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Audience Perception of the Influence of Puffery as Persuasive Tools in Herbal Medicine Advertisement in Ondo State

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Abstract

This study focused on “Audience Perception of the Influence of Puffery as Persuasive Tools in Herbal Medicine Advertisement in Ondo State”. The study considered survey research method based on the fact that it explained audience perception of the influence of puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement in Ondo State. The population consist of both adult male and female from the three Selected Local Government Areas of Ondo State and the relevant sampling size of 400 was arrived at using Taro Yamane’s formula, though out of the 400 questionnaire distributed, 360 was recovered for analysis. The findings of the study revealed that puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement. It also discovered that, herbal medicine advertisements contain puffery. It also concludes that, puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement and also that puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influence consumer buying habit. The study therefore recommended that any claim that cannot be supported with indisputable evidence should not be made in the adverts. Is also recommended that, there is need for audience research as a way of testing their acceptability of the commercial posture of the media, while enlightening them on the desirability or otherwise of generating revenue to keep the station afloat.

Keywords: Puffery, Herbal Medicine, Advertisement, Audience Perception

Introduction

In a free market economy system where variety of goods and services breed competition among similar brands and organizations, advertising appears to be the necessary ingredient that can ensure that one’s organization stays ahead in spite of the contending claims of competing brands. The herbal medicine industry is no stranger to this intense competition. The concentration on

this industry stems from the stiff competition that characterizes the industry. This has compelled a number of herbal medicine companies to advertise their products on many media platforms such as newspapers, radio, television, billboards and magazines. At the same time, there are standards and ethical requirements on advertising generally, and medical claims in particular, that must be honoured or followed. This is because of the possible adverse effects on human health of any inaccurate or misleading claims of efficacy in health products (Ogbodoh, 1990)

Advertising is a persuasive communication which employs persuasive techniques or tools to influence consumer's interests and control consumer's purchasing habit. Consumers react to advertisement in different way and make decisions on how to spend their available resources on consumption related product. Persuasive advertising refers to a persuasive type of marketing communication designed to influence the target audience and lured them to patronise the goods, services or ideas advertised. Kruti and Alan (2009) assert that persuasive advertising is intended to induce people to buy the advertised goods or services. This becomes more important as the product grows or faces increasing competition. The advertiser now needs to give more reasons or enticements to lure consumers. The goal of most advertising messages is to persuade the audience to believe an idea or buy a product. The language of persuasion in advertising therefore, is an important media literacy skill. Aliede (2002) writes that most advertisements are persuasive in order to win converts who are lured to patronise the goods, services or ideas advertised. Most of the time advertisement message of a particular product contains puffery in other to lure and influence the consumers that a particular product would satisfy their needs.

According to Hoffman (2006), puffery is a form of advertising in which a product or service is praised as being superior to others related or alternative product, with less or no evidence to back up the claim. This is done for the sole purpose of influencing buyers or consumers that might not otherwise give the product or service any attention or that consider the product has alternative to other related product. Puffery can sometimes be found in advertising or promotional materials about a specific product or service, though it is often employed by advertising agent and other people attempting to gain consumers' or buyers favour. Puffery is legal, so long as it does not escalate to what would be considered misrepresentation. To explore this concept, consider the following puffery definition.

In the realm of advertising litigation, puffery is a legal defense that is often called upon in deceptive and misleading advertising cases (Hoffman, 2006). The usage of puffery is not only found in the domain of advertising, but can also be applied to several other situations. "Legally the most significant characteristic of 'puffery' is that it is a defense to a charge of misleading purchasers of goods, investments, or services, or to a charge that a promisor has made a legally cognizable promise" (Hoffman, 2006). In terms of deceptive and misleading advertising, "puffery" can be defined as the reason that, the advertisement in question should not be consider as deceptive as its mere nature is just a "puff" or an obvious exaggeration.

Puffery strategic marketing tools in advertising which intends to persuade the prospective consumer choose a particular product due to the persuasive language behind the advertisement of such related product. Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas or products by an identifiable sponsor. The definition identifies fundamental elements. First, it is a paid form of presentation, which emphasizes that advertising space or time

must be purchased. It is non-personal, meaning that it is not a direct or personalized presentation to one individual, but to the masses. Identified sponsor refers to the identification of the brand or the advertiser that is communicating. Arens (2008) define advertising as the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods, services and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media. The whole essence of advertising is to make customers to be loyal to the products advertised. Brand loyalty as noted by Jacoby (1971), cited by Afzal (2013) suggests that brand loyalty is the purchase response of an individual or consumer for one or more alternative brands over a time period, deciding from a set of alternative brands.

Strategic marketing and tactically positioning products creates an opportunity for corporations to obtain customers and achieve a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Specifically, marketers will be able to portray their products in a manner, which elicits emotional feelings, and conveys a message that is relatable and desirable for the consumer.

Statement of the Problem

The place of advertising in sale promotion of a product especially 'Herbal Medicine' in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized because, it serve as a persuasive tools that influences the consumers to purchase a particular organizational product. As a medium of mass communication, advertising has taken a center stage in the promotion of product goods and services especially in this 21st century with the emergence and consolidation of different media service providers. Advertising is no doubt the fulcrum on which every successful enterprise, especially in a free market and competitive economy revolves because its serves to communicate an idea to a large number of target audience in an attempt to convince them to take a certain action. It is a form of communication intended to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to purchase or take some action upon products, ideas, or services. There is no doubt that some advertising messages most especially some herbal medicine advertisement contains puff piece because most of the time advertising such advertising intends to exaggerate or praise a particular product more than is worth in order to lure the target consumers. The questions that; What influence does puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement has on its audience especially in Ondo State? How does puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement influence its target audience becomes the problem this study intends to solve.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the above problem stated, the objectives of this research work are to:

1. Examine the influence of puffery as a persuasive tool in advertisement
2. Examine the extents of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement
3. Ascertain the influence of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement on target audience in Ondo State

Research Questions

The following are the research question of the study

1. How does puffery as persuasive tools influence advertisement?

2. To what extents does herbal medicine advertisement portray puffery?
3. What influence does herbal medicine advertisement have on target audience?

