



## Research Article

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## Linguistic Deception in Television Advertising: A Study of Zebrudaya

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**Abstract:** Advertising is meant to sell products, goods and services to consumers by persuading them to purchase a particular product. This is mostly done through various media like television, radio, newspaper as well as the new media (social media and the Internet). Many studies have shown that television is the most influential among them. However, there appears to be a recent trend in television advertising especially involving Chief Zebrudaya. Zebrudaya is famed for advertising malaria and pain relieving drugs as well as national advertising aimed at nation/peace-building and electronics. His constant use of bad grammar constitutes linguistic deception.

**Keywords:** Linguistic, television, advertisements, advertising language.

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## INTRODUCTION

Generally, advertising is a relatively low-cost method of conveying selling messages to numerous prospective customers. It can secure leads for salesmen and middlemen by convincing readers to request more information and by identifying outlets handling the product. Advertising appeals aim to influence the way consumers view themselves and also signifies how buying certain products can prove to be beneficial for them. The message conveyed through advertising appeals influences the purchasing decisions of consumers. The most important types of advertising appeals include emotional and rational appeals. Ambekar (2009) noted that emotional appeals are often effective for the youth, while rational appeals work well for products directed towards the older generation. Some of the appeals are discussed in the following sections. An emotional appeal is related to an individual's psychological and social needs for purchasing certain products and services. Many consumers are emotionally motivated or driven to make certain purchases.

Advertising according to Aka, Okorie and Kehinde (2015, p.3) is a potent vehicle for achieving acceptance of desirable and useful concepts or ideas where the profit motive is minimal or missing altogether. Okorie (2009) reasoned that advertising has become an integral part of our social and economic system; it is indeed a powerful communication tool of business to most firms and organizations for them to be able to reach their target market across the globe. In other words, advertising can be seen as a form of communication

intended to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to purchase or take some action upon products, ideas, or services. Advertising is part of the marketing activities of a company, and part of the range of communications that can support a brand. Marketing, as a business discipline, can be thought of as the essential interface between a business and its customers or consumers.

However, advertising is charged with the responsibilities of promoting goods and services, thereby creating awareness about the product to the people, persuading target audience to patronize products and services as well as to save the life of brands always. In an attempt to make the best of this or to make this more successful, manufacturers most times use advertising to promote their goods and services in the face of prospective consumer/customers. However, in an attempt to make advertisements catchy and persuasive, product manufacturers adopt different techniques including linguistic deception and bad grammar.

## MEANING OF ADVERTISING

Advertising is among us for the thousands of years with an aim to circulate information, propagate and disseminate messages and interacting with the people to propose their services and products. Influence of television in persuasion is evinced and its effect cannot be refuted (Zia and Iftikhar, 2018). Advertising is the communication of information about the price, quality and availability of a product. Generally, advertising involves a message communicated with the intention to

sell by persuading consumers or intending consumers to buy (Oparaugo, Dogo Daji and Kawoh, 2020).

Advertising media include: the newspaper, magazines, posters, neon and fluorescent signboards, billboards to the commercial on TV, laser shows to inflated high-rise figures and objects, advertising has come a long way. Advertising therefore, is intended to attract, modify, change and influences public opinion.

Advertisements in newspapers are fascinating, exciting and creative in this world of globalization. They are part and parcel of our day to day's life. It plays a vital role for a company to promote its sales and increases revenues. Almost all the ads use taglines to attract the customers. Everything matters in an advertisement: color, background, people/animation appearing, the choice of words used by the advertiser, font size of word character, all matter in advertisements.

The importance of advertising grows steadily as brands rely heavily on media for various marketing objectives such as increasing sales, creating knowledge and awareness in the market etc. the field of advertising continues to grow and evolve. Advertising also plays a very important role in shaping the ever changing norms of society both nationally and globally. With the growing role of advertising in the lives of people attention now is being paid to the various negative as well as positive effects of advertising (Barve, Sood, Nithya and Virmani, 2015). It is worthy to note that advertising flourishes on persuasion. Advertising is a form of marketing communication (Okoye, Nwogbo, Ugwuanyi & Okafor, 2017). Going further, Uwem, Iniobong and Inyene (2015, p.217) aver that advertising entails the persuasion of an audience or consumer to take some action with respect to products, ideas or services.

### **Television Advertising**

The first television advertisement appeared on July 1, 1941, during a baseball game on a local New York channel. It lasted for ten seconds and the advertisement was on 'Bulova watches' which cost just four dollars. It completely revolutionized television.

Television advertising is a span of television programming produced and paid for by an identified sponsor often through an advertising agency to convey a message to market a good, idea, or service. Television advertising usually lasts on the screen between 15 and 60 seconds in length. Television advertising is widely considered the most effective means of advertising and marketing because of its combination of sound, sight and motion. As a result of the effectiveness of television and high competition among industrial firms and companies in the marketing of products, firms resort to the use of different advertising techniques including testimonials.

