

THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING IN GUARDIAN AND VANGUARD NEWSPAPERS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study investigates the meanings embedded in the advertising language in two Nigerian newspapers, The Vanguard and The Guardian using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Anchored on Norman Fairclough's CDA framework, the research examines how advertising language reflects power dynamics, gender biases, social class representations, persuasive strategies, and underlying ideologies. The objectives include critically analyzing advertisement language, identifying the persuasive techniques employed, and uncovering hidden ideological meanings. The study analyzes advert language drawn from The Vanguard and The Guardian Newspapers, spanning thematic areas like religion, education, financial services, nationalism, media/technology, and consumer culture. Findings reveal that advertisement language in The Vanguard and The Guardian Newspapers functions as a powerful discourse that reproduces societal inequalities and shapes consumer behaviour. It also reviews the exploitation of religion for persuasion, with differential representation of Islam and Christianity; the portrayal of education as a vehicle for hope, despite unemployment challenges; the framing of financial services and nationalism as intertwined; and the romanticization of technology and consumption as markers of progress. The study further finds that persuasive strategies such as slogans, repetition and emotive appeals are central to advertising discourse, while class hierarchies are reinforced through targeted messaging. This research contributes to media discourse scholarship by demonstrating how Nigerian newspaper advertising not only markets products, but also constructs social realities, reinforces ideologies and reflects broader societal structures, offering critical insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers.

Introduction

Language is vital in the creation of meaning serving different purposes in both cultural and social contexts, as it can either be used to perform a function or relate an idea. In the words of Kamalu et al. (2022), 'Language as a crucial component of the social structure enables its users to establish social relationships, express their social and cultural experiences' (p. 1). This shows that people's social and cultural experiences are expressed through language. Kamalu et al. (2022) further added that: '... resources of language enable users of the language to express their distinct social experiences such as their ethnic and racial identities, social class, age, educational background, religious beliefs, gender, attitudes and ideologies and so on' (p. 2). It is thus clear that such social factors as age, identity, social class, and even ideologies are reflected through

language.

Halliday (1973) believes in the three meta-functions of language, but places emphasis on ideational function. To him, ideational function of language is the 'content function of language' (Halliday, 2007, p.183). This means that the ideational function of language carries or incorporates a message. It follows that, it is in the ideational function that the text-producer embodies in language their experience of the phenomena of the real world (Halliday, 1973). This goes to show that language does not only carry events of the real world, but can also be used to create meaning.

The meaning creation potential of language becomes essentially the focus of discourse analysts, as they look into the different nuances of language to interpret or explore how meaning is etched on it. Discourse centres on the need to master the formal rules of the language as a means of decoding and encoding meanings in text (Mckenna 2004). This view implies that discourse is not particular about grammatical accuracy, but how coherent or logical a piece of an utterance or an expression is in connection with what it refers to. This then means that the focus in discourse is not essentially grammar but meaning. The need to analyze discourse in order to make deeper sense of texts, expressions and other larger utterances necessitates the introduction of critical discourse analysis. Hence CDA lends itself in understanding the meaning embedded in commercials, as its focus is critical interpretation of language use and the social context in which language is used.

Omeje and Oparaugo (2021) define advertising as “a method of communication that encourages viewers to make a purchasing choice about a product or service while providing information.” It then means that adverts are embedded with expressions, and these expressions carry meanings. Oparaugo et al. (2023) further indicated that it refers to creating a message to sell a product, thought, idea, or service.

Accordingly, 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 (Oparaugo et al., 2023, p. 1). This is also true with the Nigerian Newspaper advertiments. Incorporated in them are not only different images, pictures and colours that signal meanings, but also words that embed different information. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher focuses on investigating the meaning of some advertisement language used in *The Vanguard* and *The Guardian* Newspapers. In other words, this study carries out a critical discourse analysis of the language of advertising in the newspapers, to identify how language is used in them to show power dynamics, gender biases, class, as well as reveal how language is used to appeal or persuade, and the meaning embedded in the language used.

Statement of the Problem

The language used in advertisements, especially in Nigerian newspapers embeds meanings that reflect power dynamics, gender biases, class and persuasion. However, these meanings are often hidden and not explicitly understood by readers. As a result, this study investigates the meaning of the language of advertising used in two Nigerian newspapers (used in *The Vanguard* and *The Guardian* Newspapers) through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in order to

create awareness about the hidden meanings in advertisement language. It is this gap that necessitates the present study, as it focuses on unveiling meanings embedded in the language of advertising in the papers to identify how language is used in them to show power dynamics, gender biases, class, as well as reveal how language is used to appeal or persuade

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the meaning of language used in The Vanguard and The Guardian Newspapers through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. The objectives are to:

- i. Critically analyze the language used in advertisements in The Vanguard and The Guardian Newspapers, identifying power dynamics, gender biases and social class representations.
- ii. Examine the persuasive strategies employed in advertisements in the newspapers, and how they influence consumer behaviour in decision making.
- iii. Uncover the hidden meanings and ideologies embedded in the language of advertisements in the newspapers.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent does advertisements in The Vanguard and The Guardian Newspapers use language to reflect and reinforce power dynamics, gender biases and social class representations?
- ii. What persuasive strategies are employed in advertisements in both newspapers, and how do these strategies influence consumer behavior in decision making?
- iii. To what degree are meanings and ideologies embedded in the language of advertisements in the two newspapers hidden?

The Significance of the Study

The study's theoretical significance lies in its contribution to the field of discourse analysis, particularly in using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to examine the language of advertising in Nigerian newspapers. Thus, by shedding light on how language is used to construct meaning and shape social relationships, this study adds to the understanding of power dynamics, gender biases, and social class representations in the language of advertising. Furthermore, the study's use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodology contributes to the development of this theoretical framework, demonstrating its applicability in analyzing advertisement languages.

