A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF GLO OGA SIM’S VIDEO ADVERTS ON NTA

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Abstract
Global Satellite System Communication (GSM) was introduced in Nigeria to replace Nigerian Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) which failed to perform. Since its inception, GSM business has been experiencing quite an impressive and rapid growth across Nigeria. One major factor that is responsible for this growth is television advertisement. Competition has been quite aggressive among all the telecommunication companies in Nigeria. GLO as one of the leading telecommunication companies in Nigeria has used this medium to excel. Previous studies on adverts had concentrated mainly on discourse related approaches such as pragmatics, systemic functional grammar and intersexuality. Insufficient attention has been paid to semiotic interpretation of the icons, indexes and symbols found in telecom adverts in Nigeria generally and none to GLO OGA SIM adverts on Nigerian Telecommunication Authority (NTA). It is against this backdrop that this study examined a semiotic interpretation of icons, indexes and symbols found in the selected GLO OGA SIM adverts on NTA to explicate their rich semiotic elements used as communicative strategies using Pierce’s Semiotic Theory. The study discovered that the company made a careful selection of those signs that would catch the attention and minds of network users to switch to the new introduced sim which would give them more opportunities to explore the world. It therefore concluded that for adverts to yield elaborate inferential interpretations when viewers work on them, familiar signs, especially human symbols that can be found in the language community of the viewers ought to be used.

Keywords: Semiotic analysis, icons, indexes, symbols, Glo adverts.
Introduction

Modern advertisement has attained incredible level of sophistication. From traditional jingles, advert or ad has grown into music videos and dramatic performances with simulative images, slogans and phrases played over different mass media platforms including the social media. This is happening in an environment of increasing business competition, struggle for market lead and wide proliferation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). With the introduction of GSM in Nigeria in 1999, many telecommunication companies emerged in the country to provide telecommunication network services to Nigerians. These include MTN, Globacom or Glo, Airtel and Etisalat.

The fight to dominate the Nigerian market has been going on among these network providers over the years through intense advertisements. Some of the companies like Airtel have suffered setbacks and losses in the past leading to series of reacquisition of the company by different entrepreneurs; hence, the company’s name has changed severally from Celtel to Zain and now to Airtel in the bid to still remain relevant in the global market. The ultimate goal of business advertisement is to increase the sale or patronage of a product or service and hence, profit. In a competitive business environment such as found in Nigeria today, the growth and sustainability of a product rely heavily on the quality of advertisement. Hence, business competitors seek to generate increased consumption of their products or services through ‘branding’ – a process which associates a product name or image with certain qualities in the mind of consumers.

Globacom is one of the biggest telecommunication companies in Nigeria. Just recently, the company was listed as the third biggest brand in Nigeria below Dangote group and MTN. In other words, Glo is the second biggest telecom company in Nigeria and the biggest owned by a Nigerian, Mike Adunuga. It is evident that this market lead has been sustained by aggressive advertisement by the company which can be seen across different media platforms especially the television in Nigeria. Glo ads deploy colourful images, performances and codes to engage the minds of network subscribers. Linguistic semiotics can be used to study these features in order to appreciate the communicative value of Glo ads. The present study therefore, is set to examine selected screenshots of Glo Oga Sim video adverts on the network service of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) to explicate their rich semiotic elements used as communicative strategies.

Linguistic studies in the area of product advertisements in Nigeria have featured the aspect of telecom network advertisements since the inception of GSM. The studies focused majorly on the print media and TV to investigate the language of the adverts and its influence on subscribers as well as the products and services of network providers. These studies however concentrated mainly on discourse related approaches such as pragmatics, systemic functional grammar and intersexuality. Insufficient attention has been paid to semiotic interpretation of the icons, indexes and symbols found in telecom adverts in Nigeria generally and none to GLO OGA SIM video adverts on NTA. This therefore constitutes the research problem of this study given the huge reliance of Glo ads on semiotic elements. The objectives of this study are:

a. To explore the use of the main semiotic signs that are used in order
to convince the viewers to buy the new sim.

b. To focus on how icons, indexes and symbols combine together in this context for specific communicative purpose.

**Review of Related Scholarship**

Makinde (2007) studies Globacom’s product advertisements on Nigerian TV networks to see how they are designed to attract multi-ethnic Nigerian subscribers. The study employs Glo adverts shown on TV in Nigeria between 2003 to 2006 which were recorded and transcribed, as data and also adopted Searle’s Speech Act Theory (SAT) and Peircean model of semiotic theory as theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal that the adverts took into cognizance the socio-cultural values of the target audience in order to appeal to them. Also, the non-verbal cues employed in the adverts improved their overall message. The study concludes that the meaning of advertisements can be better interpreted by paying attention to the environment or contexts of such advertisements.

