

Advertising language in Nigeria: The Punch Newspaper Paradigm

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Abstract

This study investigates advertising language as contained in the Punch Newspaper 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 advertising language drawn from The Punch Newspaper, spanning thematic areas like religion, education, financial services, nationalism, media/technology, and consumer culture. Findings reveal that advertisement language as used by the Punch Newspaper 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, both in letters, words, phrases, clauses and sentences. This is because, language serves 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.

In Halliday's (1973) Systemic Functional Linguistics, language is used to reflect social factors. Halliday 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. This is why discourse has language as its raw material (Mckenna 2004). Discourse centres on the need to master the formal rules of the language as a means of decoding and encoding meanings in text. 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. It then follows that through CDA, the encoded meaning in adverts language can be explored.

Omeje and Oparaugo (2021) opine that advertising is 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 points out how the words in advertising, 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). 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, 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 advertisements. 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 Punch Newspaper. In other words, this study carries out a critical discourse analysis of the language of advertising in the newspaper, to identify how language is used in it to show power dynamics, gender biases, class and creates awareness about the hidden meaning in the language of advertising. It is this gap that necessitates the present study.

Statement of the Problem

The language use 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 Punch Newspaper, 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 Nigerian newspapers, as seen 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, in order to create awareness about the hidden meaning in advertisement language in the Punch Newspaper.

Aim and Objectives

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

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

1.4 Research Questions

- i. To what extent does advertisements in select Nigerian newspapers use language to reflect and reinforce power dynamics, gender biases and social class representations?
- ii. What persuasive strategies are employed in advertisements in select Nigerian 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 select Nigerian 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. Additionally, the study's focus on power relation, gender biases and social class representations in advertisement language.

Scope and delimitations of the Study

This study is restricted to Critical Discourse Analysis of one Nigerian newspaper, The Punch 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 The Punch Newspaper, that equally carry meaning, the present study covers only critical analysis of discourses in the newspaper.

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 (1995) view of CDA is as well insightful, hence he defines CDA as follows:

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

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).

To Omicron (2003), discourse refers to expressing oneself using words. Omicron (2003) further explains that discourses are ubiquitous ways of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the world, which can be used for an assertion of power and knowledge, and for resistance and critique. Omicron (2003) maintains that discourses are used in everyday contexts for building power and knowledge, for regulation and normalization, for the development of new knowledge and power relations, and for hegemony (excess influence or authority of one nation over another). He also identifies that discourse is shaped and constrained by (a) social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity, and gender) and by (b) culture, and (c) Discourse (the words and language we use) helps shape and constrain our identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs. This explanation covers both perspectives of scholars on discourse a fragment of language beyond sentence and as language in use. In other words, these two perspectives are formalist and functional approaches to discourse.

Fasold (1990) implies that language discourse is employed to achieve some purposes or it is the use to which a language is put. 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

Discourse analysis (DA) can be simply described as the study of discourse which 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 (Emezue, 2002). 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.

Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) too assert that Discourse Analysis aims to understand and reveal the 'ontological' and 'epistemological premises', which are embedded in language and which allows a statement to be undertaken as rational or interpreted as meaning. Implicitly, discourse analysis inquires into the essential or essence of a text or the rationale behind every language in use. Sud (2014), in a different way, opines that discourse analysis aids in constituting (and changing) knowledge, social relations and social identity. In other words, Sud (2014) sees discourse analysis as being instrumental in challenging some hidden ideology in text or language in use, and, at the same time, useful in creating a social marker. This is viewed as a two way relationship, wherein language changes according to the context and situations are altered according to language use.

Similarly, Hogdes et al. (2008) opine that discourse analysis is an umbrella term for a number of Qualitative Research methods, and is broadly involved in studying and analysing the use of languages. This view presents discourse analysis as an interpretative paradigm. In other words, it is a method responsible for uncovering meanings that are in text. 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 follows that discourse analysis investigates language to uncover the meanings that are wrapped around it. Harris (1952) likewise adds that discourse analysis is a method for the analysis of connected speech or writing, for continuing descriptive linguistics beyond the limit of a simple sentence at a time. This implies that discourse analysis takes into account what a unit or body of language means, and not just limited to formal features of a sentence.

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.

Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Dijk (1993), Critical Discourse Analysis is a special approach in discourse analysis which focuses on discursive conditions, components and consequences of power abuse by dominant (elite) groups and institutions. 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. And that such is done in opposition against those groups and institutions who abuse their power (Dijk 1993) factors in that specific context. Equally insightful is Gee's (1999) view as he states that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

connects micro-analysis of actual spoken language and written texts to macro-analysis of societal discourses by tracing patterns of repetition words, synonymous phrases or other linguistic features.