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it offers insight into how puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicines advertisement influenced its audience, especially in Ondo State. This study will also fill in the intellectual gap that exists in the area of herbal medicines and advertising.

Furthermore, this study will influence policy implementation and also serve as a useful guide to stakeholder institutions that regulates advertising such as Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria APCON, the National Food NAFDAC, and Nigeria Traditional Medicine Practitioners Associations (NTMPA) among others in order to coordinate herbal medicine advertisement to avoid violation of advertising code, rules and regulation as it will assist both practitioners and the regulators (FDA) to identify the loopholes in their advertisement and provide solutions to address them. It will also influence advertisers and practitioners to adopt strategic and effective tactics that will capture and sustain the interest of the audience, while meeting the professional standards at the same time.

Research is very important in every aspect of human lives, and hence this study will add to existing knowledge on the subject matter. In the end, this study is expected to add to the overall body of knowledge that exists in the area of advertising discourse and herbal medicines.

Scope of the Study

This research work is limited in scope to audience perception of the influence of puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement in Ondo State. It also focused on Ondo State in which three Local Government Areas each from the three Senatorial Districts in the State will be selected, this as a result of the researchers inability to captured the heterogeneous large number of herbal medicine consumer. Therefore, the three Local Government Areas will be selected each from the three senatorial districts of the states and a structured questionnaire will be distributed to both adult male and female of the selected areas for the purpose of gathering relevant data for the research work.

Definition of Terms

Puffery: Puffery is a form of advertising in which a product or service is praised as being superior to all others like it, without any evidence to back up the claim

Herbal Medicine: Herbal medicine are drugs that are derived mainly from herbs and medicinal plants parts like roots, stem, leaves, barks, flowers, fruits, and seeds.

Advertising: Advertising is a persuasive communication which employs persuasive techniques or tools to influence consumer's interests and control consumer's purchasing habit

Literature Review

Advertising is a subject which has attracted an enviable degree of interest in virtually all human societies in recent times. By virtue of its role in the socio-economic activities of many societies, an appreciable number of scholars, practitioners and media men and women have, over the

years tackled the various issues in advertising. Discussions have been held and aired over the broadcast media, and many books, journals, magazines, periodicals, public documents, dailies, court decisions, literature of pressure groups, speeches of public figures, reports have dealt extensively with the subject. (Latour, 2009).

However, very few of all these have paid adequate specific attention to the need for, awareness of, and conformity with and problems facing advertising regulatory and control mechanisms in any society. Despite this constraint, this researcher has examined available materials, hoping there from, to find the various view and ideas about what have been held and posited by the past researchers, authors, and practitioners (Ehikwe, 2006).

Concept of Advertising

Advertising and communication, in general, are components of contemporary economic and social system. In today's society, advertising has evolved into a complex system of communication, important for both organizations and the general public. The ability to deliver messages carefully prepared to its targets gave over time to advertising a major role in marketing programs of most organizations. Different companies, starting from the multinational firms and local firms attaches increasing importance of advertising in order to present their products and services to important markets. In functioning market economies, consumers have learned to use the advertising information in their purchase decisions, Srivalli (2003).

The expansion of production activities, growth of market competition, rising standard of living of people, downward development in socialism and communist economy and upward development in capitalist economy and globalization of business are some important socio-economic factors responsible for rapid growth of advertising in this centuries. Advertising is bound to make rapid progress in the years to come. This may be due to market competition, new development in the field of science and technology, new initiations in liberalization, privatization and globalization, Srivalli (2003).

A coherent and functional analysis of advertising can be done by calling a vision that incorporates two levels: the descriptive one, which considers issues related to the need to define and differentiate advertising from other marketing tools of communication, and the normative one, that captures the conditions that advertising must meet so that marketing goals can be achieved. The need for strategic vision regarding advertising can be seen as an example of covering the normative aspect of the analysis, while the advertising features and forms can be aspects of the descriptive analysis.

Advertising plays a vital role in the society, in general and in the business, in particular. It acts as a technique of sales promotion and modernism. Advertising is essential in the case of internal as well as global marketing. At the same time, it is necessary in the case of all types of products old, well established and new (Baran, 2004). The basic objectives of advertising are to provide information, to attract attention, to create awareness and to influence buying behavior of consumers. Aaker and Myers (1999) believe that advertising can be considered a mirror of society.

Persuasion as a Concept

As has been established early on, advertising is a discourse of persuasion, with the intention to convince people to act in a certain manner. Therefore, it has become important to analyze persuasion as a concept and link it with how it is able to influence beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, or behaviors. Simply put, persuasion is a process aimed at changing a person's (or a group's) attitude or behavior toward some event, idea, object, or other person(s), by using written or spoken words to convey information, feelings, or reasoning, or a combination thereof. Keraf (2004) defines persuasion as an art of verbal activities with the intention to assure someone to do something appropriate with the speaker's purpose for the present time. It means the purpose of persuasion is for the speaker to persuade the listener to act something with no violence and coercion. For persuasion to be successful, the speaker needs to put in efforts geared towards stimulating the addressee to take decisions that favour the speaker (Kraf, 2004; Umi, 2010).

