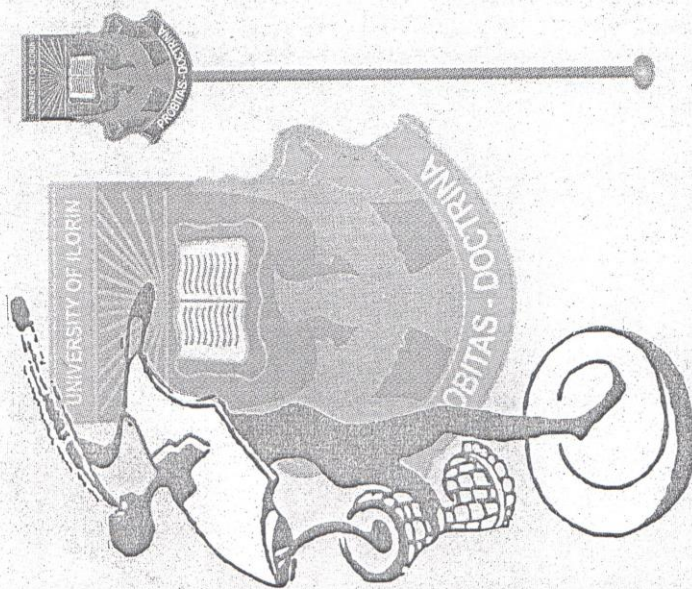


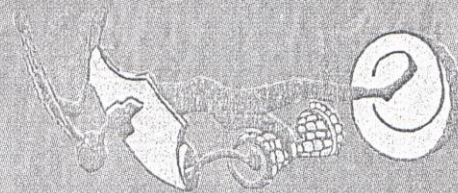
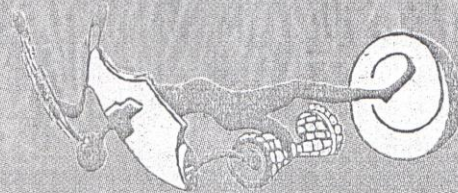
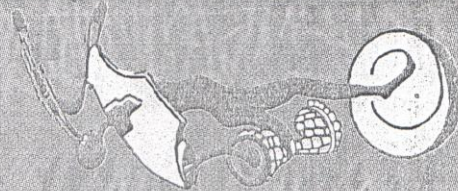
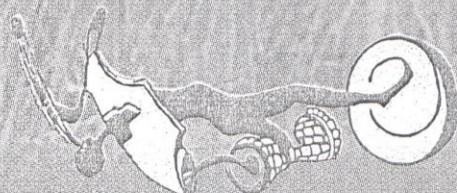
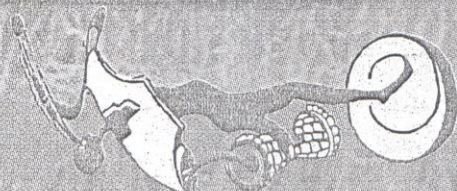
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The Language of Effective Dramatic Communication in Some Selected MTN Advertisements

By

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Introduction

Language, when used effectively, can hold people's interest. It can also persuade people to do so many things; it can persuade people to purchase goods and services being advertised. Every successful advertisement must make a useful and lasting impression and this is achieved through language. The design of the message helps to determine whether people will pay attention to it, whether they will remember it, whether it will affect what they do (Olujede, 2000:60-61).

The language of advertisement, according to Crystal (1987:390) "is generally laudatory, positive, unreserved and emphasizing the uniqueness of a product." Memorable slogans and catch-phrases, e.g. *say what you want to say; MTN wherever you go, Renewed, Be Bold*, technical vocabulary and scientific terms, sentences beginning with active, commanding verbs, e.g. *Be* adjectives and adverbs—in quantity, double meanings, e.g. You are phoney-funny, the use of comparative forms that are unrelated to any reference point—"washes whiter", etc. are commonly employed. In this paper we would like to examine how the functions that language performs meet with the various advertisement objectives using some selected MTN advertisements.

Language is an important means of presenting information in the society in general and in advertisements in particular. It is the principal means used by humans to communicate with one another

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(Comrie, 2007). It is, therefore, important to look at the functions of language in the society in relation to advertisement objectives. Leech, (1974: 49) states that language has at least five functions in the society. These functions are expressive, phatic, informational, aesthetic and directive.