To Blommaert (2005) and Jorgensen (2002), critical discourse analysis is considered to be wider and broader which analyses the relation of language within a society and its impact on the discourses. They are of the view that linguistic and social variables in CDA research are closely knitted to each other because whenever we approach any text or discourse, we approach it from linguistic perspective and emphasize how choice of language in a particular discourse pertains particularly about a wholeness or formal features of a sentence. 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.

Stemming from Habermas's (1973) critical theory, CDA aims to help the analyst understand social problems that are mediated by mainstream ideology and power relationships, all perpetuated by the use of written texts in our daily and professional lives. In other words, Fairclough (1989) adds that the objective of CDA is to uncover the ideological assumptions that are hidden in the words of our written text or oral speech in order to resist and overcome various forms of power over or to gain an appreciation that we are exercising "power over," "unknownst" to us. This implies that through CDA, people are made to know when power or language is employed to manipulate them.

Most critical discourse analysts thus endorse Habermas's claim that 'language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimizations of power relations, ..., are not articulated ...language is also ideological' (Habermas 1967, 259). It is the realization of how language can be manipulated to convey certain purposes that necessitates application of CDA in interpreting discourse or text. Thus, Fairclough (2002) approaches CDA extensively when he says that CDA might be defined as fundamentally interested in not only analyzing opaque but also transparent, structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, in Fairclough's (2002) opinion, CDA aims at investigating critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse). He adds that CDA can also focus on body language, utterances, symbols, visual images, and other forms of semiosis (signs and symbols) as means of discourse.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is required to explore the social context of a language. This is especially so as CDA sees "language as social practice" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), and considers the context of language use to be crucial, thus:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of 'social practice'. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects

of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258)

Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning in any given language (Acheoah & Olaleye 2018). This shows that Semantics reveals how meaning works in a language. Nwala (2015) added that 'Semantics is the study of meaning and interpretation, which promotes communication' (p. 196). This reveals that Semantics helps in meaning making, and through it, there is a flow of communication. It also means that Semantics helps in clarifying ambiguities in words or sentences. Said et al. (2023) opine that Semantics is a branch of linguistics, which aims to investigate the meaning of language. This reveals that Semantics deals with the meaning of sentences and words as they are fundamentals in meaning realization. In line with the said, Martinez and Castillo (2015) stated:

Meaning defines language since it is in direct connection with the very existence of language. Language is nothing but the creation of meanings. Meaning thus is universal and necessary for language to exist. At the same time meaning manifests itself in language (p. 50).

According to Geertz (1973), meaning is a cultural construct, shaped by social and historical contexts. Geertz's (1973) view relates that meaning is realizeable in context. Similarly, Hall (1997) argues that meaning is a product of encoding and decoding processes, influenced by cultural codes and conventions. Wittgenstein (1953) addresses this view, proposing that meaning is derived from use and practice, rather than reference.

Advertisement

Advertisement also known as commercials are display which semantically coded, and combined with semiotics in order to convey meaning or to communicate. '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). It follows 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. Furthermore, 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)

Empirical Review

Noriega (2012) worked on the topic "The Conflation of Health and Beauty in Advertising: A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Three Television Commercials" to examine how television commercials construct a tie between health and beauty in advertising. The study

incorporated analysis of both visual and the verbal modes, and applied Systemic Functional Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Discourse Analysis to gain further insight on how advertising discourse could bring about ideological positions through images. The study identified that the commercials projected a uniform representation of both human image, colours of the product and the colours in the various frame of the commercials to project a sense/meaning of health and beauty. It thus suggested the need for multimodal analysis in learning as it brings out hidden meanings in different modes in visual images. Like the present study, Noriega's (2012) study applied CDA as its theoretical framework, and also focused on exploring how advertising beauty products on television commercials shapes the ideology of buyers. This study is nonetheless different from Noriega's (2012) study as it investigates the meaning conveyed by some commercial display in selected Nigerian newspapers.

Furthermore, Suku's (2019) work on "Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Image Representation in MTNng Instagram Advert" aimed to examine the narrative and the conceptual processes obtainable in visual grammar such as the images of MTNng and Instagram advertisement. The study indicated that the conceptual processes that are represented through multimodal elements in the form of images in the MTNng Instagram advertisements are mediated in order to persuade, entice and inspire consumers/customers to patronise MTNng product and services

Suku's (2019) work concluded that multimodal analysis is significant for it helps to reveal the underlying meanings embedded in images such as are mediated in MTNng Instagram advertisements. The work is similar to the present study because it did a multimodal discourse analysis of Instagram advertisements, however, its analysis is limited to only concepts and narrative in the advertisements of MtnNg. The present study is therefore unlike Suku's (2019) study that focused only on MtnNg advertisements on Instagram. The present study on the other hand carries out a holistic examination of advert language in selected Nigerian newspapers, using CDA as its framework with the aim of orientating consumers on ideological inclination of such adverts.