This means persuasion occurs only through cooperation between sender and receiver. The focus of persuasion is not only on the sender, the message, or the receiver, but all of them are equally focused on, hence it can be said that the persuasive process is a cooperative process. This is because persuasion is a result of the combined efforts of source and receiver (Umi, 2010). That explains why advertisers carefully draft their messages and choose the right channel with an eloquent speaker, actor or narrator.

Concept of Persuasive Advertising

Persuasive advertising is a component in an overall advertising strategy that seeks to entice consumers into purchasing specific goods or services, often by appealing to their emotions and general sensibilities. This particular advertising strategy is different from informative advertising, which essentially provides the customer with hard data about the nature and function of the product. With persuasive advertising, the assumption is that the consumer already understands the basic nature of the product, but needs to be convinced of the desirability and the benefits that set a particular product apart from the competition (Tatum, 2003). However, it is important to note that persuasive advertising does not actually state that if the consumer uses a given product, the effect illustrated in the advertising will automatically take place. The idea is to convey the perception that there is a good chance that the consumer will experience some type of benefit that is similar to what is portrayed in the print ad or the television commercial. In fact, some examples of persuasive advertising go as far as to include a disclaimer that the situation displayed in the advertising is only an example, and not the only possible outcome. This approach is often used in advertising for legal firms, in that the disclaimer notes that the advertising does not imply that the services provided by the firm are necessarily superior to those provided by other legal firms. (Tatum, 2003)

According to Shrum (2012) the early fears about the persuasive power of propaganda on citizens in the 1930s and 1940s soon morphed into worries about the persuasive power of advertising, particularly the worry about subliminal persuasion through advertising (Bargh, 2002; Brannon & Brock, 1994). One of the more effective approaches to persuasive advertising is to focus on specific benefits of the product. While those same benefits may also be found with competing

products, the idea is to convey that a given product provides that benefit in a way that is hard to find elsewhere (Tatum, 2003).

Another approach to persuasive advertising is to convey the perception that using a given product will help an individual be more successful with some area of his or her life. A brand of mouthwash may use media advertising to convey the message that using the product assures the breath is fresh for a longer period of time, and therefore helps to enhance the confidence of the user when interacting with other people. This same general approach is used with perfumes and colognes, where the advertising creates the perception that anyone who uses the product will be more attractive and socially successful.

Given advertising's prominence in the domain of persuasion, it is not surprising that theories of persuasion have played a central role in scholarly research on effects of advertising (and marketing communications more generally). There are numerous theories of persuasion that have implications for advertising and marketing, many of which are covered in this volume. Rather, we have chosen to highlight the persuasion theories that have been most influential in advertising, marketing, and consumer behavior research over the last 30 years. Some of these theories will be familiar to communication researchers (e.g., theory of reasoned action; elaboration likelihood model), others less so (e.g., persuasion knowledge model). We provide a brief presentation and discussion of each theory, and then review the research that applied these theories to marketing questions. Finally, in the last section, we discuss some new directions in consumer research that pertain to concepts related to persuasion (e.g., preference construction and choice, perceptions, liking).

According to Shrum (2012), changing responses, is the most common persuasive effect and probably also the one with the most important persuasive impact (Miller, 1980). In trying to change consumers' responses, marketers of HRP's may provide counterarguments for the consumers' doubtfulness against the product e.g. by claiming that the product will solely do well and by communicating high degree of satisfaction from the early adopters of the product. To reinforce responses messages which suit individuals' existing preferences are created. In reinforcing, the message senders try to create messages which correspond to and reinforce individuals' attitudes (Miller, 1980). Consumers may feel that an all-round diet is good for their health although they believe that they lack the time of cooking such. The marketers of nutrition supplies may then market their products with the main argument that they are a perfect supplement to reach an all-round diet.

A common way of shaping responses is to create associations between the advertised product and a positively perceived object or person (Miller, 1980). To relate to the subject of interest, HRP's are often advertised by the use of a liked celebrity as a spokesperson, i.e. through celebrity endorsement. To sum up, persuasive communication can be used in order to reach three different persuasive effects; changing, reinforcing, and shaping, responses. For the purpose of this paper, persuasive communication that intentionally tries to reach any of these three effects will be of further focus as it is suggested that these are the persuasive attempts that the consumers react strongest to. In order to understand how the three persuasive effects may occur through advertisements for HRP's, examples of persuasion strategies for each one of them will be

given in the following section. The intention is that this will help to reach an understanding of how their usage could increase the likelihood of reaching the desired persuasive effect.

The Concept of Puffery in Advertising

Puffery is a form of advertising in which a product or service is praised as being superior to all others like it, without any evidence to back up the claim. This is done for the sole purpose of attracting buyers that might not otherwise give the product or service any attention. Puffery can normally be found in advertising or promotional materials about a specific product or service, though it is often employed by politicians and other people attempting to gain favor. In the realm of advertising litigation, puffery is a legal defense that is often called upon in deceptive and misleading advertising cases (Hoffman, 2006). The usage of puffery is not only found in the domain of advertising, but can also be applied to several other situations. "Legally the most significant characteristic of 'puffery' is that it is a defense to a charge of misleading purchasers of goods, investments, or services, or to a charge that a promisor has made a legally cognizable promise" (Hoffman, 2006). In terms of deceptive and misleading advertising, "puffery" can be defined as the reason that the advertisement in question should not be deemed deceptive as its mere nature is just a "puff" or an obvious exaggeration (i.e., it should be identified as such and not taken as the truth).