The practical significance of this study lies in its potential to create awareness among consumers about the hidden meanings and ideologies embedded in the language of advertising. By understanding how language is used to persuade and influence consumer behaviour, advertisers and marketers can develop more effective and responsible advertising strategies.

Scope and delimitations of the Study

This study is restricted to Critical Discourse Analysis of two Nigerian newspapers, The Vanguard Newspaper and Guardian Newspaper. In doing so, the study focuses on analyzing discourse language which has the potential to contribute to social change by highlighting and challenging discriminatory practices in advertising on these newspapers that embody power

dynamics, gender biases, and social class representations in advertisement language. Although there are semiotics such as colours, images and signs on both newspapers that equally carry meaning, the present study covers only critical analysis of discourses in these newspapers.

Key terms: Discourse, Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Meaning:

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This research is hinged on Critical Discourse Analysis Theory (CDA). CDA is relevant in interpreting open and underlying message(s) embedded in expressions, conversation, discourse and text. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was propounded by key figures such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun A. van Dijk. Norman Fairclough's influential work, "Language and Power," published in 1989, laid foundational aspects for CDA. This framework examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology, with Fairclough's work being a cornerstone in the field. Kamalu and Osisanwo (2015) states that 'Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an innovative multidisciplinary approach, which tackles a number of social issues' (p.190). This tackling simply implies that CDA is useful in unraveling text, discourse or expressions that have hidden meaning. In other words, CDA helps in uncovering intentions, ideas, power, hidden expectations and social inequality in text, expressions, language and discourse. Given some covert intentions of the written and spoken word, CDA is necessary for describing, interpreting, analyzing, and critiquing social life reflected in text (Luke, 1997). This goes to show that some ideas or intentions in spoken words or text are discoverable through CDA. In view of the said, Van Dijk (2000) adds that CDA is:

a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in social and political context. (qtd. in Kamalu & Osisanwo, 2015, p 190)

This implies then that CDA is relevant in analysing discourse especially as it explores or examines dominance, inequality, ideology, social class manifest in text or discourse and the way such social issues as are re-enacted or addressed through language or conversation/discourse in different media or platforms. Fairclough's () view of CDA is as well insightful, hence he defines CDA as follows: 1995

By critical discourse analysis I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (pp. 132-13)

The above explanation of CDA shows that CDA explores social/cultural factors that play part in the structuring of text, discourse or language and unveil the ideology, dominance and expectations behind the text or discourse. Furthermore, as pointed out in the above quotation, CDA is also interested in tackling ideology and power relations encoded in texts, talks, events,

and their connection with culture, society and discourse. This theory is relevant to this study as it helps exploring the expectations, inequality, gender biases, ideology, power(persuasion strategies), social class differences embedded and intended in Nigerian newspapers such as The Punch Newspaper, Vanguard Newspaper, Guardian Newspaper, Nigerian Tribune Newspaper, Sun Newspaper, This Day Newspaper, National Mirror Newspapers, Daily Trust Newspaper.

Conceptual Review

Some concepts that are used frequently and that are relevant to this study are reviewed in this part of the study. It follows that some scholars have deliberated on such concepts as discourse, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and meaning. These concepts are thus examined here.

Discourse

Discourse refers to the way language is used in social contexts to create meaning beyond the literal interpretation of individual sentences. It can be an expression, a text, or a phrase that carries meaning. Emezue (2002) stresses thus:

Discourse is the product of language in use. It is any structured stretch of language that is larger than a sentence. This means that discourse looks beyond the sentence to the environment of its use and the person involved in the production of the sentence (p. 16).

Emezue's (2002) view reveals that discourse is not just about language but how language is used, and it involves other factors as the context in which it is used. Emezue's (2002) also emphasises that discourse is beyond the formalities of language to include the person or persons responsible for a given utterance. Schiffrin (1994), on her part, gives a comprehensive meaning of discourse when she explains discourse as 'a particular unit of language (above the sentence), and a particular focus (on language use) (p. 20).' Schiffrin's (1994) view reveals that discourse is not part and how, by who and in which context such language is used. This section is divided into four parts: theoretical framework, conceptual review, empirical review and appraisal of the reviews.

Fasold (1990) is among the scholars who approached discourse from the functional point of view. He says that, '...the study of discourse is the study of any aspect of language use (p. 65).' By 'language use,' Discourse therefore, as indicated by these scholars, is goes beyond a sentence to include the person, the context and the purposes for which a language is used.

Discourse Analysis

Zellig Harris (1952) is the first scholar to use the term discourse analysis as a method for analysis of connected speech or writing in order to continue descriptive linguistic analysis beyond a single sentence, and also to show correlation between culture and language. Harris (1952) implies that as a method of analysis, discourse analysis covers both linguistic aspects and extra-linguistic (that is context and persons connected to language) factors in interpretation of a text or language.

Emezue (2002) Discourse analysis (DA) can be simply described as the study of discourse. DA examines the range of differences in what serves as the ability to produce and understand meaningful language; that is, to communicate, goes beyond mere recognition to correct sentences or how to produce them. This shows that DA accounts for the communicative potency of what is often tagged correct or incorrect grammar. To Omicron (2003), discourse analysis challenges us to move from seeing language as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social, and political condition. Even more significant, our words (written or oral) are used to convey a broad sense of meanings and the meaning we convey with those words is identified by our immediate social, political, and historical conditions.

Brown and Yule (1983:1) state the core of discourse analysis thus: the analysis of discourse, is necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs. It thus reveals that the concern of discourse analysts is the study of language in use in social context, that is, what language is used for not the formal properties of language particularly.

