

**LANGUAGE, GENDER SEMIOTICS AND CONSUMERISM IN BILLBOARD  
ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE IBADAN METROPOLIS**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my Dear Father, the Almighty, the only One Who has the power to say and bring to pass with ease and amazing precision,

and

To my loving parents, Overseer Jonathan Olusoji and Deaconess Christianah Mojisola Olaifa, who have always handled parenting with the fear of God, giving all they have, to ensure the comfort and success of their children.

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## ABSTRACT

Semiotics, a science of signs, largely influences audience's socio-cultural perception of billboard advertisement in postcolonial contexts. Existing linguistic studies on gender have examined various perspectives on gender stereotyping in mass media advertising, without significantly exploring advertisers' use of signs to exploit consumerist tendencies and the vulnerability of the audience. The study was, therefore, designed to examine billboard advertisements' exploitation of gender, linguistic and cultural codes in the Ibadan metropolis, with a view to establishing how the audience's values and preferences are influenced.

Roland Barthes' Rhetoric of the Image, complemented by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotic Theory, was adopted as framework. The interpretive design was used. Ninety billboard advertisements, covering several strategic locations in the Ibadan metropolis, were purposively selected based on evidence of gender codes in them. The selection covered 47 food items, 26 service providers, seven household items and 10 beauty products. The difference in the number sampled under the categories was due to availability. Data were subjected to semiotic analysis.

The use of language demonstrated a heavy reliance on metaphor, exaggeration, repetition, ambiguity and weasel words. Masculinity and femininity were used to project outdoor and indoor activities, respectively, to underscore the continued relevance of stereotype. Cultural assumptions were harnessed to make the stereotypes appear normal. Femininity was more represented, even when products advertised were not gender-specific. The woman was also presented as a professional at handling particular duties such as cooking and caring for the children. Stereotypes were, however, discovered to also communicate positive values. For instance, femininity was, sometimes, intentionally represented as a better choice for advertising particular products. The consumerist tendencies exploited in the advertisements included corporeality, celebrity endorsement and glamour. The woman's body was utilised as an advertising tool, as particular parts were emphasised to exploit the voyeuristic tendencies in the audience. Colours on the products were used to perform textual metafunctions of salience, framing and enhancer of information value. Youths were sometimes portrayed as agents of experimentation and innovation. The billboards were turned into a marketplace where previous opinions were tactically discarded, the general reasoning manipulated and new opinions quickly formed. The cultural codes of the Yoruba such as 'aso-oke', 'agbada', beads, talking drum, the Yoruba language and diacritical marks were exploited to endear products to culturally sensitive individuals. There was a heavy reliance on pathos to exploit the emotions and common assumptions of people.

Billboard advertisements in the Ibadan metropolis employed linguistic, gender and cultural codes to present products as fundamental to the audience's survival.

**Keywords:** Billboard advertisement, Consumerism in Ibadan, Semiotics of gender

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

Advertisement is a ‘world’ where products are sold to the public through the dynamic use of various persuasive strategies. Such strategies include bandwagon appeal, celebrity testimonial, association principle, portrayal of gender and so on. Advertisers employ these, in different ways, to ensure that the interest of the public in their products is stimulated and sustained. These strategies are employed as a system of signs through which various messages about a product, its advantages and other pieces of information are passed across to the public. As a result, advertisement can be said to have a special kind of language, formed with the desire to meet up with the expectations of the audience, and even if it is possible, amaze them.

The dynamic nature of the world has also contributed to the success of advertisement because concepts are subjected to perpetual change. This change has been attributed to globalisation, technological advancement and many other factors. The media also plays a major role in the interpretations given to concepts as it reaches a public that is large and heterogeneous. Media outlets form one of the main sources through which information and ideas are disseminated to most people around the world and they have the potential to spread and ameliorate/aggravate issues that border on gender inequality (UNESCO, 2012). While discussing the impact of the media on various interpretations the society has given to gender, Wood (1994:31) argues that “of the many influences on how we view men and women, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful”. This, partly, explains why additional meanings are given to various concepts on a regular basis. The world of advertisement is not spared from this influence, as gender, culture and the likes are now employed by producers of products and providers of services to reflect the

changes in the world. Advertisers appropriate their experiences of social change and deploy such as a vehicle of communication.

Culture is a tool that is employed by advertisers to reach the people. It describes the beliefs, values and practices of a particular society. Some of these practices are foods, lifestyles and manners of dressing. Advertisers celebrate these values and lifestyles to endear the products and services being advertised to the audience. As a result, channels of advertisement are customised for particular cultures. Advertisers do this in various ways. Some advertisements are designed in indigenous languages, while for others, foods favoured by cultures are celebrated and cultural codes, displayed. All these are deployed to present the products and services as personalised goods to the audience. A sure way to get the attention of a group of people is to make them believe that their way of life is appreciated. Advertisers, thus, present and celebrate a culture using language creatively.

Language is a necessary tool to advertise goods and services (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). The effect of advertisement, especially when language is employed creatively, is unmistakable. Though several people claim that they remain unaffected by advertisements, regardless of the level of creativity at work, the decision of such individuals to patronise the goods and services advertised shows that some members of the public are influenced, even without knowing. This points at how impactful an advertisement could be. Visual advertisement is a means by which images are combined with words to sell various products, hence, language as employed here is, sometimes, multimodal, not only as a vocal system of sounds. Though language is still used, it is employed with the consciousness that a major part of the essence of the advertisement would be taken care of by images.

As a result, visual advertisement thrives on visual appeal to ensure that the audience's interest is captured and sustained. Since the environment provides the audience's eyes with various competing sights, conscious efforts are made by advertisers to ensure that in the myriad of sights, a particular sight holds their attention. Generally, linguistic tools are combined with creative images for the purpose of visual advertisement, before they are finally displayed through various channels like the television, the billboards and the fliers. According to Roland Barthes, images in advertisement function as an anchor (where the

image supports what the linguistic message says) or a relay (where the images provide an opportunity to say something slightly different from what the linguistic message says).

The use of images in visual advertisements transcends aesthetic reasons. Images are also employed to make communication easier (Armstrong, 2010). In addition, visual images are packed with layers of meanings (Messaris, 1997; Kayode and Afolami, 2013) and they make it possible for members of the public to relate with some of the ideas being sold (Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi, 2013). This shows that apart from the general function of selling goods and services, advertisements are also created to perform a deeper function of selling ideas, opinions and lifestyles. Apart from utilising the methods advertisers believe would work for the patronage of their products, they are also involved in using language to represent what they believe as weaknesses of the audience. Such desires could range from the love of a particular image, language, method of presentation to a way of life. The general belief is that when a product is advertised using what the audience appreciates, the audience would have no choice than to patronise the product, even if it is going to be for the love of that thing they cannot do without. As such, the desires of the audience are manipulated in the advertisement of such products, so that an unending patronage is encouraged. Many of such products end up being presented as basic needs of the audience.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Several studies have been carried out on visual advertisement, focusing on the peculiar nature of its language and audience's perception of images used. Some of the works (Barthes, 1985, Scott, 1994, Attwood, 2005, Zotos and Okiring, 2013, Tsihla, 2014, Mansoor, 2013, Negm and Tantawi, 2015, Abuya and Akinkurolere, 2013, Alozie, 2009 and Koksai, 2013) have examined how masculinity and femininity are represented in visual advertisements. Some of the studies have expressed dissatisfaction on the stereotyping of femininity and the involvement of the media in upholding some representations.

The society keeps changing. How these shifts occasion aesthetic changes that advertisers exploit through language and visual culture needs scholarly attention. There is, therefore, the need to examine advertisers' use of signs to exploit consumerist tendencies and the

vulnerability of the audience and how culture constitutes a flexible ground for the operation of consumerism in Ibadan metropolis.

### **1.3. Aim and objectives of the study**

The aim of the study is to show how gender and cultural matters are appropriated and deployed with language, to serve as signifying resources, in billboard advertisements. The specific objectives of the work are:

1. to explore how language is manipulated in billboard advertisement in Ibadan metropolis
2. to examine how masculinity and femininity are represented in the billboards
3. to discuss how the advertisers exploit the consumerist tendencies that may be found in the Ibadan audience and context
4. to examine the non-linguistic codes that are employed by the advertisers to reinforce these consumerist pursuits.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The following questions were developed from the aim and objectives of the study:

1. How is language manipulated in the billboard advertisement of goods and services in Ibadan metropolis?
2. What are the representations given to masculinity and femininity in the billboards?
3. How do the advertisers exploit the consumerist tendencies that maybe found in the Ibadan context?
4. How are the non-linguistic codes employed by the advertisers to reinforce these consumerist pursuits?

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

Visual advertisements have the power to reflect, revolutionise, influence, offend, attract and magnetise (Akpan and Obukoadata, 2013). Despite the fact that some images in advertisements have generated various controversies, they continue to be utilised by advertisers and some are even becoming celebrated. Advertisers have, through the power of creativity, repackaged some of the same representations already criticised by the public.

There is, therefore, the need to comprehensively examine how language and gender are employed and sold as necessities to the public.

By studying gender representations in billboard advertisement of products in Ibadan, with recourse to culture, it would be understood that advertisement has become a world where the society is being mirrored and shaped. Users of language will also have a better understanding of the significant functions images play in communicating ideas that may be impossible with words. These, in turn, would enhance a correct assessment of the use of language in the world of advertisement.

### **1.6 Definition of terms**

The working definitions of some basic terms, as they pertain to this work, are given here:

**Gender:** This concept explains whether an entity is said to be masculine, feminine or neuter.

**Sex:** This defines whether a person is male or female.

**Masculine:** This is used for issues relating to boys or men.

**Feminine:** This is employed for issues that have to do with girls or women.

**Advertisement:** This is a paid form of public enlightenment of a good or a service to elicit a positive response of the audience towards such.

**Outdoor advertisement:** This is a means of advertisement that is located outside, where it can be seen by everybody, rather than inside a building.

**Billboard:** This is a channel of advertisement that sells a product or service to the public using a large board that is usually erected by the roadside.

**Representation:** This is the visual depiction given to an entity.

**Gender stereotype:** This is a fixed idea or identity that has been given to a gender as a result of the regularity in its use.

**Language:** This is a system of communication where spoken or written words are utilised to express one's feelings and opinions.

**Consumerism:** This is the attitude that values the acquisition and consumption of consumer goods.

**Text:** This is a collection of signs formed with particular reference to the rules of the genre such belongs to.

**Visual advertisement:** This is the type of advertisement where images of various kinds are employed to appeal to the audience's sense of sight.

### **1.7 Summary**

This chapter gives background to the topic and provides an insight into what the study is all about. Statement of the research problem provides an understanding on the gap the research seeks to fill. The aim and objectives are also provided and are satisfied in the subsequent chapters. The chapter rounds off with the definition of terms which gives working definitions to some terms as employed in the work.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Overview of the chapter**

This chapter is a critical exploration of various perspectives of scholars who have examined the representation of gender in billboard advertisements. Some of the concepts examined are advertisement, outdoor advertisement, visual advertisement, gender representation in visual advertisement, the impact of culture in some gender representations, the influence of the media in upholding some representations and the contributions of some members of both genders in upholding some of these contributions. Issues explored are done with a view to identifying and studying aspects that have been undermined or neglected. The theoretical framework employed for the work is also examined.

#### **2.2 An overview of advertisement**

Advertisement is a paid form of promotion done in favour of goods and services. It has been defined by Rodenrick (1980:4) as “a message specified by its originator, carried by a communication system and intended to influence and/or inform an unknown audience”. Doghudje (1985:8) affirms that it is “a group of activities aimed at and including dissemination of information in any paid product or service to compel action in accordance with the intent of an identifiable sponsor”. Goods and services are advertised with the sole aim of persuading members of the public to patronise such. Generally, advertisements are created with the intention of attracting the viewer’s attention, affecting their perception, persuading them to make a ‘favourable’ decision by supporting the

product being sold and, ultimately, affecting their behaviour (Negm and Tantawi, 2015:2). Several outlets of these advertisements expose people to repeated displays which are capable of creating and sustaining the public's positive feelings towards such products.

There is almost no form of advertisement that is without the intent to influence the decision of the audience. Also, such is always to favour whatever is now on ground (the new idea that the advertiser is trying to sell). Experts even believe that advertisement is a concept that the world has been operating with, albeit without its knowing (James Laver in Patrick and Hagtvedt, 2017:1). According to him, "advertising is as old as humanity: indeed, much older; for what are the flaunting colours of the flowers but so many invitations to the bees to come and buy our products".

Advertisers are known to employ 'affective condition' by placing the advertised products beside the desires of the consumers. In fact, most advertisements are designed with emphasis on the benefits the audience stands to gain from the use of such products than the products themselves. At such times, the benefits of patronising such product or service are given prominence over the product or service being advertised. This explains why some advertisements are believed to be more emotional than logical. Since everyone always wants to enjoy an improved standard of living, the advertisers get their wish in making use of all these strategies. While examining the impact of advertisement on the audience, Oyeleye and Adeyinka (2014: 276) ascertain "it inspires in them a desire for upward mobility and general improvement in the standard of their life". Advertisement only becomes successful when the intended purpose(s) of the advertisers are achieved in the members of the public. While considering the impact of advertisement in the society, Scott in 'The Atlantic Monthly Group' (2013) states:

advertisements are sometimes spoken of as the nervous system of the business world ... As our nervous system is constructed to give us all the possible sensations from objects, so the advertisement which is comparable to the nervous system must awaken in the reader as many different kinds of images as the object itself can excite.

Advertisement is an age-long practice (Solomon, Cornell and Nizan, ND). There had been several methods by which people were informed about the existence of several goods

and services before the advent of the various modern means of advertisement. Scott (2013) claims that the only means of advertisement known to the ancient world was the word of mouth. This later graduated into the use of market place, the commercial traveler and finally to the office; the office is where so many decisions are made and the outcome of such is what we see on billboard, television and other advertising outlets. The modern means of advertisement have, however, become necessities for the survival of the present modern world so much that it is sometimes difficult to believe that the society used to be without them. The competitive nature of advertisement is also partly responsible for the rapid growth it has experienced, as advertisers are seen trying to outsmart the rest in order to succeed and remain successful. Though the cost is high, some advertisers would rather pay the price than wait to see their products pushed into the world of oblivion. This explains why Scott (2013) affirms:

The expense connected with advertising has increased; the competition between rival firms has become keener; and consequently the demand for good advertising has become imperative . . . The inefficient advertisers are gradually being eliminated, and the survival of the fittest seems to be a law of advertising as it is of everything else that develops.

Since advertisement is created with the use of various communication tools, these tools are vehicles employed to influence the human mind and generate action-provoking responses. Whether words or pictures, creativity is taken as a necessity to ensure that whatever choice made achieves its goal. Unlike the modern means of advertisement, the ancient methods brought the seller, product and buyer together. Such afforded the buyer the luxury of making use of all the sense organs to check the product on sale and helped in guiding against blind purchase. Since these luxuries are not provided for in the modern advertisement, the modern advertiser is seen trying to make up for the missing luxuries through the channel of advertisement chosen.

Ibadan, like several other big cities, has its own share of advertised products. It is a city in the south-western part of Nigeria and the capital of Oyo State. The city boasts of a population that is large and heterogeneous. As a result, different kinds of goods and services are advertised. The city also keeps growing every day and this explains why advertisers of goods and services see Ibadan as a good venue for advertisement.

Advertisers employ different means of advertisement to ensure that whatever they have to offer gets noticed and acknowledged by the public. Though Ibadan is a densely populated city, varieties of products are seen competing for prominence. Advertisers of rival products are almost always ready to do anything to see their products emerge the ‘winner’ (the only or most patronised product).

Since Nigeria is a multilingual country, numerous languages are spoken by its citizens. Though Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been chosen as the major languages, English Language is the official language for the purpose of mutual intelligibility. Advertisement is also affected by the multiplicity of languages in Nigeria. Advertisers try to get across information about their products and services to the public in different languages. Though many advertisements on the radio and television are rendered in English Language, the same messages are also relayed in Pidgin and relevant mother tongues (Oyeleye and Adeyinka, 2014:277). English Language, however, remains the most used.

### **2.2.1 Outdoor advertisement**

Outdoor advertisement is a form of advertisement that takes place outside rather than inside a building. Members of the public are informed about the existence of various products through outdoor means like billboard, posters, signboard, paintings on wall, flyers, vehicles, side walls of buildings and bridges, bus stop benches and roof tops. The following are listed as benefits of outdoor advertisement:

1. outdoor advertising targets the mass market
2. reinforces the availability of the brand
3. reassures the consumer of the brand choice
4. provides the retailer with proof of advertising support
5. reaches markets no other advertising medium can
6. visibility
7. builds brand loyalty
8. maintains brand dominance
9. strategically located
10. coverage, frequency and impact. (Continental Outdoor Media)

This means of advertisement offers a round-the-clock kind of advertisement to the public as the channels are always seen around. Different products and services ranging from beauty products, foodstuffs and electrical gadgets are sold through this means. The outdoor advertisement is the most public medium of getting the public informed about the

existence of goods and services and it offers its services to all, regardless of the age, financial status and even the educational attainment of the public, at times. Apart from the extensive awareness and continuous exposure outdoor advertisement affords the audience, it is, sometimes, the last image their memories are filled with before they get to the point of purchase.

Outdoor advertisement is a very common means of mass persuasion by which advertisers get across information about their goods and services to members of the public in Ibadan. The present success and orderliness in outdoor advertisement has been attributed to the creation of Oyo State Signage and Advertising Agency (OYSAA). This agency was created some years ago to see to the management of outdoor advertisement in Ibadan. While answering questions on the impact of the Agency, the Director General of OYSAA, Dr Yinka Adepoju (2016) states “the agency has turn (sic) around the outdoor environment in Oyo State . . . Oyo State is rightly on her way to achieve environmental standards commensurate to international standard”.

Billboard advertisement is one of the means of outdoor advertisement. A billboard is a large board designed with words, coloured or white and black images to advertise goods and services. Apart from the purpose of advertising various products, it also adds to the beauty of its environment and this explains why Karol (2012) claims “billboards are a ubiquitous part of cityscapes throughout the country”. Billboards are placed by the roadside and afford a constant means of advertisement. Apart from the large boards that used to serve as billboards, there are several innovations in billboard advertisement; digital billboards and vehicle wraps have been introduced. A digital billboard is a billboard that displays digital images that are changed at intervals through the use of technology. According to Lamar (2014), digital billboards are “computer-controlled electronic displays with technological capacities that are taking out-of-home advertising to a new level”. Vehicle wrap (wrap advertising), otherwise known as mobile billboard, is a means of outdoor advertisement that allows a vehicle to be partially or completely covered with large vinyl sheets, bearing the images of the product or service being advertised. Some vehicles are also painted.

All these types of billboards have their additional advantages, apart from what the traditional billboard provides the audience with. The digital billboard, for example, is cost effective as it allows more goods to be advertised on the same board. The manner in which the advertisements are being changed could also be fascinating. This draws the attention of the audience, thereby making it easier for their interest to be got. The mobility of the vehicle wrap makes it easy for it to reach places where the traditional billboard may never get to. Even if the road is untarred, the mobile billboard can still get to such a place once it is motorable. Also, the digital billboard rarely gets clustered by other advertisements and so, it is free from competing products, making the advertisement to be impactful and undisturbed. “The distinctive size and shape is not only perfect for catching the eyes of potential customers in the vicinity, but it also provides added visibility – even in the middle of traffic” (Mobile Outdoor Billboard Truck Advertising Resource Center, 2011).

Also, situations that some road users (pedestrians and drivers) detest are seen as beneficial for the mobile billboard. For example, driving a mobile billboard at night affords its message to be read by some tired business men and women who would rather prefer to be in their homes at such times. A traffic hold-up is even considered a blessing as it ensures that the message carried by a mobile billboard is read by virtually everyone on that part of the road. The slower the traffic, the more the message is read (Mobile billboard advertising, 2008). Roux (2014), while assessing the effectiveness of mobile advertisement on a particular group of people, asserts “there is a positive correlation between recall and attention paid to car advertising; between attitudes towards advertising on cars and the recall thereof . . .”

As a medium of advertisement, the billboard is known to have many advantages, some of which are summarised by Kayode and Afolami (2013: 76). According to them, billboards are “advertisements and signage are communication infrastructure which do not only interact with the public commercially but doubling as landscape furniture that add beautification to the overall events happening in outdoor spaces”. They conclude “people buy products for many reasons. Not only because they need them but often times because they are well-packaged and presented bonuses like bonanzas and fascinating pictorial ideas”. The effectiveness of the billboard in general public enlightenment is also

reinforced by Akpoghiran and Otite (2013). They assert that people can be made to manage their wastes through constant billboard campaigns that can inform them on why the environment should be kept tidy and how to achieve this.

A billboard has the ability to reach a very large audience, the duration of visibility is elongated, unlike advertising through other media, and there is the opportunity of being creative. Billboard advertisement is not restricted by some bans that are placed on advertising on the radio and the television. For example, the television advertisement of alcoholic drinks is not allowed at particular hours of the day. Taylor, Franke and Bang (2006: 21) have listed visibility, media efficiency, local presence and tangible response have been listed as the primary reasons why businesses are advertised on the billboard. While outlining the benefits of billboards, the following are highlighted by Comstor Outdoor (2015):

1. constant reminder of your message throughout the year (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
2. sustains name and image awareness – can't be turned-off, turned-out or put aside
3. designs that capture and maintain a reader's attention
4. serves as a directional guide for potential customers.

The location of the billboard, though of immense benefit to ensure regular accessibility, could, however, hinder its success. This is because a large percentage of its consumers are always 'on the go'. There is, therefore, the need to ensure that the billboard gives the audience its message without their having to squeeze their eyes; they do not even have the luxury of time and space to do this. While considering how to come up with excellent results in billboard advertising, Suggett (2015) lists the following as the basic rules of billboard advertising:

1. for billboards, six words or less is ideal
2. get noticed, but don't make your billboard a huge distraction
3. this is not the time for direct response
4. billboards should be smart, but not too clever
5. the more the billboards, the better
6. don't say it, show it.

As a result, advertisers are known to be ready to create whatever is capable of getting and retaining the attention of the audience. In order to advertise their goods on the billboard, advertisers make use of language, images and colour. Like any other concept with two

sides, advertising on billboards has its disadvantages, some of which, according to Robertson (2015) are:

- a. message must be brief
- b. long-term commitment.

Griggs, Robinson and Wohltmann (2012) have the following as disadvantages:

- a. no room for audience feedback in the communication process
- b. limited exposure {on the part of the audience}

Despite these disadvantages, some advertisers have been able to advertise successfully on the billboard and come out with good results because of their creative prowess. Though billboards generally attract the attention of the audience, the success of whatever is being advertised on it resides solely on how creative the advertiser is. The billboard is a means of outdoor advertisement that is difficult to ignore because of its placement and durability. Lots of people and organisations gain from outdoor advertising. Some of them, according to Davidson (2001:6 - 7), are: the general economy, small businesses, the community, the advertiser, site owners among others. Though it used to be described as the “poor relation of advertising”, outdoor advertisement has become one of the most innovated media in recent times (Davidson, 2001). As long as a billboard is placed strategically and not demolished by the effect of rain or sun, it continues to pass across its message(s) to the audience. Images of the product, gender and other means of advertisement are displayed in different colours to draw the attention of the audience to whatever is being sold. The various advantages of the billboard are summarised by Taflinger (1996) “the old cliché ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ is correct. Think how long it takes to describe something as opposed to showing a picture of it. No matter how many words you use, some details will be left out that are visible at a glance. Thus, sight can quickly and concisely show a customer what the advertiser wants her to see . . .”

As a result of its location on the road, the billboard gets read by virtually every road user; some drivers have been accused of allowing themselves to be distracted. This may not be far from the truth as advertisements on billboards have allowed some designers’ creative powers to come into limelight. In the words of Davidson (2001:5), “there are vast masses of people who do not have access to television nor do they buy or read newspapers and magazines . . . they are exposed to outdoor advertising at their local trading stores in the rural areas and at shopping complexes in the townships”.



There are also several developments on the different types of billboards in existence. Billboards are now designed with electronic aids to display various products. Some are designed to take the shape of the products they advertise while others are made to look as real as possible with the types of materials used for their design. All these and more make it difficult for billboards advertising products and services to be disregarded. They are not only noticed, their messages are stored in the memory of the viewer and recalled when needed. Some have even been discovered to encroach into the audience's thoughts when least expected. This is made easier by the constant source of reminder the billboard has turned itself into. According to Answers Corporation (2013), some of the advantages of billboards are their ability to throw themselves in the audience's face and target a particular market area.

Just like the other means of advertisement, the billboard displays different types of products like food items, shoes and household items. However, despite the fact that the number of the users of these products is high, some of the products have been forced to go into extinction. This is because for almost every product, there are at least ten different competitors. The producer of each product is, thus, seen trying their best to ensure that their product becomes the 'privileged one'. Each product is made to outshine the other(s) through the various means of advertisement.

### **2.3 Visual advertisement**

Though an advertisement educates and entertains, its effect is not expected to end at achieving these results. Whatever first impression an advertisement creates in its audience is expected to translate into inducing them to patronise the product or service, else such is not regarded to have succeeded. Hence, all the efforts an advertiser puts into his/her work to make it creative are expected to gear the audience towards becoming a customer of the advertised product. Getting the audience to support their vision is the ultimate aim of every advertiser. However, since the attention of a person needs to be got and the interest won before such can support whatever is being advertised, advertisers make efforts to utilise all they have to get noticed.

