Keywords:** Semantic, advertisements, advertising language, newspaper.

**INTRODUCTION**

The linguistic and philosophical study of meaning in language and semiotics is called semantics. He is interested in the relationship between symbols (words, sentences, signs and symbols) and their representation (their actual meaning). Semantics is also a branch of linguistics that studies meaning, the change of meaning, and the principles that govern the relationship between sentences or words and their meanings, according to Wikipedia.

Advertising is a type of marketing that involves paying for space to advertise a product, service, or cause. Advertising, or advertising for short, is the actual commercial message. The purpose of advertising is to reach out to people who are most likely to pay for a company's product or service and convince them to purchase. Advertising is a paid-mediated communication from a known source that encourages consumers to take a particular action (Kenechukwu et al., 2013). An advertiser aims to reach potential customers and influence their perceptions, opinions, and purchasing behavior. They spend much money to get people interested in their product (market) (Omeje et al., 2022).

Generally, advertising is a type of promotion, and like promotion, advertising must have a definite objective. This requires identifying specific target consumers and being clear about the impact of advertising on them. Advertising objectives have historically been explicitly presented as direct sales. It involves a message communicated to sell by persuading or intending consumers

to buy (Oparaugo et al., 2020). Advertising is now considered to have a communication objective to inform, persuade and remind potential customers of the value of a product—advertising attempts to train consumers to respond positively to the advertising message. Advertising objectives drive the development and execution of the entire marketing campaign (Singh, 2012). Advertising is responsible for promoting goods and services, increasing the audience's product knowledge, persuading the target audience to favor products and services, and always keeping the brand alive ( Omeje et al., 2022).

This paper analyses the semantics of advertising language in newspapers, focusing on selected advertisements from the Daily Trust newspaper. The study of semantics is a broad multidimensional domain of study in linguistics. There are a million and one definitions of semantics out there.

## **MEANING AND HISTORY OF ADVERTISING**

Advertising is the mass promotion of a product. It is to raise awareness about the uses and benefits of a product. This makes the product available to those who need it, fulfills advertiser needs, and increases sales (Ampofo, 2014). Omeje and Oparaugo (2021) define advertising as all written or verbal communication directed at a target audience and paid for by a sponsor to sell or market a product or service. Advertising is about enticing existing and potential customers to continue or initiate action. Advertising is a method of communication that encourages viewers to make a purchasing choice about a product or service while providing information. It is considered an essential factor for the economic development of traders and companies (Haider & Shakib, 2017).

Advertising, in general, is the promotion of goods, services, businesses and ideas, usually done by a named sponsor. It refers to creating a message to sell a product, thought, idea, or service. With the wide use of media, advertising is a dynamic concept. Newspapers, periodicals, posters, neon and fluorescent signs, billboards, television commercials, laser projections, and high-rise inflated figures and objects are all examples of advertising media. Accordingly, advertising aims to attract, modify, change and influence public opinion.

Newspaper advertising is attractive, exciting and innovative in today's global society. They are an integral part of our daily lives. A business needs to encourage sales and generate revenue. Slogans are used in most advertisements to attract customers. Everything in advertising matters: colors, background image, displayed person/animated image, advertiser word choice, font size, etc.

The advertising field continues to grow and evolve as brands rely heavily on media for various marketing purposes like increasing revenue, generating knowledge, creating market awareness, etc. Advertising also plays a vital role in shaping the ever-changing norms of society, both nationally and internationally. With the increasing influence of advertising on people's lives, more attention is paid to the many positive and negative effects (Barve et al., 2015). It should be noted that advertising thrives on persuasion—marketing communication in the form of advertising (Okoye et al., 2017). Going further, Uwem, Iniobong and Inyene (2015, p.217) argue that advertising involves persuading an audience or consumer to take an action related to a product, idea or service.

Advertising agencies, ad development agencies, advertising media and a large number of people such as copy editors, visualizers, brand managers, researchers, The creative head and designers take it to the client or the recipient forms the ad. field. An advertising agency is hired by a company that needs to promote itself or its products. The client provides the agent with information about the brand, its image, the ideals and values that underlie it, the target segments, and so on. Agents turn ideas and concepts into graphics, text, layouts, and themes to interact with users. Spots are broadcast after customer confirmation, according to reservations made by the agency's media purchasing department.