Gee's (1999) approach to discourse analysis is that people use language in purposeful ways, situated within social, historical and political contexts. Like other scholars' view on discourse, Gee's (1999) view is that discourse analysis examines the use of language by people. In other words, this means that discourse analysis looks at language as that which is useful in achieving certain purposes. It thus highlights why discourse analysis is focused on texts, expressions, conversations or a stretch of utterance, and not just on a sentence. Accordingly, (Alek, n.d.) points out thus:

Discourse analysis is a methodological approach that delves into the study of language and communication to uncover underlying social, cultural, and power dynamics. It treats language as a social construct that reflects and shapes reality, emphasizing the importance of context....

It is important to note also that is not all about language or expressions, it includes the context in which language is used. With this view in mind, Berrocal et al. (2016) remarks that discourse analysis pays great attention to language forms and functions in social interactions to improve language acquisition by analyzing how native and foreign speakers use language within the social context. In other words, discourse analysis concentrates on details of speech used by people in order to convey the social meaning using the components of language represented in morphology, syntax, phonetics, and phonology. The inclusion of social context enhances meaning making of language as such helps in knowing why a given expression is used by a given person in a given context. Thus, central to discourse analysis is the recognition that language serves as a vehicle through which individuals both reflect and construct their understanding of the world (Simmons & Hawkins, 2014). It follows therefore that the inclusion of social context in discourse analysis helps know individual's world view through their use of language.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Dijk (1993) points out that CDA examines patterns of access and control over contexts, texts,

genres, talk, and discursive strategies of mind control. He also states that CDA studies discourse and its functions in the society, and the ways society and forms of inequality are expressed, reproduced, legitimated, and represented in talk and text. Similarly, Fowler (1996) says that the perspective of CDA is to produce the knowledge of exploitation and knowing, conscious rising of the people regarding any discourse in socio-cultural context.

Corson (1995) says that critical discourse analysis applies certain techniques like textual and stylistic features to find out the social relations, identities from the linguistic perspective. Corson (1995) also indicated that CDA, whether they reveal the social issues like dominance, hegemony are reflected through text or it is the discourses related to educational systems like schools, official documents are dealt by the analysis of the text.

Meyer (2001) likewise interpret the term 'Critical' in CDA as the analysis and understanding of the language embedded in social, political and economic perspective. Meyer (2001) further indicated that CDA tries to develop connections between the powers exerted through language with a wider socio-political context. The focus seems to be on text primarily because it reflects the ideological and identity basis which are constructed and produced through the social relations. Gee (1990) and Sampson (1980) on their part, put an argument that CDA systematically interprets discourses with the help of various approaches by keeping in view socio-political and economic contexts. Here, social semiotics plays significant role in the interpretation of discourse because the analysis would be done on the basis of social background.

In his view, considering the power of the written and spoken word, CDA is necessary for describing, interpreting, analyzing, and critiquing social life reflected in text (Luke, 1997). Van Dijk (1988) also states that CDA is concerned with studying and analyzing written texts and spoken words to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, economic, political, and historical contexts. This thus means that CDA tries to illuminate ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favor their interests. By unmasking such practices, CDA scholars aim to support the victims of such oppression and encourage them to resist and transform their lives (Foucault, 2000). Foucault's (2000) view thus points out that CDA is relevant in orientating and equipping people to not and resist dominance or social inequality.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), whose prime target is to disclose the hidden ideological and power relations which are embedded in text (Rahimi & Sharififar, 2015), calls for a critical approach to discourse analysis, especially as such approach is required to explore individual's world view through their language use. In other words, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is required to explore the social context of a language.

Semantics

According to Odoemenam et al. (2017), semantics is a unique language component that connects with other aspects of human communication. According to Emodi (2011) Semantics is the study of meaning system of a language and its approaches vary widely. To Edem (2023),

semantics also often involves breaking down individual lines of text to study root words, nouns, verbs, adjectives, idioms and how they are arranged.

Acheoah and Olaleye (2018) indicated that meaning is systematic and that it can be realised through language. This view further proves that meaning is manifest through language. Basically, meanings are of two kinds-denotative and connotative meaning (Emodi, 2011). Denotative meaning is the literal or common dictionary meaning while connotative is the evaluative, inferred or emotional meaning (Emodi, 2011).

Advertisement

Advertisement also known as commercials are display which semantically coded, and combined with semiotics in order to convey meaning or to communicate. Omeje and Oparaugo (2021) defined 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. This explains how words in adverts, whether written or spoken, are contributors in enforcing the buying of a given product. Also, 'Advertising is a method of communication that encourages viewers to make a purchasing choice about a product or service while providing information' (Oparaugo et al., 2023, p. 1).

Empirical Review

Dasgupta (2018) did a study on "Gender and Portrayal in Age of Social Networking Sites: An Analytical Discussion" to explore various aspects of pertaining to gender portrayed in age of social media. The study applied Socialist Feminist Theory and Postmodern Feminist Media Theory. In the study, the researcher indicated that social media reinforce gender stereotyping, and that commercials that appear on Social Networks are main sources of gender stereotyping.

The research further highlighted that women are seen as object of sex on social media advertisements such as cosmetics and domestic products. But advertisements for men focus on cars, business and investments. The study finalizes that what accounts for different portrayal of male and female is that they are raised with different set of cultural values. Dasgupta's (2018) study differs from the current study because it focuses on advertisement pictures, that is semiotics in exploring gender differences. The present study is devoted to exploring Facebook and Twitter discourses. While Dasgupta's (2018) study is about gender biases against women in social media adverts, and the negative portrayal of the female body on the adverts, this study goes beyond gender biases to revealing social class, inequality, power and mind controlling strategies in adverts language in selected Nigerian newspapers.

