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Textual Features and Portrayal of Women in the Choice of Cosmetic Products in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study aimed to examine how advertisers use discourse to make consumers buy into their ideas, beliefs, or simply their products. It was informed by the fact that advertisers use language to influence people, especially women, into purchasing their products even if they may not necessarily be required from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. The objective of the study was to identify the effect of textual features and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products. To this end, this study adopted a mixed-method design. The already documented cosmetic scripts were used to collect data and organized, transcribed and described according to three dimensions of discussing discourse and a structured questionnaire was administered for the quantitative aspect and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics. The data analysis reveals that advertisers influence consumers to choose certain products or services through the skillful use of language to convince, persuade and at times manipulate consumers. The study concludes that textual features have a direct influence on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Nigeria. The study recommended that advertisers pay particular attention to their use of language and try to create more friendly content to attract consumers.

Keywords: Advertisements, critical discourse analysis, Fairclough's ideology

1. Introduction

Advertising is a way of announcing what an organization wants to promote, announce, or sell, that is, putting forward the attributes and advantages of its products. We cannot overestimate the importance of advertising; as such, it performs several functions in society, such as educating people by making products known and communicating information about products. Advertising has been defined in many ways by various scholars. For instance, Fredrick Allen (1994) sees advertising as any form of non-personal presentation of products, goods and services or ideas for action that is openly paid for by an identified sponsor. Advertising to Courtland Bovee and William Arens (1989) is a planned process of dissemination of information and persuasive messages done purposely through a paid, non-personal medium by an identified sponsor to reach out to a mass audience comprising anonymous individual members. They further argue that advertising is seen as good and criticized for its role in selling products and its influence on the economy of societies (Arens *et al.*, 2011). Advertisers usually have full control of the message all the way to the audience since getting their message across is an essential marketing strategy but many have been criticised for stereotyping women through these ads. Advertisements are regarded as a form of media discourse that can be used to refer to text, audio, video, photography and graphic designs by which advertisers use language with appealing phrases in order to convince people to buy their products. Advertising can be channeled through many tubes like newspapers, magazines, radio and television broadcasts, stage shows, websites, billboards, posters etc.

The discourse of advertising is based on the assumption that the text is produced to persuade the consumer to buy a product or a service or to present that product or service as desirable as possible to the potential audience. CDA tends to explore various social theories that analyze the interaction of language, power and ideology in various contexts. Amandeep *et al.* (2017) stated, "Most advertising agencies try to understand the desires of their target market in their approach to advertising." For advertising to be effective, advertisers need to be aware of how customers may respond to their messages. To make this easier, academics and professionals have tried to develop theories and models that can show how customers respond to the advertising they are exposed to. By understanding the different behavioural levels that customers pass through, the advertiser can create a message that will meet all requirements and be effective. Advertisers,

having discovered the power of mass media and the fact that people rely on them to satisfy certain needs, keep devising ways to package and structure persuasive messages that will effectively appeal to the audience to buy their ideas, products, and services over the years. Therefore, advertisers seek all means to persuade or 'manipulate' prospective consumers in a competitive market to get consumers not only to buy but to keep buying. Since advertisements are regarded as a form of media discourse and language is a discourse, CDA is considered relevant since it is a major discipline used to investigate any phenomena within language variances in a social context.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Advertising serves many functions in society, and a major one is its marketing ability, especially in promoting companies' products and services. As such, it has indeed become a large industry that is the leading communication platform that gives meaning to modern marketing (Baran, 2014). This is why most commercial organizations and advertisers employ the use of appeals to influence or compel the target audience to make a purchase (Aaker, 2010). To achieve this, advertisers utilize various tactics, including persuasive messages and women's images, to arouse interest in their products and facilitate sales. Reichert and Lambiase (2003) believe this to be very effective at grabbing consumers' attention in marketing and communications in this 21st century. However, how advertisers frame their messages and appeals has received much criticism worldwide, including in Africa and Nigeria, where it seems to be eroding the confidence of the ladies, leading to a loss of self-esteem. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the effect of textual features and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products to make recommendations to stakeholders for more acceptable and friendly content.

1.2. Objective of the Study

To identify the effect of textual features and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Lagos, Nigeria.

1.2.1. Research Question

What is the effect of the textual features on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Lagos, Nigeria?

2. Theoretical Framework

The effect of textual features and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Lagos, Nigeria, shall be analysed through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis.