Similarly, Okujeni (2009) studies the influence of mobile network advertisements on subscribers’ choice of network in Nigeria focusing on MTN and Glo adverts. The study employs the survey method to sample the attitudes of Nigerian users of GSM. The findings show that advertisement stimulates the interest of subscribers to choose a particular network; but other factors such as wide network coverage, free calls and airtime, play more prominent roles in influencing the choice of subscribers.

Furthermore, Adebileje and Adebileje (2012) attempt an intersexual analysis of selected telecom adverts relating to Glo, Etisalat and Airtel on Nigerian television networks. Intersexuality as developed by Kristeva (1966) is employed as theory on randomly selected adverts of Glo, Etisalat and Airtel with a focus on intertextual devices such as humour, celebrities, music and symbols, and codes. It was discovered that the most commonly used device in the adverts is celebrities. Symbolic codes relating to each network is also pervasively used.

The above studies especially Makinde (2007) are related to the preoccupation of the current study in their linguistic benefit and source of data. However, their theoretical foci differ significantly from this study. Although Makinde (2007) employed Peirce’s semiotic theory, it only looked at icons in less detail. The current study however investigates icons, indexes and symbols in Glo network advert of GLO OGA SIM to sufficiently explore the signs in the adverts.

Njemanze, ET al. (2015) examines the language of Airtel’s (formally Zain) network advertisements on Nigerian *The Guardian* newspaper using a stylistic approach. The study discovers that simple imperative structures matched with appropriate images are privileged by Airtel in their advertisements. Also, the diction of the adverts is tailored to appeal to readers’ emotions. On the other hand, Dalamu (2017) examines the persuasive linguistic strategies employed by MTN and Etisalat in the print media to attract Nigerians to their products and services. Fifty different adverts relating to MTN and Etisalat selected from *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers form the data for the study. Halliday’s three meta-functions of the clause in Systemic Functional Grammar, SFG also serve as theoretical framework to the study. The findings disclose that MTN and Etisalat use similar linguistic strategies such as thematic structure, imperatives and elliptical declaratives to persuade Nigerian
subscribers. Both networks also create new words for new ideas pictured in their adverts. The study concluded that MTN and Etisalate’s structure of persuasive advertisement language are relatively similar.

The studies reviewed in the above paragraphs center on the print media advertisements of Airtel, MTN and Etisalat. They are also concerned more with the linguistic strategies employed in these print media adverts to persuade Nigerians. However, the present paper attempts to investigate the sign elements used in Globacom network’s TV or video advertisements to see how these elements aid the effectiveness of the adverts; hence, the unique gap the study is set to fill in knowledge.

**Theoretical Approach**

Peircean (1931-58) model of semiotic theory is employed as the theoretical framework on which this study is hinged. This theory of semiotics or signs is an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning. The Peircean sign has been defined as something that relates to something else for someone in some respect or capacity, (Merrell, 2001). According to Sebeok (2001), Peircean sign has three components. They are the representamen (something that does the representing), the semiotic object (an entity displaced from its context of occurrence) and the interpretant (the meaning that one gets from a sign). Also following Merrell (2001), any sign that is complete must have a representamen, a semiotic object and an interpretant and each of these signs must enjoy the company of the other two. He divided the sign into three modes thus: an icon, an index and a symbol.

An icon is a sign that interrelates with its semiotic object by virtue of some resemblance or similarity with it, such as map and the territory it maps (a photograph of Churchill is an icon of the original item). An index is a sign that interrelates with its semiotic object through some actual or physical or imagined causal connection. A weathervane obediently moves around to point (indicate, index) the direction of the wind due to the action of the wind on the object (smoke was for the ranger an index of fire). A symbol is a sign whose interpretation is a matter of social convention. One of the best qualifications of Peirce’s symbol is a linguistic sign whose interrelation with its semiotic object is conventional. This is to say that there is no necessary natural link (as with the index) or a link due to some resemblance or similarity (as with the icon) between the representamen and the semiotic object. The phonetic sounds or the inscribed letters ‘Coke’ have no necessary connection to the actual item. They could have been virtually any other sounds or marks on paper, (Merrell, 2001).

This is to say that an icon has a physical resemblance to the semiotic object, the thing being represented. An index shows evidence of what is being represented while a symbol has no resemblance between the representamen and the interpretant. The connection between them must be culturally learnt.

Peircean theory of the sign is used in this paper to explore the use of the main semiotic signs to convince the viewers to buy the new sim. The researchers looked at the sign components of the video screenshots as seen in icons, indexes and symbols as a practical way of convincing the viewers to switch to the new GLO OGA SIM for better browsing and internet opportunities. This paper refers to semiotic analysis because it probes the deliberate use
of signs to convince the viewers to switch to the new GLO OGA SIM.

**Methodology**

The videos were downloaded online from NTA. So many videos on GLO OGA SIM advert are available but the researchers purposively downloaded two videos and screenshot some parts of the videos for analysis. In the first video, two parts were screenshot while four parts were also screenshot in the second video for analysis. A qualitative content analysis was adopted in the data analysis.

