SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF MTN AND GLO NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF DAILYTRUST

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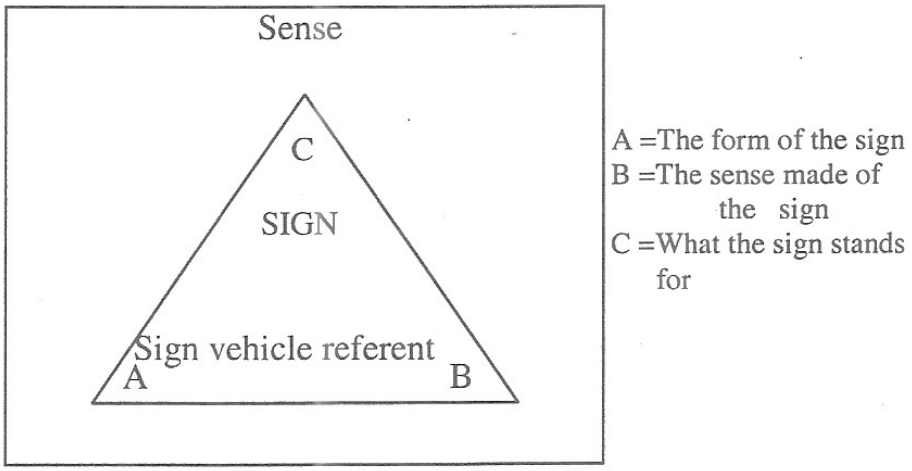
ABSTRACT
Language is an important aspect of communication. It is an important factor that can either make or mar an advert to reach its target audience. This comparative study therefore analyses the similarities and differences in semiotic contents of MTN and GLO newspaper advertisements in Daily Trust newspaper. The study was conducted to identify the sociolinguistic signs and codes employed in the advertisements. Seven (7) advertisements of MTN and GLO from the Daily Trust newspaper were sampled and content analyzed respectively. The research covered a period of six months (from January to June, 2013). Findings revealed that choice of language in all the networks is persuasive in nature with each network trying to prove to the customer that it is better than the other. The findings also revealed that advertising functions as a significant communication tool. The semiotic contents in all the networks are the same in that each applied persuasive communication strategies to lure customers to buy their products. It is recommended that APCON should improve on its monitoring responsibility and sanction to reduce the tendency of deceitful advertisements.

Introduction
Communication is a process by which we assign and convey meaning in order to pass on certain message to others. Human communication is considered the highest developed form of communication among other communication systems. In semiotics, a term that originate from the Greek word semion "sign", it is believed that we use different signs and symbols to communicate in a structured form and method.

However, communication involves transmitting ideas or information from person to person. This is successfully achieved in human language with the help of speech sounds or writing system that conveys an agreed item of information. This whole system of signs is often called semiotic system. Thus semiotics is the study of sign structures and sign process. It deals with how a text comes to 'mean' and how language system functions and operates.

Modern semiotics theory identifies two main streams of semiotics, sometimes referred to as semiology and semiotics. One is the dyadic model conceived by a Swiss linguistic Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). He defines a sign in terms of a "signifier" and a "signified". The former refers to the form a sign takes and the latter, the concept being represented (Chandler, 1992 cited in Wannisinghe, 2011). According to Dyer (1996), all interpretation and analysis of signs happens in relation to the structure and structural relationships with other signs. The other branch was derived from American pragmatic philosophy by Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914). Pierce used a different set of terms to describe sign functions. To make sense out of the sign, one has to understand the form of the sign as well as what it stands for. This is diagrammatically represented below



Pierces traid of semiotics cited in Wannisinghe, 2011.

Semiotics focuses attention on signs and signs systems in texts and how readers might interpret (decode) those signs (Newbold, Boyd-Barrett and Van Den Bulck, 2002). They go further to say that "it exposes the ideological latent meaning behind the surface of text, allowing us to grasp the power relations within them". Semiotics analyses directly the cultural and communications frameworks that structure the market and brands under scrutiny (Danesi, 2010).

However, language is one of the most important characteristic of human behaviour. According to Saussure (1913), Language is the most important sign system. Advertisers often use varieties of linguistic devices to sell their products to customers. This study investigates the linguistic techniques of advertising with particular reference to Nigerian GSM advertisements in print media. Adverts, no doubt, rely almost entirely on the use of language thus the need to examine in detail, the linguistic signs and codes involved in GSM advertisements in the Nigerian newspapers.