Images have become common symbolic artifacts employed by advertisers to tell the world about their products. The continuous use of particular images gives a product a brand. If

the use is sustained, such product becomes known with a specific personality (Tayebi, 2010). Images used include pictures of objects, goods being advertised and human beings. They are important tools some advertisers cannot afford to do without in ensuring the success of their advertisements. Armstrong (2010: 204) says “complex issues can sometimes be explained more clearly by using an illustration”. Advertisements are created with the advertiser’s sole aim of attracting the viewer’s attention, influencing perception, persuading and affecting behaviour in favour of whatever is being sold (Negm and Tantawi, 2015). The attention of the audience of advertisement is more drawn to visual elements than verbal ones. The focus of some members of the public is even so riveted to whatever is being displayed (visual elements), at times, to the undermining of whatever is being said (verbal elements). This is also enhanced by the fact that such visuals are usually made to be dominant than other elements represented.

While looking at the effect of visuals in advertising, Patrick and Hagtvedt (2017) claim “eye-tacking studies have been used to show that consumers focus first on the dominant picture in a print ad before attending to verbal information”. The multiplicity of advertisements in the society makes it possible for some of them to go unnoticed or even ignored. Creative advertisers try to ensure that their advertisements do not get lost in the crowd. Visuals have become rhetorical tools through which the advertisements of some products have become successful. While discussing the role of visuals in advertisement, Koksai (2013: 78) avers they are “important tools of advertisement and especially with using visual figures as rhetorical devices, advertisers try to communicate much more accurately and effectively”. To Koksai, visual rhetorical figures are used by advertisers “as a way of expression to aestheticize the visuality and by this way they increase the effectiveness of the process of meaning exchange and reinforce their communication process” (79).

Rhetoric is defined by Scott (1994: 252) as “an interpretive theory that frames a message as an interested party's attempt to influence an audience. The sender's intention is understood to be manifest in the argument, the evidence, the order of argumentation, and the style of delivery”. In a bid to ensure that their advertisements command the attention of the audience, some advertisers frame their propositions in form of a ‘trope’. Scott (1994: 252) says:

In rhetoric, an argument presented in figurative form is called a trope. The function of a trope is to present a proposition in a fresh way, so that the audience thinks about a familiar issue from an unexpected perspective. Using a trope is thought to break through habituated perception, skepticism, boredom, or resistance. We can see, perhaps, that using a trope might be an appropriate strategy for a genre such as advertising where the environment is repetitious and cluttered and the audience often uninterested

Various authors have examined the role images play in advertisement. Negm and Tantawi (2015: 2) affirm that visual imagery is “constructive in capturing attention, stimulating curiosity, indicating product features and benefits, and establishing identity”. They believe that “the use of imagery impacts consumers’ perception because it increases recall, enhances attitude toward the promoted matter, and affects behavioral intentions”. Its use gives advertisement its tangible essence. It also provides detailed information that the verbal aspect of the advertisement may not be able to give. Patrick and Hagtvedt (2017), while discussing the importance of visuals in advertisement, say:

Visual imagery is used to attract attention, stimulate curiosity, illustrate product features and benefits, create and develop a personality for a product, associate the product with certain symbols and lifestyles, and establish a brand’s identity in the minds of the target audience.

The use of visuals provides the advertiser with resourceful tools that might have been otherwise unavailable. Visuals also provide the advertisers with an opportunity to weave desirable ideas, feelings and expectations around their products. Since members of the public are always looking for ways to improve their standard of living, such products are patronised with the hope that some, if not all, of the desired feelings sold with the products could be claimed. This explains why some advertisers, all in the name of being creative, manipulate such images to ensure that they are most impactful. Some advertisers make use of visuals to supply the audience with information to make them discriminate between products. Some advertisements are even so coined that customers are made to dump their former convenient choices for ‘untested waters’ with an assurance that they are making a wise decision.

Images stimulate curiosity, demand attention, command reaction and make lasting impression. They have the advantage of scaling the hurdles mere words would never even attempt. Apart from the representation of the choices made, there are lots of other things about the manner of representation which communicate several messages. This ranges from the choice of a particular layout, style to the use of colour. Choices are made for particular reasons by advertisers. Whatever could have been said or is being said is better connected and a unified whole is formed through the use of images. Cope et al (ND) belief:

Visual images demand a viewer's attention. Photos have the ability to convey drama and emotion and realism in a way that text alone cannot. Visual images can short circuit higher levels of cognition and reasoning, because they are more lifelike and easier for the brain to process. Also, because the brain codes visual and nonvisual information separately, the additional memory coding can increase information recall.  
(8)

Images in advertisement also channel the interpretations the audience gives to them. Though it is a common knowledge that some advertised visuals are intentionally made to be ambiguous, some have been discovered to play a vital role in the direction the meaning given to them takes. The meanings are always visible in the choices of particular items, the style of presentation, what is emphasised, shades of colour and depth of the visual. Negm and Tantawi (2015: 8) assert:

the images and visual components in ads are typically a scene, which provides the background for the entire advertisement. The visuals may or may not feature a representation of the promoted matter. The visuals usually provide a variety of clarifications and explanations; interpretation that guides viewers to certain aspects of meaning, possibly in conjunction with the text. The image and written text are put together in some order that suggest coherence, determining the particular meanings that the advertisement has.

Images are generally employed for the advertisement of different types of products and services. Though to Armstrong (2010: 204), illustrations are “likely to be especially useful for utilitarian products: that is, for products that solve problems for consumer. In addition, they are used for products that are new to the target market”, it is no longer

always the case. Nowadays, products and services are advertised with whatever would make them sell. Images are seen on outlets advertising both utilitarian and hedonic products (hedonic products are goods purchased primarily for gratification, Armstrong, 2010). Also, illustrations are used for different products, regardless of how old they are in the market. In fact, all in the name of not allowing their customers to become bored or uninterested after seeing the same sights over and over again, some advertisers get themselves involved in ‘rebranding’ so that the same message is passed across to the audience in a fresh way (Scott, 1994). Besides, since hedonic products can be equated with luxurious goods, members of the audience can decide to do without them, thereby ignoring advertisements selling such. The use of images has proven to be capable of attracting the attention of the audience, especially when they are not even looking out for such advertisements.

Images presented in visual advertisement are not always the likeable ones or the kinds the audience would choose, if given the chance. For example, fear is employed to induce the audience’s reaction. Fear appeal is used to sell products or services that advertisers present as antidotes to certain risks (Fennis and Stroebe, 2010). Disgusting images that provoke nausea, withdrawal and other related reactions are intentionally employed by the advertisers of some goods and services. They are constructively used, especially for health advertisements and campaigns, to tell the audience the side effect of not yielding to whatever is being sold. Joffe (2008: 87) examines the persuasive and dissuasive impacts of advertising with disgusting items and lists the following as disgusting images given to smokers in an advertisement or campaign related to smoking:

1. cigarettes represented as arteries oozing with cholesterol/fat
2. a heart with smoke pouring out of it
3. the smoker’s mouth as an ashtray
4. deep wrinkles around the mouth of an attractive young woman with the accompaniment of the text ‘cat’s-bum mouth’
5. an attractive young woman with very stained and uneven teeth
6. smokers as dead or diseased people.

The writer goes further to investigate why disgust is used so copiously by the mass media, despite the fact that it elicits looking away. He claims that “one aspect of this answer lies in disgusting objects’ ability to ‘stick in the mind’ or imprint themselves”. Since every advertisement is believed to elicit the advertiser’s expected outcome in the audience when

it is memorable, some advertisers see the use of disgusting images as a good idea. According to Joffe (2008: 87):

moving beyond the food arena, a practice such as smoking becomes a contaminated entity when tainted with death and other disgust-inducing associations. Persuasive messages that use disgust play not only on a visceral gut-level of response but on a magical-thinking realm. For all of these reasons a sense of disgust stays with one and can rub off onto previously acceptable entities. It is therefore a potentially powerful tool for those who seek to persuade and dissuade.

A critical look at the use of disgusting items, however, shows that it does not always achieve the desire it is meant for. In fact, it has the tendency of foiling the various efforts of an advertiser. There is a level of repulsion the nature of some people can take. If not constructively employed, the effect of some disgusting items could be overwhelming to the extent that the audience may not even want to wait to find out what exactly is being advertised. This is even made probable because some outlets of visual advertisements do not offer the audience the patience to process why such images are displayed. Besides, the chance of a failed advertisement because of the use of disgusting items is very high because images are almost always presented as bold visuals.

The effect of visual representation is not limited to advertisement. Politics is another area where the influence of visuals is felt. Images are employed as vehicles of persuasion by different political parties and their aspiring candidates, to solicit support from the public. Just like in advertisement, the opinions of the audience matter a lot in politics as they determine the success or failure of a candidate's political ambition. This explains why visuals are usually included in campaigns to ensure the voters' approval is obtained. Messages passed to the audience through images have a way of being left unquestioned. Sullivan (ND: 27), while describing the perceptions of images in advertisement avers "through societal norms, we have grown accustomed to accept images as truth without using the same analytical process to pick apart images in the way we do text". Sullivan goes further to say "the human brain processes images in a way that triggers emotion and instinctive interpretation of reality" (27). Apart from the fact that images provide the audience with experiences that are realistic and true, they also help to influence the voters'

beliefs, opinions and attitudes (Padil and Azahari, 2014). Padil and Azahari also affirm that images are “considered as one of the media with the most potential to build a symbolic identity of the party, in which, the images help enhance the candidate’s familiarity and personal quality to voters” (2014: 215).

Another area where images are used outside advertisement is a war-related circle. Images are also used to influence the line of thought of the public in war-related issues. It is understood that the emotions of people can be easily appealed to when a situation is shown instead of being relayed by words. Cope et al (ND) affirm:

powerful images of war can sway public opinion for or against combat operations. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt relaxed press censorship, after a two-year ban on casualty photos, and allowed the release of photos depicting dead soldiers in the hopes that it might galvanize public support for the war. (3)

### **2.3.1. Gender portrayal in billboard advertisement**

Gender has become a common sight on the billboard; it is used in various ways to get products and services sold to the public. Though the multiplicity of channels of advertisement poses the danger of information overload, and consequently an indifferent audience, the use of gender has become another tool of making sustained impact on the audience. According to Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi (2013: 55), “gender advertisements give the viewers a glimpse into a world laden with socially defined and constructed gender relations, displays and roles. These images are crafted to mimic real life and many mistake the concepts of fantasy and reality in regards to advertising”. Its creative use has helped advertisers to cut through the clutter of competing advertisements and made a lasting impact on the audience. Gender is employed in advertisement for several reasons. Apart from the aesthetic appeal it lends to the billboard, advertisers also use it to give life to various qualities and ideas they sell.

The use of images provides the advertisers with the opportunity to give products and other items particular identities. Some of these could be strong but stereotypical while others could be weak but new. The images and identities given to the masculine and the feminine genders are described using various terms. Generally, though, these have generated unending controversies over the years, as numerous authors have expressed

dissatisfaction over the manner in which both genders, especially the feminine gender, is represented. While considering the identity of women in the postmodern culture, Damean (2006: 90) says “the "feminine" and the "masculine" are defined using binary oppositions: subject/object, essence/ appearance, culture/ nature, reason/ passion, active/ passive, spirit/ matter”. However, despite the disagreement that has been generated on the use of gender, advertisers continue to make use of gender for the purpose of advertisement. Its use, they have discovered, helps in getting members of the public to identify with advertised messages.

Gender is one of the tools employed in the advertisement of various products. The impact of employing gender is more felt when the advertisement employs a visual medium. While discussing the edge the use of visuals has over mere words, Abuya and Akinkurolere (2013:69) affirm that “there is no better way to bring to fore messages which ordinarily might be difficult to express”. Gendered images are displayed on visual advertising channels like newspapers, vehicles and billboards. Mukherjee (2009:30) asserts that “advertising is seen as playing a manipulative and merciless role in the emerging brandscape, seeking to transform customers into the personification of brand identity”. The audience has been lured by the sheer beauty of the images used for advertisement into buying some products. Some of these advertisements even capitalise on the use of the images so much that the public find it challenging to identify what exactly is being sold. Members of the public are, however, drawn into appreciating the beauty displayed in the advertisement and before they know it, they find themselves making the decision to patronise such a product or service. Schroeder and Zwick (2004:25) assert that several advertisements only make a passing comment about the product or service they market. According to them, images are intentionally arranged so that instead of emphasising the product, connections are created between models and lifestyles/ideas.

Gender is employed for the advertisement of products to perform several functions. While it is employed to perform a decorative role on the channels of advertisement, some other channels use the displayed participants as active users of whatever is being sold. The success of several products has been attributed to the creative use of gender. Some products are even advertised with the added advantage of representing images of



celebrities on the advertising outlets. Mukherjee (2009:1) claims that “celebrity endorsement is always a two-edged sword and it has a number of positives – if properly matched, it can do wonders for the company, and if not, it may produce a bad image of the company and its brand”. This is because in employing gender for advertisement, the association principle is used to link the satisfaction, happiness and other desirable qualities displayed by the gender to the use of the product being advertised. This does not only make the product more sought-after, it also makes it appear more attainable. The product and the benefits the audience stands to gain are displayed for all to see, making it difficult for such to be denied.

Members of the public find it easy to relate with an advertisement when it depicts the society. Since the society itself keeps changing, advertisement is made to reflect the changes found in it. Gender representations are, thus, modified regularly to conform to the alterations noticed in the roles assigned to different genders in the society. At a time, gender was seen as a criterion for identifying the sex of an individual. However, it is no longer seen as serving only that purpose. Gender now connotes power, responsibility, identity and expertise. Individuals who have different ideas to sell to the public are aware of this. It is, therefore, not a surprise to see gender being employed to pass across several messages to the public. Members of the audience have, at several times, been made to see issues from a seller’s point of view through the use of gender. This explains why Beauchamp (2013:1) believes that “although gender representations are still prevalent in advertising, they are altering to match the gender roles merging in the society”.

The portrayal of gender on billboards advertising various products is a common sight. This channel of advertisement relies heavily on gender because it makes the billboard look real and inviting. One seldom sees a billboard that does not display a gender while advertising a product or service. This is, nonetheless, employed in various ways and for different purposes. Opposites, for example are known to attract. A particular gender can be chosen to advertise goods that are not meant for it to serve as a form of attraction to the opposite gender (Messaris, 1997). Even where the masculine and feminine genders are not used, billboards still advertise using the neuter gender.

Apart from the general duty of beautifying the channel of advertisement, the images employed are also used for the purpose of communication. Some messages are clearly stated while others are inferred by the audience. This is done intentionally to ensure that the attention of the audience is caught and retained. A close study of these gender representations also shows that they are not arbitrarily chosen. Choices are made based on what the advertisers see as the best option in every situation. It also brings to limelight, the fact that certain factors are responsible for the choices made by the advertisers. The images of the two genders do not connote the same thing. Even the names suggest a big difference. The word **femininity** is believed to suggest ‘softness’, ‘frailty’, ‘submission’, ‘a need for extra care or attention’ and ‘limitation when it comes to handling some serious issues while even the word **masculinity** seems to ‘radiate a lot of raw power and excess energy’. According to Bakar (2014), the identity that is developed based on our gender identification as a man or woman is termed masculinity and femininity.

The representation of gender has generated a lot of controversies. The use of masculine and feminine genders for advertisement is seen as one that involves a lot of discrimination. The discrimination is even believed to be prevalent in the early years of members of the two groups. According to the Shirley Chisholm, “the emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, **it’s a girl**”. On the other hand, a boy is expected to come alive to his responsibilities and the high expectations of the society, at a very early stage of his life. Even at a tender age, the boy-child is encouraged to be serious, by almost every member of the society. This is because he is seen as the future head of a family and whatever he is able to make of his life determines how successful or otherwise such a future would be. He is, thus, constantly cheered to be ambitious and serious in whatever field he chooses. This can be inferred from the opinion of Shaka and Uchendu (2012:3). According to them, “at the adolescent stage of life when imaginations are easily fired, the male adolescents are encouraged by the society (parents, aunties, uncles) to think of their future careers. They are thus encouraged to be ambitious”.

Discrimination, between the genders, exists in various aspects of life. It is believed to exist in education and the manner in which the two genders are generally treated. For example, Ambe-Uva, Iwuchukwu and Jibrin (2008:814) believe that “gender imbalance existed in student enrolments and staff recruitment”, Egun and Tibi (2010:18) assert that

“there is an indication of inequality in educational chances for boys and girls”. A man is believed to enjoy certain privileges because of his gender. Advertisement also experiences discrimination in the choice of gender. For instance, the image of the feminine gender is most often used for the advertisement of clothes, home appliances, drugs and cleaning products (Picklesimer, 2007:4). Picklesimer believes that women are “seen as emotional and slender, associated with the household, family and fashion while men are seen as muscular and competent, associated with paid work, sports and technology”. This is similar to the opinion expressed in College Board (2011) where advertisements are claimed to “present women in limited roles. Girls and women in ads show concern about their bodies, clothes, homes and the need to attract a boy or man”. This explains why Shaka and Uchendu (2012:3) believe that even as a child, a girl is forced to notice her appearance and believe looking beautiful should top her scale of preference. Shaka and Uchendu (2012:3) aver that “she begins to expect more flattery. Her emotions are in captivity. She may well forget every other thing in life. Moreover, right from before she forms her first words, she has been indoctrinated into the patriarchal society where the value of women lies only in their sexuality”.

Correa (2011:174) shares this opinion. According to her, “advertisements that involve domesticity emphasise the traditional role of woman as a wife and mother”. Even the single woman is not left out as almost all her efforts are geared towards looking beautiful for the man (Correa, 2011). Correa’s study of the Indian woman reflects “a gender-biased socialization process in Indian Society as the mother was shown to be concerned about her son’s health, strength and intelligence and for her daughter, she was a nurturer of the feminine ideals of beauty and domesticity” (2011:182).

Apart from the domestic image given to the woman, the woman’s beauty is also emphasised in advertisements. Some even believe that this representation supersedes any other. According to Correa (2011:185) in her study, “the dominant image of femininity presented in the advertisements was that of the beauty ideal. This ideal has become the new straitjacket of femininity, which requires women to compete through their appearance for the attention of men”. Special parts of the woman’s body, at times, are focused to bring out the beauty sought. Close up of body parts of the woman are displayed in advertisement that capitalise on the beauty of woman. These parts include: legs, breasts

and lips (Gudekli and Celik, 2014:6132). It is also believed that the focus on beauty is an indirect link to making sexual suggestions in such advertisement. This is not appreciated by everyone and its early reversal has been suggested. While discussing the need to draw a line of demarcation between pornography and the portrayal of the feminine gender in advertisement, Lanis and Covell (1995:7) say “the power of such advertisements to manipulate attitudes of such importance to our interpersonal and societal well-being should not be underestimated. Advertisements are more pervasive than pornography, and unlike pornography are presented in a socially acceptable framework”. Gudekli and Celik (2014) highlight roles given to woman as the following:

1. Housewife
2. Modern business woman
3. Woman as a sexual object and
4. Artist woman

The portrayal of the feminine gender is believed to undermine the expected status of an African woman. She is not only portrayed in a negative light, she is also confined to the traditional areas she is known with, thus reinforcing gender discrimination (Nwaolikpe, 2014:41). Gender inequality is also noticeable in the education Sector (Ashong and Batta, 2011). Studies have also been carried out on the representation of gender in the Nigerian Film Industry. While looking at the image given to the feminine gender in the film industry, Amobi (2010:1) says “feminist scholars, critics and women’s movements have relentlessly challenged the stereotypical representations of women in Hollywood films, criticizing their sexist depictions as whores, jilted mistresses, emotional cripples, sex-starved spinsters and psychotics”.

Some scholars, however, believe that to a great extent, the feminine gender is responsible for the identity given to it, at times. As such, the general societal belief has been allowed to form a solid background as to the representation of this gender. While considering gender representation in the Nollywood Films, Shaka and Uchendu (2012:1) say:

two video films *Jenifa* (Mayideen S. Ayinde, 2008) and *Games Women Play* (Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, 2004) have been used to illustrate how patriarchal attitudes in Nigerian society have been inherited by the Nollywood video film culture, which is helping to glamorize the reigning

patriarchal mentality that conditions women to derogate their own sex and cooperate in their own subordination and subjugation.

This is very similar to the opinion of Daniel (2011). She believes that the feminine gender has helped in sustaining the male hegemony in the Nigerian Society through the pictorial representation some women make available to the public. According to Daniel (2011:127), “women are those sustaining the patriarchal social order through their giving support and hegemonic consent to the ‘sex symbol’ image of themselves in the newspaper”.

Advertisement is also an influential tool employed to create and spread different ideologies. The ideas have turned into permanent concepts in some individuals that they now interpret gender representations from these perspectives. This explains the contempt with which a man is likely going to welcome an expression that suggests he is **feminine** and why some ladies may not really mind their actions being described as **masculine**. In his article ‘The selling of Masculinity’, Nerdlove (2013) believes that “we are regularly bombarded with messages selling the idea that masculinity is violent, physically aggressive and sexually domineering and that anger and stoic toughness are the only appropriate emotions for men to display”. This distaste is also expressed in the College Board (2011). According to the article, “the male images shown in ads almost never include such traits as sensitivity, vulnerability or compassion. This may discourage boys and men from displaying these natural and desirable human traits. Ads may thus limit a boy or a man’s senses of what he can or he should be”. All these show that apart from the product being advertised, particular choices and portrayals of gender are displayed to sell much more than what the advertisers may, sometimes, claim.

The roles these choices perform are really appreciated when they are not seen as mere images that are used for the purpose of advertisement but are seen as signs through which a producer passes across several messages. It is, however, remarkable to discover that advertising is not a stable field. It has been discovered to pattern its several representations and messages after the changes in the society. This is not a surprise as human beings, the consumers of advertisements, appreciate changes. This explains why over time, the same gender has been employed to pass across different messages. The

feminine gender, for example, used to be believed to portray the picture of a soft and helpless individual who relied on the man for the fulfillment of her sex. This has changed as the same sex is now employed to connote responsibility as a family woman and fulfillment for a single woman. The same goes for the man who, contrary to the image represented at a time, is now portrayed in some advertisements as a responsible and successful family man. Advertisement is, thus, seen to reshape the society and reinforce certain beliefs. Some advertisements look so true that the audience finds it very easy to see such as the reality. This substantiates the fact that gender is not just represented on any billboard for the purpose of adding beauty to the process; it is also employed for the purpose of communication.

The use of gender in the world of advertisement has generated mixed feelings. While some appreciate it, others feel it is overused, manipulative or in favour of a particular gender, at times. As a result, some scholars believe decisive steps need to be taken to ensure that both genders are equally represented. Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) should ensure that advertisements use gender sensitive images and words (Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi, 2013; Eze, 2014). Gender representation has created a wall of division in the meaning given to advertisements as the images are interpreted based on whether the use is appreciated or unwelcome by the interpreter.

Genders used for advertisements have been given additional meanings by some members of the audience, which are sometimes different from the obvious meaning the producer must have felt they created while designing such an advertisement. The division created by the representation of gender in advertisement is also exploited by some advertisers to send different messages to the audience. All of these are, however, done to ensure that the product receives the highest patronage and, if possible, becomes the only product being patronised by everyone.

#### **2.3.1.1. Depiction of the masculine gender in visual advertisement**

Masculine images are employed to sell products and services on various visual channels of advertisement. These goods range from hard drinks, electrical gadgets to other general services. The man is depicted in various ways. He is presented as a being whose unwavering focus is on how to make a meaning out of his life. As a result, no time is

given to frivolities as he is always engaged in something that adds to his quest to be successful. Consequently, masculine images communicate seriousness, determination and a general no-nonsense outlook. According to Londo (2006: 9 - 10) while discussing the different depictions given to gender:

By contrast, the depiction of the few male characters and their careers present in the magazine, does not focus neither on their looks, nor on their fate. Rather than depending on *force majeure* or some divine intervention like fortune or carefully watching their weight in order to preserve their jobs, the males in this magazine go through spiritual crisis emerging stronger and more famous than before ...

Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi (2013: 55) argue that the constructions given to both the masculine and the feminine genders are those established in the society. In their words, the masculine gender is portrayed as “alert and conscious of surroundings, standing upright, eyes open and looking around, bodies are controlled, mean expression on face, gripping things tightly with hands, hands in pockets, serious and physically”.

There are controversies on the various depictions given to the masculine gender in visual advertisement. Some scholars believe that the man is made to look proud, egoistic and uncaring, and that the representations given to him are unnecessarily harsh and detrimental. Katz (1999: 17) avers “but the pretense of omnipotence and invulnerability that is implied by ubiquitous images of physically powerful males is not just emotionally stultifying. It also gets a lot of men—and boys—killed”. Nerdlove (2013) believes that the media is responsible for most of the images the masculine gender is known with. To him, media messages about getting identity for the masculine gender targets the youths and the growing men. He notes:

in both cases – the youth and the working-class men – are looking to fill a void. The younger men are trying to find their place in the world and are seeking guidance as they work towards how to be men. Meanwhile the older men are often feel as though they have been cheated and that others are benefiting from something that’s being denied to them, thus they want to re-establish their manhood (sic). Advertisers are well aware of this and craft their message with supposed ideals of masculine identity; “Feeling insufficiently manly?” they ask. “This product will make you the man you’ve always known you could be.”

This is similar to the opinion of Katz (1999) who believes that instead of portraying the natural, unfixed and inevitable state of a man, an adulterated version is presented. His study of the 'climatic scene' in "The Wizard of Oz" is analysed as a projection/mask/performance often worn to shield the vulnerability of man and hide his humanity. The big, bold and tough appearance given to the man is to make up for the challenge some women had become to them at workplaces, in business and education. He further states:

fed by a constant stream of images informed by the Marlboro Man ethos of the "real man" as a stoic rugged individualist, millions of boys and men learn early on that acting like a man means you don't complain, you don't admit weakness, you don't ever let others see the anxious man behind the curtain. This sort of conditioning starts very young, as does the pressure on boys and young men to compete... (1999:17)

Sakajarvi (2013), while studying the identity given to men in advertisement, believes that several of the roles given are socially and culturally constructed. They are also relatively unstable and this explains why the identity keeps changing. According to him, apart from depicting some men as struggling to maintain the traditional identity given to them, masculinity has also been depicted as that of a new kind of man that has features of femininity. In addition, displaying the male body as an idea of masculinity is yet another identity. Sakajarvi sees most of the old definitions of what masculinity is as products of comparing the man and the woman. He further states "these two genders have started to resemble each other in a way that while women have started to adopt more masculine characteristics especially in their behavior, men have started to acquire more feminine characteristics both in physical appearance and behavior" (2013: 82).

