

Analyzing the Advertising Language of the Mobile Telephony in Nigerian Newspapers: A Stylistic Approach

Queen Ugochi Njemanze, PhD

Nina F. Nwulu

Mark C. Ononiwu

Directorate of General Studies
Federal University of Technology Owerri
Nigeria

Ifeyinwa Obiegbu, PhD

Department of General Studies
National Metallurgical Training Institute
Onitsha, Nigeria

Abstract

Since the introduction of the General Services on Mobile (GSM) telephony system in Nigeria in the first decade of the 21st century, many mobile communication companies strive to outwit one another by crafting some novel advertisements. These companies use mostly the newspapers as medium of reaching their intended audience. This work explores the styles of the language of advertising as used by Zain Mobile Communication in the Nigeria daily newspapers especially the Guardian. The paper will unravel the techniques the advertisers use in extending their messages to their subscribers in order to create emotive impact that will persuade the audience/users to use their product. This study identified the various forms of advertising strategies the advertisers use to lure their subscribers to buy/use their products and services. The paper concludes by commending the advertising language of Zain Nigeria which the authors see as appropriate because it enhances product sale and services of the advertisers.

Keywords: Advertising, Newspaper, Mobile Telephone and Language

Introduction

Advertising shares some characteristics with other art works like novels, plays and films. Like radio and television, Advertising is a type of one way communication with an anonymous audience. Like them, it establishes ways of drawing the audience into what seems to be a two - way relationship. Advertisers, whose main purpose is to make people choose one product over all its (usually very similar) competitors in the market, use an implied promise to supply people with the things they want the most. They employ fictional scenarios which depict the audience as the subject or receiver of the action; the product as the helper that solves people's problems, and the object as some desirable quality.

Again, they employ a form of language that is filled with emotive words. The essence of this is to appeal to the sense of taste of their prospective customers. Apart from this, advertisers prefer to put the verbs of their sentences in -an imperative mood, as well as use disjunctive rather than discursive grammar.

In this study, we shall pay particular attention to the advertising language of ZAIN, as one of the Global System on Mobile Communication Networks that is based in Nigeria. We intend to consider the advertisement of ZAIN in the Guardian Newspaper in recent times, and analyze its language, using stylistic indices. The essence of this is to find out how appropriate the advertising language of ZAIN is to its audience, their prospective consumers.

To carry out this task effectively, we shall look into the following sub-headings; stylistics, the language of advertising, the advertising language of ZAIN, stylistic analysis of the advertising language of ZAIN, and then conclusion.

Stylistics as a Concept

Stylistics is an aspect of linguistic study that emphasizes the appropriateness of a language to its audience. It tries to understand how suitable a language is to a particular audience. This, in other words, helps us to appreciate the fact that it is the nature of the audience that will, to a great extent, determine the form of language to be used in relation to it. Hence, we have different stylistic genres all being determined by their audience. Some of these are journalese, legalese, officialese, and literary Stylistics. Journalese, as the name indicates, is a form of language employed in the mass media. It is used mainly by journalists to interpret the events that daily take place in our society and present them to the general masses that form their audience. The legalese, on the other hand, is used by legal practitioners to analyze issues that take place in the law court and present them meaningfully to their audience. The legalese form differs from the journalese in the sense that it is always formal, cold, and non-melodramatic in nature. As regards the officialese form, it is mainly the language employed in various government establishments, institutions and offices. It is basically formal, cold, and objective in its presentation of issues. It shares some qualities with the legalese in being formal and less subjective. However, it differs from it, given the fact that its audience is less restrictive than the legalese form.

On the contrary, literary Stylistics has an extensive audience, far more than all the other forms of Stylistics. It has specialized and mass audience. The special audience refers to literary scholars who write and analyze literary works, while the main audience refers to any person that cherishes reading literary works. Literary Stylistics or the language of literature is used to recreate life in an educative and entertaining manner, melodramatic, and filled with euphonic words. Having said this, Stylistics can be perceived as a survey into the various forms of language employed by human beings to interact with one another at different occasions and situations in life. Now, let us briefly look at stylistic analysis.