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Advertisements are regarded as a form of media discourse and Language is a Discourse as well, therefore making Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) relevant since it is a major discipline to investigate any phenomena within language variances in social context. CDA tends to explore various social theories that analyze the interaction of language, power and ideology in various contexts. According to Fairclough (2003), language is an intricate part of social life that is interrelated with the fundamentals of social life and, as such, can be seen as characteristic of social practice in a certain culture. That is, how language is used will help us know about the existing social practice. Therefore, CDA provides the criteria to consider the relationships between discourse and society, between text and context, and between language and power (Fairclough, 2001; Society, 2020; Wing-Chun Ng, 2020). This, in effect, means that language has the power to change people's worldviews and that the power of ideology in certain cultures can influence the use of language. According to (Fairclough, 1989), CDA is a type of social practice in which ideology and power both have an impact on and interact with one another. Critical discourse analysis, according to Dijk (1995) and Education (2018), is a sort of analytical discourse study that examines social power abuse, domination, and inequality as well as how they are repeated, practiced, and resisted. Dijk further explains CDA as the study between discourse and power (Van Dijk, 2008, 2015) and in advertisements, it can be a power exercised by advertisers over consumers or vice versa. Fairclough then states that there is a bilateral relationship between discourse and social structures because discourse has an effect on social conventions and at the same time, social structures influence discourse and that language cannot be separated from political groupings, social issues, or power relations. That is, language has a role in manifesting ideologies to gain power over people by convincing them about what is manifested in the language. In essence, the research tools selected for this study are Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis with analysis of texts, analysis of discourse practice, and study of discursive events as illustrations of socio-cultural practices.

Following Fairclough, N. & Wodak (1997) and Berkovich & Beniel (2020), we can summarize the main tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis as addressing social problems involved with power relations are discursive and that discourse constitutes society and culture. Also, we see that discourse does ideological work and that the link between text and society is mediated. Furthermore, we note that discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, thus making discourse a form of social action. Due to the societal notion that women desire to remain attractive at any age, beauty is one of the key issues in advertising. Thus, advertisers play on the female need to remain beautiful and this is expressed in media with youthful attributes that can be obtained by purchasing certain products dangled before them to get them to procure such products.

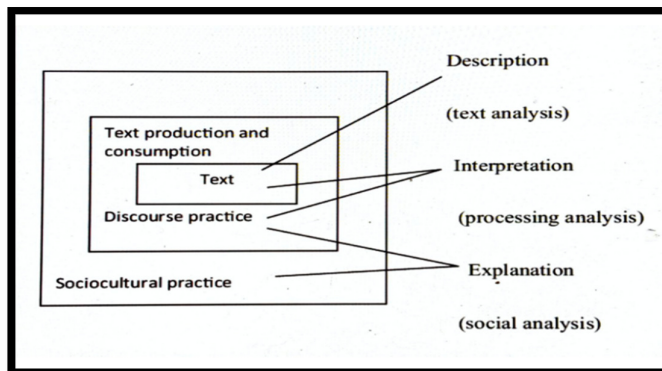


Figure 1: Fairclough's Three Dimensions of Discourse

Norman Fairclough describes CDA as a type of social practice where ideology and power both affect and interact. All three dimensions of Fairclough's model are interdependent and relevant to this study as a means of examining the social processes that create ads. Thus, it is hoped that an in-depth analysis of the textual features of advertising discourse can be conducted since CDA takes into consideration the social processes of discourse.

3. Review of Literature

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Beauty Products (Lestari, 2020) reports that through the choices of vocabulary, grammar, modality, etc., advertisers bring psychological effects to consumers and that the strategies used by advertisers tend to manipulate consumers into using the products. (Romaine, 1999) still on textual strategies, illustrates one of the textual strategies used by cosmetic brands targeted at women by analyzing an ad for Max Factor Foundation and by the word 'yes' as the reply, the ad implies that wanting to be a beautiful woman is the same as putting on Max Factor makeup. Kaur *et al.* (2013), in their study on Beauty product advertisements, examined beauty ads and reported that advertisers use various linguistic devices, for example, direct address, positive vocabulary, headlines, and catchy slogans to attract women. Vocabulary carries a certain view of what constitutes beauty. The ads promote an idealised lifestyle and manipulate readers to a certain extent into believing that whatever is advertised is indeed true. This study revealed how the ideology of beauty is constructed by stereotyping how beauty products are synonymous with a better life. Thus, people in power (advertisers) use language as a means to exercise control over others. Najihah (2020) concludes in his study that the concept of beauty in advertisements is illustrated by words and pictures of people and models involved. He asserts that the discourse of body care ads regarding the concepts of beauty has hegemonized people's minds to believe in similar concepts of beauty as portrayed. Advertising language, they assert, is used to control people's minds since they want to appear as the models/celebrities in the adverts. Advertisers thus exercise power over the consumers through the use of language. However, almost all these works were descriptive or qualitative only, so this research work takes a step further by using a mixed method designed to corroborate the results.

4. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine advertising discourse and portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Lagos, Nigeria. A mixed method design was adopted for this study using purposive sampling because this study was only to investigate cosmetic product advertisements. The data were collected from seven advertisements of popularly used cosmetic products in the form of videos taken from company websites, YouTube and ARCON, and they were transcribed to ease the analysis process. They were then analyzed based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis for the qualitative aspect, while for the quantitative aspect, data were collected using a questionnaire based on Likert-type scale questions ranging from 1-5 to capture the variables. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics such as correlation analysis and regression analysis.

5. Results and Discussions

To examine the effect of textual features on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products, the already documented cosmetic scripts were used to collect data and organize, transcribe, and describe according to the first dimension in discussing discourse as text. Also, the questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale was used for the survey. The following were the findings:

Variable Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
The use of certain words to qualify the good of products convinced me to buy some products	3.8241	1.18246
My choice of products/services has been heavily influenced by the manner of encouraging language.	3.7839	1.21379

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Effect of Textual Features on the Portrayal of Women in the Choice of Cosmetic Products

The table shows that about 10.6% (21) respondents strongly disagreed that words that qualify as good of products do not change their choice of cosmetic products, while 3.5% (7) respondents disagreed to the statement. On the other hand, about 52.8% (105) and 27.1% (54) respondents agree and strongly agree, respectively, that words that qualify as good products help make their choice of cosmetic products purchase. The respondents that are neutral are 6.0% (12). Then, about 10.6% (21) of the respondents strongly disagreed that their choice is influenced by encouraging words on the choice of cosmetic products, while 6.0% (12) disagreed. However, 5.0% (10) respondents were neutral. Interestingly, about 51.3% (102) and 27.1% (54) respondents agree and strongly agree, respectively, that the choice of encouraging words influenced their choice of cosmetic product purchase.

Further, the hypothesis tests if textual features have a significant impact on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products. The dependent variable, the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products, was regressed on predicting variable textual features to test hypothesis H₁.

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between the effect of textual features and social-cultural on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products.

The table below shows the summary of these findings on the hypothesis tests.

Hyp	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	P-value	Hypothesis Supported
H ₁	textual features → portrayal of women	0.906	0.821	903.175	0.000	Yes

Table 2: Regression Analysis Result on the Relationship between Textual Features and Portrayal of Women
Source: Data Analysis, 2023

Textual features significantly predicted the portrayal of women -, $F=903.175$, when P is 0.000 implies that there is high significance, which indicates that the textual features can play a statistically significant role in shaping the portrayal of women ($b=0.906$, p is 0.000). The result shows a direct positive relationship between textual features and the portrayal of women in their choice of cosmetic products. Moreover, the $R^2=0.821$ depicts that the model explains 82.1% of the variance. These findings affirm Hidayat, Kusuma, Alek., Purwahida and Defianty (2020) that the texts in the advertisements were formulated in such a way for the purpose of persuading and attracting potential buyers. The following findings discussed according to the first dimension of Fairclough's model on the textual analysis below corroborate these findings.

5.1. Personalisation (Use of Pronoun)

The first is personalization, also known as the use of pronouns that help create a friendly atmosphere to persuade the audience.

	Example in the text	Advertisement
1	Find out your true beauty naturally We are proud of Nigeria We want Nigeria to be proud of us	Hawaii soap (Evans)
2	With you, my skin journey. I could walk all day It keeps my skin ... choose the best for your skin	Eva soap (Evans)
3	... moisturises your skin for more lasting beauty. ... let your skin do the talking.	Snow White (Hush'd,)
4	Experience your real beauty ... New Siri soap gives me soft, glowing skin	Siri by SIRI
5	...removes impurities from your skin gives your skin a tender, nourishing care.	JOY by PZ
6	Reveal your skin's natural radiance	Nivea
7	Connect with you in the most grandeur X7 glow	X7 by Z.G, L