#### **2.3.1.2. The use of the feminine gender in visual advertisement**

The feminine gender is also used on the billboard for the advertisement of various products and services. This development, in turn, has given the gender various images and communicated both acceptable and unacceptable ideas to the public. The representation given to the woman in the print media, in general, and the newspaper, in particular, is not different from the way she is portrayed in other areas. As pointed out by



Nwaolikpe (2014: 41), “the photographic images of women in the print media are portrayed negatively which undermine the status of the African woman today by depicting the Nigerian women negatively, confining them to areas traditionally meant for them, and reinforcing gender discrimination and stereotype”. This agrees with the highlights given by Alozie (2009). While explaining the use of women in advertisement, Alozie mentioned themes repeatedly discussed by various scholars. They include: frequent under-representation, stereotypical/traditional roles given when finally represented, portrayal as domestic caretakers, representation as mere decorations in advertisements and exhibition as sexual objects. His findings attest to similar discoveries by other authors, though with the addition of an intentionally ambiguous depiction. To him, though one of the advertisements he studied emphasises the changing role of a woman as hardworking and a great help in economic development, her role is not clearly stated. He states:

It is also possible to interpret the woman as playing the traditional role of women in the workplace as a secretary or receptionist. The symbols in the advertisement tend to support that perception. The woman is seen sitting down on a desk, smiling with a phone in front of her. She is looking up and smiling, which might lead most customers as they walk into the office to view her as the receptionist. Thus, one could argue that while this advertisement does show her in a professional role, her role remains an inferior one as a secretary or receptionist. (2009: 31)

He also emphasises the need to appreciate the positive contribution such an advertisement is capable of making. Portraying the woman in such a setting attests to the fact that she is also capable of making use of her intellectual ability. In Alozie (2009:31 - 32)’s words, “the positive contribution of the advertisement must be noted. It takes the African women outside the home and portrays her (sic) in a business and professional setting. It contradicts the notion that African women are completely subjugated”. A critical study of this assessment, however, shows that though the woman is shown in a setting slightly different from the usual, there is really not much difference as no clear verbal anchor is made. This is more felt because the omission seems to be intentional. Instead of being a positive contribution, as Alozie claims, it indirectly reinforces the traditional belief. The advertisement could be interpreted to communicate her inability to really hold executive positions, in spite of her exposure, education and civilisation. Since it is an advertisement

intended to correct the general traditional belief, one would have expected such to be devoid of any ambiguity, whether accidental or deliberate.

In advertising with the feminine image, advertisers give the gender various representations. While looking at gender construction and portrayal of the feminine gender in Guinness Stout billboard advertisement, Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi (2013: 55) assert that the woman is represented as “touching self, caressing an object, lying on the floor, sitting on a bed or chair, eyes closed, not alert, confused, vulnerable, body contorted, dressed like a child, holding an object or a man for support, sexy and sexually available, seductive, playful and careless”. The descriptions above show a being that is frivolous and a little vain. It also portrays the woman as one who sees her body and its care as priorities.

Apart from the representations of the woman given above, she is also generally seen as a beauty agent. This is one of the commonest images given to the feminine gender. Various advertising channels capitalise on the beauty of the woman and display various parts of her body in details. Though, the use of the feminine image is needed at times, visual advertisements have been discovered to dwell on the beauty even when other non-related products are advertised. Such advertisements, on the surface, are made to sell the product, but a critical look shows that there are several not-so-obviously-displayed messages they carry. Since it is a practice that has been on for a while, the woman is believed to have become so used to being admired that maintaining the said beauty is one of her priorities. Beauty is seen as a typical feminine goal (Londo, 2006). Damean (2006: 91) states

women are prisoners in this virtual panopticon as, once aware they are being objects of the gaze, they apply to themselves the normalizing politics of control and self-surveillance. In the contemporary patriarchal culture women act as if a masculine observer were permanently watching them.

Some authors see the feminine beauty as the blessing and the curse a woman cannot do without. Whenever a woman is made to display her beauty, such a message is sometimes underlined with a suggestion that her beauty is not for her own benefit but for members of the audience, mostly masculine, who have to get their eyes fed and satisfied with pleasure. As a result, she is expected to ‘stay in shape’ as this is one of the major reasons why she is

tagged beautiful in the first place. The feminine body is one of the visual tools in advertisement that has generated numerous controversies. It is seen as being used as a manipulative instrument by advertisers to have the sustained interests of the members of the audience, the men especially. As a result, some scholars claim that the woman's body is usually displayed nude, partially or sexually clothed.

Portraying the woman as an inevitable mother and a caregiver are also common images on channels advertising with the feminine image. This is represented directly and indirectly on the channels of advertisement. The feminine gender is also seen to be created for the 'inevitable end' of motherhood. Billboards are seen with pictures of the woman as a nurturer of children. Her dispositions, activities and general demeanor suggest that she is not just naturally created for the role of being a mother, it is a duty she enjoys carrying out.

The image of a woman is usually displayed carrying out different responsibilities towards ensuring a comfortable life for the children. Scholars have complained that though the duty itself is expected from a woman, the frequency of its display on these channels of advertisement makes it wrong. While considering the representation of mothers in two magazines, The Social Issues Research Centre (2011) reports that an unchanging feature in the representations given to the feminine gender is the continuous process of internalising the responsibility of bringing up the children and experiencing guilt for not being good enough. Though the woman is expected to perform various activities in raising her children, she is not to be saddled with all the parental responsibilities needed for the development of a child, since both fatherhood and motherhood are subsumed under parenthood.

Advertisers also portray the woman as a being who does not have much power to do certain things. She is often seen as a fragile being, whose emotional make-up disallows her from performing certain duties. According to Damean (2006: 92):

The man appears as rational, active, independent, while the woman appears as passive, dependent, subject to passions. Therefore, the tasks that require responsibility, competitiveness, ambition, initiative, intelligence, strength (such as earning an income, taking political decisions, leading an institution) are traditionally attributed to men,

while those requiring care, empathy, nurturing, obedience, submission, are attributed to women.

Nailer (2011) studied the representation of the woman in two magazines and came up with different categories of the portrayal. Some of them are the portrayal of the woman as in companionship with a man, as a domestic individual, a western beauty, a career woman, as an accessory among others. The author claims that in many of the cases studied, the woman was represented as being in a kind of relationship. Such include images as a wife, mother or partners of men. Nailer avers that her data showed only a few cases of women represented in non-traditional roles, challenging a man or made to look more prominent than the man. The author concludes by saying “the fact that only a very few advertisements represent women as equal to men or more prominent than men might be a reflection of the patriarchal structure of the society” (2011: 94 -95).

Based on reasons like exposure and civilisation, however, the feminine gender is more involved in intellectual positions in the society than she used to be. Some of the very old and traditional beliefs still manifest in some aspects of the society though. Sheehan (2012):

Men and women today lead highly complex lives with multiple societal roles. Men and women are parents, business people, corporate board members, friends, siblings, volunteers and more. This differs from the *Leave it to Beaver* society of the 1950s, where societal roles were much more specific: men were the breadwinners and women were the homemakers. Today, though, society still clings to some of the values of the 1950s. Almost half of working mothers say they spend more time each day parenting than on their careers . . .

Chan and Cheng (2012) believe that while the men are employed for the advertisement of non-domestic products, women are associated with domestic and home-setting products. To them, these representations have been consistent and are already being passed to the upcoming generation. Both youths and children are seen striving to model themselves after the image projected in various advertising channels. The media, according to Chan and Cheng (2012: 9) “is a socializing agent in the modern society. Children and youth may learn gender roles through observation and imitation. By observing members of their

own sex and copying that behavior, children and youth can discover how they are supposed to behave”.

The woman’s image has gone through several transformations in advertisement. Gudekli and Celik (2014) note that the first time a woman’s image was portrayed with an image akin to a sexual one was in the 1850s. Between 1850 and 1900, the representation took on that of chubby, provocative, well-kept and beautiful women, before the representation started propagating the idea that sexuality is nothing to hide (Gudekli and Celik, 2014). They further note “newly emerged "New Woman Image" has changed the mother, wife and housewife figure and present new woman image such as a women working in a profession, having lesson in university, single academician, dancers, games master” (2014: 6131). To them, this new image has not only led to the collapse of several African taboos, it has also helped the course of advertisers as former images used with caution are now freely displayed.

The society is seen as a major agent in the general treatment given to women. To Shaka and Uchendu (2012), economic and political positions of interest and value are mainly occupied by men, thereby encouraging the dependence of women on men. This uneven distribution reflects in various aspects of both genders and is being represented in the Nigerian video film industry (Nollywood). Shaka and Uchendu (2012: 1) argue that Nollywood “is a reflection of the traditional social conditioning which permit the demonization of girls and women who stray from the path of ‘true’ womanhood; true womanhood being defined as passive, quiet, controlled, docile, dependent, constrained, accepting and acquiescent”. Since then, no matter the success a female made, such was weighed in her ability to attract a man and get married. Even up till now, single but matured women are not really appreciated in the society. The society frowns at them and would rather have such become married. This position is also represented on different channels of communication in the society. No wonder Shaka and Uchendu (2012: 2) claim “whatever image of the female the men seemed to prefer, the women modified their bodies to conform in order to attract the attention of the men”.

Authors are also divided on what to make of the boldness displayed by women in their patronising of some sexual commodities and the general exhibition of some sexually-

explicit female materials. While some believe it is the women's way of sustaining gender stereotyping, others see it as the much-needed display of boldness on the part of the women. The whole process, Attwood (2005: 393) believes has been "taken up with enthusiasm in broadsheet newspapers and women's magazines where it is typically represented as evidence of women's growing sexual confidence and of a more contemporary and progressive view of sexuality".

#### **2.4. The construction of gender roles in visual advertisement**

Apart from the general meanings that naturally come with the masculine and the feminine genders in visual advertisement, various other meanings can be attributed to the two genders. They are constructed identities based on various reasons and contexts. As a result, members of both groups are indirectly enforced to bear these representations. These constructions are studied from the identities given by nature, culture, media, as well as some members of the genders.

##### **2.4.1. The male and the female as different beings**

Nature is gender-sensitive. Men and women are created as different entities with peculiar characteristics. Attitudes, behaviours, preferences and other features clearly show that a man is basically different from his female counterpart. As individuals, though they have been studied as competing individuals, nature teaches that they are meant to complement each other. While the sex of a person is determined by his biological features, gender is defined with particular roles, identities by the society. Although scientific studies often conflate sex and gender, they have different implications.

Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women, while gender is the social construction of how men and women should act, what values they should hold dear, and what roles they should play in the society (Baldwin and Kapoor, 2004). This agrees with the distinction given by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:10). According to them, "sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex". Though sex and gender are not synonymous, the former has been discovered to be responsible for the latter. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:10) affirm "gender builds on biological sex, it exaggerates biological difference and, indeed, it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant".

As such, except in exceptional cases, a man is described in masculine terms and a woman in feminine terms. Since they are different beings, it should therefore not be much of a surprise that they are not portrayed in the same light. Sheehan (2012: 90), while discussing the differences between the two genders, states:

men process messages and make decisions more quickly than women do, perhaps because men focus on the primary message of a given advertisement and take in little other information during the process. Women, on the other hand, process the information in an advertisement quickly and from many levels and sources, including music, visuals, voice-over, and text.

The basic differences in both genders tend to have been taken too far by the society though. Members have been discovered to delight in growing, to great lengths, the lines of demarcation, while nature should have been allowed to take its course; a normal man/boy finds it easy to behave like one just like it is obtainable for a woman/girl. This has, however, not really been allowed. Even at infancy, provisions have been made to ensure children of different sexes are seen as such (Helgeson, 2012). While discussing her experience at the birth of her daughter, Katja, she says “by dressing Katja in gender-neutral clothes, I learned that the default assumption of others was she must be a boy. Any infant girl in her right mind (or her parents’ right mind) would wear pink or ruffles or have bows in her hair or have her ears pierced!”.

#### **2.4.2 Culture and its impact on gender representation in billboard advertisement**

The concept, culture, is defined as the way of life of a group of people. This includes their beliefs, values, choice foods, clothing, language and other peculiarities. Without necessarily knowing anything beforehand, smart individuals find it interesting to be allowed to guess the ethnic origin of other persons. Some cultural traits are also naturally carried about by people. Individuals do not usually need to learn about some cultural provisions; they naturally grow into them. It may, therefore, be difficult to separate a man from his culture.

Although a culture comes with general beliefs which do not seem to harm anybody, there are also some aspects that are yet to be objectively developed; gender is one of such. Every culture has excellent values which are proudly upheld by members as well as some

'nasty and ugly' parts. These features have been taken into the social interaction of the members. According to Okiring (2013: 5), "cultural myths can be found in every society and may be viewed as the backbone to every social structure". The treatment a particular gender sometimes receives from its counterpart or other members of the society has been directly or indirectly stipulated in the culture. Shaka and Uchendu (2012:1) attest:

For much of history and throughout the world, social and legal traditions have tolerated or even promoted the physical assault of women by men. In ancient Rome, a husband could legally divorce, physically punish, or even kill his wife for behaviours that were permitted for men.

Punishment of wives was called chastisement, a term that emphasized the corrective purpose of the action and minimized the violent nature of the behaviour. Under mediaeval English common law, a husband could not be prosecuted for raping his wife because the law provided that a wife could not refuse consent for sex to her husband.

Since it is always difficult to separate people from their culture, other aspects of life like communication, sexuality, interaction, participation in various issues and of course, advertising are impacted by culture. Sexuality and culture meet at various points. As such, the effect of one on the other cannot be denied. There are provisions for each sex in every culture and this status quo tends to give outstanding roles to men while less recognised ones are reserved for the women. This feature also exists in the relationship between sexuality and religion (Odebunmi, 2010). Gender is a prominent area in advertising where the impact of culture is heavily felt. Though it may not have set out to be regarded as one, advertisement is a cultural tool.

The Yoruba culture, which is the ethnic group of Ibadan, the setting of this study, has both positive and negative characteristics, many of which are directly, casually or indirectly portrayed in visual advertisements. One of the negative features of the culture is the portrayal of the feminine as weak, subjugated and subdued, when compared with the male. Hussein (2005: 59) further proves this:

women have been victims of gender ideology. Gender ideology is a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which a society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices. Gender ideology contains legends, narratives and



myths about what it means to be a man or a woman and suggests how each should behave in the society.

While discussing the nature of the woman in Yoruba culture, Familusi (2012) affirms that the woman is made to take a subordinate role and this is felt even in other areas. According to Familusi (2012: 300) “men show superiority over their women counterparts, who are usually relegated to the background. Therefore, socially, politically, economically and religiously women are to a very large extent, disadvantaged since decision were taken mostly by women the males”. The discrimination is believed to start at birth (Olabode, 2014). Familusi also highlights various areas where discrimination is depicted. Such include: inheritance, proverbs and taboos, western education, widowhood practices among others. She also highlights the positive impact of civilisation and acculturation as women are not represented to occupy prominent positions. Familusi, however, notes the need for those fighting for certain woman rights to be careful so that values and enviable morals of the Yoruba culture do not become trampled under our feet in a bid to have a balanced portrayal of the two genders.

Gender and culture have also been discovered to interrelate. Culture is an important aspect of a human being or a society. It encompasses the values, interests, beliefs and other concepts that come together to give meaning to such an entity. Culture is defined by Schalkwyk (2000:1) as “part of the fabric of every society, including our own. It shapes the way things are done and our understanding of why this should be so”. This explains why the world of advertisement cannot be separated from culture. Since the essence of advertisement is to ensure that the audience is appealed to, the culture of such an audience is an effective tool to catch and retain their attention. The different ideologies and features given to gender representations employed for advertisements are, thus, seen propagating the culture of such people. This is implied by Schalkwyk (2000:1) who says “expectations about attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men – in other words, gender – are shaped by culture”. The impact some cultures play in the portrayal of the feminine gender is also believed to have a great impact on the way the woman is generally seen in the society. In addition to suggesting that cultural practices that are harmful to the feminine gender be discarded,

Familusi (2012) believes that “if a man is indispensable, I contend that women should also be recognised as such, and value must be placed on the human person, not sex”.

Some of the interpretation given to particular genders can be traced to beliefs that are rooted in the culture of such a group of people. The Yoruba Culture, for example, used to see a man-figure in every male. As a result, more autonomy was given to the masculine gender. This is similar to the opinion expressed by Schalkwyk (2000:4) “men’s privileged position also gives them disproportionate power in determining the values that prevail”. This belief is similar to the one upheld by Shaka and Uchendu (2012). They state that “traditional beliefs, customs and laws restrict the roles women may play and limit their economic opportunities, contributing to their dependence on men”. Nwaolikpe (2014:46) attests to this by saying that “the images of women portrayed in the print media are negative and undermine the African woman today”.

Apart from the African culture, the society has carved a culture for itself. This has peculiar features that have been influenced by the African culture and the media’s perceived wants of the audience. As a result, images are now represented to reflect all these. Kilbourne (2003: 173) expresses how the society is so used to the sexual representation of a woman in advertising that it is almost difficult to believe that it was not so at time. Kilbourne asserts:

it is almost impossible to imagine what our popular culture would look like if women’s bodies weren’t objectified and dismembered. We are so used to this that it is hard to believe that it has not always been so. In fact, the eroticized imagery of women has been part of the general cultural landscape, not relegated to the world of pornography and sex clubs, for only the past 50 years or so.

#### **2. 4. 3. The influence of media on gender representation in billboard advertisement**

Advertisement is an area that is mainly controlled by media practitioners. They are usually made up of experts who have studied the nature of the market system and what (form of advertisement) sells most. They are responsible for communicating the constructions given gender to the larger world. While their efforts are appreciated, advertisers, in particular, and the media, at large, have been blamed for the erroneous representations given to the masculine and the feminine genders in the world of

advertisement. The impact of the media has been described in different ways by authors.

Damean (2006: 90) avers:

Media provide images and figures that spectators can imitate and identify with. . . Media are efficient means for disseminating the dominant discourse of power and for disguising it into a matter of "common sense". Therefore, artificially created needs, norms and standard regarding the female body are presented as natural and normal.

Damean (2006: 90) says:

media are efficient means of dissemination and control. They play the observer's role in a virtual panopticon, exposing women's bodies in detail, setting norms for their shape and dimensions, providing the methods to model one's body according to standards and sanctioning every exception to the rule.

Katz (1999: 16) also affirms “a proliferation of mass media images has helped structure the way we think and react to the shifting gender terrain”. This opinion is also expressed by Mansoor (2013: 155) who asserts “the unquestioning acceptance of such norms by the majority of journalists also affects the way the coverage of women issues is handled”. The upcoming generation is also believed to have become affected as children grow up with the gender beliefs demonstrated in their worlds. This can be inferred from the assertion made by Alozie (2009: 19) who states:

while quantitative and qualitative studies on advertising have not established a direct connection between the impact of commercials in the formation of stereotype gender and sex roles, socialization studies including those discussed previously, have shown that the content of the mass media do influence the comprehension and perception of children and adults.

Whether they know it or not, members of the public are believed to be affected by what they are fed with by media practitioners. Different forms of channels of media are known to help in making members of the public what they have become today. Alozie (2009:19) says “studies on mass media have also established that an individual’s value system and worldview are related to their media exposure. For example, heavy television viewers exposed to constant violence contained in the programming cultivate a worldview of a violent society as a reality”. Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi (2013: 59), while discussing

the manner in which the media portrays feminine perfection assert “advertisers are culpable for the heightened body dissatisfaction amongst women, because they constantly use sexy unrealistic images of ultra-thin models, the depiction of women as sex objects and the frequent use of sex, to sell products”. The above proves that whether good or bad, the media, to a great extent, is believed to be the determining factor of the lifestyle of their audience.

Endong and Obonganwan (2015) contend that the media are active forces responsible for popularising beliefs and perceptions. They believe that their contents are those which relegate women to subordinate positions in the society and that, generally, the media practitioners are agents involved in women stereotyping and marginalisation. They are seen as shapers of concepts; their positive or negative stand, towards issues is believed to have a lot to do in the final position taken by members of the audience. According to Endong and Obonganwan (2015: 101):

the mass media constitute one of the cardinal ideology and repressive state apparatuses (together with religious, educational institutions and the law). They enjoy immeasurable powers of socialization, mass mobilization and advocacy. One way in which they shape audience perception and attitude is through the institution of representation.

A critical look at the stand taken by these authors shows that though salient points have been made, the media is not solely responsible for the ideas propagated through its channels. The media, as a body, is created with the sole aim of representing the populace. The practitioners act as the voice of the people (the public, the government and other subgroups). Since whatever is represented by the media is only appreciated when it is seen to have an affinity with reality, the media also looks at the society and particular sets of people concerned in whatever portrayal it gives. As a result, though the representations given by the media affect the people, they are also responses to the needs (both uttered and perceived) in the audience. Some are even products of the demands made by the public. As such, the process is a two-way one; as the media affects representations in the society, the society also dictates the way the media depicts it. This kind of association is what Endong and Obonganwan (2015:103) tag a ‘symbiotic relationship’. They state:

society directly or indirectly provides the “raw material” (notably technical knowhow (human resources and ideology) for the construction and fine-tuning of media text. They partake, complement or complete a socialization process often (already) commenced by other ideological state apparatuses (religion, education, the law, religion among others)

Notwithstanding, the fact that the media holds an important position in what is represented is not negotiable. It is a body that determines, to a great extent, what happens in the society. It also has the power to influence. According to Salinas (2015: 2), “the media is the single most powerful tool at our disposal; it has the power to educate, result in social change. . . it could also be used for changing social norms that lead toward the deconstruction of gender stereotyping and hence facilitating progress toward gender equality in societies”. The media has an important role to play in constructing the right identities and even in correcting wrong notions.

#### **2.4.4. The contributions made by some members of both genders**

The impact made by some members of the masculine and the feminine gender in the way they are represented has also been discovered to have aided the overall representation. Though there is no justifiable reason for the media, some of the representations seem to be choices made by members of the genders. Though during the 1995 Beijing Conference, the media were accused of representing women in a derogatory light, research, however, attested to an overall decline in the regularity of such practice by some newspapers (Daniel, 2011). While examining ideology, power and pictures of women, Daniel (2011) investigated an age-long practice of newspapers like *The Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, where pictures, basic information and contact (phone numbers, e-mail addresses) were displayed. A decline in the act was discovered in some national newspapers, though it persisted in some. To Daniel (2011), the contribution of the participants could not be mistaken as the displayed items were usually sourced from them. She contends “no one can blame the media as ‘misrepresenting’ women; the women of their free will, not only pose in this manner, but actually sent the pictures to the newspaper house with the intention of getting them published” (2011: 126). According to her, some of the women’s postures and choice

of clothing items were sexually suggestive. This could also be seen as a factor responsible for the treatment given to some members of the gender.

A critical study of the situation also shows its multifaceted nature. The picture itself is more of a response posed by the media. Daniel (2011) asserts that several of the newspapers introduced the page with the question “do you consider yourself stunning enough to grace our Page 3?”. Though such reaction is totally uncalled for, some of the displayed pictures could have been fuelled by the desire of the women to show that they were capable of rising up to the challenge. Some might have also seen the display as an opportunity to assert their values, some of which could have been ‘crushed’ by some cultural provisions. The possibility of the above claim is reinforced by other observations made by Daniel (2011). There was the prevalence of clothing items like trousers and even an *abeti aja* cap worn by some female members of the society, both of which are typically seen as men’s clothing items (in the African sense). It can, thus, be safely concluded that some of them knowingly made the choice of such items to show the world that they were capable of doing anything, especially those activities considered to be masculine. All the reasons above are, however, not good reasons for some members of the feminine gender to be involved in acts that are capable of strengthening misrepresentation of this particular gender. The feminine gender is also believed to be responsible for some of the representations she is given, as she contributes directly or indirectly towards the stereotypical portrayals. This explains why Ezeife (2016: 54) states “it is noteworthy to reflect that the woman is not entirely exempt from her own subjugation. In most instances, the woman orchestrates her oppression”.

The visual representation examined above would not have been necessary if the effect of such had not been felt in other areas. Visual advertisements are seen with pictures of scantily-dressed women looking happy and fulfilled. Some of them are even pictures taken as ‘selfie’, the picture of a person taken by self. This practice is common with the visual advertisement of beauty products like cream and soap. The display of such pictures shows the satisfaction of the feminine gender in being so represented. Since the media are also interested in representing individuals the way they feel they cherish, such displays are promoted in advertisement. Such pictures connote the desire of the individuals to display their ‘assets’. Though this is not practised by every member of the gender, some women

also dress the same way in the society. Unlike the rich African culture in which one's nakedness is sacred, some women prefer to celebrate their own nakedness by exposing parts that are better hidden.

In a bid to be fashionable, near-naked dresses are worn by some women. Some of them have even turned this into a competition, where the latest fashionable woman is adjudged by how daring she is in baring her body. At Paris Fashion Week, Nicki Minaj was seen in a short black dress displaying her left breast. Street (2017) affirms "for a while, Nicki Minaj has had a comparatively reserved sense of style compared with some of her older, flashy tactics. But following a bit of industry drama recently, the female MC took to Paris Fashion Week in a series of gag inducing looks. The latest? A breast exposing top from Mugler at Haider Ackermann". Kendall Jenner was also seen in a butt/back-baring dress at 'Met Gala 2017'. The caption suggests the belief of the reporter on the act. According to Prinzivalli (2017), "when it comes to making a fashion statement, Kendall Jenner learned from the best. She strolled the Met Gala carpet in a La Perla Haute Couture gown. The sheer, backless look came with a thigh-high slit and a diagonal chest-baring cutout, and left not much to the imagination on the back". There have also been several cases where women threatened to go naked, in order to prove a point or fight for a cause.