In essence, when using the defense of puffery, the company in question is able to remove liability as this defense deems any reasonable consumer should not fully believe the claims being made in the advertisement. In the Deception Statement released by the FTC in 1984, puffery is defined and includes) representations that ordinary consumers do not take literally, 2) expressions of opinion not made as a representation of fact) subjective claims (taste, feel, appearance, smell) and hyperbole that are not capable of objective measurement."

Using this defense can alleviate the charges put forth that accuse the company in question of making a misleading claim. For example, a claim such as "Better than the rest" is a situation where a puffery defense would commonly be used, as the reasonable consumer cannot actually prove if the said product is better than the rest and thus, it is not deemed a factually misleading statement. This is an example of an explicit statement, where there is little room for interpretation and a reasonable consumer should be able to determine that such a claim is difficult to measure, thus it would have little chance in court. Depending on the context, a claim can be explicit, similar to the one above, or it can be implied, leaving room for interpretation sometimes resulting in confusion for the consumer. For example, Bayer, a well-known aspirin company made a claim that said "the world's best aspirin," which the FTC agreed was mere puffery. In a different context where the same claim was used, but in conjunction with other competitors, it made consumers believe that it was better than other options of aspirin because it contained superior qualities (Sterling, 1983).

Put another way, puffery claims are usually used by the defendant when they have made claims that state their own product is better than competitors' products, or if the product claims to give the user desirable results that ultimately are unattainable. This type of advertising encourages (bad) consumption and that is why consumers and competitors feel compelled to complain when the product doesn't live up to the desirable results, or more specifically the stated facts. In the

context of Bayer aspirin, if a consumer normally bought and consumed a different brand of aspirin, then based on Bayer's comparison advertisement the consumer decided to purchase Bayer instead (believing the product contained some type of added benefit), then this would be deemed bad/harmful consumption as a result of a misleading advertisement. Often participants in studies have a hard time believing they are influenced by advertising claims, especially relating to sensitive topics such as habits and healthy eating.

Puffery in advertising is legal because most courts consider it to be so obviously unreliable and shallow that it cannot really be considered grounds for liability. However, if the puffery works to misrepresent the product, or to tell customers an outright lie, the seller may be held liable by the customer for false advertising or fraudulent representation.

False advertising is different from puffery. While puffery is thought of as expressing an exaggerated opinion in order to attract more customers, the goal of false advertising is to actually deceive or mislead the customer in order to get him to pay for a particular product or service. It must be proven that a statement or representation was intended to be deceptive, in order for a Court to find it was false advertising. If businesses wish to engage in puffery in advertising, they need to take care not to make statements that could be found in any way to be false, misleading, or deceptive.

Puff Piece in Advertisement

Puff piece is an idiom for a journalistic form of puffery: an article or story of exaggerating praise that often ignores or downplays opposing viewpoints or evidence to the contrary. In some cases, reviews of films, albums, or products (e.g., a new car or television set) may be considered to be "puff pieces", due to the actual or perceived bias of the reviewer: a review of a product, film, or event that is written by a sympathetic reviewer or by an individual who has a connection to the product or event in question, either in terms of an employment relationship or other links. For example, a major media conglomerate that owns both print media and record companies may instruct an employee in one of its newspapers to do a review of an album which is being released by the conglomerate's record company.

Although some journalists may assert their professional independence and integrity, and insist on producing an unbiased review, in other cases a writer may succumb to the pressure and pen a biased "puff piece" which praises the product or event while omitting any discussion of any shortcomings. In some cases, "puff pieces" purport to provide a review of the product or event, but instead merely provide peacock words (an amazing recording); weasel words (probably one of the most important albums of the 2000s"; "Perhaps one of the leading bands of the 2010) and tabloid-style filler which is peripheral or irrelevant to assessing the qualities of the product or event ("during the filming, there were rumours that romantic sparks flew between the two co-leads, who were often seen talking together on the set").

The financial relationship between the product company or entertainment firm and the reviewer is not always as obvious as a cash payment. In some cases, a small group of reviewers may be given an exclusive invitation to test-drive a new sports car or see a new film before it is released. This privileged access to the product may lead the reviewer to do a biased review, either out of a sense of obligation, or because of a concern that the failure to produce a "puff piece" will lead

to the loss of future preview privileges. In some cases, the potential for bias in invitation-only preview sessions is substantially heightened when the reviewers are flown in to the location for the review, given fancy hotel rooms, and provided catered food and drinks during the actual review. The most egregious cases of this situation occur when, instead of inviting the reviewers to the company headquarters or another logical venue, the company gives all-expense paid tickets to Hawaii or Mexico, and holds the preview screening of the film or the product launch there. (Jefkins, 1976).

A particular use for puff pieces may be in health journalism. Providers of alternative medicine may be unable to make claims due to laws against false advertising, but they may be able to place stories and testimonials with journalists who can write as they wish under press freedom laws. Recruiting health journalists to write puff pieces may be a lucrative way to build the reputation of a product that has no effect.

Persuasive Strategies in Advertising Discourse

According to the Greek Philosopher Aristotle, persuasion could be brought about by the speaker's use of three modes of "rhetoric": Ethos, Pathos and Logos (Boubehrezh & Iraj, 2013). Ethos, (Greek word for 'character') in rhetoric and persuasion studies, demonstrates the character and/or credentials of a communicator. This means the persuasion power lies in the hands of the speaker. For a communicative act to achieve its persuasive goal, the speaker is required to possess traits that are deemed by the audience as credible and trustworthy. Pathos (Greek for 'suffering' or 'experience') is an appeal based on emotion, with the intention of motivating people to take action (ibid). Logos, or appeal through reasoning, was considered the most important appeal by Aristotle. It refers to the internal consistency of the message the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence (Fudold, 2001). According to Boubehrezh and Iraj (2013), the basic persuasion techniques often explored in advertising are association, bandwagon, celebrities, experts, explicit claims, fear, humour, emphasis, plain folks, repetition and testimonials. Others are charisma, euphemism, rhetorical questions, scientific evidence, and simple solution. The concept of persuasion automatically dovetails into its associated theoretical construct called rhetoric.