Also, the study of Lingga et al. (2021) entitled "Multimodality in the Perfume Advertisement on a Fashion," investigated the images of the advertisement of the perfume products. The study anchored on multimodal approach and applied qualitative research method. The research identified the visual and the verbal aspects of the perfume products. And explained that the verbal mode reinforced the need to purchase the product. The visual aspect, by exhibiting the transparency of the bottle and the facial display of the female participant in the perfume package, gave a sense of calmness the perfume brought to customers when they sprayed it.

Lingga et al.'s (2021) study thus explored all the modes (both the visual and the verbal) in the perfume advertisement. The present study however, differs from theirs in that its objects of analysis are naira notes which have both social and cultural underpinnings. Lingga et al.'s (2021) study is limited to perfume advertisement only, unlike the present study that examines advert language of all advert products in selected Nigerian newspapers to uncover their language strategies for attracting customers to their products.

Study Gaps

The studies scholars above (on Critical Discourse Analysis, Semiotics and Multimodal

analysis) have been thoroughly reviewed in this study. Most of the studies identified the usefulness of CDA in analysis of discourse or texts. However, none reviewed advertising language in Nigerian newspapers that the present study identifies. The present study thus carries out a critical discourse analysis of language of advertising in one of Nigerian Newspapers to identify how language is used in it 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 advertisements. It is this gap that necessitates the present study, as it focuses on unveiling meanings underlying adverts language in The Punch Newspaper.

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 Punch Newspaper.

Sources of Data

The primary sources for this study include online newspapers of The Punch Newspaper. 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 Punch Newspaper 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 Punch Newspaper, the present study captured and downloaded 10 advertisement discourses that are centred on ideology, persuasive technique and class difference.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting discourses from The Punch Newspaper advert discourses that reflect ideology, persuasive technique and class difference. These advert discourses represent and manifest ideology, power, persuasive technique and class difference. Thus, out of all 10 discourses in selected Nigerian Newspapers, (5) 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 Punch Newspaper.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data Presentation: The data are presented placed on the following table

<u>Peak</u> Encourages Muslim Faithful to Share Goodness and Nourishment this Ramadan
<u>Peak:</u> Bruised and Pierced for Us #GoodFRIDAY
Millionaire emerges from the Bet9ja UCL Jackpot Campaign This the latest demonstrati on of Bet9ja's commitment to giving back to its agents and customers who have remained loyal to the brand & have position it as the market leader.
<u>Dstv</u> Whatever package you've on, connected or not, this your chance to unlock the full power of DStv Premium and revel in a world of endless entertainment and authenticity.
<u>Indomie</u> Ramadan Kareem Share the Goodness of This Season & WIN #Indomie Spirit of Sharing

Data Analysis

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 The Punch. Advert language from the newspaper 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

Data 1: Peak Encourages Muslim Faithful to Share Goodness this Ramadan

Data 2: Peak
Bruised and Pierced for Us
#GoodFRIDAY

In **Data 1**, the advertisement “Peak Encourages Muslim Faithful to Share Goodness this Ramadan” employs careful, respectful, and non-provocative language in representing Islam. Ramadan is portrayed through values of sharing and goodness, which align with widely accepted Islamic ideals, without crossing into controversial or sacred doctrinal references. This

careful construction reflects the cultural reality in Nigeria, where Islam is highly respected and advertisers are cautious not to use language that might provoke offense. Fairclough (1995) stresses that CDA must uncover how discourse reflects and sustains social relations of power, and here the respectful framing of Ramadan suggests an acknowledgment of Islam's authority and influence in Nigerian society. By highlighting “sharing” and “goodness,” the advert affirms Islam positively, appealing to communal values while preserving the sacredness of the faith.

However, **Data 2**, which is the Christian-focused advert “Peak: Bruised and Pierced for Us #GoodFRIDAY” treats one of Christianity's holiest moments — the crucifixion of Christ — as a rhetorical device for product promotion. Terms like “bruised” and “pierced,” drawn directly from the Biblical account of Christ's suffering, are sacred to Christian identity, yet they are commodified here to create emotional impact for a consumer brand. As van Dijk (2000) observes, CDA reveals how ideologies are reproduced through text, and in this case, the ideology is one of trivialization: the sacred death of Christ is transformed into mere advertising copy. Instead of reverence, the language “commonizes” and diminishes what Christians hold in awe, presenting divine suffering as if it were a casual metaphor, stripped of its sacred weight.