Statement of the Problem

Language is a comprehensive component of communication. It is one of the most important characteristics of human behaviour without which communication might not be effective. Most advertisements generally use persuasive language to communicate to potential buyers. Pishghadam & Navari (2012) conducted a research comparing the politeness strategies used in persuasive adverts; they found out that the choices of psychological strategies made by advertisers to persuade customers were in line with their intended culture. The cultural knowledge of the advertiser is important in designing the message. This is seen in the words of Evans (1999) who argued that semiotics play a role in marketers understanding of consumer cultures and subcultures.

Advertisements generally adopt semiotic elements as a base to effect non-verbal communication. These are mainly in the form of graphics, cinematic devices and audio effects. In print advertisements, there is entire advertisement with the slogan of the advertisers' choice. According to Dada (2011), the image may or may not be a representation of the product. There is therefore the need for a semiotic interpretation of such non-verbal signals in a study of advertisements. However, it becomes pertinent to understand whether MTN and GLO

advertisements represent the products being advertised. Therefore, the research is aimed at assessing the semiotic signs and codes involved in newspaper GSM advertisements in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this research is to find out the kind of semiotics used in advertising. The research is anchored on the following objectives:

1. To examine the choice of semiotic signs and codes in MTN and GLO GSM newspaper advertisements; and
2. To ascertain whether these signs and codes are persuasive in nature.

Semiotics Theory

Semiotics deals with the production and interpretation of meaning. To de Saussure (1857-1913), semiotics is a science which studies the role of sign as part of social life. He defines sign as the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. The signifier is the sound image and the signified is the concept. Pierce (1839-1914) defines semiotics as the formal doctrine of signs. He argued that to make a sense out of the sign, one has to understand the form of the sign as well as what it stands for. Morris (1901-1979) also contributes immensely to the theory of semiotics. He develops the theory of behavioural semiotic as an attempt to understand sign as 'responses' or 'dispositions' to behaviour not merely as 'concepts' or 'ideas'. He explains that language may be governed by syntactic, pragmatic and semantic rules. Syntactic rules may determine which combinations of signs may function as grammatical statement. Semantic rules determine the conditions under which signs may be applicable to objectives or situation. The pragmatic rules determine the conditions under which sign vehicles may function as signs, that is, it studies the origins, uses and effects of signs. Therefore the syntactical dimensions of semiosis is governed by the relations which signs have with each other, the semantical dimension is concerned with the relations which signs have to other objects or events which they signify, while the pragmatical dimension deals with the relations which signs have to their producers and interpreters.

Modern semiotic theorists include Batthes (1915-1980) whose contributions made the subject a major approach to cultural studies in the late 1960s, and Eco (1932) who defines semiotics as the study of anything that stands for something else. To him semiotics concerns everything that can be perceived as a sign. Metz (1931-1993), kristera (1941), Hjilmslev (1896-1982), Lacan (1899-1966) in psychoanalysis, and also Levi-Strauss (1908) saw his subject anthropology as a branch of semiotics. He applies semiotics under the name of 'bricolage' which represents a process of creation by using materials that are not necessarily best adopted to the task in hand and the 'bricoleur' which represents the initiator of the bricolage.

Semiotic theory views communication as the development of shared meanings through the use of signs. Signs are tools - things (real or imaginary) that extend some sensory, physical or intellectual capacity (Danesi, 2013). Denotation and connotation are useful in making sense of the content. Denotation deals with what something is while connotation deals with what something implies. Connotative meaning is not only concerned with the intentional communication but also with our ascription of significance to anything in the world. It goes beyond the literal meaning. Denotation and connotation describe the relationship between the signifier and the signified. According to Chandler (2013), denotation tends to be described as the definitional 'literal' 'obvious' or 'commonsense' meaning of a sign while connotation is used to

refer to socio cultural and personal associations (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign. Most signs are more open to interpretation in their connotations and their denotations because according to most semioticians, no sign is purely denotative (lacking connotation). Gebner (1956) offered the notion of code which brought the media more into semiotic domain. He defines a code as anything that is used to create messages in a socially meaningful way. According to Dyer (1996), the concept of code is central to semiotic analysis and that the formation and understanding of messages (encoding and decoding) is made possible by codes. He defines Code as a set of rules or an interpretative device known to both transmitter and receiver, which assigns a certain meaning or content to a certain sign.