The beginnings of advertising date back thousands of years. Outdoor signage, usually an eye-catching sign painted on the wall of a building, is one of the earliest known means of advertising. Many signs of this type have been discovered, especially in the remains of ancient Rome and Pompeii. An outdoor advertisement discovered in Rome advertises a rental property, while a find painted on a wall in Pompeii draws the attention of tourists to a tavern in another city. The papyrus was used in Thebes, Egypt, three thousand years ago to announce the reward for the return of runaway slaves. William Caxton, an English merchant, diplomat, writer and printer, wrote the first English print advertisement in 1477. 'Sarum Ordinal' or 'Pye,' a list of instructions for the Salisbury rabbi on how to deal with the Easter date change, is announced in this announcement.

A Wailing City is the original version of advertising in Nigeria. Other categories include signs and designs of caves and rocks. In 1928, advertising became more or less modern. West African Publicity Limited (based on UAC) commenced operations in Nigeria around this time. He has worked with marketing events in Nigeria and West Africa. Later, the company was renamed LINTAS.

In the 1960s, an increase in television and radio stations and print publications such as newspapers and magazines contributed to the growth of advertising. Rosabel Advertising and Insight Communication are two prominent advertising agencies that emerged in the late 1970s. They still run a thriving business. They have improved the quality of their advertising and developed new and innovative ways to promote products and services. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) was established in 1988 to regulate and manage advertising activities.

## **SEMANTICS IN ADVERTISING**

Semantics refers to the mind's ability to give a word or phrase the appropriate meaning. According to Odoemenam, Ordu and Omoghie (2017), semantics is a unique language component that connects with other aspects of human communication. Semantically, we capture what a sentence is trying to say or convey by deriving meaning from words and expressions. The study of meaning is called semantics. Emodi (2011) observed that the core of an advertisement is the persuasion associated with it in a study of the uniqueness of word choice used in advertising language.

The implied meanings of words, adjectives, invented words, misspelled words, repetition, metaphorical use, puns, nonexistent terms, and ambiguous statements are all explored concerning

how manufacturers use them to achieve their goals in his research (persuasion). It defines the types of phrases used in advertising as those that can persuade viewers to consider another product while capturing their attention. Noor, Mustafa, Muhabat and Kazemian (2015, p. 7) also consider television advertising slogans from a semantic point of view. They argue that advertising language contains hidden meanings and is formed from such combinations of words to attract viewers, a view Emodi discussed earlier. The common point between Emodi and Noor et al. is that the advertising language is built to stick in the viewer's mind for a while.

### **The Language of Advertising**

Language can influence people's thoughts and actions. According to Ezejideaku and Ugwu (2010), the language structure in advertising has a unique shape. Many factors influence how a copywriter (i.e., an ad creator) chooses vocabulary, suggesting that copywriters have a limited vocabulary supply. The way messages are created and delivered in advertising is influenced by the language used and the variations and uses that language allows.

In the context of advertising, language can influence the purchasing decisions of existing and potential customers (Robert, 2013). Like any other field or discipline, advertising has its language, which often does not follow regular English's grammatical or logical standards. It is a language that works and learns the environment in which it is used (Robert, 2013).

According to Kannan and Tyagi (2013), advertising language is generally quite positive, helping to highlight why one product stands out. Hyperbole, objects, extended noun phrases, short phrases, vague and snobbish words, and the use of imperatives, euphemisms, colloquialisms, syntactic parallels and charms are all mentioned in their work. The reader or audience must be attracted to the ad and identify the product. Theo Abatta (2017).

### **Imperatives**

The use of imperatives is every day in advertising. For example, "Get your copy now" leaves little room for debate. The "now" urgency dictates you subconsciously, leaving a stronger impression than the phrase "get your copy." One of the most famous advertising slogans is "Just Do It" by Nike. The phrase forces you to act - patronize - because you have no other choice. It leads you in a solid and fearless direction. The phrase was short and catchy, and it became instantly recognizable around the world. You do not need to know anything; all you have to do is "just do it."

### **Adjective**

The use of adjectives in ad copy helps with persuasion. As stated earlier, advertising is intended to convince existing and potential customers to continue/start taking action, and the adjectives fool you into believing the advertised goods or services. Fox. Persuasive advertising is intended to attract the attention and interest of the consumer, establish credibility and trust, stimulate demand for the product, and motivate the consumer to take positive action. Kenechukwu, Asemah, & Edegoh, (2013).