In addition, Kamalu and Ojatula (2019) carried out a study to ascertain how gender representation is manifest in visual communication embedded in selected lager beer advertisements in Nigeria. Their work adopted multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) in interpreting the hidden messages/meaning in the images and slogans on beer billboard. Kamalu and Ojatula's study thus revealed that media agents deliberately create and project multimodal elements that favour the male gender, but exclude their female counterparts in the advertisement of alcoholic products

Their study further revealed that non-representation of the female gender in beer billboard advertisements is a covert and/or manifestation of patriarchal stereotype, subjugation

and biases against women, which further maintains and sustains the notion that women are inferior /unequal to men.

Kamalu and Ojatula's (2019) thus concluded that the beer billboard advertisements in Nigeria project men as brave, and as being in charge. But, by excluding women, the agents who designed and produced the lager beer billboards, implied that women are weak and timid. Kamalu and Ojatula's study is similar to the present study in that it not only explored gender inequality as represented in beer billboard advertisements, but it also pointed out the ideology (in other words, the reason) behind the exclusion of women from the advertisements. However, unlike Kamalu and Ojatula's study that investigates gender inequality in lager beer billboards, the present focuses only on Critical Discourse Analysis of advert language in *The Punch Newspaper*, *Vanguard Newspaper*, *Guardian Newspaper*, *Nigerian Tribune Newspaper*, *Sun Newspaper*, *This Day Newspaper*, *National Mirror Newspapers*, *Daily Trust Newspaper* to explore gender biases, inequality, social class and power relations embedded in them.

Muliani and Ali (2022) investigate and explore the interpersonal meaning of the LATHI Song. Their study was conducted qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical study to check how different semiotic and modes such as music, sound, speech, color, action, and facial expression work together to build the interpersonal meaning. The study results show that Multimodal describes how combination different modes of communication convey meaning. The study thus submitted that, when all modes are applied in an audiovisual display, they create a meaningful communication which can be delivered to the viewers or audiences. Muliani and Ali's (2022) study is related to the present study in that it investigated meaning in some semiotics in the LATHI song, however, it differs from the present study that focuses on carrying out critical analysis of some adverts' language in selected Nigerian newspapers in order to reveal embedded meaning in them.

Study Gaps

The studies (related to Critical Discourse Analysis, Semiotics and Multimodal analysis) of the above scholars have been thoroughly reviewed in this study. Most of the studies identified the usefulness of CDA in analysis of discourse or texts. However, in the studies reviewed, none reviewed advert language in the selected Nigerian newspapers that the present study identifies. The present study thus carries out a critical discourse analysis of adverts language in the Nigerian Newspaper to identify how language is used in them to show power dynamics, gender biases, class, as well as reveal how language is used to appeal or persuade, and the meaning embedded in the adverts language in Nigerian newspapers in order to create awareness about the hidden meaning in advertisement language. It is this gap that necessitates the present study, as it focuses on unveiling meanings underlying adverts language in *The Vanguard* and *Guardian Newspapers*.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses the descriptive design, also known as qualitative design. John Creswell (1998) has it that qualitative research is a structured inquiry process in which a researcher, working within natural settings, explores a social or human problem by collecting rich, textual data to analyze spoken or written words, report the detailed perspectives of participants, and construct a

nuanced, holistic understanding of the phenomena under study (p. 15). This design is suitable for this research, as it is used to ascertain, as well as interpret and analyse ideology, persuasive strategy and class asymmetry embedded in advert language in The Vanguard and Guardian Newspapers.

Sources of Data

The primary sources for this study include online newspapers of The Vanguard and Guardian. These data were captured with a smart phone and downloaded from Opera Mini, so that the extent to which ideology, persuasive strategy and class asymmetry embedded in advert language in The Vanguard and Guardian Newspapers manifest were ascertained. The secondary sources for the research are ebooks, books, articles and pdfs.

Research Population

Although there are several discourses related to ideology, persuasive technique and class asymmetry in The Vanguard and Guardian Newspapers, the present study captured and downloaded 30 advert discourses that are centred on ideology, persuasive technique and class difference. Five (15) discourses from each of Vanguard and Guardian Newspapers were extracted.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting discourses from The Vanguard and Guardian Newspapers. These advertisement discourses represent and manifest ideology, power, persuasive technique and class difference. Thus, out of all 30 discourses in both newspapers, only the (10) advert discourses that embody ideology, persuasive technique and class difference were selected for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Through the use of descriptive or qualitative method, this study points out ideology, persuasive technique and class-sensitive/content that are manifest in the captured and extracted advert discourses from the aforementioned Newspapers. The study observed discourses that reflect ideology, persuasive technique and class difference and these were analysed through the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which enable the study to ascertain the extent of ideology, persuasive technique and class difference in the advert discourses in The Vanguard and Guardian Newspapers.

Data Presentation

In this section, the data are presented placed on tables under the particular newspapers from which they are extracted.

S/N	Newspaper	Advertisements and Language Use
1	Vanguard Newspapers:	Allure. Rhoda MICHAEL On The Business of Fashion Classy Ways to wear off -the-shoulder
2		Diamond Bank Long may our Flag Fly Happy Independence Day We've Changed The Game for Good
3		Introducing Free Tomorrow The Biggest Thing To Hit Nigerian From GLO-THE FIRST NETWORK THAT BROUGHT YOU PER SECOND BILLING (Glo) Unlimited Welcome To THE NEXT GENERATION NETWORK
4		Vanguard Online Edition Same Dimension Same Quality No Extra Charges For every Ad Space you buy in the Vanguard Newspapers you get FREE advertising Space in our e-Edition This is one more Reason To Choose VanGUARD
5		Opay...Beyond Banking-University of Calabar Joins Beneficiaries of Opay's N1.2Billion 10-year-Scholarship Programme
6	Guardian Newspapers :	10 million girls in Nigeria alone cannot afford sanitary pads HAPPY WORLD MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY #Periodfriendlyworld Together we can....
7		Zenith: Be cool with eazy by Zenith, Get your phone number as your account
8		RONK INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL: ...nation's brightest hope our commitment is to raise the total child through quality education, exposure and sports They sustain our edge and help us win Enroll Now!! Entrance Examination Dates: 2nd and 9th August, 2025
9		First Bank Since 1894 Different time Zone, Same trusted bank first Diaspora gives you full access to Nigerian banking services anywhere in the world-You first