However, Mckibbin (2014) asserts that the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic meaning are useful in making sense of the form of a sign. The paradigmatic means deals with what choice to make and the syntagmatic explains the overall scene scheme. According to Kress (2010), the sign is the central concept of semiotics because meanings and forms are fused into one entity. In the words of Bignell, cited in Najafian (2011), 'the first step in analyzing an advertisement is to note the various signs in the advert itself. Semiotics promotes understanding as a system of signs by which human create meaning in accordance with codes of which they are unaware (Tsotra, Janson & Kecmanovic 2004).

The semiotic analysis of signs and codes within advertisements reveals the mythic structure of meaning that the advertisers work to communicate. These meanings however contribute to our ways of seeing ourselves and the world. Najafian (2011) asserts that people are encouraged to see themselves in terms of the products and services which are advertised .and aspect of their social world in terms of the mythic meaning which advertising draws on. What an advertisement means depends on how it operates, how signs and its ideological effect are organized internally and externally. Advertising should be seen as structures; that functions by transforming an object into something which gives meaning in terms of people. In essence, social semiotics theory is concerned with the process of interpreting and using signs and symbols, which are represented by our daily experiences in different social environments or situations.

GSM in Nigeria

The global system for mobile communication (GSM) is a technology that allows service provider (network operators) provides mobile phone services to subscribers who pay for airtime after buying a SIM card (subscriber identity module) from the network operator (Dada, 2011). According to Gordon (2005), Nigeria is a multi-lingual nation with an estimated 516 languages. English has become a second language in Nigeria, while Nigerian Pidgin English, with probably the largest speakers has also emerged as a result of contact of English with indigenous languages (Dada, 2011). Also, Salami (1999) stated that in a given speech community, speakers often use different varieties of language.

GSM became a reality in Nigeria in 2001, when the Federal Government invited companies with technical competence in the provision of GSM services to bid for three GSM licenses that were to be auctioned. The three companies that won the bid were Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), Communication Investment Limited (CIL) and Econet wireless Nigeria. The Nigerian Telecommunication Network (MITEL) also got a license by government fiat. The official launch of GSM in Nigeria was on the 28th of August, 2001, starting with Econet wireless which

resurrected to V-mobile and to Celtel and now to Zain. In addition, were MTN and NITEL. The only exception was CIL which defaulted in the remittance of its license fee. It later metamorphosed to Globacom, Nigeria's second national carrier. However, the presence of GSM in Nigeria has literally changed the face of the nation. It has made communication much easier and faster.

The Language of Advertising

Advertising language according to Dyer (1999) is generally informal and colloquial. He further mentioned that the sentences used in most advertisements are usually simple and short, and are in adverbs and adjectives.

The communicative strategies in advertising lure consumers to buy the product or service. It is evident that advertisers make several claims about their products and service not minding whether such claims are really true. They apply persuasive strategies in their advertisements. Armstrong (2010) posits that advertisings ultimate objectives are to persuade people to buy a product, donate time or money to a cause, or support an idea. Therefore, the principles underlying what works in advertising also apply to persuasion in other areas of life.

Advertisers often use special words or phrases called weasel words to communicate (Dada, 2011), Examples are: helps, best, goods, and works. When MTN came into the market in 2001, it only had Econet to contend with, and so it rolled out a slogan "the best connection". But with other network providers in the market, it changed its slogan to ''your best connection". This is to make the consumer feel that MTN would give the best if connected.

According to Danesi (2010), there are three general features that define code and their relation to media - the first is *representability* which implies that codes stands for something. The second is *interpretability* which implies that messages can only be understood by those familiar with the code. The third is *contextualization* which implies that message interpretation is affected by the context in which it occurs. All the three features help the advertiser in constructing the message. It is important to note that the oppositional meaning manifests it self in all kinds of media texts. Danesi (2010) argues that one does not perceive meaning in absolute ways, but rather in relational terms. He goes further to add that if one says something is positive for instance, one thinks of opposition which is negative, white and black, good or bad.

It has been discovered that advertising plays a role in selling products by influencing buying behaviour (Dinu & Dinu, 2012). The essence of being in business is to produce for sales and profits. In order to achieve these goals, the advertisers use persuasive communication strategies to influence intending buyers to purchase the product or service. This is evident in the words of Ayanwale, Alirni & Ayanbimpe (2005) that the purpose of advertising is to create awareness of the advertised product and provide information that will assist the consumer to make purchase decision. Therefore, advertising influences consumers' preference for a product or service. Advertising tells us we can trust a product or service and like it, but whether this is true, it is left to be seen. Therefore product recommendations are a form of content that advertisers might expect to benefit from (Reuter & Zitzewitz, 2005).