Stylistic Analysis

Stylistic analysis is an evaluation or assessment of a language, with a view to establishing its genre, and how appropriate it is to the audience it is meant for. In doing this, one tries to establish the suitability of a language to an audience by stating how it is able to meet certain criteria, arming oneself with such stylistic analytical tools as the "lese" form, the structure of the language, the diction of the language, the tone of the language, and the audience of the language. In stylistic analysis, the analyst aims at establishing the extent to which the language user or the user of a particular language genre is able to put his message across to his audience, by using the right words (lexemes) and structure, as well as tone. The analyst also tries to establish the effect of such language on the audience. For the purpose of this study, we delimit our stylistic analysis to that of the language of advertising, which is an essential component of the language of the mass media or the journalese form. We intend to analyze stylistically, the language employed by ZAIN to advertise its product in the Guardian Newspaper. But before going into this, let us look at the language of advertising generally.

Advertising and its Language

According to Peter Sells and Sierra Gonzalez (2002), "Advertising is a form of communication," it gives us information about a product, but more importantly, it persuades us to think about a product with a view to buying it. Advertising could take various forms and these include:

Direct Address Advertising

The simplest form of advertising takes place in a direct and impersonal form. It eschews the second - person pronoun, "you", using deictic words like "here," this, "now" and imperatives like "look", see," watch", and refers to visible features of the product advertised. The main participants in the direct address advertisement are the addresser (the advertiser) and the addressee (the audience).

Indirect Address Advertising

In indirect address advertising, we have one or two secondary participants who act as vehicles for the conveyance of the advertisers' message. Here, we have one speaker (usually a satisfied consumer or a supposed expert) who is first person "I" or "we" to create the impression of events taking place in real life.

Advertising Stereotypes

The people shown in advertisements are stereotypes rather than individuals. These stereotypes contain some grain of truth and do not offend the paying public.

Examples of stereotypes are housewives that are usually portrayed as happy, well dressed and cheerful. They preside over homes that are orderly, clean and tidy, and even when they are glad to save on the cost of an item, they never appear pushed for cash.

Print Advertisement and its Components

The advertisements that are usually placed on newspapers and magazines have three basic components: text, image, and organization of elements.

Text

The advertisement has some texts which give information about the product, and provide anchorage for the image. Apart from this text that gives us descriptive information about a product, there are some other texts that serve the purpose of catching the reader's attention, as well as (typically) short phrases that act as a form of slogan, and finally, the name of the company and the name of the product.

Image

Image as an aspect of advertisement gives us the background for the entire advertisement. The image may or may not present a representation of the product, and the product may or may not be in use. Take for instance, an image of a tube of toothpaste as opposed to some toothpaste on a brush. An image normally has some interpretational component that helps the reader/audience to get some aspects of meaning, in conjunction with the text.

Organization

Organization in advertisement emphasizes how image and text are put together. Organization supports coherence, some form of order in which the parts are interpreted, and relevance, which indicates the particular kind of meaning that the advertisement has.

Words and Structures Used in Advertising

Advertising language makes use of words from a restricted subject of English. It uses common words, often with some emotional as well as literal value. Leech (1966) gives us some common words that are usually used in television advertisements. The adjectives are "new", "good/better/best" "free", "fresh", "delicious", etc. The verbs include "make", "get" "give", "have", "see", etc. Also according to Shirley Russell (2001:188), "Extra force is added by turning some adjectives into compound ones: undreamed of country, fresh creamy - mild, shining-clean, etc. Russell (2001:188/9) goes further to tell us that:

"Get" is used far more often than "buy" for psychological reasons. "Buy" is a word that has one major meaning: the spending of money. It denotes what for most people is an unpleasant action. "Get" on the other hand is a word with wider and vaguer associations. It connotes acquiring, and makes the spending less obvious.