The *expressive function* of language expresses the speaker's or writer's feelings and attitudes. This has to do with the poetic use of language, swear words and exclamations. The *phatic function* is used to keep communication lines open and also keep social relationships well. It helps in maintaining cohesion within social groups. Language performs *informational function* to convey information. This is also called the subject matter. The *directive function* aims at directing or influencing the behavior or attitudes of others. It is used for commands, requests, and so on.

The *aesthetic function* of language is the use of language for the sake of linguistic artifacts. Aesthetics is a field of practice that values imaginative, sensory, and emotional experience for the intellectual thoughts, connections, and expressions that such experience enables; it is seen as the general field within which the literary arts occur (Hoogland, 2004:43). Language performing aesthetic function is designed to please the senses through actual or imagined sounds and through metaphor. Rhythm and sound effects play very significant roles in advertisements.

The five language functions are related to the various advertisement objectives to be examined. In advertisements, language performs informative function as it informs the audience about new products and services. The language of advertisement also performs expressive function because the choice of words of the advertiser is meant to affect the attitudes of the audience towards the advertised products or services. All these language functions are employed in the various MTN adverts examined at different points of their life cycle.

The Aesthetics of Marketing Communication

Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers about the products and brands that they sell (Kotler and Keller, 2006:496). It

tells or shows consumers why a product is used, by whom, where and when. It also provides information about the maker and what the brand stands for. Consumers can also be given an incentive and reward for trial or usage. As Kotler and Keller (2006:495) succinctly put it:

Companies must also communicate with present and potential stakeholders, and the general public. For most companies, the question is not whether to communicate but rather what to say, how to say it, to whom, and how often. But communications get harder and harder as more and more companies clamor to grab the consumer's increasingly divided attention. To reach target markets and build brand equity, holistic marketers are creatively employing multiple forms of communications.

There are six major modes of communication which make up the marketing communication mix. These are, advertisement, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing and personal selling (Kotler and Keller, 2006:19). The marketing communication examined in this paper is advertisement. It is chosen because it is a central element of a marketing communications programme.

The Essence of Advertisement

"Advertisement is any paid publicity in media for goods or services directed at consumers" (Mcquails, 2005:547). It is a form of commercial mass communication designed to promote the sale of a product or service (Robbs, 2007). It provides an introduction to the company and its products or services, introduces new features, and may also remind customers of how to use the product and possibly where the product can be purchased. The modern advertiser stresses not the product but the benefits that may be enjoyed by purchasers. The primary objective of advertising is to pre-sell the product. Advertisers hope to persuade consumers towards a particular product. According to Mcquails (2005:547), advertisements have various aims which include the creation of awareness, making brand images, forming positive associations and encouraging consumer behavior.

Almost all advertisements are professionally produced with

carefully constructed mixture of words, images, and symbols. These are chosen with the aid of experts in consumer psychology as adverts are meant to have effects on the audience. Advertising messages are disseminated through numerous and varied channels or media. The major media in developed countries are newspapers and consumer magazines, television, direct mail, radio, business publications, and outdoor and transport advertising. The media we are looking at is television as it has a wider reach. The choice is made because it combines sight, sound and motion.

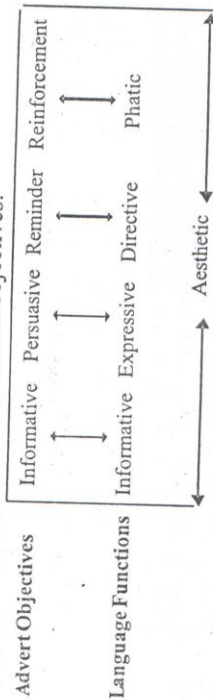
Brand Image in Advertising

Brand is defined by the American Marketing Association as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors." It is all about creating differences between or among seemingly similar products or services (Kotler and Keller, 2006:256). Many advertisers prefer a strategy known as image advertising. These advertisers seek to give a product a personality that is unique, appealing, and appropriate so that the consumer will want to choose it over similar products that might fulfill the same need. The personality is created partly by the product's design and packaging but, more importantly, by the words and pictures the advertisements associate with the product. This personality is known as a brand image.