Newspaper Advertising

Newspapers feel the competition from other media but continue to represent a showcase for advertising. Like other media, newspapers do some policing of adverts, refusing to accept those that violate rules setup by the management and advertising agencies like APCON. They strive to maintain good image. Some media specific tactics or rather persuasive principles include headline, pictures, text, structure of body text, type face and layout.

However, colour is a main ingredient in package design because it identifies the producer that is why advertisers give plenty of attention to the value of colours they choose. Colours clearly can be used to denote people, places and things as well as classes of people, places and things, and more general ideas (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Colour may play a role in the success of an advertisement and may seem to be the first thing the receiver notice. Using proper colour seems to be the quickest way to create mode without saying a word (Najafian, 2011). Advertising layout is divided into several parts: headline, body copy (which is the main part of advertising message, often divided into subheads), signature line (a mention of brand name accompanied by a price-tag, slogan or trade-mark), and standing details (address of firm). In layout, the headline is a basic advertising element and the most important of all. A good advertising headline brings news to the reader. It becomes paramount for the advertiser to design the headline in a way that the audiences become curious about the product or service. This helps narrow down the audience to people who are really interested or affected. The column amplifies the headline. It helps in convincing the reader to buy the product. The art is also important because it includes photographs, paintings and drawings. These are very important in designing the advertisement because they tell the story.

Photographs can speak to the viewer if designed properly. According to Beasley and Danesi (2002), “the ultimate goal of creating an appropriate image for a product is to embed it into social consciousness”. Although a photograph in a paper does not necessarily capture a fact event directly, it takes on social connotation through the way it is shown, where it is placed in the newspaper layout and how captions annotate its sub textual meaning (Danesi, 2010). The logo helps to identify the advertisers and it mostly appears at the bottom of the advert. A slogan may also be included. The layout may appear in different stages depending on which will suit the advertisement at hand. The type design also varies. All these elements are carefully selected to make the advertisement appealing to the audience.

Many contemporary advertisements do not ask the consumer to buy the product. They often come in linguistic signs (words) and visual representation. These signs can simply denote something (an object or people represented in it) or they can easily connote something (meanings that have social and cultural relevance). For instance, a female model in an advert connotes the mythical ideal of feminine beauty. According to Bignell (1997), the Newspaper is just a collection of signs. These signs may include paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements such as the title of the Newspaper, the fonts used, the layout, the colours, the texture of the paper, the language adopted, the content of the articles and so on, and each of these signs has been chosen to generate meaning. Advertising regulation aims at ensuring that the consumer is adequately (hopefully) protected that the advertising practice is responsive and socially responsible (Nzeribe 2012).

Methodology

The method of data collection was qualitative content analysis. Since sampling for qualitative analysis is not -required to meet the stylistically valid formulae of quantitative analysis (Macnamara, 2005), the researcher has selected apparently typical representative examples. Adverts of MTN and GLO were conveniently sampled from the Daily Trust newspaper. The population of the study consists of six months editions of MTN and GLO adverts in daily trust newspaper (from 1st January to 31st July, 2013). There was no advert from the two networks in June and so July was picked as the sixth month for the analysis. Within this period, MTN had 14 adverts while GLO had 20 adverts which make a total of 34 adverts. Four adverts were selected from MTN and three from GLO. This is because most of the adverts were repeated. The units of analysis are the entire adverts. The content categories include colour, layout, photography and typography. Data gathered were analysed and discussed through a semiotic technique. A semiotic analysis gives you a detailed analysis of how rational and emotional meanings are constructed.

Results of Findings

The table below shows the advert messages for, both papers (MTN and GLO) respectively. The researcher has selected apparently typical representative samples. The researcher has highlighted some words or phrases used in the adverts that may lure consumers to purchase the product. The researcher has underlined some of the words that the advertisers use to capture the attention of the subscribers. However, the headlines are written in bold.

