

## ADVERTISEMENT SLOGANS OF SELECTED SOAPS AND DETERGENTS IN NIGERIAN MARKET: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

Central to pragmatics is to understand the strategies or mechanisms that aid interlocutors to work out hidden, indirect or implied meanings of an utterance or a whole text. However, this study investigated the language of advertisement with specific attention to the slogans of selected products in the Nigerian market. In the study, four slogans of soaps and detergents were sampled and analysed using some pragmatic principles: Speech Acts, Cooperative Principle and its maxims and Implicature. This study is a descriptive qualitative research. The data were sourced from the internet. Findings reveal that the slogans performed three types of speech acts: Assertive, Directive and Commissive respectively to communicate the advertisers' intended messages. Also, the advertisers predominantly employed the Assertive Act to fascinate the potential customers. Furthermore, the advertisers deliberately flouted the maxims of quality, quantity and manner to manipulate and influence the decision of the potential customers to gain support and patronage from them and this generated implicatures.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, Advertisement, Slogan, Soap and Detergent

### **Introduction**

Pragmatics is a very important aspect of linguistics which suggests that utterances must not be long to communicate effectively. So, in conversations, people employ their linguistic prowess to make their utterance short yet meaningful. Pragmatics practically deals with strategies that govern how meaning beyond the words can be interpreted and understood without ambiguity. According to Wales (1989:365):

pragmatics is the study of language use which is concerned with the meaning of utterance rather than a grammatical sentence or proposition.

In communication Often times, people utter/write words that are sometimes apparently different from what they actually say/write, yet the listeners understand the additional or hidden meaning and communication is achieved. However, pragmatics makes this possible. According to Crystal (1997:301):

Pragmatics studies language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

In this present time, language does not serve as just a mere tool of communication rather it has become a powerful tool to earn money. It has become the most influential device of publicity in the business world due to its persuasive and attractive nature. This is why Watson and Hill (1993:146) considering the language user, define pragmatics as thus:

The study of language from the point of view of the user, especially the choices, constrains he meets in employing the use of the language and the effect the use has on the communication situation.

Language is a veritable tool which the advertisers leverage in design advertisements slogans to communication, create interest in or promote sales of products and service. So, companies constantly search for good advertising firm that could get their messages to the potential customers.

Advertisement slogan has proven to be a successful tool for communication between the advertisers and the public. Slogans are the most important and condensed messages that advertisers would like to

send across their intended customers. Slogan is one of the effective ways to draw attention to product and services, it tells a lot about products qualities. According to Urdang and Robbins (1984:18) slogan is defined as “a group of words that promise a reward in a dramatic way which is easy to read, easy to say, and easy to remember”. Smart and intelligent slogans leave unforgettable impressions in the mind of potential customers. In fact, the tone and language of a slogan positions the brand of the product it represents so, a well-designed slogan has the capability to make the product desirable in the market. Slogans can be seen in newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet, billboards, posters and so on. Today, internet is the fastest growing advertising medium apart from television and radio, it offers incredible opportunities for a wide range of business and advertising presently. The essence of advertisement slogan is to communicate the existence and quality of a product to the public. Unfortunately, some of these slogans do not communicate explicitly with clear messages. However, this is one of the reasons why advertisement slogans are prone to pragmatic analysis and interpretation.

Different Products in the market have advertisement slogan(s) with which they are identified with. These Slogans are short and simple; often written in three to six words yet, they sum up what the product or service has to offer. Sometimes, they follow a particular pattern as in the examples below:

**It's Delicious/It's refreshing**

**Future Assured/Stability Assured**

Slogan is said to be effective if it has the potency of making the product stand out from every other similar products as exemplified in the following slogans below:

Clorets Chew gum - **Confidence in Every breath**/Orbit Chew gum - **Just Brushed Clean Feeling**

Maggi Cube Seasoning – **With Maggi, Every Woman is a Star**/Knorr Cube – **Your Taste Maker**

Again, slogans make different products to be recognized easily.