Data Analysis

In this section, the data are presented in different subheadings, such as: Persuasive Strategies, Ideology, Class/Social Inequality, Power, Prestige, Authority and Persuasive Consumer Appeal. Also, the section embodies a critical discourse analysis of selected advertisements drawn from two major Nigerian newspapers: The Vanguard, and The Guardian. Advert language from the Newspapers were purposively selected for their representation of dominant persuasive strategies, ideological positions, and socio-cultural implications. These excerpts have been systematically organized under thematic categories that highlight recurring patterns in language use, persuasive appeal, and ideological framing. Each category situates the advert language within its socio-political and cultural context, moving beyond surface promotional content to reveal deeper discursive functions. The analysis focuses on how linguistic and stylistic choices construct meaning, sustain ideologies, and reflect broader power relations in Nigerian society. The selected excerpts are presented and examined below under their respective thematic subheadings.

Persuasive Strategies, Ideology, Class/Social Inequality in Advert Language

Guardian Newspaper: 10 million girls in Nigeria alone cannot afford
Data 6: sanitary pads
 HAPPY WORLD MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY
 #Periodfriendlyworld
 Together we can....

The excerpt, “10 million girls in Nigeria alone cannot afford sanitary pads... Happy World Menstrual Hygiene Day,” foregrounds a pressing issue of gender inequality and socio-economic marginalization in Nigeria. Through the linguistic strategy of quantification (“10 million girls”), the text constructs the problem as not merely personal but structural, emphasizing the widespread and systemic nature of menstrual disturbing realities to many young girls in Nigeria. According to Fairclough's (1995) view, discourse does not merely reflect reality but actively shapes it by foregrounding certain issues while backgrounding others. Here, the advertisement creates visibility for the hidden struggles of young girls, whose access to awareness, dignity, and health is often compromised by the lack of affordable sanitary products. In Nigeria, this resonates deeply with a patriarchal socio-economic structure where women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, and their basic needs are deprioritized in public policy and social spending.

The inclusion of celebratory slogans such as “Happy World Menstrual Hygiene Day” and hashtags like “#Periodfriendlyworld” functions ideologically by attempting to normalize menstruation within public discourse. This is significant in the Nigerian context where menstruation is often cloaked in silence, stigma, and taboo. CDA, as van Dijk (2000) notes, is concerned with how dominance and inequality are enacted through discourse, and in this case, the text challenges patriarchal discourses that have historically marginalized female bodily experiences. By using inclusive language (“Together we can...”), the excerpt constructs a collective identity and responsibility, countering the exclusionary discourse that isolates menstruation as a “women's problem.” This discursive strategy pushes against cultural silences and situates menstrual hygiene as a matter of human rights and social justice.

At a deeper level, the text encodes power relations and ideology. On one hand, it seeks to empower women by raising awareness, yet it also implicitly critiques the Nigerian socio-political system that has failed to address such fundamental inequalities. CDA reveals how the text draws attention to the intersection of gender and class: menstruation itself is natural, but access to sanitary products is determined by socio-economic privilege. This aligns with Luke's (1997) observation that CDA interrogates how texts reflect and reproduce social life and inequality. In Nigeria, where government interventions on reproductive health are limited and sanitary products are taxed as luxury goods, the discourse highlights systemic neglect and inequality. Thus, the advertisement not only markets an idea of inclusivity (#Periodfriendlyworld) but also exposes the ideological tension between consumerist awareness campaigns and the structural inequalities they seek to address.

Vanguard Newspapers:

Data 1: Allure. Rhoda MICHAEL On The

Business of Fashion
Classy Ways to wear off-the-shoulder

The advert language, “Allure. Rhoda MICHAEL on the Business of Fashion: Classy Ways to Wear Off-the-Shoulder,” reflects how media discourse often constructs women primarily through the lens of appearance, beauty, and style. The lexical choice of “classy” carries ideological weight: it situates femininity within standards of elegance and respectability that align with elite or middle-class aspirations. Following Fairclough's (1995) perspective, discourse not only describes but also prescribes ways of being; here, the advertisement implicitly tells women that identity and value are mediated through fashion choices. This is particularly evident in patriarchal societies practiced across Africa, especially Nigeria, where women are discursively judged more by physical appearance than by intellectual or professional achievement. Thus, the advertisement participates in the reproduction of gender inequality, reinforcing the patriarchal norm that women's visibility and social worth are tied to their looks.

The phrase “the business of fashion” also encodes socio-economic ideologies. While it foregrounds fashion as an industry, it simultaneously suggests that women's economic empowerment is attainable through consumerism and style entrepreneurship. Van Dijk (2000) notes that CDA studies how dominance and inequality are enacted in discourse. Thus in patriarchal African societies, this reflects a paradox: women are offered agency primarily within industries associated with gendered expectations—fashion, beauty, and domesticity. In contrast, men's entrepreneurship is discursively constructed around politics, finance, or technology. Such an asymmetry not only limits the narrative space available to women but also reproduces patriarchal structures that restrict women's empowerment to “acceptable” domains.

Furthermore, the focus on “classy ways to wear off-the-shoulder” emphasizes women's bodies as sites of public gaze and regulation. This reflects Luke's (1997) argument that CDA must interrogate how discourse critiques or sustains social life: here, discourse sustains the commodification of the female body. In patriarchal societies in Africa, particularly Nigeria, women are often subjected to moral policing based on their dress, with modesty discourses reinforcing their subordination. While the promotion of off-the-shoulder fashion may appear to encourage individuality and self-expression, it simultaneously subjects women to evaluative frameworks of “classiness” and desirability. In this way, the advertisement embodies a double bind: it grants women limited freedom of style while still reinforcing patriarchal ideology by reducing their social visibility to aesthetics.