Rhetoric

Since the study is focused on persuasive communication, it is imperative to analyze the concept known as "Rhetoric". Regarding the advertising industry, it can be stated that the rhetoric principles are important because they play key roles in persuading audiences to behave or think in a manner desired by advertiser. "Advertisements that incorporate rhetorical devices perform better than those do not for both measurement of recall and persuasion" (Tom & Eves, 199, p.41). This point emphasizes the key role of rhetoric in advertising.

One of the early seminal studies into this concept was done by Aristotle, whose studies differed significantly from earlier works by other scholars. According Adegaju (2008), Aristotle defined rhetoric "as the faculty of discerning the possible means of persuasion" (p.124). Throwing more light on the subject, Rapp (2002) explains that the persuasion is achieved when the speech is delivered in such a way as to project the speaker as credible. He further explains that the success

of the persuasive efforts depends on the emotional dispositions of the audience. This means the onus lies on the orator or speaker to arouse and influence the audiences' emotions in order to change their perception or worldview. Also, the speaker persuades through the logic of the argument itself by demonstrating that something is the case or seems to be the case.

These three forms of persuasion manifest themselves in many advertising discourses, and herbal products advertising for that matter. With *ethos*, advertisers might carefully select people who are seen as credible personalities by the target audience. *Pathos* might be observed through the use of emotional appeals such as fear, humour and other techniques aimed at exposing the audience to the risk of not purchasing the herbal product being featured in the ad. *Logos* would be reflected in the arguments or the actual claims in the ad; such as through reference to a research study which proves that the herbal product is of good quality and has been authorized by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA). Also, *logos* is achieved through carefully-selected claims and benefits that appeal to the rational minds of the audience.

In respect of these, therefore, the discourse analysis in this study emphasized how the principles of persuasion (*ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*) played out in the selected herbal medicine ads and how they succeed in terms of influencing people to purchase these products.

Additionally, there are three kinds of rhetorical speeches deliberative, forensic and epideictic. Under the deliberative form of rhetorical speech, the speaker performs two main duties either to appeal to the audience to do something or warn them against something. This type of rhetorical speech involves issues that are yet to happen. The audiences are expected, based on the evidence presented by the speaker, to decide whether to go by the advice of the speaker or dismiss it in the future (Rapp, 2002). The forensic speech either accuses somebody or defends self or someone. Unlike the deliberative form, this kind of speech involves activities that happened in the past. Rapp (2002) further explains that while the listener has to decide in favour of one or two opposing parties, the third species does not aim at such a decision. The epideictic speech praises or blames somebody, as it tries to describe things or deeds of the respective person as honourable or shameful.

This study sought to establish how deliberative speech is expressed in herbal medicine advertisements by seeking whether or not the narrative entreats the audience to eschew certain practices that make them susceptible to the sicknesses and ailments which the advertised products seek to cure. Forensically, the discourse analysis sought to investigate how the ads project traditional medicines as a good or better alternative to the chemical medicines. It examined if and how the ads dispel the various misconceptions about traditional herbal medicines. The epideictic component was observed through a critical review of how the commercials on herbal medicines either blame or praise individuals and organizations for acting as the brain behind the growth or decline in the adoption of herbal products. Mostly, ads of this nature tend to heap praises on the manufacturer of the 'herbs' and present him as the solution to the problem which has been dramatized in the advertisement.

It must be emphasized that persuasion becomes necessary only in situations where two or more points of view exist. According to Lucas (1992), "there must be a disagreement, or else there would be no need for persuasion". Given this viewpoint, persuasive speeches centre on four types of arguments or propositions: propositions of fact, value, policy and concern about a

problem. O' Hairr et al. (1995) explain that "propositions of fact assert that something is true or false; propositions of value allege that something is or is not worthwhile; propositions of policy recommend a course of action or policy as necessary and desirable (or unnecessary and undesirable); and the speech designed to create concern about problem asks an audience to agree that specific conditions should be perceived as a problem requiring solution".

Considering the sensitive nature of the concepts of health, disease and (type of) healing in human life, the propositions or arguments described above inform the persuader's (advertiser) intent to modify, influence, shape and (if possible) change the beliefs, attitudes and behavior of the audience as we shall see presently in our discussion. In respect of the objectives of this study, the discourse analysis would aim at how the four propositions are observed in herbal medicinal radio advertisements.

In sum, it can be explained that advertisers, particularly those in the herbal medicinal industry, rely on the theory of rhetoric through source credibility and other concepts or strategies cited above to draw audiences to their products. The end goal of every advertising act is to convince and that is what rhetoric seeks to explain.

The anchor literature for this study is Adegaju's (2008) study, which examined the persuasive strategies of advertising herbal medicine in south-western Nigeria. Drawing on the assumptions of propaganda techniques/rhetorical strategies in advertising discourse, the author contended that a lot of emphasis had been placed on the use of herbal medicines in health care far more than researches on the rhetorical dynamics of their marketing and advertising.

Therefore, commercials and jingles on radio and television, in addition to printed ads were analyzed to identify the persuasive or rhetorical strategies embedded in them. The results of the study revealed that there are no "significant culture-specific strategies of advertising in the data sampled, as the communicative strategies generally fit in with the prefabricated style of advertising discourse" (Adegaju, 2008). The study also found out instances where advertisers tended to abuse meaning in language by making certain advertising claims for which there was no objective evidence to back.