Structure

The structure of an advertising language is usually simple. It makes use of an imperative without a subject. For example, "Get your own copy now". The structure of an advertising language is written in a disjunctive rather than discursive grammar. Dependant clauses and phrases are employed without the support of main clauses. We shall see this in the analysis of the text.

Examples of these adverts presented in a phrase form are presented in the following:

1. Encompass in *Fast Company*. June, 2001.
"One Policy, Indivisible
for all the Belongings you Hold Dear".
2. Dodge in *Style*, August, 2002.
"EVERY THING I HAS ITS PLACE BEHIND YOU."
3. Riders in *Glamour*. August, 2002.
"Jeans that fit. Beautifully".
4. Haribo in *Vogue*, September. 2002.
"when diamonds are no longer enough".
5. Secret in *Glamour* August, 2002.
"Presenting.

THE STRONGEST ARGUMENT

-yet-

for the sleeveless

Black Dress".

Sometimes, the grammatical unit may consist of a single word. An example is given by Russell (2001:189) thus: "Tesco. Every little helps". The shorter units of disjunctive grammar make immediate impact on the listeners than discursive sentences. They equally make fewer demands of their concentration. At times novel words are used in advertisement as can be seen in the advert of cointreau in Style of August, 2002. "So many taboos, so little time". "BE COINTREAUVERSIAL" Advertisers are used to breaking the rules of grammar with unconventional spellings at times, the violation is employed to enhance an effect, as in "krisp," where "K" presents a harder edge to the sound than 'C could do, or in "cream", where doubling the vowel may assist to intensify a rhyme. The changes in spelling are used to attract attention by looking different, as in "Whiskas Glocoat". Playing games with the normal distribution of upper and lower case letters is another way of seeking for attention.

The Creative Use of Language in Advertising

Since products do not vary much from one another, advertisers do make effort to inject originality into the language used to promote them. They employ newly coined words like "peelability" "temptational" "out sparkle", and phrases like "unzip a banana". Advertisers also turn common sense and conventional meanings on their heads in coinages like "In the best circles washing machine is pronounced Parnell". They also use figurative language to change conventional sense in paradoxical phrases like, "eating sunshine" "smiling colour" "purposeful shape". There are times they use old cliches and pun as in "when it rains, it pours" (Morton's salt). At times, they show their originality in the use of a terse and simple sentence. For example, "I think, therefore IBM". This is adapted from Rene Descartes' statement "I think, therefore, I exist."

Advertising Language of Zain in the Guardian Newspaper

1. ZAIN ADVERT IN THE GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER OF THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2009, PAGE 38.
- A. THE TEXT (LANGUAGE) OF THE ADVERT; The texts in the advert can be itemized as follows
 - i. "New
Zain
Step
up"
 - ii. "Discover a world where the more you talk the better it gets"
 - iii. "With Zain step up, you get up to 50% discount monthly as well as chance of winning a 35 No. phone".
 - "Special numbers"
 - "Exclusive Internet Offers"
 - " 100 Complementary SMS for the first month"
 - iv. "Buy a Zain sim card NOW and dial *200* 1# to activate (N2, 000 monthly access fee)"
 - v. "Terms and conditions apply"
 - vi. "Proud sponsor of MAMA TV"
 - vii. "www. Zain.com"
 - viii. "A Wonderful world."

B. The Image of the Advert

There are four images of young women in the advert. One of these women is moving up towards the sky. As she does so, she is making a call, putting on a smiling face. She dresses smartly holding a bag in one hand. At her right hand side is positioned the logo of Zain. The other three women are standing and looking up at the first woman as she ascends towards the sky. They are all watching her with amazement and admiration. They are well dressed like working class women, holding their handsets in their hands, but they are not making call with them. They are standing in front of a sales store.

C. Organisation of the Advert

Looking at the image and the text, one notices that there is coherence between them, which helps the reader to understand the message the advertiser wants to get across.