Power, Prestige, and Authority in Advert Language

Guardian Newspaper:

Data 7:

Zenith:

Be cool with eazy by Zenith

Get your phone number as your account

The Zenith advertisement, “Be cool with eazy by Zenith. Get your phone number as your account,” employs a casual, conversational tone that seeks to position the product as modern, convenient, and user-friendly. The lexical choice of “be cool” evokes youthfulness, informality,

and ease, suggesting that financial services can be integrated seamlessly into everyday life. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that discourse does not merely reflect social reality but actively constructs it; here, the advertisement constructs the bank as approachable and in tune with contemporary lifestyles. The simplification of banking processes by allowing a phone number to serve as an account further reinforces the narrative of accessibility, reducing perceived complexity and appealing to consumers' desire for efficiency in a fast-paced society.

However, a closer CDA reading reveals implicit assumptions about class and technological literacy. By framing convenience through digital means, the advert privileges consumers who are technologically savvy and have access to mobile devices, potentially marginalizing individuals without these resources. Van Dijk (2000) notes that discourse reproduces social inequalities by normalizing certain practices while rendering others invisible. In the Nigerian context, where disparities in technology access are significant, this language subtly aligns banking convenience with modern, urban, middle-class lifestyles, positioning others as outside the target audience. The discourse thus both markets a product and reinforces social distinctions, demonstrating how language in advertising mediates power, class, and access to resources.

Guardian Newspapers:

Data 9: First Bank
 Since 1894
 Different time Zone
 Same trusted bank
 first Diaspora gives you full access to Nigerian
 banking services
 anywhere in the world
 —You first

The First Bank advertisement, “Since 1894. Different time Zone. Same trusted bank. First Diaspora gives you full access to Nigerian banking services anywhere in the world — You first,” constructs an image of reliability, longevity, and global accessibility. The use of historical reference (“Since 1894”) highlights the bank's longstanding presence and experience, which builds credibility and trust in the minds of consumers. The phrase “Same trusted bank” reinforces this authority, suggesting consistency and dependability over time. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse does not merely reflect social reality but actively shapes it; here, the advertisement frames First Bank as a socially embedded institution capable of bridging both local and global spheres, appealing to Nigerians at home and in the diaspora.

From a persuasive standpoint, the ad employs emotional and aspirational appeals to influence consumer behavior. The reference to “Different time Zone” and “full access to Nigerian banking services anywhere in the world” conveys convenience, modernity, and global mobility. These linguistic choices position the bank as responsive to the needs of technologically savvy, globally connected clients, thereby encouraging engagement with its services. Van Dijk (2000) highlights that discourse often enacts social hierarchies; here, the ad implicitly privileges those who are globally mobile and digitally literate, signaling that access to elite, technologically integrated services is a marker of status.

Finally, the tagline “You first” employs a direct, personalized persuasive strategy that prioritizes the consumer and fosters loyalty. This rhetorical choice creates a sense of empowerment and individual attention, appealing to emotions and reinforcing the notion that First Bank values each client personally. Luke (1997) notes that CDA interrogates how text reproduces social life, and in this case, the discourse merges historical prestige, technological competence, and social distinction. The ad does not simply market banking services; it constructs a narrative where trust, mobility, and status intersect, shaping consumer perception and subtly reinforcing social hierarchies in Nigeria, particularly among domestic and diaspora populations.

Vanguard Newspaper:

Data 2: Diamond Bank
 Long may our Flag Fly
 Happy Independence Day
 We've Changed the Game for Good

The Diamond Bank advertisement, “Long may our flag fly... We've changed the game for good,” employs a nationalistic tone that links the bank's services and achievements to Nigerian identity and pride. The phrase “Long may our flag fly” evokes patriotic sentiment, aligning the institution with broader nationalistic ideals. Fairclough (1995) notes that discourse constructs social reality and embeds ideological positions; here, the advertisement positions Diamond Bank as not merely a financial institution but as a participant in the nation's progress. By intertwining banking with national symbols, the ad communicates that using Diamond Bank is an act that resonates with civic pride and collective identity.

From an ideological perspective, the statement “We've changed the game for good” suggests transformative influence, portraying the bank as innovative, forward-looking, and socially impactful. Van Dijk (2000) emphasizes that discourse reproduces and enacts power structures; in this context, Diamond Bank constructs itself as a central agent of economic progress, implying that financial empowerment is linked to national development. The advertisement thus functions not only as a marketing message but as a subtle vehicle for reinforcing the association between economic authority, patriotism, and social responsibility.

In terms of persuasive strategy, the ad leverages both emotional and ideological appeals. The patriotic framing elicits pride and loyalty, motivating consumers to align themselves with a bank that symbolizes national advancement. The declarative “We've changed the game for good” signals permanence and credibility, encouraging trust and confidence in the institution's services. Luke (1997) argues that CDA uncovers hidden social and ideological effects in texts, and here, the advertisement's discourse constructs a narrative where financial choice becomes intertwined with civic identity. Consequently, the ad subtly encourages engagement with Diamond Bank while promoting an ideological message that equates banking innovation with nationalistic achievement.