In terms of the rhetorical strategies, Adegaju (2008) identified that one of the rhetorical strategies employed in advertising herbal medicine in the discourse is source credibility. Furthermore, the findings established that another rhetorical strategy was geared not only at convincing the audience of their competence but also at refuting the perceived opponents or critics of herbal medicine who negatively label herbal medical practitioners as local, shallow and illiterate.

Claims

Claims are supposed to function as information sources of the quality of the products. However, especially in the supplement industry the trustworthiness of the information to the consumers is questioned. The discussion arises as it is not clear if the consumers understand the meaning of disclaimers, i.e. a warning of that the claim has not been evaluated (Mason & Scammon, 2000). Thus, consumers face difficulties in determining the trustworthiness of different claims and its scientific base (Silverglade, 1994).

Celebrities

Celebrities are used in advertising to persuade consumers through credibility (Monahan, 1995). The influencing power of a well-known endorser lays first of all in the celebrity's ability to attract attention. Furthermore, the general view is that celebrities possess likeable and attractive qualities. (Atkin & Block, 1983). The aim is that through endorsement, the positive meaning connected to the celebrity will transfer to the product and subsequently, to the buying consumer (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008). However, even though consumers seem to have a positive view of celebrities, their credibility and thus effectiveness in advertising have been questioned (Atkin & Block, 1983; Freiden, 1984).

The increasing consumer interest for celebrities and how they act, do, and behave, is a clear indicator of the increasing influence of the famous in today's society (Choi & Berger, 2010). Consumers' aspirations to possess the same skills as certain celebrities raises questions of responsibility and consciousness (Choi & Berger, 2010) and who to hold responsible in a scenario where the influence is followed by a negative outcome. In order to understand consumers' responses to different persuasive attempts one need to know how consumers may process the message and subsequently how their evaluation of the same is formed. Therefore, individuals' message processing and judgment formation are described in the following section.

The persuasive strategies used by advertisers who want you to buy their product can be divided into three categories: pathos, logos, and ethos. Pathos: an appeal to emotion. An advertisement using pathos will attempt to evoke an emotional response in the consumer. Sometimes, it is a positive emotion such as happiness: an image of people enjoying themselves while drinking Pepsi. Other times, advertisers will use negative emotions such as pain: a person having back problems after buying the "wrong" mattress. Pathos can also include emotions such as fear and guilt: images of a starving child persuade you to send money. Logos: an appeal to logic or reason. An advertisement using logos will give you the evidence and statistics you need to fully understand what the product does. The logos of an advertisement will be the "straight facts" about the product:

Ethos: an appeal to credibility or character. An advertisement using ethos will try to convince you that the company is more reliable, honest, and credible; therefore, you should buy its product. Ethos often involves statistics from reliable experts. In knowing how the different strategies appear, a natural question follows of why an individual employs a certain strategy. Strategy that is employed depends on the amount of resources that the message recipient is willing and able to put into the processing. The advertising message, (e.g. complexity and inclusion of pictures), the individual's personal characteristics, (e.g. message involvement and expertise), and the situation in which the message is received, (e.g. editorial and advertising context), constitute the determinants of the allocation of resources. Moreover, the mood of the message receivers has also proven to play an influencing role in the adoption of processing (Forgas, 1995).

To conclude the findings presented by Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999), people tend to adopt the systematic processing strategy when they put a high value on forming accurate views and are able and motivated to allocate the resources needed to extensively and critically process the message. When adopting a systematic strategy the degree of persuasiveness is dependent upon

the perceived strength and the information provided in the advertisement. On the other hand, people are likely to adopt the heuristic strategy when they are interested in producing judgments that are adequate but not necessarily fully accurate. Lastly, the experiential strategy is employed when people have scarce ability and little motivation to process the message (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999).

Testimonials

Here, advertising messages often show people testifying about the value or quality of a product or endorsing an idea. It includes a list of well-known individuals who endorse such product or service. Also known as celebrity spokesperson, consumers transfer admiration or respect for the celebrity to the product.

Humour

This is a powerful tool of persuasion that uses amusement to grab and sustain attention to a product or service. Advertisement can be designed as to arouse laughter but provides little information about the product or service. In creating laughter, advertisers show their product or service in attempt to connect that good feeling to their product or service. This is very effective because consumers remember advertisements easily and associate positive feelings with the product.

Influence of Advertisements on Sales of Herbal Products

Having established the rhetorical strategies employed in advertising of products, especially herbal medicines, it is important to analyse how these persuasive strategies influence consumer's purchasing decision. In Ghana, some studies have been conducted to confirm the influence of herbal products' advertisements on consumer patronage. Ayimey (2013) did a survey in the Ho Municipality of the Volta region of Ghana to investigate the impact of radio commercials on herbal products. The researcher's choice of radio as the medium of interest is in line with this study, in that radio, as a medium of advertising, can reach wider audience in both rural and urban areas than other media such as newspaper and television. Ayimey (2013) further argued that in recent times, the popularity of radio as an ideal medium of advertising is gaining ground among herbal medicine producers apparently for commercial gains. The study revealed that the majority of consumers got to know of the products through radio advertisement. Also, the data further suggested that 60.7% of the sales of herbal products could be attributed to advertising.