The woman ascending towards the sky typifies the New Zain promotion captioned "step up", where "the more you talk the better it gets" The woman rising up from the ground and moving towards the sky as she makes calls implies that she has, through using "Zain stepped up", discovered a world (where probably she is ascending to) where the more you talk, the better it gets. Again, the women seen standing and watching her in amazement and admiration are the prospective consumers of Zain who are simply advised to make use of Zain step up and get up to 50% discount monthly, and by so doing, discover their own new world like the woman they are admiring.

2. Zain Advert in the Guardian Newspaper of Tuesday, September 8, 2009, Page 28.

A. The Text (Language) of the Advert

The texts of this advert are the same as that of September 3, 2009.

B. The Image of the Advert

The advert has images of five young men. One of the men that is between four men is bigger than others. He is ascending towards the sky as he makes his call, wearing a happy and smiling face. The other men are seen standing and watching him in amazement and admiration. They are all holding their own handsets. They are all smartly dressed like working class men.

C. The Organization of the Advert;

The text of the advert matches with the image. The young man stepping up has discovered a new world, where the more the talks, the better it gets. This he did through using the new Zain step up. The advertiser appears to be encouraging the other men looking at the ascending man in admiration to be like him by subscribing to Zain step up.

3. Zain Advert in the Guardian Newspaper of Thursday, September 17, 2009. Page 34

A. The Text (Language) of the Advert:

- i. "0812",
- ii. "0708"
- iii. "0808"
- iv. "0802"
- v. "we have added a new number to our growing family".
- vi. "The new 0812 number range has increased our capacity to allow for 10 million more Nigerians to enjoy the amazing bundle of benefits available on the Zain Network, like one network, pay 4me, mobile Top-up, 300 monthly call me backs, 300 monthly credit me, caller ring Back Tone and lots more! So, join our Zain family and enjoy our wonderful world."
- vii. "0812 Same quality service, same coverage".
- viii. "Proud sponsor of MAMA TV".
- ix. "www.zain.com"
- x. "A wonderful world"

B. The Image of the Adver

There is no human image in the advert. Rather, what we have is the number, 0812, boldly written at the uppermost centre of the page. Other numbers that appear under it are: 0708, 0808, and 0802. These numbers are put in a jaded colour, indicating that, though they are ZAIN lines, they are not the one that attention is being given to through the advert.

C. The Organization of the Advert

There is coherence between the image: "0812" and the text: "we have added a new number to our growing family" The text helps us to know why ZAIN has come up with a new line, "0812", and is urging the buying public to subscribe to it and enjoy some of the benefits users of other ZAIN lines are enjoying.

Stylistic Analysis on the Advertising Language of Zain

In this analysis, we pay particular attention to the structure, diction, tone, and audience of the advertising text (language) employed by Zain to present its product to the public and to solicit for their patronage.

1. Zain Advert in the Guardian Newspaper of Thursday, September 3, 2009, and Tuesday, September 8, 2009.

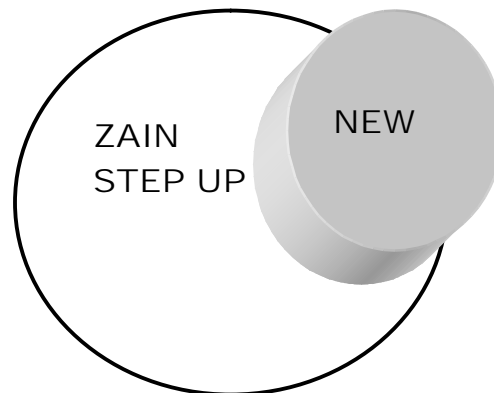
The Advertising Text (Language)

The advertising texts of Zain in the Guardian Newspaper of Thursday, September 2009 and Tuesday, September 8, 2009, are the same. Hence, we shall treat and analyze them as one text.

A. Structure of the Texts

The texts of the advert are eight in number. These texts are presented using different structural patterns.

The first text is presented in a simple structure: "New Zain step up." This is a Noun phrase. The advertisers' objective in presenting the text in this form is to let the reader know the name of the product that is being advertised. To draw the attention of the reader more, the advertiser presented these words using good graphics and lay out. Again, the choice of the colour, and word layout are worth noting, as can be seen below.