It is ironic though that while the masculine gender strives to be 'fully-kitted', some members of the feminine gender struggle to go nude. Advertising is known to represent the audience and ensure new trends become featured. If some women go to great lengths to expose their nakedness, it is, therefore, not really a surprise that representing their naked bodies in visual advertisement is becoming a common sight. This also explains why Daniel (2011: 125) asks:

If women now claim to demand respect and not to be treated as if they are playthings meant for the fleshly pleasure of men, should they still be clinging to the old attitude of being construed as the Waterloo of men? They do not seem to portray the notion of those to be taken seriously by dressing up in a manner that men had supposedly been determining for them for ages if women choose to continue seeing themselves as those that can only be stunning by exposing their bodies and posing suggestively, why should men see them as serious contenders in any field of endeavour?

## 2.5. The relation of consumerism and visual advertisement

Consumerism, here, is the belief that meaning and satisfaction are found through the purchase and use of consumer goods (Goodwin, Nelson, Ackerman and Weisskopf, 2008). It is the inclination towards the buying and the consumption of consumer goods. It is a belief that encourages an ever-increasing purchase of consumer goods. This ideology presents the consumption of goods as the source of satisfaction that is needed by the consumer. Though it looks quite simple on the surface, it is a rather complex ideology. According to Brusseau (2012: 606):

1. We identify ourselves with the products we buy. Consumerism goes beyond the idea that our brands . . . are *symbols* of who we are. Consumerism means our products aren't just things we wear to make statements. They are us; they incarnate the way we think and act.
2. If we are what we buy, then we need to buy in order to be. Purchasing consumer items, in other words, isn't something we do to dispatch with necessities so that we can get on with the real concerns of our lives . . . Instead, buying becomes the way we do all those things. The consumption of goods doesn't just dominate our lives; it's what we do to live.

Consumerism is the ideology that encourages members of the public to keep buying and keep consuming products because satisfaction is found in doing these. This is evident from the definitions given to it. According to Norton (2009), it is the belief that personal wellbeing and happiness depend, to a very large extent, on the level of personal consumption, particularly on the purchase of material goods. Producers, advertisers and service providers use this to their advantage. Since this ideology is encouraged, the tendencies towards consumerism in the audience are nurtured. Members of the public are made to believe that there is nothing wrong in buying and consuming, even when such products may not really be necessary. The lifestyle that is celebrated according to Norton (2009:1) is, thus, the one that "consumption and material possessions are at the centre of happiness". Though people have always seen the need to buy products, more consumption is encouraged as this is seen as a better lifestyle.

Over time, members of the public have become influenced by this ideology. Consumerism is presented as a harmless lifestyle that comes with numerous advantages.



This lifestyle is celebrated and encouraged by the market system. Norton (2009:2) affirms that “the nature of the market system in which we live shapes peoples preferences and choices excessively in favor of consumption over values”. This has been done in a subtle way, with little or no emphasis on the disadvantages of such a lifestyle. Advertisers use several strategies to present this ideology as a normal way of life to the public. This ranges from the audience’s preferences of particular benefits to the manipulation of language and images. Since the advertisers do not front the fact that they are encouraging this ideology, members of the public find themselves patronising the goods and services being advertised.

## **2.6. Semiotics: A study of signs and sign systems**

Semiotics, as a field of study, deals with signification and all it entails. The term ‘semeiotics’, according to Danesi (2004:4) was coined by Hippocrates (460 – 377 BC) while studying the nature of a symptom in medical science. The symptom was seen as a ‘semeion’ (a physical mark or sign) by Hippocrates. As a field, semiotics focuses on representation in different aspects of life. Its knowledge helps us to understand the important roles signs and their interpretations play in constructing world realities. According to Elam (2005: 1), semiotics is “a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society”. While explaining the impact interpretation plays in understanding signs, Chandler (2007: 11) says:

exploring semiotic perspectives, we may come to realize that information or meaning is not ‘contained’ in the world or in books, computers or audio-visual media. Meaning is not ‘transmitted’ to us – we actively create it according to a complex interplay of codes or conventions of which we are normally unaware.

Semiotics studies how a sign can be employed to stand for something else, which may initially look unconnected to such a sign. In a broad sense, Umberto Eco (1976: 7) submits that it is “concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign”. Anything is a sign as long as it is taken to refer to something other than itself (Chandler, 2007: 13). This explains why a sign can take several forms: object, image, sound, sight, gesture and other forms of representation. Though a sign is capable of taking different forms, such forms are

devoid of any significant meaning until we interpret them, consciously or unconsciously, as signifying such.

Although the use of signs for communication has a long history, modern semiotics began with the Swiss Linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913) and the American Philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914). Semiotics has also been proven to be a very important aspect of life, though it seems to have been exaggerated a few times. While explaining the significant role it plays, Chandler (2007:10) affirms “while we need not accept the postmodernist stance that there is no external reality beyond sign-systems, studying semiotics can assist us to become more aware of the mediating role of signs and of the roles played by ourselves and others in constructing social realities”. Saussure’s model is rooted in the dyadic tradition in which a sign is composed of two parts: a sign and its meaning. The association of the two is referred to as ‘signification’. Saussure sees a sign as a whole and the combination of a signifier and a signified. He states:

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept [*signified*] and a sound pattern [*signifier*]. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer’s psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a ‘material’ element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept. (Saussure, 1983: 66)

He refers to the signifier as the sound pattern and perceives writing as an analogous sign-system which is secondary, separate and dependent. According to Chandler, “within the (‘separate’) system of written signs, a signifier such as the written letter ‘t’ signified a sound in the primary sign-system of language (and thus a written word would also signify a sound rather than a concept). Thus for Saussure, writing relates to speech as signifier to [the] signified . . .” (2007:16). The same signifier could also be interpreted in various ways, thus resulting into different meanings. This is made even easier if such a signifier is placed in different contexts. Following the illustration given by Chandler (2007:16), the signifier ‘close’ on a carton of milk, for example, indicates to a buyer the point at which such is to be covered after use, the same word on a button placed beside a door tells

everyone what button to press to get the door closed and the same word, with a ‘-d’ (past tense marker) printed on a cardboard and placed at the entrance of a supermarket signifies to customers that business is over for such a day. The signified, according to Saussure, is the conception or thought brought up by the signifier (sound pattern) (Chandler, 2007: 16). He stresses that the signifier and the signified (sound and thought) are so intimately linked that one induces the other; they are also mutually dependent (Saussure, 1983: 111).

Precedence was placed on relationships rather than things by Saussure. He perceived meaning to be more relational in nature than referential. While discussing the nature of meaning, Chandler (2007: 18) avers that to Saussure, “the meaning of signs was seen as lying in their systematic relation to each other rather than deriving from any inherent features of signifiers or any reference to material things”. He sees both signifier and signified as relational entities. This position could be a little confusing, especially since several words are known to make meaning without their reliance on other words. However, the important role relationship plays in interpreting words is not to be pushed aside. A study of the environment (context and surrounding words) in which certain words are found helps in giving a better understanding to the initial meaning attached to such.

Saussure also believes that a sign is distinct from another as a result of what it constitutes. He sees the essence and uniqueness of a particular sign in its ability to be differentiated from another, based on what it has but is lacking in the other. This, according to Chandler (2007: 21), is what is obtainable in advertising. He claims “advertising furnishes a good example of this notion, since what matters in ‘positioning’ a product is *not* the relationship of advertising signifiers to real-world referents, but the differentiation of each sign from the others to which it is related”. Saussure dwells on negative, oppositional differences between signs which make it possible to define concepts by contrasting with other items. He sees a concept as being characterised by the possession of what others in the same group do not have.

The arbitrary nature of the link between the signifier and the signified is also stressed by Saussure (Saussure, 1983: 67). To him, real-world referents do not need particular sounds to refer to them before they are seen or understood for what they are; they are real enough.

Chandler (2007: 22 - 23) opines “the form of the signifier is not determined by what it signifies... No specific signifier is naturally more suited to a signified than any other signifier; in principle any signifier could represent any signified”. The notion of arbitrariness in language is, however, believed not to have been created by Saussure; other scholars like Aristotle, Plato, Hermogenes have also discussed it (Chandler, 2007: 23).

Signification, as a means of communication, is also seen to be arbitrary, though not its entirety. The interpretations given to some signs are determined by the meanings attached to them in some other contexts. While discussing the partial arbitrariness of signs, Chandler (2007: 27) states “while the relationship between signifiers and their signifieds are ontologically arbitrary . . ., this is not to suggest that signifying systems are socially or historically arbitrary”. This agrees with the claim made by Lévi-Straus (1972: 71) which states “the sign is arbitrary *a priori* but ceases to be arbitrary *a posteriori* – after the sign has come into historical existence it cannot be arbitrarily changed”. Chandler further affirms “even in the case of the ‘arbitrary’ colours of traffic lights, the original choice of red for ‘stop’ was not entirely arbitrary, since it already carried relevant associations with danger” (2007: 27). As a result of its use in various contexts, a sign obtains different connotations which are, usually, known by its users.

Peirce also formulated his own model of sign at about the same time when Saussure was formulating his. Unlike the model designed by Saussure, Peirce came up with a triadic model which consists of: a representamen, an interpretant and an object. The representamen is the form taken by the sign, an interpretant is the sense created by the sign and an object is what the sign refers to (Chandler: 2007: 29). These three are seen as important elements and every sign is made up of them. A perfect understanding of a sign resides in the agreement of these three. As such, it is very important to get a good grip of how a message is interpreted before one can understand what is being represented. The meaning of a sign is often hidden and is only brought to limelight through the interaction of the representamen, the interpretant and the object.

The triadic concept of the sign is believed to have been employed by various other scholars before Peirce came up with his. Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Boethius, Francis Bacon and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz had all employed a triadic model of the sign

prior to its use by Peirce (Chandler, 2007: 33). The major difference between the models propounded by Saussure and Peirce is that while the former advocates that a sign is dyadic in nature, the latter believes it is triadic with his addition of 'the object'. Though different scholars have supported both schools of thoughts, Roman Jakobson, an expert of binary structures in language recognises the importance of the addition in the model propounded by Peirce (Chandler, 2007: 35). This shows that though this third sense is not acknowledged by Saussure's model, it does exist and it is an important part of the signaling system.

Unlike Saussure, Peirce also offers a classification of signs, which is at times referred to as the 'differing modes of relationship between the signifier and the signified'. The divisions include:

- a. symbol: this mode is created in a situation where the signifier does not share any physical resemblance with the signified. The relationship is conventional and must be learnt.
- b. icon: here, the signifier resembles the signified and the similarity can be seen, felt, tasted or even heard. Elam (2005:19) asserts "the governing principle in iconic signs is similitude; the icon represents its object 'mainly by similarity' between the sign vehicle and its signified".
- c. index: the mode here is that in which the signifier is connected to the signified. The sign vehicle could act as a pointer to what is being referred to.

## **2. 7. Theoretical framework**

This study is hinged on a modified version of Roland Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image*. Insights from Roman Jakobson's 1960 *Communication Model* and Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's 1996 *Visual Social Semiotic Theory* were used to broaden the scope of the Barthesian model.

### **2.7.1. Roland Barthes' Rhetoric of the Image**

*Rhetoric of the Image* by Roland Barthes is a semiotic theory where images and words are deconstructed to bring out both the obvious and the hidden meanings. According to him, the word 'image' originates from the Latin word 'imitari' which means 'imitation'. This forms the central question in Barthes' essay. The essay addressed the questions of 'how

can analogical representations produce true systems of signs and not mere combination of symbols? How does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there beyond? To him, if an image is a mere imitation (copy), is it capable to adequately convey meaning? Can images be said to constitute a language? if they do, how does meaning work within this language?

Barthes, in this analogy, presents a particular advertisement (composed of words and images) as a system of signs in which the channel of communication (advertised copy) is made up of layers of meanings. The image is a 'Panzani Advertisement' composed of some packets of pasta, a tin, some onions, peppers and tomatoes, a sachet and a mushroom. All these, designed in yellow and green, are captured as emerging from a half-open string bag and the image as a whole is placed on a plain red background. The text is made up of caption and labels on the items displayed as well as the word 'Panzani'.

According to Barthes, the Panzani advertisement can be broken down into three:

- I. the linguistic message
- II. the denoted image and
- III. the connoted image

The linguistic message is represented by the verbal elements in the advertisement like the caption and the labels on the items displayed. These verbal elements perform two functions, namely: anchorage and relay. The anchorage serves as a control for the image. It helps to focus the attention of the audience on a particular interpretation; on their own, images have the tendency to be ambiguous. The anchorage thus helps to mirror what the image has already said. It emphasises the message passed across by the image. The relay helps in giving an extended meaning to the message given by the image. It provides the audience with what potentials the image has in giving additional meanings. The denoted image, otherwise called the literal/non-coded image is the first meaning an image gives to its viewer, without considering various factors that could be responsible for the creation of such or any hidden meaning such could have. The denoted image is the primary meaning an image has and such could be shared by different persons, since such image is interpreted based on what everyone can see.

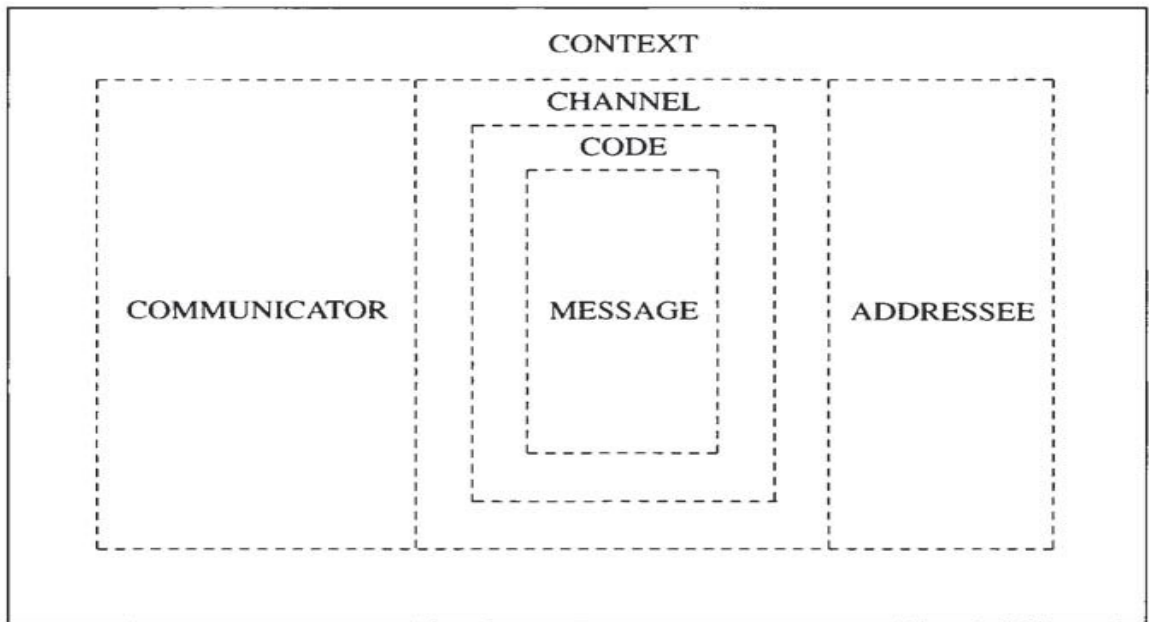
The connoted image, on the other hand, is the secondary meaning an image gives, which usually comes after the initial and spontaneous idea the image gives to its viewer. This

also explains why the connoted message is also known as the symbolic/coded image. Meanings derived at this level are usually arrived at when the image is fixed into particular codes which could be historical, cultural and societal in nature. These codes are modes that are used to unearth the hidden meanings in images and they show how an image could be made up of social, cultural, historical and other kinds of ideologies. These ideologies help in explaining the whole essence of an image. According to Lockwood (2007), “ultimately, it is not the photo itself that is significant but rather the historical and cultural elements of the photo”. The authenticity of the connoted aspect of an image is unmistakable as different factors are responsible for this. Apart from the codes the image is subjected to, its creation itself lends a big hand towards the multiplicity of the meanings. Barthes (1977: 19) asserts:

the press photograph is an object that has been worked, on chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation; while on the other, this same photograph is not only perceived, received, it is *read*, connected more or less consciously by the public that consumes it to a traditional stock of signs.

### **2. 7. 2. Roman Jakobson’s Communication Model**

This theory was developed by Roman Jakobson in 1960. He believes that language (text) must be studied in all the varieties of its function. The concepts highlighted in the model include: the message, the addresser, the addressee, the context, the contact and the code. To him, a communication process is more involving than the simple and commonly recognised one-way communication process between the addresser and the addressee; every other part of the message is as important as the rest since they all come together to make the process a success. Jakobson (1960: 3) states “each of these six factors determines a different function of language. Although we distinguish six basic aspects of language, we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function”. A pictorial representation of the model as well as all its parts is given below:



**Figure 2.1.** Roman Jakobson's Communication Model  
(The modified version as represented in Forceville, 1996: 70)

The representation of gender in billboard advertisement is seen as a product of some other factors like the society, the media and culture. A full interpretation of any representation will not be obtained if any of the parts that contributed in one way or the other to its construction is left out. This model provides a means to ensuring that the impacts of these other parts are considered. Unlike the popular belief, no message is created in isolation. If properly analysed, several messages will be discovered as products of all these 'minor' but important parts.

### **2.7.3. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's 1996 Visual Social Semiotic Theory**

This model believes that every image performs three different kinds of tasks in its creation of meanings. It examines the functions performed by the elements of a communication process. They are:

1. representational function
2. interpersonal function and
3. compositional function

The representational function is concerned with the story the represented image tells, who the participants are and how they are connected. This is a very important aspect as it



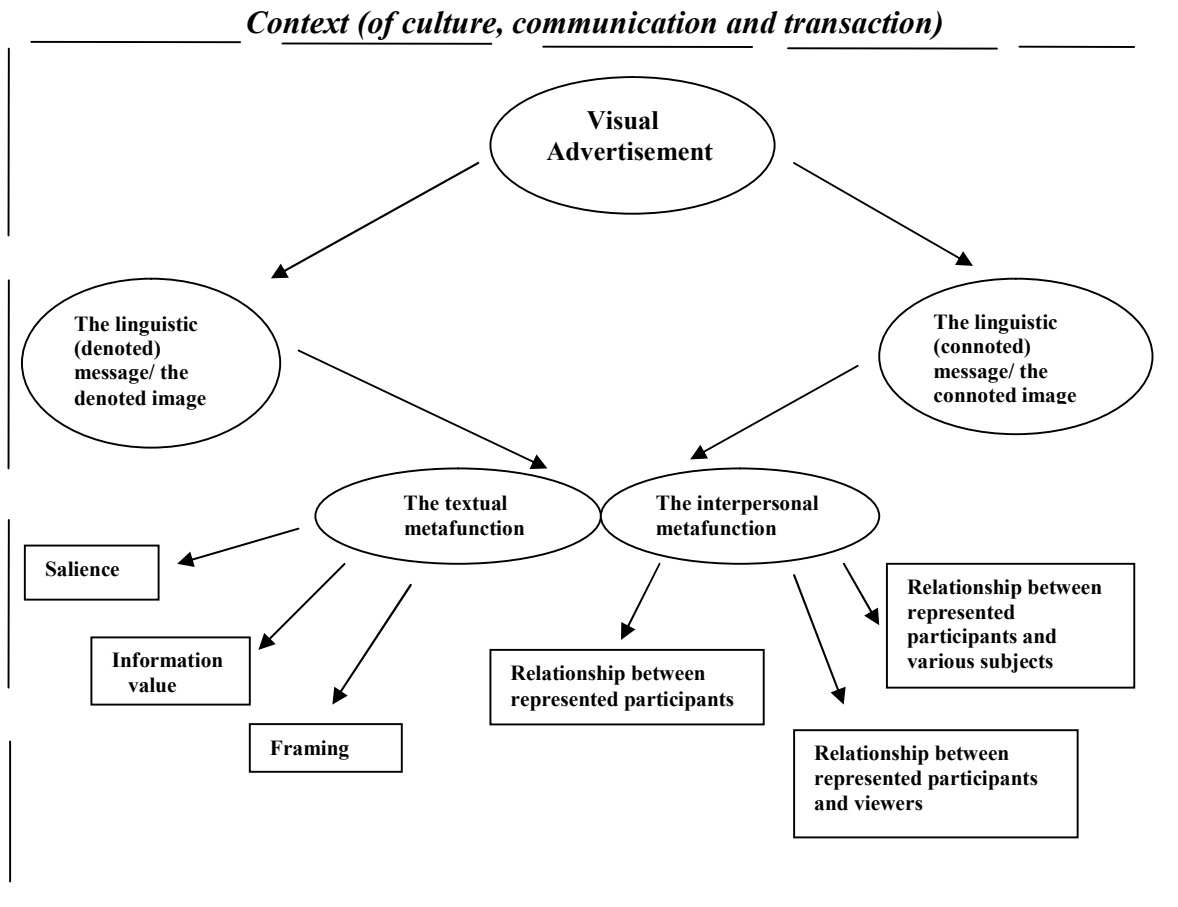
brings to limelight histories and other facts that could play major roles in ensuring balanced interpretations are given to the represented images. Interpersonal function, on its own, discusses the perceived actions among the represented participants. It also considers other aspects of the communication process like the addresser (creator) and the addressee (recipient). All these are necessary to ensure no important part of the message is ignored.

The following are types of interpersonal meanings:

1. image act and gaze
2. social distance and intimacy
3. horizontal angle and involvement
4. vertical angle and power.

The compositional function considers how the parts relate to one another and how they all come together to form a unified communication process.

Given the inability of the Barthesian semiotic orientation to pay attention to how signs are used for framing, salience, accentuating the value of a piece of information, as well as relationships between represented participants and other subjects, insights from Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's (1996) 'social semiotic theory' and Roman Jakobson's (1960) 'communication model' are utilised to broaden the scope of the Barthesian framework. Social semiotic theory looks at the process of communication under three functions, namely: the ideational, the textual and the interpersonal metafunctions. Instead of leaving the discovery of the implicit meanings under the revised categories to chance, the insights obtained helped to ensure a comprehensive analysis. Out of the three functions identified by Kress and van Leeuwen, two (the textual and the interpersonal metafunctions) were chosen based on their relevance to this study. The two modified divisions of Barthes' model were, thus, expanded using these two functions from social semiotic theory. Jakobson recognises the importance of six factors (context, contact, code, message, addressee, addresser) in communication. Since the modified version of the Barthesian framework already shares some affinity with other factors, only context (of culture, communication and transaction) is employed to further strengthen it.



**Fig. 2.2.** A modified version of the Barthesian model  
(Modified by Lydia Tomilola Olaifa)

The combination of these theories helps to have a critical and an unbiased understanding of why the masculine and the feminine genders are so represented in billboard advertisements. Their semiotic approach ensures that concealed meanings that could otherwise remain hidden are unearthed and that the concept of gender signification is appreciated objectively. The theories draw attention to certain codes that are responsible for particular depictions of gender in visual advertisement.

## 2.8. Summary

This chapter has discussed critical issues related to the representation of gender in billboards advertising products and services. It also reviewed the theoretical framework employed for the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Overview of the chapter**

This chapter focuses on issues connected to data collection and analysis. It provides a brief background to the milieu of the study and gives a list of the billboards analysed under four categories. Also, the chapter discusses method of data collection, sampling procedures and method of data analysis.

#### **3.2. Milieu of the study**

Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria, is the setting for this study. Ibadan, fully known as Ilu Eba-Odan (the city at the junction of savannah and the forest), is the third largest metropolitan area, after Lagos and Kano, in Nigeria (Arambara, 2013). This feature has also brought both real and imagined opportunities, the kinds that are not found in the rural areas (Tomori, ND). It is situated about 78 miles inland from Lagos and it is connected to many other towns by a system of roads, railways and air routes (Tomori, ND). It has also been labeled as the largest indigenous city in Africa ([infocontent.pgschool.ui.edu.ng/Ibadan\\_history.aspx](http://infocontent.pgschool.ui.edu.ng/Ibadan_history.aspx)). According to Arambara (2013), during the 2006 census, the city had a population of about 1,338,659. Scholars have given reasons that have aided its rather rapid but unsurprising growth. According to Adelekan et al. (2014:7) “the city has grown at a tremendous rate since the oil boom of the 1970s, and population projections indicate that the city’s population will double in the 25 years between 2005 and 2030”.

Another peculiar feature of Ibadan is its heterogeneous nature. Though due to its ethnic origin, the main dwellers are Yoruba, academic and commercial purposes have drawn people of other ethnic groups to the city. Igbo and Hausa people, as well as members of

other ethnic groups, have become major stakeholders in the city. The survival of any group has always rested on the availability of daily provisions like food items, beauty products, clothing items and other products meant to provide comfort for the populace. This explains why goods and services of different sorts are provided and suppliers of both strive to attract and retain the attention of the public.

Generally, success in advertising is not believed to be got when few people patronise but when virtually everyone opts for such products on a regular basis. Every advertiser strives to ensure their products, in the circle of other competing products, become household names. Advertisers have, thus, seen the need to be as creative and enticing as possible to their audience; the innovative use of gender is one way that has been discovered to help in magnetising and retaining the attention of the audience. Gender has a way of making it very easy for the public to relate with whatever is being advertised. It is also a provision that visual advertisement benefits a lot from. Billboards are seen displaying images of gendered images advertising food items, clothing materials, household materials and musical instruments.