This disparity in representation reveals an ideological imbalance in how Nigeria's two dominant religions are portrayed in advertising discourse. Islam is handled with caution, respect, and cultural sensitivity, while Christianity is treated with relative informality and commodification. Luke (1997) argues that CDA critiques social practices encoded in text, and here the practice is one of unequal reverence: advertisers avoid offending Muslims but show less concern for preserving the sacredness of Christian faith. This reflects broader discursive patterns in Nigerian media, where advertisers often negotiate social harmony by respecting Islamic values yet feel freer to employ Christian imagery without fear of significant backlash.

The implications of this discursive imbalance are profound. By elevating the respect shown to Islam while reducing Christian doctrine to mere marketing tools, advertisers reinforce a hierarchy of religious sensitivity in Nigerian society. This has the effect of inferiorizing Christianity, commonizing Christian creeds, and presenting Christ's death as an everyday commodity rather than a sacred mystery. As Fairclough (1995) highlights, discourse helps secure hegemony through its “opacity,” and in this case, the hidden power lies in privileging one religion over another in the symbolic marketplace of advertising. The neglect of Christian sacredness in contrast to the careful treatment of Islam exposes how language not only sells products but also reflects and reproduces cultural and religious hierarchies in Nigeria.

Power, Prestige, and Authority in Advert Language

Data 3: Millionaire emerges from the Bet9ja UCL Jackpot Campaign
 This the latest demonstration of Bet9ja commitment to giving back to its agents and customers who have remained loyal to the brand & have position it as the market leader

The Bet9ja advertisement, “Millionaire emerges... demonstration of Bet9ja commitment...”, employs language that constructs an illusion of empowerment and opportunity. The phrase

“Millionaire emerges” immediately foregrounds success and upward mobility, appealing to consumers' aspirations for wealth and financial transformation. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse actively shapes social reality; here, the advertisement positions gambling not merely as entertainment but as a potential pathway to economic achievement. The emphasis on individual triumph constructs a narrative of accessibility and possibility, suggesting that anyone can attain extraordinary financial success through participation, thereby engaging deeply with the consumer's desire for upward mobility.

From a social and ideological perspective, the advertisement subtly reinforces the gambling culture while aligning it with power and status. Van Dijk (2000) notes that discourse enacts and reproduces social hierarchies, and in this case, the text links economic empowerment to participation in Bet9ja, normalizing gambling as a socially desirable practice. The phrasing “demonstration of Bet9ja commitment” constructs the company as benevolent and responsible, masking the risks of gambling while highlighting rewards. By presenting winners as examples of attainable success, the discourse both motivates engagement and implicitly sustains the ideology that financial power and social recognition are achievable primarily through such platforms, rather than through broader structural opportunities.

The persuasive strategies in this advertisement are multi-layered. The text appeals to emotion by showcasing success stories, which evokes hope and desire among potential consumers. It also appeals to status and social identity: participating in Bet9ja is framed as a path to recognition and empowerment within society. Luke (1997) emphasizes that CDA examines how text reproduces social life, and here, the discourse constructs gambling as a legitimate avenue for economic and social advancement. Simultaneously, the advertisement glosses over potential consequences, creating a seductive narrative that ties economic aspiration and personal power to engagement with Bet9ja, reflecting both consumer persuasion and the reinforcement of gambling as a normalized cultural practice in Nigeria.

Persuasive Consumer Appeal

Data 4:

Dstv

Whatever package you've on, connected or not, this is your chance to unlock the full power of DStv Premium and revel in a world of endless entertainment and authenticity

The DStv advertisement, “Whatever package you've on, connected or not, this is your chance to unlock the full power of DStv Premium and revel in a world of endless entertainment and authenticity,” constructs a discourse of aspiration and inclusivity. By using the phrase “whatever package you've on,” the company appeals to a wide audience, presenting itself as accessible to all subscribers regardless of their economic standing. The idea of “unlocking the full power” relies on metaphorical language that frames access to premium content as a form of empowerment and liberation, enticing consumers with the promise of abundance and exclusivity. In Fairclough's (1995) terms, this reflects how advertising discourse seeks to naturalize consumer desire by linking a product to broader values — in this case, enjoyment, modernity, and authenticity.