Table 1: Data Presentation

MTN Advertisements		**GLO Advertisements**	
Headline	**Message**	**Headline**	**Message**
1. Islamic service from MTN	Your daily divine connection. Stay connected to your faith and increase your Ibadah with the new Islamic service from mtn. get access to the holy Quran, namaz timing, live prayer relays from mecca, Islamic songs and much more daily	1. Recharge for double promo	Enjoy double your recharge any day, anytime, get double the value whenever you recharge from #100 airtime and above. You can then talk twice as much with your friends and loved ones.
2. Switch to MTN. Retain your number.	*Awesome* rewards, *widest* coverage, *low* rate calls.	2. BiiiG FIVE PROMO	Get 5 TIMES credit on every recharge *instantly* *Notargets.* *Nodelays.* Browse sms and talk across all networks.
3. Introducing MTNRoam41ess. Enjoy low rates across the world.	Wherever you travel to in Europe, Middle East and the rest of Africa, make calls for as *low*as#80 per minute with MTN roam41ess.	3. AMAZING new tariff plans.	Gista- 15k/sec.GLO to GLOcalls. 30k/seccalls to other networks. 15k/sec to all glo numbers. G-bam- 5k/sec. calls to 5 family & friends numbers. 18k/sec to all networks. Free5MB daily. Hi-flyer- enjoy 18k/sec calls to all networks when you subscribe to data plan of 200MB or more. Talkat18k/sec on a single data plan. Infinite -20k/sec GLO to GLO calls. 30k/sec calls to Other networks. 10k/sec to 10*Favourite*numbers. Talk *free*- 150 *free*sms monthly. 15k/sec glo to glo calls. 18k/sec calls to

			other networks. 150mins *free* Talktime monthly.
4. Get the MTN Shyne or MTN Lyte for next- to-nothing	*Free* daily voice minutes *Free* daily Sms *Free*caller tunez		

The Semiotic Feature of MTN Print Advertisements

The choice of colour in MTN GSM advertisements is yellow and yellow depicts joy and battle telling the consumer that they are ready to contend with any network to satisfy them. It is a warning colour. According to Dada (2011), 'yellow exudes warmth, inspiration and vitality. It suggests happiness because of its resemblance to the colour of the sun. It signifies communication and enlightenment'. Therefore, if your favorite colour is yellow, it indicates that you are looking forward to a bright future, and in subscribing to this network, you are expected to be all of the above and even more; whether all this is true is left to be seen.

The 'Yello' adopted in MTN slogans also indicate 'Hello' which denotes greetings from MTN (Dada, 2011). They coined in their slogan "Yello" meaning "how are you" stylistically to draw the attention of the consumer. However, the latest MTN slogan "everywhere you go" indicates that by subscribing to the network, the consumer will enjoy unlimited service. They have also included another slogan "Welcome to the new world". This may be as a result of the new communication technology where people are engaged in social networking.

The *Switch to MTN* advertisement which allows users to retain their number is a persuasive means of gaining customers. There is an advert MTN foundation which is a community service is also another means of marketing their products and services. MTN awards scholarship in science and technology that gives beneficiaries the opportunity to explore their talents. Another advertisement is the newly introduced *MTN Roam4less* with a scenario of a man making calls to four different places with low tariff. This denotes that the consumer can make calls across the world in low rates. *The MTN Shyne and MTN Lyte gprs phones* subsidized from N2100 - N1000 and N3000 - N1500 respectively, was offered during the month of Ramadan, All these are promos and a sure means of persuading the customer to purchase the product or service.

The Semiotic Feature in GLO Print Advertisement

Globacom being the youngest of all the three networks (MTN, Zain and NITEL) chose colour green and green is a fruitful colour. It represents freshness. It can also convey a feeling of guilt, disease and even terror (Nelson, 1994). Just as the cool breeze of nature, it creates an atmosphere that is cool, calm and natural. It indicates a feeling of stability and growth.

The GLO slogan 'GLO with pride' to 'rule your world' and now 'GLO unlimited' signifies growth in competition. Their choice of graphics varies depending on the kind of message they want to pass on to the audience. They also employ celebrities as their photographic figures in order to gain consumerism. A typical example is the use of the famous Nigerian artist PSquare in the photographs of the *recharge for double promo* advertisement.