### **3.3. Scope of the study**

The study investigates the concepts of language, gender representation and consumerism in billboards advertising various goods and services. As a result, the pictures of billboards displaying various products and services are taken. Such products include beautifying products (soaps, creams), food items (drugs, food types and snacks), beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks), service providers (Glo, MTN, Etisalat, Airtel), advertising campaigns and household items. The billboards are classified under four headings – food items, services, household items and beauty products. The billboards are highlighted below:

#### **A. Food items**

1. Coartem
2. De Rica
3. Frisomum
4. Honeywell Superfine Flour
5. Maggi
6. Ibucap

7. Gala
8. Mr Muscle
9. Three Crowns
10. Tasty Tom Jollof Mix
11. Combisunate
12. Melody Candy

**B. Beverages**

13. Vitamilk
14. Orijin
15. Williams Dark Ale
16. Bull London Dry Gin
17. Goldberg
18. Gulder
19. Smirnoff
20. New Wazobia Pack
21. Regal Dry Gin
22. Snapp
23. Cowbell Chocolate
24. Pepsi
25. King Tonic
26. Trophy
27. Yugo
28. Guinness
29. Adonko Alcoholic Bitters
30. Maltina
31. Action Bitters
32. Seaman's Schnapps
33. Goldberg 1
34. Goldberg 2
35. Hollandia Evap Milk
36. Star Radler

37. Supreme Ice Cream
38. Peak Milk
39. Eagle Aromatic Schnapps
40. Bullet Energy Drink
41. Veleta Sparkling Fruit Drink
42. Chivita
43. Trophy
44. Chapman
45. Dano
46. Cocacola
47. Olympic

**C. Service providers**

48. 9 mobile
49. A young lady advertises visibility of brand
50. Aptech Computer Education
51. A masculine T-shirt advertises space
52. A feminine T-shirt advertises space
53. Independence Promo
54. Advertisement of space in its barest form
55. Feedwell Supermarket
56. Digital billboards 1
57. Digital billboards 2
58. Digital billboards 3
59. Price Slash
60. Training creative minds and hands
61. Advertisement of space with a little humour
62. COVMIND
63. GLO Campus Data Booster Zone
64. DSTV
65. Royal Spices Academy
66. Peppered Rice Take Away
67. OPay

- 68. Jumia
- 69. Taxify
- 70. Foodies
- 71. McDowell's

**D. Advertising campaigns**

- 72. Campaign against genital mutilation
- 73. Campaign for Family Planning

**E. Household items**

- 74. Dettol soap
- 75. Ariel
- 76. Mortein
- 77. Harpic
- 78. Waw
- 79. Dabur Herbal toothpaste
- 80. Olive Toothpaste

**F. Beauty products**

- 81. Dallas Cosmetics
- 82. Classic Soaps
- 83. Always pad
- 84. Delta
- 85. Eva
- 86. Pure Skin
- 87. Carotone
- 88. Mega Growth
- 89. Ivory Beauty Soap
- 90. Serial White Gold

**3. 4. Data collection**

Data for the study are billboards of products and services in Ibadan metropolis. Since billboards are always strategically placed for maximum visibility, major and minor roads in Ibadan were combed. Several tours were made to areas like *University of Ibadan, Ojoo, Agbowo, Bodija, Apata, Sango, Agodi, Onireke, Sabo, Iyaganku, Oremeji, GRA, Dugbe,*

*Beere, Ogunpa, Aleshinloye, Mokola, Molete, Gate, Challenge, Eleyele, Ring Road, Oja Oba* to have images of the billboards captured. One hundred and thirty (130) billboards of products were purposively captured but ninety (90) were selected for this study as a result of the reasons given under limitation to the study.

### **3. 5. Rationale for the choice of data and instrument**

The choice to study billboards advertisements of goods and services was made because of the need to critically examine what advertisers do with language and images. Though each location is filled with people of various ideas, advertisements continue to be impactful because of various strategies employed to reach the public. Advertisement is a world that could be referred to as the product of different factors. According to Alozie (2009: 3), “advertising tends to reflect the cultural values and symbols prevalent within its target society”.

Images were studied mainly because of the impact they play in the effectiveness of visual advertisements. Members of the public find it easier to relate with visual advertisements designed with images. Pictures, generally, are so important to life that our right hemisphere is believed to think in images (Oeilsj, 2011). Also, images are believed to be capable of helping one to overcome the barrier of getting appropriate words to express oneself and have been proved to last longer in the memory (Produzione Expositor, 2011, Amelsvoort, ND).

Moreover, Ibadan is chosen as the setting of the study because of its rather peculiar but balanced audience (in terms of gender and ethnicity). Apart from its ability to boast of a good representation of inhabitants from other ethnic groups, its exposure makes it a perfect place to have been affected by general civilisation and development. The heterogeneous nature helps to ensure the city could be regarded as a good representation of the Country.

### **3. 6. Sampling procedure**

The study is descriptive in nature. The ninety (90) billboards selected out of the one hundred and thirty (130) purposively captured were grouped into four subheadings. For the analysis, major categories were formed based on the objectives of the study. These



major categories were further subdivided, with each bearing particular heading to reflect the focus of such.

### **3.7. Method of data analysis**

The analysis is text-based; the billboards were texts on which the analysis relied. Though the images and the use of language are solely relied on in the analysis, other gendered resources were also identified. Each code of communication was analysed to avoid getting things muddled up. In analysing the data, different categories were formed based on shared features discovered in the billboards. Each category was studied based on the type of products, the manner in which both genders were represented, the cultural implications depicted by the portrayals and the significant issues they communicate. In order to ensure that all the aspects were catered for, the gendered elements were first identified, their general meanings given before the various implications were analysed. This was done in order to identify the various parts that were brought together to communicate through the gendered images in the billboards.

### **3.8. Limitations to the study**

The billboard is a channel of advertisement that affords certain benefits that are not available to other channels. Some advertisers, however, overdo. Some of them sell their products by whatever means is available, without really considering the logicity of such. Billboards of the same products that are designed with different images/in different ways are thus scattered across Ibadan. Though there are also new and upcoming products and services displayed, too much space is taken by billboards that are mere variations of the same item. This restricts the number of competing products that would have been available. It also cuts down the general number of advertised goods, since the available space is already taken.

The creative ability of some advertisers has also beclouded them such that their billboards are designed with too many images or allowed to take too much space, leaving one to wonder what exactly is being sold. Several billboards had several minutes devoted to them just to ascertain the product that is being advertised. The images of some were not even captured at first, since it was very difficult to decide what such were exactly meant for. The researcher had to rely on subsequent visits to get them.

In addition, the unstable nature of some billboards made it impossible to capture them. Though the researcher had to go round several times for the data collection, it was discovered that some billboards rarely stay. They are removed suddenly; just few days after such had been erected, thus making it impossible to get them when another tour was made. The sudden removal also resulted into different developments. Some of them were re-erected, some were redesigned while some were removed altogether. Since billboards are channels of advertisement one expects to be able to refer to, the unstable nature of such billboards made it impossible to consider them.

Also, some billboards which could have been very good samples had to be disregarded because of their state and location. Some were already badly battered by the effect of sun and rain, making it difficult to get a clear picture. Part of the vinyl sheet of some of the billboards was already torn. Also, some of them have become partly covered by other billboards. In an effort to avoid being covered by competing billboards, some have been designed by poles that are unnecessarily long. This made it a challenge to get their pictures taken as they were either too faint or too small to be considered.

### **3.9. Summary**

This chapter is based on issues relating to methods of data collection and analysis. Concepts like milieu of the study, scope and limitation of the study, rationale for the choice of data and instrument, method of data collection and analysis were discussed.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1. Overview of the chapter**

This chapter presents analyses and discussions from the billboards of goods and services utilised for this study. It focuses on how language, gender and consumerism are deployed by the billboard advertisers in Ibadan metropolis to ensure a continued patronage of their products. Generally, the Ibadan postcolonial values tradition, it also tries to achieve some modernity. Though a kind of categorisation has been made to ensure a comprehensive study of the billboards, overlaps are discovered. Also, since the relationship between the denoted message/image and the connoted message/image cannot be ignored, the analyses are carried out to show how they are involved. The analyses are broadly divided into four, based on the four objectives of the study and each objective is further divided into subsection(s).

#### **4.2. Manipulation of language in the billboard advertisements**

Language is one of the tools employed by advertisers to reach their audience. Apart from the function of informing, it is also used to entertain and educate. The essence of all these functions of language is to influence the audience. Thus, it enables the marketing of goods and services to the advantage of the advertiser. However, since members of the audience do not appreciate manipulation, advertisers have devised ways to ensure the use of language does not boldly carry the logo of manipulation. This allows the creative power of the advertiser to be fully utilised as several things can be said both at the surface level and the deep level. In fact, in visual advertisement, language is more at the latter than the former; this affords the advertiser to pass across several messages in coded forms. As a result, whatever expression is finally displayed is a product of various concepts.

#### 4. 2. 1 Subtle manipulation of the audience through language

Words carry power, especially in the hands of a skilled individual. Several ‘conquests’ have been made through the skillful use of words. Though people’s opinions usually differ on issues, members of the public have been made to change their perception through the creative use of particular words in a particular way. Plate 4.1 is a campaign against female circumcision. The caption ‘LET’S STOP FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION’ is the first point of attraction when one looks at the billboard; all the words are not only capitalised, they are bold and written in white. Though there are images on the billboard, the important role the expression plays in the campaign is impressed on the audience through the font type and size intentionally selected. The effect is reinforced by the fact that out of all the words, ‘MUTILATION’ stands out. Its font size combines those of the other words. This is intentionally done; to front ‘Mutilation’ as the most important word in the expression.

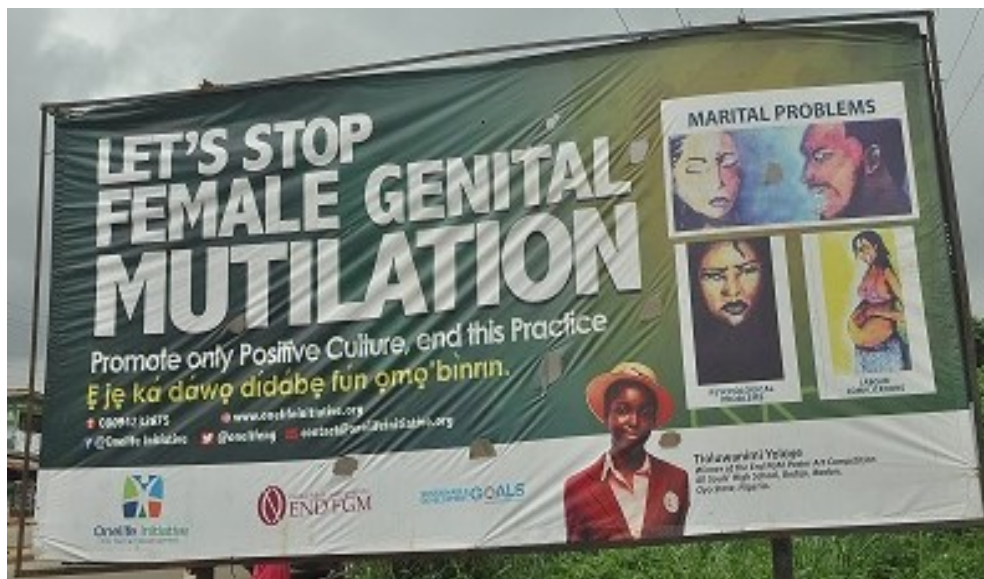


Plate 4.1. Campaign against female circumcision

This study rests on a modified version of Roland Barthes’ ‘Rhetoric of the image’. According to him, the linguistic message either performs the function of an anchor or a relay, to the image displayed. A good look at this billboard, however, shows a reversal in those duties. While the message is the salient item on the billboard, the two pictures act as an anchor and a relay. Every creative display as we have above performs three functions according to Kress and van Leeuwen. The functions are representational, interactive and compositional functions. The compositional function ensures the coherence of a text with

its surrounding element(s). In the above plate, coherence is achieved in a number of ways: the salience of the main message, the support given by the other linguistic messages and the accompaniment provided by the pictures. For the purpose of salience, the most important words the interactive participants should pay attention to is ‘Mutilation’ and this explains why it is reinforced. The expression itself covers about two-third of the whole billboard, pushing the images to a side.

The choice of words is also intentional to ensure that the message is clearly understood. Generally, ‘female circumcision’ is more commonly used when this practice is described. However, the phrase, ‘genital mutilation’ is used to guarantee that the effect of the ‘crudeness’ of the practice is not lost on the audience. The word makes one cringe and some persons would rather avoid thinking about its denotation. The images created by the expression is not pleasant and it depicts an undesirable state. The use of mutilation is hyperbolic but intentional as a design to discourage the practice of female circumcision. The word ‘circumcision’ is substituted for ‘mutilation’ because the latter is offensive and can create a scary picture in the mind of the audience. Apart from the fact that it forces practitioners to discontinue the practice, persons who have not been involved are given a reason why it should never even be considered.

The expression “Promote only Positive Culture, end this Practice” is placed immediately under the first expression to reinforce the message already passed across. The word ‘positive’ is a binary opposite of ‘negative’ and it signifies the wrong treatment the girl-child is subjected to. It is also a sign; the signifier is the expression and it signifies the imperfect nature of culture, and indicates the need for a constant check to ensure evil practices are not promoted. It also connotes that the practice of circumcising the girl-child is evil. “E je ka dawo didabe fun omo’binrin” (Let’s stop circumcising the girl-child) is placed under the first admonition to help drive the message home.

**Let’s** translated to **E**, in Yoruba, is intentionally used as an indirect way of enlisting the support of practitioners and advocates of the practice. The choice of the inclusive pronominal ‘us’ is made to bridge the real or imagined gap between the advertising campaign team/the piece of information and the practitioners of the act. Circumcision is carried out on the girl-child in Yorubaland for the purposes of health, beauty and to

discourage promiscuity. The campaigners know that discouraging such an act, especially when the practitioners feel they have good reasons, deserves a lot of tact. “Let’s” and “E” are used to show collective involvement. The words also connote a general acceptance of the practice as a societal, rather than an individual error. Since the advertising campaign blames no one in particular, the practitioners are pacified in an easier way and the message gets communicated. The words also connote the importance of everyone’s contribution towards effecting the change needed.

As earlier stated, the compositional function of a text is to ensure that the linguistic message coheres with its surrounding elements. The right side of the billboard displays three cases that are possible side effects of female circumcision; marital problems, psychological problems and labour complications are listed. These images serve as an anchorage as they help elaborate the subject of discussion. They help throw light on the practice and in a way, provide a means of enlightenment for individuals who have no idea about the effect of the practice. The picture of a female student is displayed at the background of the billboard. Its placement, however, presents the image as an afterthought. Tioluwanimi Yoloye is displayed as the winner of ‘End FGM Poster Art Competition’. Though the image denotes a brilliant secondary school student, it is a relay because of its extended meaning. It connotes the potentials of every girl-child, if female circumcision is not allowed.

A good look at the plate shows an unusually dense billboard. One of the tips in ensuring a billboard gets read is that the words must be few (Robertson, 2015). In fact, according to Suggett (2015), the message is better shown than said. There are several reasons why Plate 4.1 is designed like this. Female circumcision is a fairly complex issue that some cultures have become used to. Some practitioners believe it is necessary to discourage promiscuity. As a result, the advertising campaign feels the need to say as much as possible about it, believing that this would help discourage the practitioners. Apart from what is said, particular words are emphasised to show the complex nature of the message. Images are also employed to reinforce the piece of information already passed across through the linguistic message. The variation in the typography also has semiotic significance. The whole semiotic space of the Plate is, thus, designed because the

advertising campaign believes that discouraging the cultural practice demands the use of several convincing verbal and visual signs.

The use of Yoruba language contributes to the density of Plate 4.1. The expression written in Yoruba language is a translation of what has been said in English. Though this is intentional, as it allows audience who do not speak English Language to have an understanding of what is said, the representation takes the space that would have helped the billboard to be less crowded. Thus, while the advertising campaign has intentionally included an expression in Yoruba language for the benefit of the Yoruba audience, the inclusion is capable of making the billboard unreadable, thereby resulting into semiotic failure. A better way of deploying the Yoruba language to the advantage of this campaign would be the design of two billboards, where each one is dedicated to a particular language.

There is, however, another side to the density of this billboard. Though the advertising campaigns has reasons for the density of the billboard, all the contents make the billboard overcrowded. The space is mutilated and makes the billboard look like one without visual aesthetics. In fact, such a billboard stands the risk of not getting read, at all. The audience of billboards, whether it is the active or passive type, is always in a hurry; the billboards are always placed on busy roads where the audience may not be able to stay for long. If the curiosity of an active audience would push them to read, at least, some of the messages on the billboard, a lack of curiosity coupled with the overcrowded billboard discourages a passive audience. Thus, in a bid to communicate the gravity of the practice to the audience, the advertising campaign may lose the audience, altogether.



**Plate 4.2.** CocaCola manipulates the audience through language

The subtle manipulation of the audience through language is also seen in Plate 4.2, where CocaCola is advertised. Information value is one of the ways by which the compositional function of visual advertisement is accomplished (Kress and van Leeuwen). It can be utilised on both the horizontal and vertical axes. On the vertical axis, the right side of the billboard is divided into the ideal and the real respectively. While the ideal provides the audience with a promise and fulfillment of what the product offers, the real presents factual information about the product itself. On the horizontal axis, the billboard is divided into the right side and the left side. The left side is tagged the ‘Given’ because it is believed to display what is already known. The right side displays the ‘New’, which is the key information, the essence of the advertisement. While the left side of Plate 4.2 shows the picture of a smiling young man, with a book and an opened bottle of CocaCola, the right side displays the combination of the linguistic message and samples of the product.

The left side denotes the fact that it is a given that CocaCola is a drink appreciated by people and this explains the contented smile on the face of the young man. The right side, on the other hand, displays the division of the side into two; the ‘ideal’ carries the main linguistic message while the ‘real’ carries a picture of two bottles of the product being advertised. Though the left side, which is taken as the ‘given’ takes the bulk of the space of the billboard and the left side, the ‘new’ is pushed towards the edge of the plate, the salience of the right side is ensured by the way it is presented. The background of the right space is not only painted in red, the colour favoured by CocaCola, the linguistic



message is made to come in two colours – yellow and white. While this denotes a casual way of beautifying the billboard, it connotes a kind of division/recognition of preference.

The linguistic message itself reads ‘Choose your Coca-Cola with or without sugar’. Though all the words are capitalised, ‘with or without sugar’ is made to appear bigger to show that the expression is more important than the preceding one. While the denotative meaning of the whole expression is to inform the audience that CocaCola is now available in two varieties, the connotative meanings are:

1. they are produced by the same organisation,
2. both of them are good and
3. your decision, to pick either, is respected.

Even when it is in the interest of the audience, no one appreciates being forced to make a decision. This is the advertiser’s subtle way of telling members of the audience that they have the right to choose, have what it takes to make the right decision and that the advertiser is not going to deprive them the opportunity of exercising that right. The pronominal ‘your’ is a strategy to personalise the product. It makes the audience have a feeling of being directly addressed and boosts their self-importance. This is a subtle way of getting to the audience as everyone who reads this gets the feeling of being, personally, addressed. There is also the use of incongruous syntax in the slogan ‘taste the feeling’. A feeling is an abstract sensation, and no matter how real it is, it cannot be tasted as it has no physical form. This is, however, used by the producer to show the realness of product and its benefits.

One way to get the attention of the audience is by presenting a product as one that combines specialty with affordability. It is a rather funny combination of qualities people look at for, because though everyone appreciates quality products, no one wants to spend more than is absolutely necessary. Plate 4.3, a billboard advertisement of Hollandia Evap Milk is another place where there is a subtle manipulation of the audience.



**Plate 4.3.** Hollandia Evap Milk projects ease through language

Though there are other linguistic messages on the billboard, the first one that jumps at the viewer is ‘N100 PERE’, because of its salience. Apart from the fact that it is strategically placed on the billboard, it is also written in capital letters and designed in red, making it slightly contrast with the light blue background of the billboard. All these help present this message as the most important message on the billboard, and as if to confirm it, it is placed very close to a sample of the product. The fact that the price of the product is written does more than inform the audience about how much a pack is sold; it also connotes a sense of openness. Apart from this, the word ‘PERE’, which means ‘ONLY’ in English, is intentionally used to show the audience that though the pack may look expensive, the product is ‘affordable’. In a way, this makes it easy for members of the audience to have a rethink, even if they were going to decide against buying the product. The word ‘PERE’ relieves the burden of a potential buyer and presents it as an affordable

product. Even a clipped form of the word 'Evaporated' (Evap) is represented, as if the advertiser sees using the whole word as a waste of words and time.

In addition to this, the expression, 'JUST FOR YOU' reinforces the message and adds more power to the manipulative efforts of the advertiser. It is the semiotic of audience targeting. Though it is meant for every potential buyer, its presentation makes it look like a personalised message for a particular person. It is an implicit construction of the audience's self-importance and appeals to the audience's need for esteem. 'You' is a second person singular/plural pronoun, thus, it includes anyone and everyone. Its use here is, however, ambiguous. It is embedded with the ability to give an individual audience a false and bloated feeling of importance. Apart from this, the whole expression itself 'JUST FOR YOU' connotes a product that is only meant for the particular person, not everyone. The viewer is, thus, made to develop a personal feeling of 'I am being addressed here' for the product. The slogan 'LIFE TASTES DIFFERENT' helps in completing the work already started by the previous two. Though it is ambiguous as the name of the milk is replaced with 'life', the viewer finds it easy to glide with the knowledge that the peculiar taste of the milk is what is meant here.

Framing is one of the strategies employed to achieve the textual function in Kress and van Leeuwen's visual social semiotic theory. Though there are several other linguistic items and images on the billboard, "N100 PERE" is framed as the most important piece of information. This enhances its information value and draws the attention of members of the audience who, in a bid to appreciate the fact that the product is quite cheap, gets to know about the price of the product, all to the advertiser's advantage. Advertisers intentionally magnify the piece of information that is capable to capture the audience's attention with ease and speed, above those that may also be important but would need to be deemphasised. Scott (1903:154) states "we cannot apperceive a large number of things at the same time. An advertisement that is constructed upon the principle that all parts of it should be attractive at the same time will so divide the attention that no part of it will stand out prominently, and so it will not be noticed at all".

#### 4. 2. 2 Presentation of a simplified version of life

Language is also used to present life in a very simple light. In fact, language, sometimes, oversimplifies life and its various concepts. Since the effect of a skillful use of language remains powerful, this has been used to change the perspective of some members of the audience about several things. Even if the result is not going to last, the advertiser is assured of its impact at that point.



**Plate 4.4.** Ivory Beauty Soap presents life as an easy concept

Just like in the billboard campaigning against genital mutilation, the image here is an anchorage to the linguistic message, 'Your skin is your identity'. Though all the words are written in capital letters, the word 'skin' is made the most salient with the font size. This shows that the focus of the advertisement is on the skin. Also, while the image is placed on the left, the linguistic message is at the right and strategically placed at the centre of the billboard to doubly articulate its importance. The connotative meaning of the location of the elements on the billboards is that while the images of the lady are given, the linguistic message is the 'new', the essence of the whole advertisement.

'Your skin is your identity' looks like a casual expression on a first look but gives a deeper meaning when it is properly studied. A person's identity is the sense of who a person is, in all respects. It encompasses an individual's peculiarities, uniqueness and importance. As such, it is an understatement to equate a person's skin with their identity, since the skin only has to do with an outer appearance, nothing more. The use of this is, however, intentional. To ladies especially, the skin remains an important part of the body.

Even for several persons, whatever is beneath may not really matter, as long as the not so beautiful parts are covered by a beautiful skin. Though such is a wrong mindset, some persons find it easy to flow with such. To such people, it becomes very easy to present the fact that the skin is the same as the identity. Since the aim of an advertiser is to influence the audience to his or her advantage, presenting an idea in an oversimplified light may not really matter.

This is, however, done in a casual way, as if the issue of establishing a link between the product and identity was not planned. A very keen look shows that unlike what the advertiser may want the audience to believe, establishing one's identity through the use of the soap is the most important thing to the advertiser. Since the advertiser would not want to be caught doing this, the casual process of selling the soap is fronted. This situation is captured by Scott (1903: 233) who says "the advertisement is not a thing which contains within itself the reason for its existence. In and of itself it is perfectly worthless. The aim of the advertisement is to call forth activity in the minds of its readers – and, it might be added, action of a particular sort".

Plate 4.5, a billboard advertisement of Maltina, is another place where life is oversimplified through the use of language. Unlike the other billboards, the linguistic message is placed on the left while the image is displayed on the right. The salience of the linguistic message is, however, brought to the fore by the contrast created in the use of colour; while the linguistic message 'Find happiness in the little things' is written in white, it is placed over a black background. Apart from the salience created by the contrasting colours, the white over black background is iconic of what the expression says; the black background is wide and covers more than a half of the billboard while the white part is the only section represented through the linguistic message. If the impact could still be felt, it shows that little things are capable of providing happiness just like the linguistic message claims. The black background is also symbolic. It communicates self-control and self-confidence (Petrovici, 2014). This is reinforced by the easy smile on the woman's face.



**Plate 4.5.** Maltina as a route to happiness

The effect of the linguistic message is more felt by the sharp contrast created by the background of the displayed image on the right. Unlike the left side, this space is illuminated, though in a dull way. The woman displayed in the picture also looks happy in a quiet way. She is more pronounced by the white shirt and this connotes a pure happiness that is within. The division of the billboard on the horizontal axis connotes that the image is a result of the linguistic message. While this is not impossible, the presentation of the linguistic message takes a lot of things for granted; it assumes the presence of happiness in the little things, it generalises the possibility, making it look like what happens always. A closer look, however, shows that the expression is more of a weasel one. A weasel word is one that first gives an impression of saying something serious, until a closer look proves that nothing has been said. 'Find happiness in **the** little things' suggests particular things have been mentioned. Since this is, however, not so, the viewer is forced to interpret the little things as 'drinking Maltina'. Even at that, drinking Maltina is just **a little thing**, not little things.