Similarly, Ofosu, Boakye and Asiedu (2013) found out that advertising is one of the major communication tools that influence buying attitudes of consumers. This study looked at the herbal medicine industry and how it uses advertising to influence the buying decision of consumers in Ghana with emphasis on Amen Scientific Herbal Center in Atwima-Techiman, Kumasi. The research was designed to examine the extent to which adverts affect the buying attitude of consumers with regards to herbal medicine. Based on these findings, Ofosu, Boakye and Asiedu (2013) concluded that it is very essential for the herbal companies to fully focus on advertising because it is an effective tool for creating awareness and positive perception in the minds of consumers.

Theoretical Framework

This research work explores Persuasive (Theory of Reasoned Action) and Agenda Setting Theory because advertising is perceived to be a means of persuading consumer.

Persuasive Theory

Persuasive theory assumed that in order to influence sales advertising should generate a number of effects on the consumer in this case herbal medicine advertising as a result of its audio-visual features. Such effects are generated in a particular order, being considered as preconditions and at the same time, being the most important. It is believed that these effects are: cognitive effects, emotional effects and behavioral effects. Also occur, a number of factors with mediating role: the degree of involvement and attitude toward message. Lee and Schumann, (2004).

According to this theory, there were a number of models. Elaboration Likelihood Model was proposed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, they considering that consumer response is cognitive one that can take two directions, one related to the evaluation of product attributes and the other referring to the execution of the message (Lee and Schumann, 2004). Both directions follow the cognitive-affective response. Another model aimed at intermediate effects that advertising generate, is that proposed by Deborah MacInnis and Bernard J. Jaworski C. (Smith and Yang, 2004).

Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory posits that the most proximal input into behavior is a person's intention to engage in that behavior. Although seemingly obvious, this assumption is important because it implies that behavior is intentional. In turn, behavioral intentions are determined by one's attitude toward performing the behavior or act and one's beliefs about what important others think about one performing the behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) further specified that each component of intention, attitudes, and subjective norms were themselves determined by specific beliefs about each. Using an expectancy-value approach, they quantified attitude toward the behavior as a cross-product of the subjective likelihood that performing a particular behavior would lead to a specified outcome and their evaluation of that outcome (Shrum, 2012).

Agenda Setting Theory

This theory says that the media (mainly the news media) aren't always successful at telling us what to think, but they are quite successful at telling us what to think about. The theory was postulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in the year 1972/1973.

Also, this theory describes the ability (of the news media) to influence the salience of trending on the public agenda. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important, by comparing salient issues in news content.

The Agenda-Setting Theory comes from a scientific perspective, because it predicts that, if people are exposed to the same media, they will place importance on the same issues. According to Chaffee and Bergers (1997) criteria for scientific theories, agenda-setting is a good theory.

However, the theory is relevant to the study since the media set agenda and influence people through information and ideas being disseminated to the people. Also, its relevance in the same issues is important. Also, it can be proven false, if people have not been exposed to the same media, they would not feel same issue as important. It means theoretical assumptions are balance on the scientific side.

Methodology

This chapter comprises of the following: research design, area of study, population and sampling procedure, research instrument, method of data collection and data analysis.

Research Design

In gathering data for this study, the researchers used the survey research method. Okoye (1996:51) opines that survey is a method which is geared towards the study of people, their attitudinal frame of mind, and their systems, motivational range and manifestation. Survey method which will be use is adopted because it will help to measure audience perception of the influence of puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement in Ondo State.

Area of the Study

The area of this study comprises of three selected local government areas each from the three Senatorial Districts in Ondo state, namely: Idanre Local Government in Ondo Central Senatorial District, Ilaje Local Government in Ondo South Senatorial District and Ose Local government in North Ondo Senatorial District, the three Local Government Areas were selected in order to gather data for this research work as a result of the inability of the researchers to capture the heterogeneous large number of herbal medicine consumer.

Population of the Study

Population means all cases or individuals that fit a certain specification. Population defines limit with which the researcher findings are applicable. The population of this study which comprises of adult male and female of the selected Local Government each from the three Senatorial Districts in Ondo State is 563, 895 as recorded below:

Idanre:	129, 795
Ilaje:	289, 838
Ose:	144, 262
Total:	563, 895

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

According to Asemah (2012), a sample is a limited number of elements selected from a population, which is representative of that population. This is because in most cases, it is impractical to study the entire population.

Moreover, Taro Yamane's Formula was used to select the sample size from the total population of 563, 895 which would now be evenly distributed and randomly sampled in the selected local governments.

A sample size of 400 respondents was taken as sample for the study. This sample is derived using Taro Yamane's statistical formula (for arriving at given sample). Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size (563, 895)
 N = population (563, 895)
 e = level of significance (5%)
 1 = Constant (1)

The researcher used 5% 'level of significance to determine the sample size.

$$n = \frac{563,895}{1 + 563,895(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{563,895}{1 + 563,895(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{563,895}{1 + 1409.7}$$

$$n = \frac{563,895}{1410.7}$$

$$n = 399.7$$

$$n = \underline{400 \text{ (sample size)}}$$

Data was collected using the questionnaire which the researcher administered face to face to the respondents. All the 400 questionnaires distributed were retrieved by the researcher and this will be represented using simple percentage.

Method of Data Collection

In gathering data for this study, the researcher used the survey research method. The instruments used are questionnaires which arise during the response of the respondents in the questionnaires.

Thus, questionnaires were purposively administered on the recipients from the three selected Local Government Area in Ondo State has listed above.

Method of Data Analysis

Data gathered will be analyzed from the responses of the respondents to the questionnaire distributed on audience perception of the influence of puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement in Ondo State.

The data collected will be tabulated and itemized according to the response obtained from the respondents. The simple percentage will be used to analyze the responses as contained in the questionnaire.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

Data Presentation and Analysis

Question 1: How does Puffery as Persuasive tools Influence Advertisement?