Persuasive Consumer Appeal in Advert Language

Guardian Newspapers:

Data 8: RONK INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL:

... nation's brightest hope
 our commitment is to raise the total child through quality
 education, exposure and sports
 They sustain our edge and help us win
 Eroll Now!!
 Entrance Examination Dates: 2nd and 9th August, 2025

The Ronk International School advertisement, “Nation's brightest hope... raising the total child...”, constructs education as a path to excellence, holistic development, and social prestige. Phrases like “nation's brightest hope” and “raising the total child” portray schooling as transformative, suggesting that enrollment equips children with the skills, exposure, and moral grounding to achieve success in life. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that discourse not only reflects social reality but actively shapes it; here, the advertisement promotes an ideology in which education is presented as the ultimate gateway to achievement and upward mobility. It appeals to parental aspirations and constructs the school as a facilitator of future social and professional distinction.

However, when situated in the Nigerian socio-economic context, the claims of guaranteed success and opportunity must be critically interrogated. Nigeria faces significant graduate unemployment and underemployment, with countless individuals holding degrees yet struggling to find gainful work (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Van Dijk (2000) highlights that discourse often reproduces power structures; in this case, the advertisement promotes a selective narrative that privileges elite educational institutions while obscuring systemic challenges in the labor market. The promise of producing the “nation's brightest hope” risks exaggerating the potential of education to deliver social mobility, creating an aspirational illusion that does not align with the realities most graduates face. This ideological framing benefits the institution by commodifying education as a marker of status, even though the broader socio-economic conditions may limit the tangible outcomes of such schooling.

The persuasive strategies in the advertisement further reinforce this selective narrative. By linking quality, holistic education to future achievement, the ad appeals to parental desire for social prestige, emotional security, and perceived advantage. Luke (1997) stresses that CDA uncovers hidden social meanings in texts; here, the discourse subtly communicates that opportunity and success are accessible primarily to those with access to elite education, reinforcing socio-economic divides. While education is indeed socially valued in Nigeria, the ad's framing neglects structural realities, including limited employment opportunities, systemic corruption, and economic instability, which constrain the practical effectiveness of education as a pathway to success. Thus, the advertisement reflects both an ideological aspiration and a commercial strategy, promoting education as a high-value commodity while masking the social and economic limitations that graduates frequently encounter.

Vanguard Newspapers:

Data 3: Introducing
 Free Tomorrow
 The Biggest Thing To Hit

Nigerian From GLO- THE
 FIRST NETWORK THAT
 BROUGHT YOU PER SECOND BILLING
 (Glo) Unlimited
 Welcome To THE NEXT GENERATION NETWORK

The Glo advertisement excerpt, “Introducing Free Tomorrow... The Biggest Thing To Hit Nigeria”, deploys hyperbolic language and nationalistic undertones to market its services. The use of grandiose claims like “The Biggest Thing To Hit Nigeria” frames the product as a revolutionary development, linking the brand with progress and innovation at a national scale. This kind of language constructs Glo not just as a telecommunications provider but as a symbol of advancement for Nigeria itself. Fairclough (1989) explains that advertising discourse often goes beyond describing a product to shape identities and social aspirations; here, the advertisement constructs an image of Glo as an enabler of modernity and empowerment, aligning consumer choices with patriotic pride.

At a deeper level, however, the phrase “Free Tomorrow” carries ideological weight. It creates a promise of liberation and economic relief, implying that the service transcends ordinary communication and leads toward a better, freer future. In the Nigerian context, where economic hardship, inflation, and high youth unemployment dominate everyday reality, such messaging plays on the hopes of consumers for ease, affordability, and opportunity. Yet, CDA reminds us that these promises often mask contradictions: while telecommunications companies promise empowerment, their services frequently remain financially burdensome for low-income Nigerians, and network inefficiencies frustrate the very freedom being advertised. Van Dijk (2000) stresses that discourse sustains power relations; here, the ad sustains the corporate power of Glo by exploiting the gap between aspirational promises and lived consumer realities.

Furthermore, by referencing its legacy as “the first network that brought you per-second billing,” the advertisement situates Glo as a pioneer and national benefactor. This historical intertextuality appeals to collective memory, positioning the brand as central to Nigeria's technological progress. However, such positioning reinforces the ideology of corporate saviorhood, where private companies are portrayed as agents of national development, overshadowing the state's responsibility to provide affordable, reliable infrastructure. In this sense, the ad constructs consumer dependency on corporate power while masking structural inequalities in access to communication technology. Thus, beneath its celebratory and empowering language, the advertisement demonstrates how marketing discourse reinforces economic and ideological dominance by shaping public perception of progress around consumption.

Vanguard Newspapers:

Data 4: Vanguard Online Edition Same Dimension.
 Same Quality
 No Extra Charges
 For every Ad Space you buy in the Vanguard Newspapers
 you get FREE advertising

Space in our e-Edition
This is one more Reason
To Choose VanGUARD

The Vanguard Online Edition advertisement emphasizes consistency and value by repeating phrases like “Same Dimension. Same Quality. No Extra Charges.” This rhetorical strategy reassures advertisers that moving from print to digital does not compromise prestige or visibility. In line with Fairclough's (1995) view that discourse reproduces institutional authority, the ad constructs Vanguard as a reliable and trusted medium that guarantees advertisers the same credibility in its online format as in its traditional print edition. The phrase “This is one more reason to choose Vanguard” functions as persuasive reinforcement, framing Vanguard as the superior choice for those seeking both reach and cost-effectiveness.

At a deeper ideological level, the advert reflects the shifting media economy in Nigeria, where newspapers increasingly struggle with dwindling print circulation and turn to digital platforms for survival. By offering “FREE advertising space in our e-Edition,” Vanguard frames itself as adapting to technological progress while also masking the economic pressures of sustaining print journalism in a digital age. Van Dijk (2000) highlights that discourse often conceals power struggles; here, what appears as generosity (“no extra charges”) also reflects strategic efforts to retain advertisers in a competitive media market dominated by social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which have drawn away traditional advertising revenue.