Table 3: The Use of Pronouns in the Text of the Advertisement

This finding found that advertisers build close relationships with the audiences through personalization (use of pronouns). It can be seen that advertisers use pronouns such as 'my, your, you and me.' The words 'you' and 'your' (second person personal) are considered to address the consumers directly and personally (Rashid, Rahman & Rahman, 2016). These types of pronouns present the phenomena that they are presenting the experience and views of every layman in their advertisements and they also use pronouns in place of verbs to establish a strong relationship between the advertisers and the consumers. It can be seen that advertisers use some types of pronouns in the advertisements like you, your, us, etc., to address the consumers personally and directly in Hawaii soap when it says, "Find out your true beauty naturally," "This product is brought to you by Evans Industries." In the Ads of Evans, PZ, Siri (and indeed all the analyzed ads), the second person pronouns are extensively used to hide the actual actors in the presentation of the phenomenon, thus successfully establishing discourse in such a way that the audience sees themselves in that phenomenon as those

celebrities. Also, the pronoun "we" is regarded as authoritative and implies power, as presented in the data sample of the Hawaii ad, such as, "We are proud of Nigeria," "We want Nigeria to be proud of us." The discourse in ads is set within the society in such a way that no one seems to feel the direct import and as such, it is seen that advertisers through the use of personalization successfully build close relationship with the audience in order to persuade consumers to choose their products.

5.2. The Use of Adjectives

Adjectives are used in advertising to give more information about the conditions or characteristics of the product to make it more acceptable to the audience or consumers.

	'Positive Adjective' in text	'Negative Adjective' in text	Advertisement
1	Find out your true beauty naturally Stay beautiful with Hawaii soap Discover true beauty	Exposure to the hard weather... Sun takes its toll on the skin It leaves the skin irritated and uncomfortable	Hawaii soap (Evans)
2	... look fresh, beautiful, younger and radiant ... my skin is healthy and smooth Specially formulated to keep you clean, clear and confident So choose the best for your skin	None	Eva soap (Evans)
3	... cleanses, nurtures and moisturises ... a more lasting beauty	none	Snow White (Hush'd.)
4	Experience your real beauty with, Siri, luxurious, prestigious and elegant... ... soft glowing skin	none	Siri by SIRI
5	... your skin's natural radiance Natural Fairness is now ...		Nivea
6	Moisturizing and nourishing A spicy, elegant, luxuriousness, titillating ...		X7 by Z.G, L

Table 4: The Use of Positive and Negative Adjectives in the Text

All the ads contain positive, but only Hawaii soap ad has negative adjectives. The positive adjectives are related to the qualities of the product, e.g., nurtures, moisturises, smooth, glowing, fresh, younger, beautiful, radiance, tender, elegant, etc. Those positive adjectives refer to the value that can be experienced by the consumers if they use that product or what people will get if they buy the product. For instance, Eva ads dangle the following carrot to persuade the consumers when it says, "... look fresh, beautiful, younger and radiant", "... my skin healthy and smooth," thus capitalizing on the ideology of a woman's need to always look young and beautiful.

Also, Siri and Joy's ads tow the same trend by inserting positive adjectives in illustrating the good of the products to the consumers, such as, "Experience your real beauty with...", "Siri, luxurious, prestigious and elegant...", "...soft glowing skin," "leaving it soft, supple, and silky smooth," "... gives your skin a tender, nourishing care," "... its unique, refreshing fragrance." All these are what consumers are to benefit which resonates with self-esteem and societal concerns. No wonder these products are in high demand in the market.

On the contrary, the negative adjective is linked to the problems existing when the product being advertised is not in use. The negative adjectives found included "irritated" and "uncomfortable." Hawaii insists that the "Sun takes its toll on the skin" and "It leaves the skin irritated and uncomfortable," thus giving the impression that it leaves the skin with a lot of inadequacies. It suggests that to avoid these negative conditions depicted by the negative adjectives, the audience are expected to buy or use the products. It now uses positive adjectives to find out their "true beauty naturally" and encourages them to "Stay beautiful with Hawaii soap."

Consequently, the adverts were used to describe conditions or characteristics through adjectives to try to give answers to what consumers' expectations of the product should be. As a result, it is observed that the advertisers use a lot of positive adjectives rather than negative ones. The findings concur with Kaur *et al.* (2013) that there are two types of adjectives: gradable adjectives (they describe qualities that can be measured in degrees; they can be used in comparative or superlative forms) and non-gradable adjectives (they describe qualities that are completely present or completely absent). Thus, advertisers use adjectives to describe their views on their products to persuade potential consumers that they will look better and that the condition of their skin will get better after using the products, spurring consumers to take action.