Table 1: Does puffery as a persuasive tool in anyway influence advertisement?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	289	77%
No	86	23%
Total	375	100%

The above table shows that, 289 respondents representing (77%) admit that puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement while the remaining 86 respondents representing (23%) have contrary opinion. This means that puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement as attested to by the total highest of respondents.

Table 2: Does puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influence your buying habit as a consumer?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	286	76%
No	89	24%
Total	375	100%

The above table shows that, 286 respondents representing (76%) admit that, puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influenced their buying habit as a consumer while the remaining 89 respondents representing (24%) have contrary opinion. This indicate that, puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influenced their buying habit as a consumer as attested to by the total highest of respondents.

Research Question 2: To What Extents does Herbal Medicine Advertisement Portrays Puffery?

Table 3: Does herbal medicine advertisements contain puffery?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	248	66%
No	127	34%
Total	375	100%

The above table shows 10 shows that, 248 respondents representing (66%) admit that herbal medicine advertisements contain puffery while the remaining 127 respondents representing (34%) have contrary opinion. The above indicate that, herbal medicine advertisements contain puffery as attested to by the total highest of respondents.

Table 4: To what extents does herbal medicine advertisement portray puffery?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Greater extents	286	76%
Some extents	89	24%
Total	375	100%

The above table shows that, 289 respondents representing (77%) admit that the portrayal of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement is great while the remaining 86 respondents representing (23%) admitted it to some extents. This means that the portrayal of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement is great as attested to by the total highest of respondents.

Question 3: What Influence does Herbal Medicine Advertisement have on Target Audience?

Table 5: What influence does puffery in herbal medicine advertisement have on you as a target audience?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive	122	32%
Negative	253	68%
Total	375	100%

The above table 15 shows that, 122 respondents representing (32%) admit that puffery in herbal medicine advertisement has positive influence on them while the remaining 253 respondents representing (68%) admit that puffery in herbal medicine advertisement has negative influence on them. This indicates that, majority of the respondents were influenced negatively by puffery in herbal medicine advertisement.

Table 6: What influence you most in herbal medicine advertisement?

Response	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Content	129	34.4%
Brand presentation	77	20.5%
Brand producer	89	23.7%
Slogan	80	21.3%
Total	375	100%

The above table shows that, 129 respondents representing (34.4%) admit that content influences them most in herbal medicine advertisement, 77 respondents representing (20.5%) brand presentation influences them most in herbal medicine advertisement, 89 respondents representing (23.7%) admit brand producer influenced them most in herbal medicine advertisement while the remaining 80 respondents representing (21.3%) admit that slogan influences them most in herbal medicine advertisement. The above shows that advert influenced majority of the respondents in herbal medicine advertisement.

Discussion of Findings

This study seeks to assess audience perception of the influence of puffery as persuasive tools in herbal medicine advertisement in Ondo State. Below is the discussion of this finding.

Research Question 1: How does puffery as persuasive tools influence advertisement? It was discovered in table 1 that puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement as attested to by the total highest number of 289 respondents representing (77%). Table 2 also revealed that that, 286 respondents representing (76%) which is the highest number of respondents admit that, puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influenced their buying habit as a consumer. This above attestation indicate that, puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement and also that puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influenced their buying habit as a consumer as attested to by the total highest of respondents.

Moreover, in respect of **Question 2 which seek to know, to what extents does herbal medicine advertisement portray puffery?** It was however discovered in table 3 that, herbal medicine advertisements contain puffery as attested to by the total highest of 248 respondents

representing (66%). It was also discovered in table 4, that the portrayal of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement is great as attested to by the total highest number of 286 respondents representing (76%). It can be deduced from the above that, herbal medicine advertisements contain puffery and also that, the portrayal of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement is great as attested by the majority of the respondents.

Finally, **Question 3** is based on, **what influence does herbal medicine advertisement have on target audience?** Table 5 attest to this in which total highest number of 253 respondents representing 68% admit that puffery in herbal medicine advertisement have negative influence on them. Also, in table 6, majority of 129 respondents representing 34.4% admit that content influences them most in herbal medicine advertisement. It can be affirm from the above that puffery in herbal medicine advertisement have negative influence on the consumer and also that content influences them most in herbal medicine advertisement.

Based on the above findings, it can be deduced that puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement and also that puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influenced consumer buying habit.

Conclusion

The study has demonstrated the need for effective advertisement for good products. And how such can be influenced to attract intending customers and consumers. The study has also succeeded in adding value the existing knowledge in the field of journalism and marketing, particularly in the area of advertisement and product promotion. Based on the findings of this research work, the study concludes that puffery as a persuasive tool influence advertisement and also that puffery as a persuasive tool in advertising influenced consumer buying habit.

This research work also concludes that, the level of puffery in herbal medicine advertisement content is very high as rated by the total highest number of respondents.

It also concludes that the content in herbal medicine advertising influences the consumer.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made

- Unethical advertising practice like disparaging competitors or making unfair claims about their products or services must be disallowed or discouraged by advertising media.
- Any claim that cannot be supported with indisputable evidence should not be made in the adverts.
- There is need for audience research as a way of testing their acceptability of the commercial posture of the media, while enlightening them on the desirability or otherwise of generating revenue to keep the station afloat.
- No matter the revenue generation drive of an advertising media, ethical behavior should been forced throughout organization culture and practices. Advertising must be regulated in order to deter unethical practice.
- To act ethically and be socially responsible, manufacturers, advertisers and the advertising media must perceive ethics and social responsibility as important components of marketing advertising persuasive communication.

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