The use of image in this plate makes it easier for the advertiser to pass across the message, which would have been a bit challenging if only the linguistic message had been used. The ease displayed by the represented participant makes it look possible to enjoy such. Visual rhetoric helps to get messages across to the audience in a persuasive way (Albakry and Daimin, 2014). The casual but easy enjoyment displayed by the lady makes it possible for the audience to see her as an image of what happens in real life. Albakry and Daimin

(2014: 29) affirm that “in advertising, the image is a perfect ‘representation’ of life”. Since the advertiser has an idea of what the audience appreciates, such is usually chosen to grace the billboard. This explains why Scott (1903:233) claims that “the successful advertiser must be a psychologist”.



**Plate 4.6.** Star Radler projected as a route to double enjoyment

The use of language in Plate 4.6 is similar to that of Plate 4.5. Though the billboard is not divided into two equal parts, the demarcation between the linguistic message and the image is very clear. Also, the linguistic message acts as both an anchorage and a relay to the displayed images. ‘Get double refreshment’, the linguistic message is all written in capital letters and presented in bold to show its salience. Refreshment is doubly articulated. Though it is not situated as the most important element on the billboard, the presentation makes it difficult to miss the linguistic message. In addition, it is placed at the top left corner as an icon of a **topic**, the concept that gives a lesson its direction.

Though it is undeniable that an alcoholic drink is advertised, it looks a little confusing, on the surface, how the audience is expected to get double refreshment. A closer look at the image, however, shows that more than the drink, friendship and a possible romantic relationship are being signified. Hence, while the enjoyment obtained from ‘Star Radler’ is the first being referred to, the second is that of a relationship. While this is not impossible, the advertiser also takes for granted the fact that such activities may not provide the needed refreshment for everyone. In fact, presenting the activities as those embedded with refreshing qualities connotes generalisation. It is possible that for some other persons, they become refreshed through other means.

Plate 4.7 advertises New Wazobia Pack. The first thing that draws the attention of the audience is the blend of Pidgin and the word ‘Wazobia’. The two of them give the audience a sense of the country where the product is being advertised (Nigeria). Apart from the language-related meaning ‘Wazobia’ has, it is also one of the popular indigenous words used for a fifty naira note in Nigeria. The use of this agrees with the price tag placed on the pack of the product displayed. The name of the product itself presents a simple lifestyle, where quality milk can be enjoyed for as low as fifty naira.



**Plate 4.7.** New Wazobia Pack advertises quality milk with a reduction in price

The linguistic message ‘Quality milk no wahala’ is the most salient element on the billboard. Apart from the fact that every word is written in capital letters, the expression is made bold and placed on the right side of the billboard to connote the ‘new’, the essence of the advertisement, where the attention of the audience is expected to flow to, with ease. This expression has both denotative and connotative meanings. While it denotes the use of a language that can be understood by the majority, it connotes an easy lifestyle that can be enjoyed by as many as possible. The background of the billboard is painted in the colour of the product, while the foreground (carrying the linguistic message) is decorated in two different shades of blue, both of which are found on the pack of the product. All these ensure coherence of the linguistic message and the elements surrounding it. They also help to ensure a fulfillment of the compositional function of the advertisement.

The lady displayed on the left has a satisfied air around her. Her smile seems easy and sincere. The fact that the picture is placed on the left gives an idea of a ‘given’, a situation that people have become used to. The lady also has a laptop on a table, to connote a fairly comfortable individual. Her dressing attests to her comfortability. Apart from the



message of affordability the choice of the lady denotes, it connotes a product that is meant for everyone, regardless of one's social class. The fact that such a fairly sophisticated lady is displayed with obvious satisfaction about the product shows that there is no class segregation, the product is meant for everyone. This is encouraging for some members of the public, who feel happy when a situation shows that they are enjoying the same set of things as 'the privileged' in the society. The product is intentionally advertised like this to discourage the opinion shared by most people that Peak, though one of the best, is expensive. Appearances are given oversimplified outlooks to show that contrary to the opinion shared by the majority, the product is affordable.

Frisomum is advertised in Plate 4.8. One of the first points of attraction on the billboard is the name of the product, Frisomum. The word 'mum' is in the product, presenting it as one that is customised for her. The word is even presented as the root to which the prefix 'Friso' is added. In a way, the name puts a label on the advertisement as one that is meant for 'the woman'. Another point of attraction is the dominant use of pink. This is the semiotic of association and dedication. Though it is not the most used colour on the pack of the product, it is excessively deployed on the billboard. In fact, the woman displayed is wearing a pink dress. While this denotes beauty, it connotes an appreciation and understanding of the woman and the role she is playing as a mother-to-be. Pink is regarded as a feminine colour and believed to have a soothing effect in a sure way. It also radiates love, care and sensitivity.



**Plate 4.8.** The incredible journey to motherhood with Frisomum

The expression ‘Make a strong start to the incredible journey’ is strategically placed at the centre of the billboard to connote what controls the whole advertisement. The journey to motherhood is one every woman looks forward to, though with some calmness because of its complex nature. Describing the journey as an ‘incredible one’ is, therefore, the advertiser’s way of allaying the fears of would-be mothers. Describing the journey using this term makes it easier for the woman to relate with it. Regardless of the description though, a woman knows it is a journey that has several possibilities. Hence, if there is any product that is capable of making the journey easier, any woman would go for such. This explains why the advertiser’s use of the adjective ‘strong’ is intentional. Though the journey could be a little stressful, a strong start, with the product being advertised, is advisable.

The font type is chosen to make the letterings look elegant. Hence, without much efforts, the expression adds to the beauty of the billboard. This is iconic of how the addition of the product being advertised is capable of adding both ease and beauty to a journey that is dreaded by some people. The picture of the woman on the left side of the billboard is a ‘given’, since it is logical that a woman be displayed to be expecting a baby. Her posture and stance agree with how easy the journey could be. Though she is not overly excited, her joy and fulfilment are felt from her smile. A part of her underwear is allowed to peep to show that at that stage, a woman may not be able to pay particular attention to some things, especially if they do not really matter. This is iconic of a woman that is really pregnant. However, despite her state, she has taken time to take care of herself and she looks good. All these are pointers to how beautiful the stage could be for a woman, if the right thing (taking Frisomum right from the beginning) is done.

The choices of the represented images and the linguistic messages are, thus, specifically made to show that:

1. The advertisement is dedicated to the woman in the totality of its encoding properties
2. The advertisers are realistic by celebrating the woman (making the billboard feminine in all ways)
3. Though it is particularly mentioned, the woman should be appreciated for agreeing to go through this important stage

4. Even if it has the potential to be a little complex, the journey could be made a very beautiful one if the mother-to-be learns to use the right product early.

There is also a rather unusual relationship between the linguistic message and the image. The linguistic message in a picture is expected to serve as an anchorage or a relay, according to Barthes. Plate 4.8 is, however, doing both in an implicit way. Since the picture supplies what is missing in the linguistic message, the first impression one gets is that the linguistic message is a relay. A closer look at the linguistic message, however, shows that it is only reinforcing the message already represented by the image, albeit from another angle. The billboard is, thus, designed in such a way that while the same message is not repeated, the importance of what is being communicated is reinforced. This adds to the importance of every represented image and linguistic message, giving the picture a harmonious feeling.

The expression ‘Now in Nigeria’ is placed at the upper left corner of the plate. Nigeria is written in bold and given salience. While this denotes that Frisomum is a foreign product, it connotes that the product is authentic. Generally, goods produced outside the country are seen as real and are, most times, preferred to those produced in Nigeria. Thus, while the expression looks like one that is giving a piece of information, it is also employed as a subtle means of telling the audience that the product is reliable. This is a strategy to appeal to the interest of people for foreign products. It is reinforced in the choice of the woman represented. The image is that of a white woman who looks satisfied.



**Plate 4.9.** Celebrating family life with DSTV

The ease with which members of a family can be brought together is highlighted in Plate 4.9. In fact, the impression of a celebration that brings members of a large family together is given to the audience, at the first look. About one-third of the billboard displays the linguistic message while the other two-third carries images of siblings with their spouses. The linguistic message **it's a GOOD TIME TO GATHER TOGETHER** is prominently displayed, though placed on the left side of the billboard as a given. Though the service being rendered is displayed, it is relegated to the background, not because of its lack of importance but because the service providers are more interested in ensuring that the audience is lured by the overwhelming effect of the togetherness displayed on the billboard. Once the audience registers the magnitude of what they stand to gain from the service, they are forced to look for the amazing product that could provide such benefits.

Almost every word in the linguistic message is written in capital letters to show the importance. The whole message is also placed on a black background to connote strength. The white and red design of the linguistic message makes it more prominent on the background. There are star-like objects at the upper part of the linguistic message and the display agrees with the celebration mood; generally, enjoyment is believed to be at its peak at night. In a way, it endorses the choice of time as affirmed in the linguistic message; it is not only a time to gather, it is a **good** time to gather together.

The right side of the billboard displays images of a fairly large family. This side of the billboard is reserved for pieces of information that are regarded as new; what deserves the attention of the audience most. The linguistic message is also equated with the image, to suggest a pictorial representation of what is said in the message and vice versa. A close look at the images shows that they are all young. This suggests a family where the children understand the importance of spending time together. The importance of this is reinforced by the fact that the siblings are not only depicted, their spouses are also present. The whole picture depicts a loving family where members appreciate and value one another. The married partners are depicted showing affection to their spouses without any inhibition and other members do not display any resentment by this openness.

White and red are significant colours on the right side of the billboard. Apart from the beauty and salience they add to this side of the billboard, they also connote purity and

love, respectively. Every member of the family puts on a white dress to denote that they belong to the same family. The colour connotes peace and unity. Though the red does not dominate, it is prominent. This connotes a mature kind of love, the type that is believed to last longer than the hurried one, because partners know what they are doing. Celebrating the family life is one important value of people. Thus, when a product proclaims to be capable of achieving this feat, such is applauded and patronised more than others who do not. This is because the busy nature of the present world and the fight for survival have pushed the need to celebrate the family life to the background.

It is, therefore, understandable that some individuals would be ready to give whatever it takes to ensure that they enjoy togetherness with their family. The service providers are aware of how it is, and makes the possibility very simple and attainable. The possibility of this is guaranteed by the happy expressions on the faces of everyone displayed. They are all relaxed and the atmosphere is an easy one. The smile helps in doing two things: it adds authenticity to the message; generally, people find it easier to believe a message when it is displayed. The other function is that it draws members of the audience. Enjoying a unique family life, the kind displayed on the billboard is almost becoming elusive to some individuals. A smile, especially a genuine one is contagious. The display makes members of the audience who are interested in this kind of lifestyle to become interested in what is being advertised.

The possibility of owning a house, without the usual hassle such is known with is displayed in Plate 4.10. Apart from the represented participant and popular actor, Odunlade Adekola, the other represented participants are side views of two houses. Though the human represented participant is a funny man who is rarely seen with a frown, his funny but happy composure draws the audience into knowing what service is being rendered. His choice is also intentional. He is not only liked by several members of the audience, his ease in handling the role given to him in home videos makes it possible to convince the audience of the attainment of the most difficult thing.



**Plate 4.10.** ‘Awoof’ with Independence Promo

Litotes is employed in Plate 4.10 by advertisers in presenting their services in a very easy light. The process of acquiring a house is turned from being a task into a pleasure. A first look at the billboard shows a crowded plate with several messages, but a closer look shows that specific details are not given. Contacts and the deadline for the offer are prominently displayed while the advertisement is silent on the terms and conditions required for the service. The main linguistic messages are made up of words that are enticing but ambiguous. All these are intentionally employed to ensure that members of the audience are lured into patronising the service offered, without paying particular attention to conditions surrounding the offer, until it is almost too late (when they are already too deeply involved to back out).

The diction is also targeted towards preying on people’s love for services that they can get for little or nothing. The closest meaning of the word **Revolution**, as used in the billboard is a **dramatic change of things**. The service providers have intentionally decided to use this word to show members of the audience that despite the fact that the offer sounds

unbelievable, it is not unattainable. An added advantage is put beside the word with the use of **plus**. In essence, the service provider is trying to say that it is a higher level of revolution. An intentional connection is made with the independence period through the use of the expression **INDEPENDENCE PROMO**. It is strategically placed on top of one of the buildings displayed to make the connection easy for the public.

A promo is an offer that makes services available to buyers, with a noticeable discount. This is employed by the advertiser to ensure a swift response from the audience. It is supported by the other part of the linguistic message **BUY NOW AND GET UP TO 40% DISCOUNT INSTANTLY**. Though the whole sentence is written in capital letters, salience is given to '40%' to enhance its information value. Even from a distance, it calls the attention of members of the audience and, without much efforts on the part of the advertiser, the advertisement gets attention. Hence, while the bonus is made to jump at the audience, the requirements to enjoy the bonus are intentionally underestimated with the use of different cases. The adverb **instantly** is used to eliminate doubts that could be creeping into the mind of the audience about the authenticity of such an offer. As if to validate the claims made, a part of a document is shown on the white background. This is employed to tell the audience that the deals made are legal and can be trusted. The linguistic message here, unlike the general notion that such is expected to either be a relay or an anchorage, is the starting point for the message. This is because on their own, the pictures say very little and could as well be interpreted in various ways, other than what they actually stand for. The linguistic message, however, gives the pictures a direction. Hence, the pictures here are performing the role of an anchorage.

#### **4.3. Representation of masculinity and femininity in the billboards**

This section analyses how gender is represented in billboard advertisements of goods and services in Ibadan metropolis. There are subsections where various issues relating to the representation of gender are analysed. On a general level, visuals are known to add to the aesthetic quality of advertisements. In addition to this, visual expressions can be packed with layers of meanings (Kayode and Afolami, 2013). When gender is specifically used, it makes it easy for members of the audience to relate with what is being said (Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi, 2013).

#### 4.3.1 Assignment of roles to the man and the woman

The billboard advertisements analysed in this section show the sensitivity of the advertisers to the gender-role stereotypes in Nigeria as women are associated with domestic chores while men are connected with enjoyment and relaxation. Some of the billboard advertisements also proffer answer to the gendered question in Nigeria about the ownership of the child. Though the father is not seen as less important in the life of a child, his physical absence in these billboard advertisements connotes that when it comes to taking care of the children, it is the duty of the woman.



**Plate 4.11.** The excellent mother as caring with Dettol 24 hours

The woman is employed for the advertisement of products and services that restrict her to the home. She is even seen to be naturally conditioned to carry out such activities. According to Ikuomola and Okunola (2011:4), “their roles as mothers and wives have also been culturally influenced and predetermined. Expectation thus is for them to be gentle, providing care for their husbands and children”. Plate 4.11 displays a smiling woman in a green T-shirt, lovingly holding her son in a protective way. She looks satisfied with her duty and this corroborates Londo (2006). According to the author (2006:1), motherhood is upheld as the “ultimate goal that would complete a woman’s life”. The human represented participants look satisfied. The woman is casually dressed, while the son is in his school uniform. The whiteness of the boy’s shirt makes a sharp contrast with the greenness of the woman’s T-shirt, making both of them conspicuous.



On the horizontal axis, the represented participants are placed on the left to indicate a 'given'. This connotes a logical situation that is already known to the majority. The right side holds both the linguistic message and a sample of the product being advertised. '24hrs maximum protection' is placed at the top right side of the billboard to draw the attention of the viewer to it with ease. This expression denotes that Dettol soap offers maximum protection at all times. However, a look at the way the way the billboard is divided into two shows that a side is presented as the result of the other. Even the colours used on both sides cohere. Hence, the connotative meaning is that with Dettol, the woman offers a 24-hour service. She is denoted as a cleaner and the duration attached to the advertisement connotes a never-ending activity.

The son's satisfaction with the mother is obvious as he holds the mother and allows himself to be held. This shows a confidence due to a trusted situation. He is well attuned to the care of the mother because of Dettol. The smile of the mother connotes acceptance of the role and the pride in what she does. All these signify her as an excellent mother, a portrait of the ideal mother figure, which the advert appeals to the public to adopt. The use of green and white symbolises nature and health, respectively. The fact that though 24-hour service is guaranteed and the son's shirt is still so white is symbolic of how possible the promise is, though it sounds a little difficult. The woman's acceptance of the role shows makes her an icon of the woman and her duty in the home. Though there is no law that says only the woman should do house chores, she is more displayed for indoor activities.

The choice of words is also intentional; the words ensure that the message is passed across with ease. 24 hours is the equivalent of a whole day. The fact that a woman is expected to do this daily presents her as a machine, who has no time to rest. Representing the duty as a 24-hour assignment is a concept with two faces. It is denigrating to expect her to be involved in an activity that suggests she is not expected to rest. The analogy between the woman as a human being and a machine points to the fact that she is not really appreciated for who she is but for what she does. Since 24 hours is synonymous to a day, the woman is seen as a being who needs to always be on her feet. She is presented in a slightly worse case than a machine; after a while, a machine is shut down and allowed to rest. For the woman, the need is not recognised, though she is expected to give her very best.

The analogy also presents the woman as a super human being. Representing her in this manner connotes that though the activity is rigorous, the woman has what it takes to meet up with it. The representation, thus, celebrates the innate strength of the woman and the extent she is expected to go. However, since it is a duty that cannot be pushed aside, she must be up to the task. The phrase, ‘Maximum protection’ is not only written in capital letters, it is also written in white and given a bold font. ‘Maximum’ is a binary opposite to ‘minimum’. This also shows not just the duration but the quality of the services the woman is expected to give, with Dettol.

Plate 4.12, the billboard advertisement of Ariel, is another plate where the role of the woman in the house is depicted. This billboard shares certain similarities with the former, the major difference being the absence of a child in this. The woman in Plate 4.12 is also a married woman; she has a ring on her fourth finger. Colour is one of the elements on the billboard that is employed for the purpose of coherence. The background of the billboards is designed using all the colours that are found on the product. Apart from the colours denoting beauty, they (white and green) also connote health and nature respectively. The whiteness is very sharp and is an icon of excellence. This agrees with the linguistic message ‘Nigeria’s best stain removal in 1 wash’. The woman’s raised finger also attests to how a stain is removed in ‘1 wash’.



**Plate 4.12.** The diligent woman’s excellent services with Ariel

Apart from the function of washing generally, removing stain from clothes is seen as an undesirable part of washing. In fact, people avoid getting their clothes stained because

some stains never get completely removed from clothes. However, the claim being made here is that with Ariel, there is a difference. The whiteness of the background shows that the stain is not only going to be removed, the material is made to be at its best. The woman's satisfaction is also evident and her smile connotes a fulfilled state. She is placed on the left side of the billboard to signify a generally acceptable situation. The green part of the billboard also symbolises a natural state. All these show that though the woman is made to perform a fairly difficult situation, she is used to it. She has also learnt to accept and even celebrate it.

Unlike the former billboard, the woman displayed here looks younger and more stylish. All these connote a woman who knows the importance of taking care of herself. Though the other woman is not dirty, this woman is better dressed. This is iconic of what the society expects from the woman, regardless of what she believes. She is also expected to accept the roles given to her in a graceful manner and even celebrate them. The advertisement, though does not say it explicitly, sees washing as a task that could be demanding. The provision of Ariel is presented as something that helps overcome the difficulty in carrying out a task. Hence, since the woman is expected to accept the role, she is expected to see the availability of Ariel as a bonus.

Plate 4.12 is divided into three; the left side, the right side and the centre. The left side displays the image of the woman, the right side the image of the product being advertised and the centre, the part that is believed to hold everything together, displays the linguistic message. Though the arrangement denotes the aesthetic quality of the billboard, it connotes how the woman is seen. The advertiser is trying to show the effectiveness of Ariel, in the able hands of the woman. This is because no matter how good the product is, it cannot perform the function being advertised on its own. The user makes the potential quality of Ariel to wash effectively become a reality. Thus, apart from appreciating the excellence of the product, the woman is also being applauded. With Ariel, the woman becomes the best stain removal in 1 wash.

These two plates are similar in the representations given to women. She is presented as a homemaker who is expected to perform her duty excellently. Apart from the function of selling the products displayed by the women, the billboards are also designed to sell the

idea of what is expected of a woman. Donnelly (2011) claims that women's magazine is believed to serve as informal educational devices in the teaching and learning of femininity, which is closely related to female gender identity. This shows that the representations are intentionally designed with the images of the women to tell the society what is expected of women when it comes to indoor activities.

The man is also employed for the advertisement of goods and services. However, he is given different roles from the woman. Most times, the man is depicted as involved in outdoor activities. Chivita is advertised in Plate 4.13 with the images of three men who are dressed in sport wears. Though there are three of them, they are all men. The first thing that draws the attention of the audience is the way the represented participants are standing. They are almost of the same height and all look fit. Though they are not depicted to be involved in any sport activity, they all look ready to be involved in any sport activity on a moment notice. The fact that the three men are made to stand on the left side of the billboard connotes a situation that has already become generally known and accepted.



**Plate 4.13.** Sporty men advertise Chivita

A huge bottle of Chivita is displayed at the right side of the billboard to connote the new piece of information that needs attention. The fact that the men are on the left does not diminish their importance; it only connotes a given situation, that needs no explanation as it is already understood by those concerned. The size of the bottle of Chivita is exaggerated and made to stand a little taller than the men. In a way, the placement of the men and the bottle makes it easy to equate one with the other. It is the advertiser's way of showing what is responsible for the strength and fitness seen in the three men. The linguistic messages displayed on the product show that if the promises are anything to go by, Chivita is healthy for consumption. 'No sugar', 'real orange' are expressions showing the healthy state of the product.

The fact that though there are three human represented participants, they are all men is iconic of the fact that the advertiser has intentionally chosen them because they do justice to how the product is marketed. In a way, it shows a choice that has become a widely accepted one. Though the woman is, sometimes, represented, the portrayal is yet to match up with the advancement witnessed in the real world. Even till now, women athletes and their events are trivialised and underreported. The three men are all smiling to show their ease and connote the fact that they are used to being seen in this light. They also try to establish a relationship with the audience (interactive participants). Their direct gaze is making a demand from the audience, as if they are trying to ask for something. This is reinforced by the friendly way in which the man in front is holding out a bottle of the product. In a way, it is the advertiser's way of presenting the men as wanting to share a relationship with the audience. This is reinforced by the distance between the represented participants and the interactive participants. There is little distance between the two groups as the three men are all shown in full and almost within the reach of the audience. This is the advertiser's way of establishing a relationship with the audience, making them believe that though it may look a little difficult to them, attaining that position (becoming like the men) is not an impossibility.

Varieties of fruits are intentionally displaced at close range to the viewer, as if they are available for scrutiny, if anyone feels there is the need. The fruits displayed include apples, berries and oranges. The oranges are ripe and cut into halves, so that the interactive participants can see inside; another way of adding credence to the linguistic

message 'real orange'. Since a person who is sure of what he or she is saying has nothing to hide, the advertiser has intentionally been open to show that the product and all the promises made can be trusted. The displayed fruits also authenticate the claim made by the advertiser that the product is 100%. Hence, though there are varieties of images on the billboard, they all cohere to lend credence to the message being advertised.

Plate 4.14 is the billboard advertisement of Vitamilk. Unlike the other billboards, this one displays both genders. The billboard is divided into section on various levels. On one level, there is a division into the background and the foreground; while the foreground appears nearer the viewer and contains images of the products being advertised, the background displays images of the represented participants. Though no particular reason is given, there are three masculine individuals (two men and a boy) and one feminine figure. The only explanation to the difference in the representation of the two genders is that the woman is intentionally represented as the one who is taking care of the rest. Red and white dominate the colours used in designing the billboard and both are found on the products displayed. While they add to the beauty of the billboard, red connotes life and white is a symbol of purity. Generally, when it comes to food, people are a little careful of the choices made. The colours are intentionally employed to tell the audience that the products are capable of giving 'life' (nutrients needed for healthy living) to the viewer and that they are safe in terms of preparations.



**Plate 4.14.** Vitamilk reinforces the societal expectation of masculinity

Two of the men in the plate are designed as dressed in sport wears while the other man is depicted as a very thirsty man, who just came from work. The colours of his shirt and tie rhyme with the ones found on the billboard and the displayed products to suggest unity. The man is drinking in a thirsty manner to suggest that he must have been involved in some kind of work. The choice of his outfit shows that the work is out of the home. Men are usually shown in environments that suggest their involvement in office works and other out-of-the-home businesses. The young men on the left are also dressed in sport wears and one is even holding a bottle of Vitamilk to suggest what is responsible for the success in their games and the happiness displayed on their faces. An analogy is being made between the drink and the ability to perform one's work with ease.

The feminine figure displayed on the billboard is also holding a bottle. Her appearance, however, suggests that she is either used as a decorative tool (the norm) or as a wife who is interested in seeing to the needs of her husband. Her native attire also suggests that she has been at home. The smile on her face is symbolic of a kind of satisfaction, the kind one gets after performing a good job. Though she is not vocalising her thoughts, her stance and the smile on her face suggest a happy state. She is also holding out a bottle of the advertised product as if to say 'my happiness and satisfaction can be attributed to this'. The husband, on the other hand, is drinking from the bottle in a thirsty manner and, at the same time, makes eye contact with the viewer with a smile on his face. In a way, his countenance suggests that he agrees with what the woman is saying.