However, the *amazing new tariff plans* introduced by Globacom in February 2012 gives fantastic value for everyone, *GLO GISTA, G-BAM, HI-FLYER, 1NF1NITO* and *TALK FREE.* Each of these plans has specific features and the subscriber is left to choose the one that matches or suits his/her lifestyle and pocket. The advertisement scenario in each plan, are pictures of celebrities and hence may capture the attention of the youths easily. Another advertisement is the *BiiiG FIVE PROMO* that gives consumer five times the amount of credit on every recharge instantly. Whether this is true is left to be tested by the subscriber. All these are sure means of convincing customers that by subscribing to the network, they will enjoy all of the above. The advertisement on *recharge for double promo* that gives the subscriber double the amount of credit bought, is also a persuasive message. The advert has the pictures of Nigerian famous artists P-SQARE and this connotes the mythical ideal of the Nigerian culture which helps capture the attention of the youths.

Discussion of Findings

This comparative analysis is done in terms of the similarities and differences in their semiotic techniques. The semiotic signs and codes employed by virtually every one of them include the choice of Nigerian Pidgin English and simple Standard English to reach a very large audience. This gives an average Nigerian an opportunity to easily decode the message. Another similarity is that they both employ artists as photographs. This gives them an opportunity to be heard by many youths because they are fans. Even though, this is not part of the scope of the research, it was found out that they both sponsor events like children's day, Workers day, New Year, etc. The advertiser used larger, capital and bold letters in the headline in order to perhaps draw receivers' attention and make them curious about what the advert is mainly about. Both use bold italics as type face for their banners. According to Danesi (2013), 'the media are tools extending the ability of humans to communicate with each other better (and further) than they can with the voice or hands', but it was observed that the signs in the advertisements are ambiguous and multiple in their meanings to decide on one true meaning of the advertisements.

The continuous repetition of positive adjectives such as low, enjoy, free, fantastic, instantly, and so on was common in both networks. This is seen in the words of Morris and Hirst (1991) that lexical cohesions are sequences of related words in text. The advertisements analyzed uses promotional vocabulary and adjectives as linguistic features, especially in the casting of the headlines. Delin (2000) believes that adjectives play a role in advertising because they often convey positive or negative meaning. According to Cook and Jefkins cited in Najafian (2011), 'the characteristic of the headline is the use of positive words'. Therefore, in answering the research question 2, the researcher can conclude without fear of contradiction that the linguistic signs and codes employed by the two networks are persuasive in nature in that each targets a larger customer service. There is no difference in terms of their linguistic choices as they all use persuasive language to lure people *to* patronize them. They are therefore engaged in high competition in order to sustain their subscribers.

Conclusion

The advertisers use persuasive language in order to convince customers to subscribe to a particular network rather than other networks. According to Nzeribe (2012) 'advertising is persuasive communication but persuasion depends on credibility which can be built and sustained over time'. Thus they all portray language as a potent and persuasive communicative

instrument and a means of social interaction in the midst of competing interest. Language use can help an advert reach its target audience, if it is well constructed. In the words of Dada (2011), advertisers project language as an exaggerative weapon, a persuasive communication strategy that can easily be used to coerce the unwary into their business endeavors.

It is evident that MTN and GLO spend a lot in advertising their products and services even though, at times these promises are not fulfilling. According to Dada (2011), Nigerians connected to the GSM networks can testify that all the networks offer very little services compared to the promises they make in their advertisements. They spend much on advertisements instead of improving the quality of network they offer their customers.

The analysis has shown that advertising functions as a significant communication instrument. According to Seren et'al (2007) 'the semiotic analysis of advertising assumes that the meanings of advertisements are designed to move out from the page or screen'. Thus, advertising strategies have implications for the theory of communication (Dada, 2011). It is therefore important for the subscribers to see beyond grammatical competence but also to include pragmatic competence. The semiotic analysis of advertising assumes that meanings are designed by their creators to shape and lend significance to our reality (Najafian, 2011).

It is evident that the language of advertisement in both newspapers is that of persuasion and this has an implication for second language learning. The language is therefore very important as each network provides a variety of services inorder to improve customer satisfaction as well as retain them. However, the language must be in line with the advertising laws and regulations.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that regulatory agencies like APCON should improve on their monitoring responsibility and sanction to reduce the tendency of deceitful advertisements.
2. Language exaggeration should be brought down by the advertising agencies to give room for more honesty in the content of the advertisement.
3. More attention should be given to advertising especially in media law and ethics. This will help reduce deceitful advertisements.
4. Media should reject any advertisement that violates advertising laws and regulations. This will make the discipline more professional.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. A survey should be conducted to find out audiences perception of GSM advertisements in Nigeria so as to ascertain their performance.
2. A research should be conducted to know whether advertising has any influence on the purchase behaviour of GSM subscribers.

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