5.3. The Use of Syntax (Disjunctive)

Another feature for simulating a conversational style in the adverts is the use of disjunctive syntax in sentences, that is, the use of phrases without verbs and subjects.

	Example in the Text	Advertisement
1	For softer and brighter skin	Hawaii soap(Evans)
2	Eva, for all shades of beauty	Eva soap (Evans)
3	Experience your real beauty	Siri by SIRI
4	Perfect & Radiant	Nivea
5	True beauty without boundaries	X7 by Z.G, L

Table 5: The Use of Syntax (Disjunctive)/Phrasal Sentence Examples in the Text Type of Advertisement

These phrases are constructed in such a way as to catch the attention of the audience and, at the same time, save space while still effectively conveying the information to draw the attention of the audience and inspire them to act, which in this case is to make a purchase. It is also to show a close relationship by using two or more words (grammatical items) to convey the message in some adverts because space use is often limited in the adverts. In this line, Hamid & Shahdan (2018), in the study Total Fairness Inside-out: Linguistic Features in Whitening Product Advertisements, explains that linguistic features in the analysed advertisements were used to first capture the attention of consumers through 'catchy' or attractive use of word arrangements in some phrases.

5.4. The Use of Mood Choice

In the advertisement, there are two participants: advertisers and consumers (audience). The position of participants is characterized by moods. So, the role of mood is to determine the position of the participant. It shows the power relationships among participants.

	'Declarative' in Text	'Imperative' in Text	Advertisement
1	Hawaii soap comes in carrot, papaya and calamansi ...	Find out your true beauty ... Stay beautiful with Hawaii soap	Hawaii soap(Evans)
2	Eva complexion care soap comes in ten different variants Specially formulated to keep you clean, clear and confident	... choose the best for your skin	Eva soap (Evans)
3	The Snow White from Hush'd Cleanse nurtures ,,	... let your skin do the talking	Snow White (Hush'd,)
4	New Siri soap gives me soft, glowing skin	Experience your real beauty with the new Siri beauty soap	Siri by SIRI
5	Natural Fairness is now Perfect and Radiant	Reveal your skin's natural radiance	Nivea
6	Pro Skin Care Vitamin Complex A spicy elegance, luxuriousness, titillating	Connect with you in the most grandeur X7 glow	X7 by Z.G, L

Table 6: The Use of Mood Choice Examples in the text of "Declarative" and "Imperative"

The advertisers in these advertisements use simple present tense in presenting reality through declarative (gives information) of the product and imperative form (tells you to do something).

The declarative form is found in all the ads. It is used to declare, give information, and give the details of the products. They give the information about products and the audience's position is that of interpreter. Information presented by advertisers should be interpreted by audiences till they get clear information. The position of speaker (advertiser) is used to persuade and ask the addressee to do something. Thus, the advertisements' words not only give the information but also give commands directly to the audience to make purchases. The findings from this study also agree with the study of Hidayat (2020) that the advertisers used personalised word choices to attract target customers to choose their products. In short, textual features have a direct influence on the portrayal of women in a choice of cosmetic products, which resonates with the argument of Mendes and Carter (2008) that the manipulative and hypnotic language of advertisements leaves society more susceptible to emotional manipulation by advertisers of beauty products.

6. Conclusions

The result of the research shows that the respondents agree that encouraging words influenced their choice of cosmetic product purchase. It indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the effect of textual features and the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products in Nigeria, also corroborated through the CDA analysis of the scripts showing that advertisers build close relationships with the audiences and that encouraging words influenced their choice of cosmetic product's purchase. While some may believe that advertising has no significant or no effect on their values, this is far from true, as revealed by the result of this research work. They use personal pronouns,

adjectives, informing words, emotive words, scientific evidence, and so on to attract and convince consumers to make purchases. In conclusion, it was discovered that advertisers persuade and, at times, manipulate women into buying these beauty products to achieve more beautiful skin and a better life through the use of encouraging texts brought forward by this research work.

7. Recommendations

This study identified the effect of textual features on the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products and confirmed that it was effective, affirming that textual features are a key aspect of advertising discourse and the portrayal of women in the choice of cosmetic products. Language use, a form of social practice, is noted as essential in the vital role of advertising in society. Therefore, the study recommends that advertisers and managers should pay particular attention to the language used in advertisements churned out to consumers. They must be user-friendly and societally acceptable. Also, cosmetic-producing companies should be encouraged to learn to advertise their products with less manipulative words in their adverts. They are encouraged to employ this knowledge from this work to achieve better content in their adverts to attract, retain and influence users in purchasing their products.

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