Adjectives add depth to an ad, and the proper adjective can dramatically change the tone of a plot. For example, Pepsi's "Dare for More" combines both an adjective and an imperative. "Dare" is imperative, and "moreover" proves that the drink delivers a higher quality than competing products.

### **Verbs and Adverbs**

To persuade consumers to take action, many advertisements use verbs and adverbs. GOtv is known for its prominent saying, "Live it. Love it". It was changed to "Live it. Love it at home" during the COVID-19 pandemic. It makes you love GOtv and like it more than other cable companies. It would be a significant benefit if the marketer or advertising agency in charge of the promotion understood how addressing an audience problem could dramatically change perception—advertising knowledge.

Advertising language is vast, diverse and constantly changing. Advertising language is not necessarily "correct" in the traditional sense. For example, comparison is often used when no meaningful comparison can be made. "Good, better," as PHB Bank's now-defunct commercial would claim, but better? They make better sense than other banks. The copywriter ensures that his language and content meet the four critical qualities identified by Leech (1966, p. 25) in Ezejideaku and Ugwu (2010) as essential for effective advertising:

1. *Attention value*: Getting attention is one thing; Maintaining it is another matter. Each advertisement seeks to attract the public's attention to persuade them to start or continue using the advertised product. This can be done using linguistics.
2. *Readability*: Readability is one of the advantages of ad text. Accordingly, the copywriter must make the ad copy's message clear and understandable for the viewer. In short, ambiguity is not acceptable.
3. *Memorability*: It is one thing to get the public's attention; it is another to ensure they remember the ad after seeing it. The copywriter must keep the advertising message short so that it is memorable. Brand names, slogans, keywords, jingles (for radio and TV ads) and other language messages to remember.
4. *Selling power*: A good ad will sell a lousy product, while a bad one will need help to sell a good product even though it is available. The considerable scarcity of imperative clauses is one of the most essential elements of advertising grammar.

### **Words and Meanings in Advertising**

Using the wrong phrases can ultimately change the meaning of the entire ad, so you should exercise caution here. Accuracy affects the accuracy of word usage. Words are used to convey precise and vivid meanings to the listener. It is essential to consider advertising language in the sense of the word (Emodi, 2011). There are two types of meanings: expression and meaning. The literal or conventional meaning of the dictionary is indicative, while the evaluative, inferential, or emotional meaning is implied (Emodi, 2011). The sign of a word is its stated literal meaning, while its meaning is the meaning with which it is associated. Advertising language can be described as

meaningful. As for Maltina advertising and its nutritional implications, the advertisement aims to convince the public (current and potential customers) of the nutritional and rich content of the malt drink.

Maltina ..... nourishment for life.

Words like **nourishment** and **for life** come to mind. The advertisement wants the public to remember that Maltina is suitable for everyone, not only the young or a particular age group. That continues indefinitely. The descriptions represent Maltina as a healthy drink with all essential nutritional elements, including vitamins. As a result, it should be taken by everyone.

### **Ambiguity in Captions**

When a term has more than one meaning, it is considered ambiguous. This needs to be clarified for the target audience. Therefore, an advertisement is ambiguous if it conveys multiple meanings. Most tagline designers aim for ambiguity and arousal. Ambiguity can be caused by odd word order in the sentence or the use of polysemous terms. In a newspaper advertisement, Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing (IVM) said, "Tough boss, strong performance." The word 'tough' is used in this context with lexical ambiguity. The caption has a dual purpose. One can experience a tough time using the IVM Granite. Again, the IVM Granite is strong (tough) enough for Nigerian roads. However, the slogan needed to be more balanced with a picture of IVM Granite on a Nigerian road.

### **Use of Puns**

A well-crafted pun can accomplish wonders. Puns are among the most widely utilized types of wordplay. Puns are used to attract attention. However, in the following example, 'Bank PHB: Wouldn't you rather bank with us?' note the lack of brand identification. Almost any competitor might use these lines. Although they are excellent, they need a distinct identity. The brand name occurs in Hypo's slogan, 'Hypo wipes o!' but as a solution or promise rather than as part of the pun. These slogans having the brand name in them can assist the name to be remembered while also giving the slogan a dual meaning.