In the diagram above, the word, "New", has a yellow colour and the background is red. Again, the word "Zain" is written in white colour and "step up" in red colour and the background is green. The essence of presenting this product in such a graphic manner is to attract the attention of the reader. The second text, "Discover a world where the more you talk, the better it gets" has a loose sentence structure. It follows the normal sentence pattern found in imperative sentences. The only thing here is that it is a complex sentence, but presented in an imperative form.

In the first part of the sentence: "Discover a world", the subject is "you" but it is not mentioned deleted. The advertiser purposely removed it (because it is an imperative sentence) to bring out the forcefulness of his statement: "Discover a world". The next part of the sentence, "where the more you talk, the better it gets," is a subordinate clause. Its meaning is dependant on the main clause, "discover a world". Looking at the clause, we notice that it is an adverbial clause of place, "where" is the marker, pointing to us the place where "the more you talk, the better it gets." The third text, "with Zain step up, you get up to 50% discount monthly as well as a chance of winning a 39 phone" is presented using a periodic sentence form. Here, the predicate of the sentence comes before the subject-The normal sentence structure is supposed to be: "you get up to 50% discount monthly as well as a chance of winning a 39 phone with Zain step up". However, the advertiser, thinking that the reader may get bored reading the sentence in this form before getting to the product, "step up", decides to present it first so that the reader's attention will focus on it before any other thing, hence, he starts the sentence this way, "with Zain step up".

The fourth text is "Buy a Zain sim card now and dial *200*1# to activate (N2000 monthly access fee)". This is a compound sentence presented in an imperative form. The sentence, "buy a Zain sim card now" is joined to "dial *200*1# to activate" with the aid of a conjunction "and". The advertiser purposely omitted the subject of the sentence "you" just to create the needed forcefulness that will aid him to capture the attention of his reader.

The fifth text is "terms and conditions apply". This is a simple sentence structure having the structure of subject and verb (SV). "Terms and conditions" is the subject and "apply" is the verb (V). Hence, it is a loose sentence.

The sixth text is "proud sponsor of MAMA TV".

This is a noun phrase. The advertiser puts it this way, he assumes that the reader already knows the company ZAIN, but does not know that it is the sponsor of MAMA TV; hence, he decides to economize his words and tells the reader what he ought to know, which he has not known. That is why instead of the sentence being: "we are proud sponsor of MAMA TV" it reads, "proud sponsor of MAMA TV". The seventh text is "www.Zain.com". This is the website of the company. The structure is a coded one, following the internet language. The essence of this is for the reader to get to the site, and find more about the company and the product.

The eighth text is, "A wonderful world". This is the slogan of Zain, and it is a noun phrase. It gives us a lot of information on what Zain is and stands for. It is a communication network that helps us to experience the world in a wonderful manner.

B. Diction of the Texts

The diction of the advert text is very simple. It is such that could be easily understood by every average reader. The name of the product, "Zain step up" is not only simple, it is appealing and encouraging as "step up" is a form of invitation, encouraging the reader or the prospective user of the product to move a little higher in status by making use of the product. The image of the young girl ascending to the sky indicates what the advertiser has in mind with the word, "step up". Besides, the choice of the word, "discover" is very important. "Discover" is a verb. It means to find something that probably nobody has found before. In other words, it means to find something new. The advertiser uses it to appeal to our sense of adventure, our desire to find new things in life. Also, in the text we have "Buy a Zain sim card NOW and dial *200* 1# to activate," Notice the use of the word, "NOW", in capital letters. The advertiser purposely put it in capital letters to let the reader know the urgency of his message. The buying of the sim card has to be now and not tomorrow.

The Tone of the Texts

The tone of the advertising texts is melodramatic. The advertiser chooses his words and tune to appeal to our sense of imagination, where we find a world, where the more we talk using Zain step-up, the better it gets.