Television advertising is largely used to influence viewers' purchase decisions. Advertisements

are divided between local and national time slots, and many of both of those types of advertisements are specific to selling products and services. The potential of television to reach the audience increase the interest of advertisers to use it and acknowledge its significance.

Communication scholars have described television as one of the most powerful and influential medium of communication around the world. As a result of its powerful effect, most advertisers rely on television to communicate information regarding their products and services to viewers in form of advertisements to attract the viewers as their target audience (Rishante, 2014). Advertising in the media has become a powerful communication tool in passing messages about the products and services to both viewers and potential customers in the society. Sybil and Thelma (2000) saw television advertising as that type of advertising that combines sounds, colour, serves and demonstrates to members of the society through which people are attracted to purchase that product. This is because the process of demonstrating, people and information on the product are directed to where they can purchase it. Many television advertisements contain catchy jingles (songs or melodies) or catch-phrases to attract and sustain the attention of television viewers long after the span of the advertising campaign. Advertising agencies often use humour as a tool in their creative marketing campaigns. In fact, many psychological studies tried to demonstrate the effect of humour and indicate the way to empower advertising persuasion.

The relevance of advertising as a promotional strategy cannot be overemphasized. In fact, it depends on its ability to influence consumers not only to purchase, but to continue to purchase and eventually develop brand loyalty. Television advertising is best suited for demonstration of products or services given that it offers great flexibility in the fact that one can combine interaction of the sight, sound and motion. These effects can be used to catch the attention of audience members and then reinforce their retention rates by repeating the message using both audio and video. Hence, television advertisement remains the best for testimonial advertising.

The effects of television advertising upon the viewing public (and the effects of mass media in general) have been the subject of philosophical discourse by such luminaries as Marshall McLuhan. Human beings yearn for community and shared experience which is also why the social media have become such a powerful force. As culture grows and becomes more diverse, television continues to be the means to provide shared experiences (Akpan, Nda and Nkenta, 2015).

### **Chief Zebrudaya**

Chief Zebrudaya Okoro Igwe Nwogbo alias 4:30, whose real name is Chika Okpala, is a comic television series actor, who became popular in his role as

Chief Zebrudaya in the NTA's *The New Masquerade* between 1983 and 1993. He is infamous for his bad use of grammar and has taken that trait to his roles in advertising testimonials especially on television. He is well known for appearing in drug adverts especially malaria drugs.

### Linguistics in Advertising

According to Dykes (2007, p.4), grammar provides a whole cohesive system concerning the formation and transmission of language. Meanwhile, Williams (2005:2) states that grammar is the formal study of the structure of a language and describes how words fit together in meaningful constructions. According to Hornby (1995:390), an error can be defined as a deviation from the norms of the target language. Error is a thing done wrongly.

The pertinence of linguistic accuracy cannot be denied and should be desired and pursued. Linguistic accuracy leads to a better message and better understanding on the part of the listener. Accuracy in grammar, semantics, a rich vocabulary and phonology enhance a message (Dalung and Goshit, 2017).

While its tickling effects are readily appreciated, the language may at first seem to be too odd a subject to study. Indeed, little scholarly attention has been given to this language (Teilanyo, n.d). Ilagha (1985) associates 'the falling standard of education' in Nigeria with Zebrudaya which 'does violence to English grammar.' He observes that 'a terrible Zebrudaya plague has been footloose on the country.' However, he is unable to specify those features in the language that do 'violence to English grammar,' such as would enable the learner or audience to be on their guard.

In Amartem Forte Softgel advertisement, Chief Zebrudaya was heard saying "Amartem Forte Softgel are good to comot malaria for body". Also in one of the advertisements of the early 2000s, he was heard saying "are you see what I'm saw?"

Zebrudaya is famed for advertising malaria and pain relieving drugs as well as national advertising aimed at nation/peace-building and electronics.

### CONCLUSION

Advertising is a potent means of persuading and convincing consumers (existing and potential) to start using or continue using a particular product or service. Television advertising is widely considered the most effective means of advertising and marketing because of its combination of sound, sight and motion. Television advertising is largely used to influence viewers' purchase decisions. Advertisements are divided between local and national time slots, and many of both of those types of advertisements are specific to selling products and services.

Many celebrities appear in various television advertising but Zebrudaya is the only one known to be using bad grammar. In a bid to grab the audience's attention, it is pertinent to use unique slogans and lines but the constant use of wrong sentences and bad grammar in television advertisements constitute linguistic deception as unsuspecting audience could easily copy it.

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