At an ideological level, the advert positions entertainment not merely as leisure but as a necessity tied to fulfillment and social identity. The phrase “revel in a world of endless entertainment and authenticity” invokes a utopian vision, where DStv is portrayed as the gateway to global connectivity and authentic cultural experiences. Yet, as van Dijk (2000) argues, discourse often masks structural inequalities: here, the notion of accessibility obscures the socio-economic reality that many Nigerians cannot afford DStv Premium packages due to high subscription costs. Thus, while the ad rhetorically appeals to inclusivity, the underlying reality is exclusionary, privileging middle- and upper-class consumers who can afford luxury entertainment.

The Nigerian socio-economic context further complicates this persuasive message. In a country where poverty rates are high and basic needs such as food, healthcare, and electricity are often unmet, the emphasis on “endless entertainment” reflects a commodification of leisure that sidelines pressing social realities. The discourse constructs entertainment as an aspirational lifestyle, implicitly reinforcing class distinctions by associating premium access with status and prestige. This ideological framing resonates with Luke's (1997) observation that CDA exposes hidden meanings in discourse; here, the hidden implication is that DStv offers not just entertainment but symbolic membership in a global, modern, and privileged community. Consequently, the advertisement exemplifies how corporate discourse in Nigeria often packages luxury consumption as universal empowerment, while simultaneously reinforcing economic divides.

Data 5: Indomie
Ramadan Kareem
Share the Goodness of This Season & WIN

The Indomie advertisement, “Ramadan Kareem — Share the Goodness of This Season & WIN,” strategically links the brand to a sacred religious period. By invoking “Ramadan Kareem,” the ad situates itself within the Muslim fasting season, which is not only a time of devotion but also of communal sharing, generosity, and family bonding. The discourse taps into these religious and cultural values, aligning Indomie consumption with the symbolic act of sharing during Ramadan. Fairclough (1989) emphasizes that advertising discourse shapes identities and social practices; here, Indomie positions itself not just as food but as part of the religious and cultural fabric of Nigerian Muslim communities.

At a deeper level, however, the advert reveals how religion is commodified for commercial gain. By linking “sharing goodness” with the chance to “WIN,” the discourse shifts the spiritual meaning of Ramadan toward consumerist practices, blending piety with material incentive. This reflects van Dijk's (2000) argument that discourse can reproduce ideologies that benefit corporate power. In this case, Indomie leverages a sacred moment to strengthen its market visibility and consumer loyalty, masking profit motives beneath the language of generosity and religious respect. The sacred act of sharing, which in Islamic teaching is about selflessness, is reframed as a transactional act tied to brand participation and reward.

In the Nigerian socio-cultural context, where religion carries deep social influence, this kind of advertisement is particularly powerful. Islam, being one of the two dominant religions in Nigeria, is often treated with heightened sensitivity in public discourse to avoid offense, and

Indomie's ad reflects this careful positioning by aligning with positive religious values of generosity and community in Islam. Yet, by intertwining consumption with devotion, the advert also risks diluting the sacredness of Ramadan, subtly redefining religious obligation in terms of corporate participation. Thus, the ad demonstrates how global brands operating in Nigeria embed themselves within cultural and religious contexts to maximize acceptance, while at the same time appeal to consumers under the guise of respect for faith.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the analysis of advertisement language in the Punch Newspaper are as follows: Advert language frequently employs religious discourse to persuade consumers, but it does so unevenly, showing greater reverence toward Islam while commodifying Christian symbols. This differential representation highlights underlying religious ideologies embedded in advertising discourse.

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 constructs consumer aspiration and empowerment, especially in gambling and lottery adverts, though this often disguises risk and exploitation. These adverts use emotive appeals to normalize risk-taking while linking it to personal and financial transformation.

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 The Punch 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 exploits religion for persuasion, with Islam treated reverentially while Christianity is commodified in casual ways. Gambling and betting adverts construct illusions of empowerment and upward mobility, subtly normalizing risk-taking behavior. Advertisers frequently use catchphrases, repetition, and slogans to reinforce brand memory and consumer loyalty. Food and festive adverts romanticize consumption as communal and moral, equating purchase with generosity and care. Advertising discourse reproduces class hierarchies, privileging elite and urban consumers while marginalizing rural and low-income groups.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that advertising in Nigerian newspapers operates as more than a tool for marketing products; it is 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.

While advertising language often projects progress, inclusivity, and empowerment, it also conceals structural inequalities by privileging certain groups over others. The respect accorded to Islam in adverts versus the commodification of Christianity, and the illusion of empowerment through gambling are examples 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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APPENDIX