Furthermore, advertisers sometimes do not abide by the proper grammar rules just to achieve their goals as seen below:

H2o Water - **Water's gonna be jealous**

Darling Japanese Fibre - **Natural Styles for Every You**

More so, there are other special situations in which words are spelt differently from the correct spelling that is generally accepted. Below are some examples:

Maltex - **I feel goooood**

P.K. chewing gum - **a looong lasting taste**

Milksi milk has this advert **creamitasti milk**

Slogans are vague, ambiguous, and indirect; the advertisers who design them are more interested in the aesthetics use of words in order to create catchy and appealing slogans not minding if the messages thereof are being properly communicated to the potential customers. More often than not, this pose a great challenge as the potential customers struggle to interpret the intended messages in the slogans. However, the researcher having observed the nature of advertisement slogans generally and the concern of pragmatics which is to provide solutions to the problem of communication, finds it of great significance to investigate some of the pragmatic principles that aid speaker's/writer's intended meaning making process for effective communication between the advertisers and their potential customers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work was theoretically based on the following: Cooperative Principle, conversational implicature and Speech Acts Theory. Austin, who first propounded Speech Acts Theory posits that “saying something is doing something”, that is, words perform actions. In other words, actions performed via utterance are generally called Speech Acts. Later his student, Seale expounded on that. He introduced the notion of ‘indirect speech act’ to describe speaker's communicative intention. Austin in “How to do Things with Words” prescribed six acts (locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary) which

utterances perform. These acts were further redefined by Searle who distinguished five types of acts performed thus: Assertives, Directives, Commissive, Expressives and Declaratives. Furthermore, Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) and Implicatures centres on the ability of interlocutors to make sense of the utterances they exchange in spite of some missing elements, that is, such elements are often implicated and such implicatures are made possible by cooperation between speakers and listeners. In fact, Conversational Implicature is actually a kind of indirect speech act, a special case of performing one illocutionary act by way of performing another.

Grice's Cooperative Principle is an assumed basic concept in pragmatics. Along with Speech Act Theory (e.g. Austin 1962 and Searle 1969), Grice's work on the Cooperative Principle initiated the current interest in pragmatics, and led to its development as a separate discipline within linguistics, and as such it is discussed by most textbooks in the area, and often cited in academic papers within pragmatics and associated disciplines. In a nut shell, of all the pragmatic theories that aid interpretation of meaning, the study will specifically adopt the ones discussed in this chapter to establish the fact that pragmatics is a relevant aspect of linguistics that aid effective communication and interpretation of messages with a stake on how utterances are understood especially, in the field of advertising generally.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted qualitative research method. However, the study is qualitative in nature because it focused on describing how advertisers leverage pragmatic principles (especially those adopted for this study) to their advantage. This study covered advertisement slogans of the selected products available and accessible in the internet. A total of six advertisement slogans of soaps and detergents were purposively sampled. The instrument for data collection was the internet, You Tube precisely. The study adopted secondary data collection and the data were analyzed using Searle's Speech Acts Theory together with Grice's Cooperative Principles and Implicature.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The four sampled data are presented for analysis using the pragmatic theories adopted in this study. In presenting the data, they are labelled datum one – four but grouped into two (A & B). The data in group "A" are sourced from advertisement slogans of beauty skin care soaps, whereas group "B" data are sourced from advertisement slogans of laundry detergents.

#### **GROUP A**

##### **Datum one: Dove Soap**

*Slogan: Reveal Beautiful Glowing Skin*

The act performed through the slogan is Assertive. Here, the advertiser is making a strong claim about the product.

The maxim flouted here is that of quality which states thus, 'do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence'. Here, the slogan is an assertion yet to be tested to ascertain the truthfulness.

The implicit meaning that could be inferred here is that the product possesses a quality that could bring out one's hidden beauty

##### **Datum Two: Pears transparent Soap**

*Slogan: Look young, stay young*

In the data above, the speech act performed is Directive. The advertiser is suggesting the potential customers to do something.