The Nigerian socio-economic context further complicates this persuasive discourse. While the ad frames digital expansion as seamless and progressive, access to online news remains uneven due to poor internet penetration, high data costs, and infrastructural challenges. Thus, the “free” expansion into e-Edition spaces primarily benefits elite advertisers and digitally literate audiences, leaving out rural or low-income groups who still rely heavily on print media. By not acknowledging these structural divides, the ad implicitly reproduces class distinctions, privileging those who can participate in digital consumption while masking the inequalities in media accessibility. In this sense, the Vanguard Online Edition advertisement demonstrates how institutional discourse promotes itself as inclusive and progressive while concealing socio-economic disparities and its own struggle for survival in a rapidly changing information economy.

Vanguard Newspapers:

Data 5:

Opay
...Beyond Banking
—University of Calabar Joins Beneficiaries of Opay's
N1.2Billion 10-year-Scholarship
Programme

The Opay excerpt, “...Beyond Banking —University of Calabar Joins Beneficiaries of Opay's N1.2Billion 10-year-Scholarship Programme,” projects the brand as a socially responsible institution that extends its role from financial services into education and national development. The phrase “Beyond Banking” establishes the company's identity as more than a profit-driven

enterprise, suggesting it operates as a benevolent stakeholder in society. By associating its brand with a scholarship initiative, Opay employs a discourse of corporate philanthropy, a common persuasive strategy in Nigerian advertisements that links consumer trust to social investment. This aligns with Fairclough's (1989) view that advertising not only markets a product but also constructs ideological meanings, here portraying Opay as a partner in Nigeria's educational progress.

At a deeper level, the advertisement functions ideologically by aligning corporate power with the aspirations of Nigerian youth. Education in Nigeria is widely seen as a route to mobility and opportunity, even though the realities of unemployment and underemployment challenge this narrative. By sponsoring scholarships, Opay inserts itself into this national aspiration, presenting itself as an enabler of hope and opportunity. However, as van Dijk (2000) argues, discourse often conceals power relations; here, Opay's philanthropic messaging masks the fact that such initiatives also serve corporate interests — boosting brand image, expanding market share among students, and cultivating loyalty. Thus, the discourse of generosity conceals a deeper economic strategy, turning education into a tool for corporate legitimacy.

The Nigerian socio-economic context further complicates this message. The emphasis on a “10-year scholarship programme” creates an impression of long-term commitment, yet many such corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects are unevenly implemented, limited in scope, and primarily symbolic. Moreover, highlighting the University of Calabar suggests regional inclusivity, but it also strategically localizes the brand in underserved regions to gain visibility and customer base expansion. This shows how corporate discourse appropriates national development gaps — such as inadequate government investment in education — to fill the vacuum in ways that benefit private interests. In this sense, the Opay advertisement reflects the paradox of CSR in Nigeria: while it promises empowerment and opportunity, it simultaneously reinforces corporate dominance by presenting private companies as saviors where the state has failed.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the analysis of advertisement language in the selected Nigerian newspapers are as follows:

Advert language makes education a symbolic tool of aspiration, presenting schooling as the gateway to success, even when this contradicts Nigeria's high graduate unemployment reality. This reflects how advertising constructs education as both a personal goal and a social ideal, irrespective of structural limitations.

Advert language often links financial services with nationalism, using patriotic terms to naturalize the power of banks in everyday life. This strategy positions financial institutions as essential to national progress and individual economic advancement.

Advert language employs technological metaphors of progress and modernity, particularly in telecom and media adverts, masking infrastructural and digital divides. Such framing positions technology as inherently empowering while obscuring systemic inequalities in access.

Advert language utilizes repetition, slogans, and catchphrases (“You First,” “Same Quality,”

“Spirit of Sharing”) to reinforce brand identity and shape consumer loyalty. Such strategies embed brand messages deeply within cultural and consumer consciousness.

Advert language often romanticizes consumption as communal and moral, particularly in food and seasonal adverts, by framing purchase as generosity or togetherness. This constructs consumption as both a personal and social good.

Finally, advert language reproduces social class distinctions, as many adverts (banking, education, premium services) target elites while excluding the realities of low-income groups. This reflects how advertising discourse perpetuates existing social inequalities through selective representation.

Summary

This study set out to investigate the meanings embedded in the language of advertisements in two Nigerian newspapers (The Vanguard, and The Guardian) using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its theoretical framework. The aim was to uncover how advertising language reflects power dynamics, gender biases, class representation, persuasive strategies, and hidden ideologies in the Nigerian media landscape.

The findings of this research show that advertising language often presents education as a symbol of hope and mobility, despite the contradiction posed by mass graduate unemployment in Nigeria. Banks and financial institutions use patriotic discourse to link economic power to national identity and trust. Technological and media adverts frame themselves as symbols of progress, while masking infrastructural inequality and the digital divide. Advertisers frequently use catchphrases, repetition, and slogans to reinforce brand memory and consumer loyalty. Advertising discourse reproduces class hierarchies, privileging elite and urban consumers while marginalizing rural and low-income groups.

These findings demonstrate that advertisement language in Nigerian newspapers is not neutral but a powerful discourse that reproduces ideologies, influences consumer behavior, and reflects broader societal inequalities.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that advertising in Nigerian newspapers is more than a tool for marketing products but also a medium of ideology, persuasion, and power reproduction. Through CDA, this study has shown that advertisers carefully select words, phrases, and discursive strategies that not only sell products but also construct social realities. In a society marked by class division, and economic struggle, advertisements embed meanings that shape how consumers perceive identity, success, and national belonging.

While advertising language often projects progress, inclusivity, and empowerment, it also conceals structural inequalities by privileging certain groups over others. The glamorization of education despite unemployment and high poverty level is an example of how discourse masks contradictions in Nigerian society. Thus, advertising language functions as both a mirror and a manipulator of social values, making its study crucial in understanding contemporary Nigerian media and culture.

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