The man's countenance is reinforced by the linguistic message '**Rich in protein for a full happy stomach**'. While the part '**Rich in protein**' refers to Vitamilk, '**for a full happy stomach**' refers to the man. A happy stomach guarantees a happy man and when the man is happy, the woman is satisfied. The linguistic message is, thus, an anchorage as it helps to elaborate what is represented in the picture. All the four represented participants are making a direct eye contact with the audience. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, this is tagged 'demand'. The connotative meaning of this is that the participants are trying to establish a relationship with the audience, draw them closer and make them see the possibility of enjoying the same as is displayed on the plate. Hence, while the men are depicted as active participants in outdoor roles, the woman is displayed as a contented and diligent in indoor roles. The fact that both are always depicted as fulfilled in their roles

connotes positions that have become accepted by both of the represented participants and the interactive participants.

#### **4.3.2 Earmarked territories for masculinity and femininity**

Apart from the fact that masculinity and femininity are usually displayed for outdoor and indoor activities respectively, their representations are also made to look like those areas are specifically meant for them. In a way, there is an unspoken agreement that there are particular territories for each gender. Even if the other gender is going to be displayed there, it is usually rare. The media has been labelled as the group responsible for this. In order to comprehend the situation with contemporary masculinities, Katz (1999) believes that one has to understand what is going on in the media. According to Katz (1999:16), “a proliferation of mass media images has helped structure the way we think and react to the shifting gender terrain”. The media has the power to influence what is celebrated in the society. The media is one of the most efficient ways to raise awareness for gender equality and the need to improve women’s status in the society (Londo, 2006).

Plate 4.15 is a billboard advertisement of Gulder and unlike the other billboards this is really scanty. The expression ‘**WHERE ARE THE MEN?**’ is boldly displayed on the billboard. Though the expression starts from the left, it gets to the centre and even approaches the right side of the billboard to show its salience. Its location on the board shows that it is not only a practice that has already become generally known (given), it continues to hold its place (new) undisturbed. The salience of the expression is ensured by its boldness, the capital letters used, its representation in white over a red background and the fact that it is the only element occupying the space; though other elements could have been conveniently placed, it is made to stand alone. This connotes a sense of arrogance, where there is no need to say much, since the little that has already been said should cater for everything.





**Plate 4.15.** Gulder celebrates the exclusive right of men to alcoholic drinks

The expression itself is a rhetorical question with several meanings. Though the question looks like a casual one, it connotes a style of establishing that Gulder is only for men. The fact that the question is a direct one shows that the advertiser sees no reason to consider that his stance may not be generally acceptable. Another function the question performs is that of throwing a dare at the men. ‘**The men**’ as used here excludes the group of individuals the society has so tagged because they have biological organs identifying them as men. The signified here are the real men; persons who are bold enough to take up challenges, such as taking Gulder. It also connotes a lack of acceptance for the general description of a man. In a way, the advertiser is trying to make the ability to take Gulder as a criterion for being regarded as a man. The advertiser has not only established the fact that Gulder is for the masculine gender, there is also the indirect redefinition of ‘a man’ based on his ability to take up a dare (drinking Gulder).

In terms of its interactive metafunction, its stance makes it a demand as its impact is thrown in the viewer’s face. This creates a sort of contradiction as a rhetorical question is one that does not really need an answer. However, the kind of response needed here is an action. Concerning the relation of power too, the text is placed on the high side of the billboard. The viewer has to raise their eyes to read it. This connotes a superior relationship on the side of the represented participant to the viewer. It shows a kind of class when it comes to the group the drink is meant for. Since no one would like to be

tagged a 'classless individual', the question could force an immediate action on the part of any member of the masculine gender who would not want to feel left out of such a group. Hence, it passes across two meanings in one message. One, the 'Group' is so elevated because it is not meant for everyone. Two, it is not an impossible feat for whoever is willing to pay the price.

The billboard is designed in pure red to connote passion, strength, the raw male power and aggression. Red is a colour that shows devotion to a course. Its impact is rarely missed. The use here demonstrates the devotion of true men to the course they are already known with. Just like blood, the colour is easily noticed and its impact lasts long. It shows determination on the part of the members. The whole representation creates a need that could be pressing and demanding, depending on what the general disposition of such is towards taking alcoholic drinks.

This plate shows a kind of audacity on the part of the advertiser. As far as they are concerned, the drink belonged to men, hence the question raised. The representation can be traced to the belief that is acceptable by the majority that alcoholic drinks are the men's reserve. Representations have been discovered to have a lot of impact on the audience, even if majority would rather deny it. While talking on this impact, Katz (1999: 16) affirms "we're not just consumers of these images; we don't simply make our way through the thousands of images we see daily and pick and choose what we like and don't like. These images have a profound impact on who we are, and on our tastes, attitudes, and the kinds of choices we make".

Plate 4.16 advertises Bull London Dry Gin. The better half of the billboard carries the images of excited men who are really happy about an event, possibly the scoring of a goal by their team in a football match. Though their sounds cannot be heard, their shouts can almost be 'touched'. Their hands are raised in excitement with closed fists, all of which are typical reactions of men who love watching football. The two are dressed in light blue T-shirts but the foregrounded man has yellow overalls on his, both of which are found on the bottle. A bull is known as a large animal. It is also interpreted as a large aggressive man. The aggressive nature of man is clearly seen in the excited nature of the two men. The foregrounded man with the yellow overalls has the greater salience because of his

position. This agrees with the stereotypical belief that alcoholic drinks are mainly meant for the masculine gender.



**Plate 4.16.** Bull London Dry Gin celebrates the devotion of masculinity to sports

This billboard also has an unusual addition – that of a female onlooker. The young lady is not only given a very long shot, only a part of her body is depicted. This connotes that the ‘arena’ is strictly masculine. The expression on her face also shows an interest in joining. She is, however, not just ignored, she is also not noticed. In fact, as far as the two young men are concerned, she does not exist. This connotes her lack of importance, as far as the moment depicted is concerned. The linguistic representations, though a little ambiguous could be said to have gender connotations. **...experience the excitement** is made to stand out with its italicised font. Though it is an obvious invitation, it is not open to the feminine gender; the use of **No Dulling** suggests that nothing short of an excited show is welcome. In a way, it suggests that no matter how much the lady longs to be a part of their group, her presence remains unacknowledged. The foregrounded man is even responsible for how so little is seen of the lady; his raised right hand covers a larger part of the lady to show that even if she attempts to force herself into the group, she will meet with stiff opposition.

The little of the lady’s outfit shown indicates she is all dressed up and her face is made up. Ordinarily, a man would want to appreciate her and may even give her a second look. However, the manner in which the men’s attention is on whatever they are watching

suggests that the lady may remain totally unnoticed till the end of whatever has taken their undivided attention. It would not even be a surprise if the lady followed one of the men to the venue. However, since their attention has been totally caught, it suggests that the lady is not as important as whatever is being shown. The stance of each of the two groups also looks accepted. The uncaring way in which the young men are shouting indicates that they really do not care whatever any other person feels. To them, whoever is not satisfied with them should move on. Though the woman looks sad, she has an indulgent smile on her lips which connotes her understanding of the situation. The indulgent smile on the face of the woman shows a situation she has come to accept, albeit grudgingly. Though the little that is seen of her shows she has a nice top on, its blackness shows a contradiction to what others in the billboard have on. She is clearly not dressed for the 'occasion'.

None of the three represented participants is looking directly at the audience. While the attention of the two men is caught by something in front, but which is not shown to the audience, the lady's attention is on one of the men. This is an indirect invitation to the audience to develop interest in knowing what has got the men so excited. The linguistic message, which doubles as an anchorage, '**...experience the excitement**', attests to the offer being made here. The excitement of the men is intentionally presented in a contagious manner so that other men who are watching become interested in belonging to this group. Though the drink being advertised may not have a direct relationship with what the men are watching, it is obvious that it has a relationship with it. It is an indirect way of telling that with Bull London Dry Gin, any man could experience the same excitement.

Plate 4.17 advertises Williams Dark Ale with images of three men. The drink is also an alcoholic drink and this explains why only men are used for the purpose of advertisement. The expressions on the faces of the three men show that they are friends and are out in the open to share a bottle or two. They are in the process of clicking their bottles as a toast to suggest that they are celebrating something. Generally, some men seem to prefer enjoying their evenings in the company of their friends than at home with the family. This may not be too difficult to explain since members of their families are likely to be made up of their wives and children, who are not recognised as drinkers. Therefore, whenever there is a

reason to celebrate, members of their 'group' are not likely to be absent as they know that free drinks, at least, would be distributed by the celebrant.



**Plate 4.17.** Williams Dark Ale presents a pathway to true friendship

Not much is shown about the men's occupation; they are casually dressed. Though one seems to be dressed like a site contractor, the head covering is too indiscernible to be understood. The participants are also placed on the left to show a given state. The aura of ease exuded by the participants appeals to the viewer and creates in them the need for companionship; the kind that is displayed among these drinking partners. The long shot of the represented participants suggests a wide gap between the represented and interactive participants. The viewer could have felt bad but for the equal power portrayed on the vertical axis. The ease and enjoyment displayed by the men are symbolic of what the society expects for the man. Generally, men are more displayed enjoying themselves in groups than women. When a group of women is depicted, the members are shown to be involved in a training or something related to work. Women are also depicted as gossips and entertainers. This is semiotic bias.



**Plate 4.18.** Smirnoff demonstrates why alcoholic drink is the masculine reserve

Plate 4.18 is the billboard advertisement of Smirnoff, another alcoholic drink. Unlike the other drinks advertised, however, what strikes one immediately with this billboard are feelings of aggression, raw male power, unpredictability and roughness. The design of the billboard suggests the general nature of alcoholic drinks. The representation defies a lot of standards and though the picture is sharp enough, the represented images cannot be seen very clearly. The number of persons represented cannot be discerned and the little that could have been clearly seen is intentionally blocked with the text:

**SMOOTH, ANYHOW YOU LIKE IT.  
NEW SMIRNOFF X1  
FROM THE WORLDS NO 1 VODKA BRAND.**

Even the text supports the roughness and a state of disorderliness; the expression ‘anyhow you like it’ indicates that ‘anything goes’. It is, thus, an anchorage. Out of all the represented participants, only two of their faces are seen while only parts of others are shown. Also, the dress codes of the two faces are not clear; the viewer is only sure of a soldier-like hat and a coloured wig on their heads. The two of them have their mouths open; one from aggression and the other looks like he is singing. Besides, they are portrayed as individuals from different origins, though their exact nationalities cannot be determined. All these connote the uncertain nature of alcohol. However, despite the uncertainty, members of the masculine gender are portrayed to be excited and enjoying themselves.

A closer look at the billboard also shows parts of the bodies of, at least, two ladies. For the first one, a part of her face and her fixed nails are seen, while the second has only her fingers shown. The one whose face is partly shown does not look happy; she looks dull, bored and like an individual who is forced to do something against her wish. She is also holding a cup with a straw but the composition suggests that she is drinking something quite different from the drink that is being advertised. If she is, however, taking the alcoholic drink, she connotes the personality of a person who is not really interested in what is available, hence her decision to take it easy on herself by sipping with a straw. The portrayal of the parts of the bodies connotes that the setting is not really meant for the feminine gender as it is rough and unpredictable. It also suggests that the unpredictable nature of the setting is thoroughly enjoyed by members of the masculine gender unlike the reaction of the feminine gender as one can infer from the face of the lady shown. In addition, the fact that only parts of the ladies' bodies are shown indicates that in such a place, members of the feminine gender can only be seen and not heard. The foregrounded female fingers also suggest that she is needed for something else, possibly a sexual assignment. This may not be far-fetched considering the distance between the fingers and the aggressive man shown. However, the viewer is not given an exact interpretation; imaginations are fired up instead.

'**We're open**' denotes availability for business. However, since the expression would have been better used by a place where things are sold, it is glaring that this is a relay; a type of drink is being advertised here, not the opening of a place of business. The expression, therefore, connotes the availability to anything; this is supported by the expression 'anyhow you like it. 'To be open' is to be ready for suggestions and virtually anything. The use of 'we', the first person plural pronoun is intentional. It creates a sense of belonging for 'members' and makes non-members feel they are missing something important. Also, it can be insinuated from the text **FROM THE WORLDS NO 1 VODKA BRAND** that the product is a global one as it is produced by the world's best Vodka brand. This also suggests that the representations and the beliefs communicated on the billboard are globally acceptable. This suggests a kind of belief that has become deeply-rooted in the society; the removal of which may be very difficult, if not impossible.

The woman is also shown in areas that are presented as her 'territories'. Generally, she is displayed for indoor activities. Whenever she is portrayed to be outside, she is usually employed for decorative reasons, to show off her beauty or just grace the face of a billboard. Plate 4.19 advertises Eva. Apart from the fact that a woman is displayed washing herself with the soap, three variants of the same soap have the images of a woman on them. The first impression the choice of a woman gives is that the product is only used by women. However, this is not so; men also use this soap. In fact, because of the mild nature and neutral functions, several men use it as their bathing soap.



**Plate 4.19.** Eva reinforces stereotyping in the representation of femininity

The lady displayed is given a close-up shot and displayed in the act of bathing, as if the viewer has to be taught the intricacies of using the soap. She is in a white bathtub and this contrasts sharply with her hair. This is an intentional choice, made to enhance the message being passed across. According to Scott (1903: 17), contrasts may be “so harmoniously formed that the two things contrasted are mutually strengthened”. Her upper arms are bare as well as the front part of her body. She is portrayed to be rubbing a bar of the advertised soap on her left shoulder. Though her whole body is not portrayed, since she is lying in a bathtub, one can assume that she is naked. A critical look, however, shows that the role she is playing here is decorative because she is only made to give the appearance to bring the viewer’s attention to her body. Not only is her head uncovered, her eyelashes, eyebrows and even her lips are lightly made-up. All these point to the fact that the posture is a decorative one.



The billboard is partly designed in pink, a colour that is believed to be more favoured by the feminine gender. The expression ‘**look beautiful, stay beautiful**’ is also displayed at the left side of the billboard. While a man is believed to be handsome, the word ‘**beautiful**’ is used for a woman. All these show how various efforts are made to give the product a feminine undertone. The choice of a woman for this product is intentional. Though a man uses the soap, the picture of a woman is believed to be capable of doing a better job at advertising the product. The woman in the product, though very close, makes no eye contact with the viewer. Her gaze is on rubbing a part of her left shoulder with the soap. This is a ploy to engage the viewer. The act is intentionally presented as an offer; the viewer is naturally curious to know what takes so much of her attention. The smile on her face shows satisfaction with the effect of the product.



**Plate 4.20.** A woman’s beauty as a bait for the audience’s attention

The feminine gender is also displayed on the billboard as a decorative role. As such times, she is employed to grace the face of the billboard because of her beauty, which in turn, is believed to be capable of drawing a fairly large crowd with ease. Plate 4.20 is an advertisement for space. The represented participant, a light-skinned woman is placed very close to the right margin of the billboard. Though she is given a medium shot, her salience is ensured by her appearance; she looks happy, carries a fairly long hair and her light skin is enhanced by her outfit (a white shirt, a light blue skirt and a pair of black shoes). She raises a leg in a playful manner and raises a printed copy of the service provider. Though she does it in an innocent manner, the viewer’s attention is easily drawn

to the smoothness of her fair legs. Such legs are tagged 'hot/sexy legs'. The picture of sophistication is completed with her black pointed shoes.

Though the playful display of the woman makes one smile, it also connotes a situation that is not totally serious. Displaying the woman on the billboard is not really a necessity. In fact, if she was not displayed, the message would still be passed across in a complete manner. She is, however, represented here because her presence is believed to be capable of attracting viewers, especially members of the opposite sex. This tendency is more pronounced because of the fact that the raised leg is totally uncalled for. The message resident in the visual representation of the woman is alluded to in the text **Your Brand Is More Visible Here!** Though the obvious meaning of the text is that whatever is being advertised on this particular billboard would be visible in that space, the hidden meaning has a sexual innuendo. The viewer seems to be invited into an intimate relationship with the woman as a relationship with her would ensure their recognition. Though the linear text runs from the left side of the billboard, it is made to end almost at the opening of the woman's 'crotch'. The exclamation mark maps out the likely location of the lady's sexual part. The effect is made more visible by the salience created in the use of colour. The pink with which the exclamation is designed, just like the rest of the text, creates a sharp contrast with the light blue of her skirt. All these connote that though the task at hand initially was to simply create an awareness of advertising space, the lady has succeeded in passing across an additional piece of information which happens to be sexual in nature.

#### **4.3.3 The nature of stereotyping in visual representation**

Though the use of gender aids communication on the part of both the advertiser and the viewer in visual advertisement, the fact that particular depictions have become the norm has generated controversies. A critical look, however, shows that while some representations are wrong and should be discouraged, others are not so bad, and are in fact with positive connotations. Therefore, as a good balance for the stereotypes already analysed above, this section looks into the other side of stereotyping that is not so celebrated and is already becoming overridden by the general idea about stereotyping.

#### 4.3.3.1 The double-faced nature of stereotyping



**Plate 4.21.** Femininity as a preferred choice to advertise innovation

Stereotyping is one of the most criticised strategies of advertisers as it keeps depicting gendered images the same way. Some depictions, however, show that stereotyping is not always bad as it sometimes passes across some positive messages, in its own way. Plate 4.21 carries the image of a woman advertising '9 mobile'. At first, one sees the image of a lady that is used as a decorative tool; her hair and face are made up to denote an individual who is depicted for her beauty. Besides, she does not seem to have much to do with whatever is being advertised. This image agrees with the stereotypical use of a lady because of her beauty. A critical look, however, shows that the first interpretation is done at the face level as the lady's face is not employed merely for decorative reasons. The figure '9' is drawn around one of the lady's eyes to denote the service (Airtel) being offered to the public. Its use is, however, symbolic. The figure 9, that is wrapped around one of the represented participant's eyes, resembles the kind of mark carried by herbalists; herbalists mark their eyes with chalk to show their ability to see 'the unusual'. It is symbolic of their ability to see what everyone cannot see; it symbolises the higher realm at which such individuals operate. The sign is symbolic of the lady's ability to see what others are blind to; she is projected from the cultural angle of an individual who has insight. The fact that the '9' is written in red shows that the lady does not only have insight, she can also see into the land of spirits.

The representation also connotes other ideological meanings. The billboard has a black background and this gives it a rather dull/gloomy look. The colour is symbolic and communicates repression and introspection (Petrovici, 2014). The subject matter is a fairly complex one and the choice of colour agrees with this. According to Petrovici (2014: 722), “black is capable to convey complex and diverse symbolic messages”. Her head emerges from the background. This connotes her operation at a level higher than that of the background. The background is symbolic of the lack of enlightenment on particular issues occasioned by the rigid nature of culture. The representation denotes the emergence of 9 mobile to draw people out of their perpetual state of blindness on the importance of technology. The figure wrapped around the lady’s eye is an icon of 9 mobile and makes her a worthy representation of the network. The whole picture is also symbolic of the intersection of culture and other signs. It is an intentional depiction by the service providers to show the attitude of some highly cultural individuals to technology.

The representation also depicts a deep interaction between the intersection of the modern and the indigenous. It shows that contrary to the opinion of some culturally sensitive individuals that technology is modern witchcraft, it is an innovation that is capable of bringing everyone out of perpetual darkness. This is symbolic of the need to allow some cultural beliefs to be open to review as this has the ability to bring about a higher level of enlightenment. This advantage of technology is supported by the website placed on the billboard. The woman is, thus, seen as a metonymic representation; an icon of authority, a voice for the public. All these meanings are negotiated by the display of the feminine figure in the plate. It is a marked deviation from the usual way of depicting femininity; masculinity was usually projected for its gift of insight, perception and clarity. The representation is also a contradiction to the image of a woman in the African setting; women are rarely given the opportunity to perform such a function or one that is even related to it.

The closeness of the shot given to the woman depicts an improvement that is not impossible. At the horizontal level, it establishes a kind of intimate relationship between the represented participant and the viewer. Her averted gaze could have been taken for detachment but the effect is balanced by her soft smile, resulting in the presentation of an offer to the public. Her hair is given some shades of white, which contrasts sharply with

the black background, to show the effect of the change. Apart from her face, a part of her hair and the brightness brought to the whole picture through her smile, every other part of the billboard is in darkness. She is, therefore, an icon of positive change in a 'world' that has preferred to perpetually remain in the dark.



**Plate 4.22.** De Rica projects a woman as a better choice for child rearing

'De Rica', a kind of tomato paste that is employed for cooking, is advertised on Plate 4.22. The billboard is designed with two represented participants, a woman and her daughter. Also, the billboard is designed in red with touches of white and green. The two represented participants are placed on the left side of the billboard to connote a given state. Though the woman is cooking, she is also involved in teaching her daughter some culinary skills. The actions are, thus, also didactic in nature. The Yoruba culture sees the children's upbringing as a duty that rests solely on the shoulders of the mother. She is not only expected to nurture them, the culture sees her as the individual responsible for instilling morals and discipline. The mother in the picture is also smiling and properly dressed to show her joy in what she is doing. Also, she is putting on a white dress, which totally contradicts the activities in the kitchen. It, however, connotes that the woman is already an expert at what she does. The amazement and patience with which the daughter also watches her are testifiers to this.

The table is laid with a white material to attest to the height of the woman's expertise. The table is not laid for dinner; the plate placed at the extreme end of the table shows that the woman is still cooking. In fact, her own activities attest to this; she is cutting

something in a pan, and an open pot is beside her. Hence, laying the table with a white cloth shows she is very comfortable of its retaining the white quality at the end of the cooking process; she knows that if it gets dirty, she would still have to wash. The white material and her white dress also signify purity and hygiene, two important concepts when cooking is concerned. They connote that she is not involved in just performing the duty, she is interested in presenting it the very best way possible. The daughter's expression 'Mom's Magic is Back' is written in clean and thick strokes to emphasise a sure state. The use of 'magic' also connotes that the process of cooking delicious meals could be seen as a very special gift. The initial letters of the main words are capitalised for emphasis.

As a duty, cooking is appreciated because it provides the body with the needed nutrients for growth. Since it has a fast connection with the state of a person's health, individuals are a little careful of what they eat, especially when the source cannot be trusted. While it is one thing to be a cook, it is another thing (a proof of expertise, on a professional level) to be able to teach. The woman depicted in Plate 4.22 has so mastered this duty that she has a willing learner in her own daughter. Both of them are placed on the left to give a given situation. However, though it is stereotypical to represent a woman as a cook, it also shows that her expertise in cooking is recognised and appreciated.



**Plate 4.23.** The cheerful mother as patient with Maggi

Plate 4.23 is similar to Plate 4.22, though instead of De Rica, Maggi is advertised here. The first impression the knowledge of stereotype in visual advertisement may give the viewer is that, as usual, only the woman is used for culinary activities. However, a closer look shows that this representation has a positive undertone. The woman looks very happy with the kids, a boy and a girl. The kids are actively involved in helping her out in the kitchen and they both look very happy. The fact that a boy is even represented in the kitchen shows a deviation from the norm where the man is believed to be interested in just eating. Since the children are beginners, one may expect the mother to be a little impatient with them, but this is not the case as the genuine laughter on the woman's face connotes a state of satisfaction with the company she has.

As good as a person is, it takes extra care and patience to be able to teach a child, not to talk of two. At the initial stages especially, they are likely going to cause more trouble than good. However, with love and patience, the woman represented in this billboard is able to make the experience a pleasant one for everyone. The table is littered with tomatoes, onions, a fish. Pepper, a jar and a packet of Maggi, with about four pieces on the table. This shows that the woman is just about to begin to cook; she has a lot to still do. Her smile and easy rapport with her kids show that for her, ensuring the experience is a pleasant one is far more important than any other thing.

The linguistic message is an anchorage to the picture displayed on the billboard. '**Mummy. Teacher. Taste Master**' denotes an individual who is not only a teacher but an expert at what she does. The representation also shows that the expressions are the vocalised thoughts of the kids; the handwriting is that of a kid and instead of complete sentences, sentence fragments are written. All these come together to connote the way they children see their mother. As far as these children are concerned, the mother is not just an amazing cook, she is also an excellent teacher, hence their use of '**Teacher**' and '**Master**'. In an unusual way, the children also display a maturity that is rare for children of their age. The fact that raw food items are displayed shows that 'food is not ready, in fact, the preparation is just about to begin'. This signifies a level of understanding, which can be traced to the kid's experience of their mother's previous deftness and smartness in the kitchen. Hence, though representing the mother as a cook is the norm, she is preferred because she does the job quite better.



**Plate 4.24.** The trustworthy mother with Coartem

‘Coartem’, a popular anti-malaria drug, is advertised on Plate 4.24. On the left (given) side of the billboard, a woman in traditional attire is looking at her son with admiration. This is reciprocated as the son’s genuine smile is also directed at the mother. The mother is denoted as a caring mother whose happiness with her son is evident. The look of the son is also filled with trust and it expresses faith in what the mother is capable of doing for him. The message in the image is reinforced by the linguistic message, which doubles as the anchorage. **Trust your mother TRUST COARTEM** occupies the position of the ‘ideal’. The design of the two connotes a situation where one’s mother could be equated to Coartem:

**trust (your mother)**

**trust (Coartem)**

As an anti-malaria drug, the advertiser is so sure of the powerful effect of the drug when it comes to curing malaria that the viewer is admonished to trust it. To emphasise the message being passed across, the drug is likened to a mother; if you can trust your mother, you can trust Coartem and vice-versa. It makes it very easy to understand the other concept as one is already used as an analogy. Drugs are not taken carelessly; several prescriptions are known to have side effects on people who abuse the use. As such, people tend to take only the drugs they can trust. The text, therefore, suggests that though it could be difficult to trust a lot of people, a mother is to be trusted as she is reliable. It



also presupposes in a subtle way, though, that one may not be able to trust some other persons, including the father. Just like in the case of Coartem where the other malaria drugs have not been directly mentioned, the use of the word ‘trust’ makes an indirect reference to them and suggests that they may not be trusted. ‘Trust your mother’ here connotes that when it comes to whom to trust, you can trust your mother. The billboard is designed with a white background which symbolises purity, innocence and lends credence to the health sector.