The advertiser flouted the maxims of quantity and manner. The maxim of quantity requires adequate information to describe and point the product to the intended customers but the advertiser could not provide that. Also, the advertiser carelessly repeated the word 'young' which is not necessary thus, failed to avoid verbosity which is against maxim of manner.

The implicature generated here could be that the product rejuvenates the skin.

## **GROUP B**

### **Datum Three: Ariel Detergent**

*Slogan: I Wash*

The slogan is categorized as assertive. This is because the advertiser is making a strong affirmation about the product.

The advertiser copiously flouted the maxim of Quantity. The information is too brief and less informative to describe the product such that the customers can easily identify it.

The implicit meaning that could be derived from the slogan is that the product is very active, makes washing less burdensome. In other words, the product produces the desired result quickly.

### **Datum Four: Waw Detergent**

*Slogan: Washes a lot, saves a lot*

The advertiser is describing the product and at the same time promising an offer therefore, the speech acts are assertive and commissive. The advertiser flouted the maxim of quality which requires the speaker not to say something which lacks adequate evidence. The implicit message that could be inferred from this is that the product is highly effective and profitable as using it could save the customers a lot of strength, time, energy, money and lots more.

## **Summary of Findings**

For a more organized and comprehensible discussion; different subheadings were used here to achieve a succinct discussion.

### **The illocutionary act(s) that communicate(s) the advertisers' intended messages to the potential customers**

Here, the data were analysed based on the occurrences of Searle's taxonomy of Speech Acts: Assertive (Representative), Directive, Commissive, Expressive and Declarative. However, findings reveal that only the Assertive, Directive and Commissives occurred in the data sampled. The slogan performed a total number of five Speech Acts thus, Assertive occurred three (3) times. Directive and Commissive record one (1) time each. Expressives and Declaratives record zero (0) number of occurrence. Therefore, the illocutionary acts that communicate the advertisers' intended messages to the potential customers are Assertive, Directive and Commissive.

### **The illocutionary act(s) that is/are predominantly employed by the advertisers to fascinate the potential customers**

Following the findings, it is revealed that three types of speech acts were performed comfortably albeit at different occurrences. But the Assertive records the highest number of occurrence at three (3) times. In other words, the Speech Acts that are predominantly performed is the 'Assertive'. However, this implies that the Speech Act has the highest degree of attractiveness.

### **The conversational maxim(s) that is/are deliberately flouted by the advertisers to manipulate and influence the decision of the potential customers to gain support and patronage from them**

From the findings, the advertisers flouted the three conversational maxims – quality, quantity and manner at varying frequencies. However, findings reveal that the advertisers flouted the conversational maxims for a total of five (5) times. The maxim of quality was flouted two (2). The maxim of quantity was flouted two times (2) times and the maxim of manner was flouted once.

(2) times. However, the advertisers flouted these maxims in such an artistic and confident way to persuade and convince the potential customers.

### **The possible implicatures generated from the cases of maxims flout in the work**

Finding reveals that there are different interpretations of meaning that could be generated from the cases of maxims flout above. Finding shows that the advertisers blatantly flouted these maxims intending for their customers to search the underlying meanings. These advertisers have flouted these

maxims to imply different meanings: that the product guarantees quality, rejuvenates the skin, guarantees quick result, produces reliable result with added advantages.

### Conclusion

This study has examined how meaning is conveyed and interpreted in advertising. The study reveals that the advertisers have unique ways to communicate their intentions to the target customers. However, the study has proven that words can actually perform actions. Advertisement slogans perform actions which geared towards communicating the advertisers' intended messages to the potential customers to persuade and influence their consuming behaviour. Interestingly, slogans can perform these acts simultaneously hence, a productive means for conveying more complex and persuasive information to the potential customers. Also, that the flouting of any of the maxims of the cooperative principle does not mean that there is invariably a breach of communication. There may appear to be apparent flouting of maxims by the advertisers which is often deliberate, but the slogans are however regarded as felicitous regardless of this perceived flouting of communication maxims.

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### APPENDICES



Appendix 1



Appendix 2.



Appendix 3.



Appendix 4.