**Icons, Indexes and Symbols**

These signs are to be analysed using the purposively selected screenshots from the GLO OGA SIM adverts downloaded from NTA.

**FIRST VIDEO ANALYSIS**

**SCREENSHOT 1**

The symbolic representation (the verbal text), GLO OGA SIM, introduces one to the purposes of the adverts. The viewer is to buy a new GLO OGA SIM which will enable the customer to have access to the internet more with 125% more data. GLO advertises a new Sim that affords the users the opportunity to surf the net and have access to all places as quickly as possible before others. With this, there is no limit to what the user of GLO OGA SIM could achieve within a limited time. The interpretant here is further reinforced in the third proposition ‘N1000 – 3.6GB/ N2500 – 12.9GB’. The text is placed at the center of a platform with the green and white colours which symbolizes the Nigerian colour and thus reminds the users that this brand is for all because it is indigenous.

**SCREENSHOT 2**

The iconic representation of the semiotic object (the cloth material that is hung in the shop) is sent as a photograph to customers around the world using the GLO OGA SIM data. It enables easy access to many customers around the world. The shop owners only need to take a photograph of all materials in their shop and send out through whatsapp to people without thinking of extra cost for data because GLO OGA SIM has provided enough data to do all that. At this point, whoever gets the photograph must rush to the shop to purchase the replica of the one sent to them. The GLO OGA SIM icon seen at the right hand side of the screenshot and the GLO icon on top of the photograph in the iconic representation of the handset show that whatever transaction that was carried out was made possible using the GLO OGA SIM data.
SECOND VIDEO ANALYSIS

In the second video, the ads used Nollywood actors that were invited to an event. This is symbolic in the sense that viewers see famous actors or celebrities as role models. Therefore, they would want to associate with them. Thus, “Screenshot 3A” shows a happy people that located the venue of the event on time with the help of GLO OGA SIM. The colour of the background and their attire are symbolic. Green as the colour of life represents freshness and security. Green creates an atmosphere that is calm and peaceful and also connotes the power of nature. White is also another remarkable colour that is symbolic. It represents peace. Green and white are Nigeria’s national colours. Using these colours in these adverts show that Glo is an indigenous network provider. It also shows that this network outshines others in getting people connected with the help of the new GLO OGA SIM. The role of colour by network providers is seen from Calvano and Lopez’s (2007) view thus:

Colour has a high influence on institutional communication because it is perceived more quickly than other institutional symbols such as iconographies or verbal texts. It has been proven that colour requires less time of reading than a logo… Colour works as a factor for remembering the brand (4).

In “Screenshot 3B”, the group refused to use the GLO OGA SIM. The resultant effect is that they lost their way as they had no data that would help Google Map work effectively. They were still in the vehicle when the iconic representations of the events were sent to their phones and they became annoyed as seen in “Screenshot 3C.” The index of annoyance is from their thought that the little data left in their sim would not be enough to direct them to the venue yet; it is used in viewing what is going at the same event where they are going. They resorted to asking questions
for direction but by the time they got to the venue, it was already late.

In the last “Screenshot 3D,” they were seen coming in to the event very late with an index of mud-smeread cloths because their vehicle got stuck in the mud. In the process of pushing out their vehicle, their cloths got smeared by mud. The mud on their cloth is also iconic because it is a resemblance of the mud on the road where their vehicle stuck. The interpretant here is that they could have avoided this embarrassment had they used GLO OGA SIM. Nothing would have kept them on the way and they would not have missed their way or been smeared by mud. As they were coming into the hall, the sound of their steps could also be heard through the indexical sign – fiam – fiam. This shows the level of their annoyance which led to a brief squabble between the two groups. The first group made a concluding statement to show that customers need to switch to the new GLO OGA SIM:

‘Don’t you know that with the new GLO OGA SIM, I will always be ahead of you?’

This statement is symbolic. It shows that the semiotic object (GLO OGA SIM) will always be ahead of other sims in accuracy and speed. With it, there is no limit to what one can achieve.

From the analysis of icons, indexes and symbols, it can be deduced that the company made a careful selection of those signs that would catch the attention and minds of network users to switch to the newly introduced sim which would give them more opportunities to explore the world. This means that adverts yield elaborate inferential interpretations when viewers work on them. More so, the use of Nollywood celebrities helped in the advancement of the use of these semiotic signs to convince the viewers to use the new sim.

**Conclusion**

The semiotic interpretations of the icons, symbols and indexes seen in the content of the ads on GLO OGA SIM are very interesting. These signs are open to interpretations which are dependent on the cultural knowledge of the interpreter within a specific context. The advertisers of GLO OGA SIM made a careful selection of those signs that would catch the minds of Glo users to switch to the newly introduced sim which would give them more opportunities to explore the world. According to Adeyemi (2008), patterns of meaning could be extended, reinvented or contested as advertisements yield elaborate inferential interpretations when readers work on them.

**References**