The Audience of the Texts

The audience of the text comprises the general Nigerian Public, particularly; those of them that can have access to the newspaper and read the contents. The advertiser knows very well, probably through research, that the Guardian Newspaper, particularly the ones of Thursdays and Tuesdays, usually contains adverts from various institutions and establishments, which compel people from various walks of life to buy them, and by placing this Zain advert on this paper on these days, he intends to reach a very wide audience, comprising men and women from all walks of life.

The advertising language has a positive effect on the audience in the sense that it makes the readers to imagine what Zain step up is like, and may be compelled to go for the product to have the same form of happy experience the image in the advert is portraying.

2. Zain Advert in the Guardian Newspaper of Thursday, Septemebr 17, 2009

A. Structure of the Texts

The first text worth mentioning here is "0812". This is a figure. The next is "we have added a new number to our growing family". This is a loose sentence structure. The subject, "we", comes before the predicate, "have added a new number to our growing family."

Again, we have "The new 0812 number range has increased our capacity to allow for 10 million more Nigerians to enjoy the amazing bundle of benefits available on the Zain Network, like one network, pay 4me, mobile Top-up, 300 monthly call me backs, 300 monthly credit me, caller ring back tone and lots more!". This is a compound complex sentence structure. It has one main clause, "The new 0812 number range has increased our capacity", and subordinate clauses like: "to allow for 10 million more Nigerians"; "to enjoy the amazing bundle of benefits available on the Zain Network," and "like one network, pay 4me, mobile top-up, 300 monthly call me backs tone, 300 monthly credit me, caller ring back tone and lots more".

The last text worthy of mentioning here is "0812. Same quality service, same coverage." This is a noun phrase. "Same Quality service" and "same coverage" are all noun phrases. The advertiser uses them to show the reader that the new product, "0812", has the same quality in service and coverage with some of their other products that are already on sale.

B. Diction of the Texts

The texts are presented with simple diction. The words are informative. Through the wordings of the text, we get to know some of the services of the ZAIN Network.

C. Tone of the Texts

The tone is echoic in nature, "same Quality Service, same coverage". Through the use of a sibilant, "s", in the "same Quality service", and "s", in same coverage, the musical effect of the language is underscored for the reader. Apart from this, the text is melodramatic in nature. It dramatizes before the reader, the expected function of the new number, "0812".

D. Audience of the Texts

The texts have a mass audience. They are meant for the general public, who are prospective consumers of the new product. They are intended to have a positive effect on the audience in the sense that, they make them to begin to think of the new product alongside its expected roles.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that an advertiser has one major goal, which is to present his product to the public and urge it to think about it as well as to buy it. Since the objective of the advertiser can only be met when the product advertised is purchased in the market, the advertiser does a lot of work in choosing the words and structures of his text, such that they will be attractive and compelling enough to make prospective buyers to go for the products. To further actualize this objective, he chooses good images that can creatively interpret the meaning he wants to communicate through the text. He also organizes the image and text in such a way that the reader will not be in difficulty to make out the meaning he wants to imply.

In the case study of Zain Advert text in the GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER surveyed in this study, we noticed the advertiser matches images effectively with his texts. We also noticed the various graphical designs and layouts which he made to ensure that the message he wants to relay to the reader is clear. Through our stylistics study of the advertising texts, we are able to notice that the advertiser uses simple structures, most of which are presented in an imperative form as well as phrase form. Again, he makes use of both loose and periodic sentence structures. Again, he uses very simple diction that appeals to the emotion of the reader. The tone is also melodramatic and creates appealing images in the mind of the reader. The effect of the texts to the audience is also very encouraging. The texts are such that make the reader not only to think of having the products, but also, to actually purchase them. We therefore submit that the advertising language of Zain in the Nigerian Daily like *The Guardian Newspaper* is such that is appropriate to the audience that utilizes it. Thus, there is the possibility that the advertiser will actualize his full objective of using the advertising language, not only to get the message across to the readers, but to also make them get and make use of the products advertised.

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