Advertisement Objectives

Advertisement objectives are the specific task that an advertisement is aimed to achieve with a specific audience in a specific period of time (Kotler and Keller, 2006:527). This is necessary because successful products go through a product life cycle which describes the course of a product's sales from its introduction and growth through maturity and decline. Four possible advert objectives are identified in Kotler and Keller (2006: 527). These are: informative advertising, persuasive advertising, reminder advertising and reinforcement advertising. The stage in the product life cycle or the marketing situation determines the objective of the advertisement. The analysis of MTN advertisement will be based on

these objectives and the roles that language play at each point. We designed the diagram below to show the interaction between language functions and advertisement objectives:



The diagram indicates a one to one interaction between advertisement objectives and functions of language with aesthetic function of language cutting across all the advertisement objectives and language functions. Every advertisement is packaged with a lot of creativity in language use as this would have a direct effect on the listeners. The aesthetics function of language permeates all the others.

Brief on MTN

MTN Group Limited, launched in 1994 is a multinational telecommunication company with the parent body in South Africa. The company is one of the leading telecommunication companies providing GSM services in Nigeria. The company started its operation in Nigeria in August, 2001 and it has been waxing stronger with millions of subscribers on its network. They have different packages and options for their customers among which are the *pay as you go package*, *post paid package*, *MT4U loyalty programme*, *MTN Business Line*, *MTN Family and Friends*, *MTN Extra Connect*, *MTN Extra cool*, etc. Some of the options are meant for particular groups of people like the youth, the executives, business men and women, etc. However, there is the need for them to keep on repositioning as they have very powerful competitors to contend with. These include among others *Glo*, *Zain*, *Multilinks*, *Starcoms*, *Visaphone*, etc. The different stage they have passed through and are still passing through is reflected in their varied advertisements.

Data Analysis and Methodology

Nine MTN advertisements are selected for the purpose of this study. They are selected because of the particular objectives they are set to achieve. Each of the advertisement tells a dramatic story and shows characters which most of the audience can easily identify with and who some see as role models or out rightly seeing themselves in the participants. The product is shown used in different settings which different people could identify with. All the selected MTN adverts make use of slogans and catch-phrases. Some of the advertisements make you laugh while some engage your sympathy depending on the side of the divide the audience is on. They can be interpreted as a dramatic performance in action.

Informative Advertisement

The aim of this advertisement is to create brand awareness and knowledge of the new products. Three selected MTN adverts fall into this category. These adverts are what we refer to as *Olorun Adaba*, *Yhello Fulani* and *Yhello Lafiagi - Ori Egun*. These are the earliest adverts of MTN that heralded their coming into the telecommunication business in Nigeria. They are the adverts that served to introduce the product into the market and to particularly inform the audience about the coverage areas of MTN.

The first advert which we titled *Olorun Adaba* shows a truck named *Olorun Adaba*. Thereafter we see a man painting the road with yellow paint. The man is busy talking. By the time the truck gets to where he is, it has picked the yellow colour. The man says: "na another motor dey collect my yhello power so". The message is that there is MTN coverage on the Lagos-Ibadan-Akure-Ilesha road.

The second advert shows a Fulani cattle rearer with his cows. The cows also pick yellow indicating that MTN is now available in that part of the country. The third advert is set at a riverine area with fish sellers by the shore. A fish seller is given the phone to make a call indicating that MTN service has reached that area. On his way entering the canoe, yellow paint pour inside the water turning everything into yellow.

The slogan at this point in time is *unbeatable coverage on more roads*. The advert made use of an actor who referred to himself

as a star in the *Olorun Adaba* advert. They also show that service had reached the places by giving it to the Fulani man and the woman selling fish to use. The people in those areas could easily identify with those people shown in the adverts. The advert is simply informing the audience about the presence of MTN in that part of the country. Language in these sets of adverts performs the informative function as it is meant to inform and persuade the people to log on to the MTN products and services.

Persuasive Advertisement

This type of advertising aims at creating liking, preference, conviction, and purchase of a product or service (Kotler and Keller, 2006). We will look at three adverts in this category. The main message of the first one is *I've got so much confidence in MTN as I have in my daughter*.

The story line of this advert shows a man who has a seminar but who forgets his prepared speech at home. He calls his daughter who reads the speech to him on the phone and he presents the speech simultaneously. The advert is trying to build people's confidence and conviction in the product and to encourage them to make it their network of choice. The slogan at this point was: MTN: say what you what to say.