### **Autographic Modification**

The variation from the standard spelling of words is known as autographic alteration. To draw attention to the brand and sell it, the copywriter purposefully spells a standard term differently than it is usually spelled. Example: MTN's *Y'hello*. This is a way of trying to write hello while recognizing MTN's traditionally known color – Yellow.





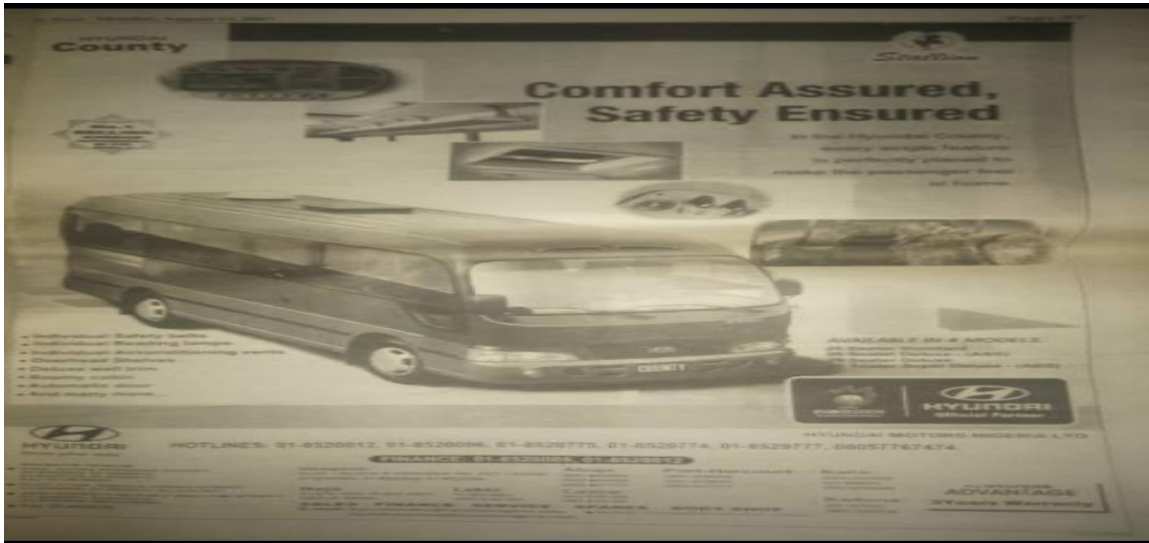
## Semantics Analysis of Selected Advertisements from Daily Trust Newspaper



There is a high presence of photographic imagery. The example features an advertisement for Globacomm. It uses a variety of signifiers which publicize both the identity of the brand and the image. The advert features five persons - three girls and two boys reuniting after a long period of no communication. Above the image is the headline "Let us be friends again" with a sub-head "For subscribers who have not used their lines since 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007". Underneath the image is Glo's logo. Also beside the image and before the logo is Glo's slogan, "Rule your world." On a superficial level, it is easy to deduce the obvious, which is that Glo has not barred subscribers for their lengthy stay without using their lines. Also promised in the advertisement is free N100 airtime.



The advert also used photographic imagery. It features a man in the comfort of his home with his laptop computer connecting to the internet for bank transactions. Above the image is the headline, "Where can I find a bank without walls?" The message is clear but, at the same time, ambiguous. With the aid of the picture, one can easily deduce that you do not need to go to any bank branch to perform your transactions physically. Then below the image is a sub-head, "That bank is Wema Bank," which tells readers that Wema Bank now has internet banking. However, one may think "without walls" means a bank building without walls or blocks.



The advertisement employed a picture showing a bus with a headline above the picture, which reads "Comfort Assured, Safety Ensure." The language employed is straightforward. The advertisement is from the automobile manufacturing company Hyundai. In the advert, they have promised customers and prospective customers their comfort and safety.

## **CONCLUSION**

The advertising industry uses persuasion to sell goods, services, and ideas by using mass media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines to reach various audiences. Advertising is primarily emotion-based, using images that capture the attention of potential buyers. They make a determined effort to leave no doubt in the minds of current and potential customers why they should stick with a marketing product that appeals to the senses. Advertisers sometimes exaggerate when informing potential customers about the presence of their products and services. They aim to convince customers to buy in the language. At the lexical and written level, the language of advertising in newspapers and magazines has distinct characteristics. Advertising language is consistent with the advertiser's goal of informing, encouraging, stimulating, and enticing the public to buy.



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