The second advert under persuasive advert is what we call 'Mama, she don born o'. This advert shows a village setting, a Niger Delta setting where the women are busy frying *gari*. The men are also there relaxing on easy chairs. A man in the city who happens to be the son of one of the women calls his mother to inform her of the birth of his child. Immediately the woman receives the call, she gives a shout of joy and starts to dance. Every other person joins her, even little children. This shows a typical African setting where the birth of a child brings joy to the whole community.

The main utterance of the first advert is *I've got so much confidence in MTN as I have in my daughter*, while the utterance of the second advert is *'mama she don born o'*. Language plays an expressive role in these adverts. The aim is to get the hearer and or audience to form some correlative attitude and eventually buy MTN products and services. The statements express a confidence in the

services of MTN which is also to further convince the audience to form the same conviction.

Reminder Advertisement

Reminder advertisement aims at stimulating repeat purchase of the products and services (Kotler and Keller, 2006:527). In the case of MTN, it encourages continual patronage by encouraging more purchase of recharge cards. Two adverts will be examined.

The first advert is titled 'Hi Jerry'. There are two characters in the advert; a young couple who are far away from each other. The man, Jerry, calls the lady, who is on bed in her night dress probably getting ready to sleep. After talking and telling her how much he misses her, he asks her to step onto the balcony for a priceless gift he has for her. She does and is welcomed by sunray in MTN's colours of yellow and blue. The advert encourages an indiscriminate use of the service with calls lasting a long time. The advert shows the product used in an attractive setting, a setting most people will want to be found. The slogan at this point is 'MTN: everywhere you go'.

The second advert is titled 'Hello Mummy'. The major characters in this advert are a nuclear family of father, mother and son. The parents have a misunderstanding which the small boy helps to settle by calling his mother and appealing to her to forgive his father. The misunderstanding is settled with an invitation to dinner by the man. The setting is a contemporary one where everybody is in a hurry and always busy. The eventful call of the son to her mother saves her so much stress as she does not have to leave the office to pick her son anymore.

The advert is such that audiences can easily key into any of the roles. They can easily identify with the characters and even the situation portrayed in the advert. Everybody is happy that the misunderstanding is resolved. The characters are upper class executives. The advert appeals to the desire for esteem and prestige. The slogan is MTN: everywhere you go.

Aesthetic language plays a directive role in these adverts. It subtly directs or commands the audience to continue being a part of the MTN network to save themselves a lot of stress. It reminds the audience of the benefits inherent in MTN.

Reinforcement Advertisement

The aim of reinforcement advertisement is to convince current purchasers that they made the right choice. The advert that falls under this objective is titled 'Fine girl like you suppose get MTN'. There are only two characters in the advert; a cab driver and a young lady going on her NYSC posting. She keeps on trying to make calls but there is no service on her line. The cab driver on the other hand, using MTN keeps on making calls. This annoys the girl who is trying unsuccessfully to call her mother. This makes the cab driver to say that "fine girl like you suppose get MTN." On arriving at their destination, he gives her his phone to call her mama.

Most of the viewing audience can easily identify with the situation portrayed in this advert. Corps members are sent to every part of the country. The claim being made by this advert is that MTN covers every part of the country and that those using it have made the right choice. It also encourages those who are yet to be connected to get connected; *Fine girl like you suppose get MTN*. The role that language plays here is expressive, dramatic and phatic. The advert is meant to impress and inspire the people to keep on being a part of the network, a kind of social group that people are proud to identify with. The objective is to further reinforce the brand name and image.

Conclusion

Advertising is used to make consumers aware of particular products and services. The basic means of doing this is via language. In this paper, we looked at the roles that language plays vis-à-vis the four advertisement objectives. We find that there is a clear meeting point between the two as each of the objectives has a direct relationship with a particular function of language.

Aesthetic function of language however cuts across all the objectives. The reason for this is because advertisement is a work of art and the language has to be appealing to the people for effective communication to take place. Effective communication could also lead to a better patronage of the product or service been advertised. We recommend that advertisers should make their advertisement messages attractive, memorable, simple and clear to consumers. The reason is that it keeps the theme ringing in the prospective consumers' mind which may eventually lead to sales.

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