The bond between the mother and her son is evident. The two of them are dressed in blue, though different materials. The smiles on their faces are genuine to show that they are truly happy. All these help to ensure coherence between the mother and her son. The fact that the son is not a ‘baby’ shows that his adoration of his mother transcends that of a child who adores the giver of food. The adoration on the boy’s face signifies one that is earned overtime, in various situations. The love displayed is not also an enforced one; the boy loves his mother because she deserves it. Though taking care of the children is generally seen as one of the main duties of a woman, the woman displayed in this billboard sees it as more than a mere duty. To her, it is a privileged task that must be carried out with joy and utmost devotion.



**Plate 4.25.** The irreplaceable quality of a mother with Three Crowns

Three Crowns is advertised on Plate 4.25 with the images of two represented participants; a mother and her daughter. While the daughter is partly seen at the background with a medium shot, the mother is given a close shot and placed at the foreground to connote that she is the most important element on the billboard. She is holding a mug, and gives the audience a direct gaze and a soft smile to make a demand. Her smile draws the viewer

with ease and one becomes interested in knowing what has made her so happy. Though she looks a little tired, the effect is minimised because of the soft smile on her face.

The daughter at the background also looks very happy. Her stance suggests a happy intrusion into a special moment her mother is having with the audience. Her smile connotes a kind of satisfaction and she seems to be looking at the mother. Though the represented participants do not really have on them any colour of the product or the ones displayed on the billboard, there is still coherence among all the elements; the narration makes a unified whole. The same colours found on the product (yellow, red and black) are the same ones employed to design the billboard. The woman is intentionally given a close shot and placed on the foreground to connote her importance. The linguistic message is a rhetorical question 'kila o se ti o ba si iya? (what would we do if there was no mother?)' that is phrased to signify how important a mother is. The question seems to be the vocalised thought of the daughter. The answer is glaring on her face and she peeps a little to see the reaction of the mother.

The slight signs of fatigue on the mother's face can be attributed to her sacrifices on the family. The woman's smile shows she has come to accept her place. Though the fact that she is placed on the left denotes that it is a given that she does all that the society expects from her, her greatness is celebrated on this billboard to connote an appreciation of all she does. Since nobody can successfully take a mother's place, it is glaring that though the woman is depicted in certain territories, all her efforts are deeply and sincerely appreciated. In a way, the advertisement is trying to say that the woman is made to function in all those areas because no other person can ever take her place.

#### **4. 3. 3. 2      The gradual effacement of stereotyping in visual advertisement**

This is another dimension to the representation of stereotypes in visual advertisement. As a result of the dissatisfaction shown about stereotypical representations, there are adjustments to ensure that majority of the stereotypes are positive. This is, however, prominent only in the real world, for now. In visual advertisement, representation of gender is yet to match up with what is obtainable in the society. It is a good starting point though. A trickle of change is being noticed in the world of visual advertisement.



**Plate 4.26.** The capable man in a feminine territory with Honeywell Superfine Flour

Plate 4.26 advertises Honeywell Superfine Flour with the image of a man. The man is also depicted in the full regalia of a cook with an apron and a cap. The apron is a branded one from the producers of the product being advertised. This connotes acceptance which is a function of hard work and dedication. It is a great improvement from the stereotypical belief that the feminine gender is the recognised cook. The represented participant is given a medium shot to establish a sort of relationship with the audience. This is enhanced by his direct gaze and smile. The smile also connotes acceptability by the man and indicates that he is enjoying his duty. The text **Quality you can trust** is displayed right beside the man to tell the viewer that the man's ability can be trusted as he is not an amateur at what he now does. It portrays the masculine gender in a more responsible and realistic manner.

All the elements on the billboard cohere. This shows unity in the message. The elements agree with the fact that the man is not just used as a decorative tool; he is a professional baker. The choice of baking, and not just any other type of food is intentional. Baking requires more expertise as the overall success of any exercise relies heavily on precise steps (measurement of ingredients, particular time to do particular things and duration). The connotative meaning of this is that the man is not just beginning to learn, he has become a master. Besides, progress in baking rests on the baker's interest. A baker can only progress in a steady manner when he or she is interested in the activities involved. The fact that this man is genuinely interested shows that he does not see baking as a woman's job. He has also allowed himself to be so publicly shown because he sees nothing to be ashamed of. The advertiser would not display the picture of a man, if they

felt it would hamper the success of the advertisement, in any way. Thus, seeing a man as a cook/baker is gradually becoming acceptable. As evidence, fresh loaves of bread are displayed at the left side. The man raises his thumbs to the audience, to show his happy and fulfilled state.



**Plate 4.27.** Snapp recognises a feminine brand of alcoholic drink

Plate 4.27 is an advertisement of Snapp, an alcoholic drink. It advertises the drink with three women singing before a crowd. Their appearances are quite similar, though with slight differences. They are almost of the same height, their hairstyles look similar and their gowns are the same shade of colour. In terms of salience, the group has the greatest salience, despite the fact that there are three of them. Their unity and the fact that they are all working towards the success of their course are evident. This shows that unlike popular belief, women can also relate peacefully and achieve great feats together. Women used to be shown inside and almost never in a group, unless they were performing a duty.

Also, the fact that they are singing before a crowd shows their obvious success in music, recognition by the crowd and acceptance by their fans, though a critical look at the crowd suggest that there are mainly ladies. This, however, shows that a woman could also be successful in duties that are outside the home, that have been traditionally tagged masculine. The fact that they can stay successful together in the public and they are all happy is an index of their lives in the absence of the crowd/viewer. The fact that the advertiser sees this as an image that is 'public-worthy' shows its level of acceptability. No advertiser will display anything new if it has not become acceptable to the public, even if

the acceptance is a gradual one. Also, it is an alcoholic drink advertised by the feminine gender to connote that its members are also allowed to take alcohol, though the presence of a part of an apple fruit suggests that it also contains fruits. It, however, overrules the fact that alcohol is the exclusive right of males.

#### **4.4 Exploitation of consumerist tendencies in Ibadan metropolis**

This section critically studies strategies employed by the advertisers of goods and services to ensure that their products are patronised in a never-ending manner. Here, consumerist tendencies that are exploited by billboard advertisers in the Ibadan audience and context are identified. Consumerism is that economic belief that satisfaction is derived through the never-ending acquisition of consumer goods. This explains why even when there is no logical reason for the purchase of some goods or the patronage of some services, members of the public are drawn into patronising regularly. This section, therefore, examines how the consumerist tendencies identified are exploited by the billboard advertisers to manipulate the choices of the audience.

##### **4.4.1 The character of the digital billboard**

The digital billboard, otherwise known as the electronic billboard, is one of the strategies fully utilised by advertisers, to their own advantage. It is an improvement on the traditional billboard that is designed with vinyl sheets. Since it is operated electronically, the digital billboard can display several pictures, add beautiful effects to ensure the whole thing comes out better than it would appear on the traditional billboard. It is a movement from still-life to digital (electronic) imaging to show a transition into the digital world. It allows multiple messages to be displayed. A kind of allure is also displayed through the use of technology to manipulate colour and technique. Though some of the images displayed are repeated versions, technology is utilised to make them creative so that it can catch the attention of the audience and work on their consciousness.



**Plate 4.28.** The allure of the digital age

It represents the present situation in the context of time and gives a glimpse into the future of technology and its impact in the society. The digital billboard is another tool utilised by the advertisers to solicit the patronage of the contemporary world which is seen as one that loves flamboyance and strives to fit into the grandeur of a particular moment. Plate 4.28 shows the projection of nine billboards, some of which are repeated versions of a particular exposure, to show the power of the digital world in manipulating concepts to suit particular purposes. The fact that the audience is exposed to multiple images at a relatively fast pace is symbolic of a changing society and the speed at which this is happening. The purpose of this billboard is reinforced by its location (Iwo Road), where road users are easily entrapped by the technique and expertise displayed. The context of transaction, thus, becomes a ‘market’ where meanings are negotiated and the audience, exploited, for the advertisers’ maximum benefit.



**Plate 4.29.** The road as a site of negotiation with technology

Plate 4.29 is a compilation of exposures, though there are just three here. The three exposures are similar activities of the same individual. They are programmed into the system and displayed at particular times. In addition to the alluring characteristics already mentioned, the manner in which each exposure is brought in is made to have its special and unmistakable effect on the public. Since technology keeps advancing daily, there is always one little addition to make the display better. The whole picture is given an extraordinary presentation so much that members of the audience find themselves eagerly awaiting the next exposure.

Plate 4.30 is the third digital billboard studied in this work. Here, though there are seven exposures, they should actually be seen as three because some are mere repetitions. One of the pictures is repeated twice, while the other one is the same message with a change of the represented participant. In addition, the billboards are designed in English and Yoruba languages. All these are manipulations through the use of technology to ensure that the audience's attention is caught and retained. The ones repeated are for the purpose of emphasis. In a way, despite the fact that the digital billboards are situated on very busy roads, the attention of the audience is forced. Hence, though the end products of these

billboards command attention easily, it is glaring that technology has helped a lot in making this possible.



**Plate 4.30.** The impact of technology in digital billboards

#### **4.4.2 The politics of representation and racism**

The choice of a white woman for the advertisement of Aptech Computer Education in Plate 4.31 raises some questions about the semiotics of racism, and not just gender, especially considering the physical context of this advert. Since Ibadan is a city in the South-Western Nigeria, it would have been acceptable to advertise with the image of a black woman. However, since advertisers are known to choose the options they consider the best for their products and services, a white woman is intentionally chosen. To them, using the image of a white woman presents Aptech and the services rendered better than what the image of a black woman would do. The choice connotes the uniqueness of Aptech Computer Education and the services that are rendered.





**Plate 4.31.** The white woman as a better choice to display excellence with Aptech

A critical look at the woman shows that she is not just a decorative tool; she is actively involved in an activity on the system. Her smile reinforces this. Though there is no tutor around her, she can navigate her way with ease. This signifies deftness at handling something that is usually not considered a ‘feminine territory’. Though she is given a close shot and has a smile on her face, she makes no eye contact with the audience to suggest the activity on the system is really engaging. The linguistic message ‘**Unleash your potential**’ is an anchorage to the connoted image. In a silent way, it challenges the audience to be the best, just like the service provider is doing through the advertisement. This draws the audience as it raises a kind of curiosity. A black woman is not utilised because she is not seen as a seller for this service; she is not a global product. Since the advertisers are interested in the patronage from the global space, a globally-acceptable means of advertisement is chosen. The black woman is, thus, doubly disadvantaged; she suffers gender discrimination and racial discrimination, at the same time. This has the tendency to lead to semiotic failure. The black woman feels slighted by the choice of a white woman over her and would not want to patronise the service. Thus, in a bid to show the uniqueness of the service being advertised, the advertiser ends up, indirectly, discouraging several members of their audience.

The choice of a woman is made because the advertiser feels only the image of a white woman can do justice to Aptech. The characteristics listed at the base of the billboard (**ISO Certified, 31 years of expertise, 6 million students, over 40 countries**) explain to the audience why the service is regarded as a special one. Though the authenticity of the

claims made cannot be verified, they, nonetheless, provide the service with an added advantage over competitors who may lack such credits. The represented participant is a sign. She is presented as a well-dressed young lady whose femininity brooks no argument. While her appearance is the signifier, she signifies a picture of attractive femininity. Her photograph is also iconic of a woman who is confident of who she is and what she carries. Her easy smile makes it difficult for the audience to feel she has allowed the position to get into her head. Her appearance is also an index of her social class in the society. On all fronts, she is presented as an able representative who has what it takes to perfectly fit into the roles she is used for. Thus, the advertiser can be said to be good at harnessing opportunities to the advantage of the service being advertised.

#### 4.4.3 Sexualisation of visual representation

Some visual representations are not acceptable by the advertiser until a sexual angle is included. In fact, this is responsible for why some individuals do not appreciate stereotypes. Advertisers feel it is a weakness of people and whatever has sexual underpinning sells fast. This is used both directly and indirectly.

##### 4.4.3.1 The semiotics of the woman's body



**Plate 4.32.** The woman's body as a seller with Regal Dry Gin

Plate 4.32 depicts a kind of politics being played through the sexualisation of the women's bodies. Women are usually utilised to complement various kinds of creative arts. They could be used as dancers or for decoration. Various parts of their bodies are scantily clad to entice the audience. In some kinds of music, for example, scantily dressed women are

used as dancers. In such cases, while the musician is engaged in his business, such women are employed as points of attraction to the audience. In order to ensure that they engage the audience, they are, intentionally, scantily dressed to pull attention to certain parts of their bodies. Since the focus is not on them, they are not allowed to distract the audience from the main message (selling a product); they are just used as a kind of pull.

The first impression one gets from Plate 4.32, a billboard advertisement of Regal Dry Gin, is that of a man who is on the stage, and as usual, is flanked by two ladies. A closer look shows that it is intentionally so set up to pull the crowd. While one of the two women on the billboard has her boobs partially exposed, the other has her hips partially outlined as a means of communication. Both parts are partially exposed to 'whet' the appetite of the audience and lure them into wanting more. Though the desire created by the pictures is not satisfied by the partial exposure, they are nonetheless fanned. Their bodies are, thus, utilised as entices and sellers to lure the audience.

Pasuma, a popular musician, is utilised as a crowd-puller. This strategy is known as celebrity endorsement. The iconicity of the man's image is a seller; his presence gives a kind of endorsement to Regal Dry Gin and suggests that with the product, you stand a better chance at becoming popular. The iconicity of the man is also a seller, his presence testifying to the fame one can get in one's profession, with the product being advertised. The head of the bottle is turned into a microphone to signify how the success of his career, music and the drink being advertised are involved. In a way, the creative way the microphone is fashioned out of the bottle suggests that the drink is why the artist is still successful in his career. Also, there are elements of intertextuality in this billboard; a creative performance of the musician is inserted into another, though a still-life, to serve as a form of a testimonial. Thus, while the billboard denotes a billboard, it connotes a stage, where talents are shown.

Though there are three represented participants, their appearances unite in various ways. The three of them are putting on a shade of blue, while the man and one of the ladies have on inner red materials. Apart from the beauty the unity in colour adds to the billboard, it connotes the sameness of a course. The same colours, though in different shades are also found on the billboard and on the displayed product. All these make it easier to

understand that the same course is being advertised. The red inner of the woman allows more than a peep into her cleavage and a side of her boobs. Though the cleavage of the other woman is not so exposed, an unmistakable outline of her hips is made to come towards the base of the billboard. Each part of the emphasised body is intentionally presented to communicate. All these do not only make them unite, they also help ensure that the sight is emphasised. The syntax of the represented participants is, thus, a seller.

Scantily-dressed ladies are not just presented, two of them are displayed to ensure that the effect they are expected to exude does not get lost on the audience. Different parts of their bodies are also emphasised to ensure that the intention of the advertiser is met. The female body is seen as a delicate object that has the tendency to lure members of the public. The woman is presented as a sexual object with special parts to enforce the attention of the audience. This is also offered as a public display because the advertiser believes that though the practice may not be generally acceptable, it is a weakness that several members of the audience are yet to overcome. This is, thus, utilised to entrap the audience. It is even seen as a bestseller by advertisers because of its relative ease in drawing attention. Since the advertisers place the success of their representations on what the society feels, the female body is, thus, defined according to the satisfaction the society gets from it. Though it is utilised in an exploitative manner, the society sees the female body as more interesting than its male counterpart. Particular parts of the woman's body are seen as assets to exploit the audience.

On a denotational level, the linguistic message is an anchorage to the denoted image. On this level, the presence of the celebrity and the girls is purely entertaining. However, the linguistic message also has a connotative meaning. The words *satisfaction* and *enjoyment*, as used on the billboard refer to the type one gets from peeping into the partially-clad bodies, and not the ones derived from the product being advertised. The three represented participants are placed in a space carved out of the billboard to suggest a kind of enjoyment in their 'world'. They are depicted to be so engaged in their activities that though the three of them are captured at a close range, none of them makes an eye contact with the audience. The three of them are smiling and the women have their attention glued to the man, who is engaged in 'making his music'. The whole picture presents an offer to the public.

The popularity of the musician is utilised as a puller, his iconicity, a seller. The male represented participant is Pasuma, a popular Fuji singer. Several persons like his song. The microphone is indexical of his success and popularity. An intentional link is, thus, created between success and Regal Dry Gin to suggest that with the advertised drink, your success in your chosen field is guaranteed. The advertisement is trying to sell the idea that with the advertised drink, you can perform better and have more credit in your endeavours. Representing him on the billboard gives a kind of approval to the product and the ideas being sold.



**Plate 4.33.** A partly-clad woman as a seller with Delta

Plate 4.33 is a billboard advertisement of Delta, a bathing soap. The initial impression one gets from the lady's posture is that of an individual posing for a photograph. The iconic element to prove this is the framed picture. Unlike few of the other soaps that could be said to be meant for a selected few, Delta is a used by both male and female. The billboard is, however, designed with the image of a lady. It is a rather small one for a close shot, as this makes a part of her head to be left out of the picture. Her face is also made up and the attention of the viewer is drawn to her red lips. Her long hair is made to fall on the sides of her breasts. She is putting on green underwear and the chest is open,

revealing a part of her breasts and even her cleavage. Her left hand is placed at her side, giving one the feeling that she is pushing out her chest a little. In addition to the part of the bosom already revealed by the underwear, the slight push affords the audience a better view. A sample of the soap being advertised is printed on her singlet, just at the uprising of her bosom and the whole image is enhanced by the curve of her hand.

The difference in the colours of her skin, hair and underwear makes a great contrast, adding to the salience of the woman. All the moves made to communicate with the picture seem to be enhancing her personality as an object of attraction. The fact that the combinations of the colours found on the soap are very similar to the ones on her makes it look like she and the soap are one. She helps enforce the effect by giving the impression that she is drawing the soap to her body. This representation shows how the female body has been turned into an object of beauty to be appreciated. The woman is, thus, made a seller for the duties Delta performs. It is a subtle way of saying ‘with Delta soap, you can get the kind of skin (quality and glow) presented by the woman’.

The closeness of the woman to the viewer’s gaze also makes her close to touch. Every part of her, including the exposed cleavage are not just available to the eyes, they are also made accessible to the hands. Her personality is also made available to the viewer. She smiles at the audience and makes a direct eye contact as if she is making a demand. The directness of her gaze and the softness of her smile make it very difficult for the audience to break away from the contact. In a way, the audience is pulled into her world, where all things seem possible. The connoted image presented signifies how all she represents are available to an interested viewer. The woman has been made so available that it only takes a stretch of the hand (denotatively and connotatively) to reach her and all she stands for. The advertisement is intentionally so ‘open’ to show the realness of the product and the promises it offers.

The word ‘**BodyGuard. . .**’ is written in yellow and this makes it to be easily seen. The punctuation mark, ellipsis, is used to suggest the omission of some words. The word is, thus, an anchorage and a relay. It is an anchorage to the denoted image of the woman who on the first look seems to be hugging the soap to herself with the left hand. A bodyguard is a kind of help hired to protect against harm. The protective way in which the woman

seems to be drawing the soap close connotes a trust in what the soap has to offer. The word is also a relay because it allows an extension of the meaning. In a way, it shows that though it is so available, the woman and all she represents welcome people/things of like minds (that are safe). This extended meaning is supported by the linguistic message ‘**Tough on germs, mild on skin**’. This is another way of saying ‘tough on enemies, mild on friends’.



**Plate 4.34.** The suggestive pose of a woman as a lure with Dallas Cosmetics

Plate 4.34 is an advertisement of various products by Dallas Cosmetics. An initial look at the billboard would make one think that feminine products are on sale. This is because of the near-naked woman displayed. A second look, however, shows that a body spray, a product used by both genders, is being advertised. The billboard is divided into two, with the larger part displaying various products by Dallas Cosmetics. The left side of the billboard displays the image of a light-skinned woman in a dark short dress. Her long hair is styled, her face is made up and the whole sophisticated look is completed with her black ‘open-toe’ shoes. Though the left side is generally believed to display the given information, this is not the case, here, as the image of the woman is captivating. The colour of her skin is more pronounced because of the contrasting colour of her gown. Her head is raised and tilted to a side in a stylish way to connote a woman who understands what fashion is.

The hair is so long and by the look of it, she just made it. This helps in giving her an alluring look. Apart from the fact that her dress is short and already exposes a generous part of her inner legs, she is squatting with her legs spread. The posture is an intentional one with the purpose of achieving specific purposes because it does not look like a comfortable one. The uncomfortable nature of her posture is seen in the manner in which she is supporting her frame with her left hand and her left leg; this too is done in a stylish manner. Her posture further opens her legs and can easily fire the imagination of the viewer as her crotch is open. The whole picture is erotic and presents her image in a sexually vulnerable position.

Though the product could have been sold without the image of this lady, the advertiser still made the image to be displayed as if there is an additional message the image would pass across. Sex is used by the advertisers of many products to catch the attention of the viewer even when such is not needed. Though the camera angle gives the image a fairly faraway look, it can be said to be a close shot as the lady is clearly seen. Her face is raised and her eyes averted from giving the viewer a direct gaze because she intends to make the whole picture an offer. Even if she had looked directly into the eyes of the viewer, her body would still have been given an intimate look. This representation testifies to how the female body has become a commodity, through which different products are sold.

This kind of advertisement is intentionally designed to attract both male and female audiences. Females are attracted because of the sheer perfection displayed and the need to attain such, while males are attracted to a seductive presentation of a member of the opposite sex. Advertisements of cosmetics are designed to charm the audience and force them to buy the products. In advertising the products, an ideal image of the woman is presented. Since the idea will ever remain an illusion, Tehseem and Kalsoom (2015) believe that such advertisements, indirectly, make women remain subservient to men. Since the picture of perfection is, however, presented, most women would not mind patronising the product. Women are steadily led towards consumerism as they are encouraged to strive for perfection. As Londo (2006) puts it, the goal is to strive for perfection according to the standards upheld by the beauty myth.



The advertisers in Plates 4.32, 4.33 and 4.34 are interested in leading the audience into voyeurism, which is an act of secretly watching and deriving pleasure from the naked body of another person. The present society is seen as one where people desire to know more about everything, especially whatever is hidden. It is a desire that advertisers believe several people have and this weakness is exploited. The female body is especially seen as interesting and that particular parts can be utilised as assets to entice the audience. The parts are partially exposed to pull the audience into wanting to see more. It is a weakness utilised by advertisers to exploit the consumerist tendencies in the audience. This is a strategy to establish a connection between the bodies displayed and the product being sold. Once the attention of the audience is retained, it becomes easier for the advertisers to manipulate such to their advantage. According to Goodwin, Nelson, Ackerman and Weisskopf (2008:4), consumerism has “created mass markets, industrialization, and cultural attitudes that ensure that rising incomes are used to purchase an ever-growing output”.

#### **4.4.3.2 Blending innuendo with visual representation**

Apart from encouraging a culture of voyeurism, advertisers also indulge in making suggestive jokes. Though this is used in several ways, visual advertisement affords a creative way of this practice. The innuendo is displayed in various ways. Some are cast as a style of teasing the audience, expressions are represented as sentence fragments and left to hang, and at other times, pictures which are capable of firing the imaginations of the audience are presented. For such advertisements, the intention is clear. However, since no advertiser wants his or her display to be labelled as vulgar, each tries to hide under the creative use of language and images.

Plate 4.35 advertises Action Bitters. The attention of the audience is easily engaged right from the beginning because of the name. As used by the images of the represented participants displayed, the viewer is interested in knowing more. Even individuals who do not appreciate the use of such are engaged in confirming whether or not their fear (that some advertisers have become so audacious) would be confirmed from the advertisement. At the end of the day, virtually everyone’s attention gets caught; which is the intention of the advertiser, right from the beginning; no product or service is sold until it has successfully engaged the attention of the audience.



**Plate 4.35.** Action Bitters advertises with a couple's suggestive posture

The represented participants, a man and a woman, are placed on the right side of the billboard to indicate a new situation. In a way, members of the public are expected to look at this because it is the essence of the advertisement. Apart from the placement of the represented participants on the right, the viewer becomes curious because of the posture of the two of them. The fact that the two of them are in a compromising position cannot be mistaken; the lady is glued to the man's body from the back. Though the black jacket of the man covers a lot about the woman's body, little would have been seen about it because of her posture. In fact, the two of them look like one. It takes a patient viewer to know what part exactly belongs to which of them. On the extreme right, two hands are seen; one on the man's chest and the other very close to the man's crotch. It takes a very diligent observer to notice that the hand of the woman is not the one close to the man's crotch. This is intentionally done to confuse the viewer and delight persons who appreciate such things.

The man is an icon of raw power. His chest shows that of an individual who works out regularly. This signifies health. Apart from the suggestive posture, the two of them have feelings that cannot be easily discerned on their faces, the closest though still has a sexual undertone. The woman is hanging unto the man as if her life depends on him and the powerful way the man covers her up shows a man that is ready to face whatever is required. The expression '**100% Herbs**' is presented as a full sentence with the full stop it carries. Though it denotes the fast means of writing, it connotes a lack of time to waste. In a way, it suggests that though there are several things to say, the advertiser would rather

have them shown. This agrees with the linguistic message ‘**I choose action**’. The word ‘**ACTION**’ is written in capital letters and the whole of the messages are brought together in a single way. The couple is made to lean slightly against an edge of the linguistic message to present them as the signified. The linguistic message is the vocalised thought of the man. The ‘action’ he referred to is not actually mentioned but the viewer can easily fill the unsaid part.

As if to complete the equation, a bottle of the drink is displayed on the left to connote a given idea. This is the advertiser’s way of saying that though Action Bitters is the product being advertised, it is already a known product. What is more important at the moment to the advertiser is, therefore, the ability of the audience to know that with the product, the given information displayed on the right is possible. Colour is richly used to ensure that there is coherence on the billboard. The black, white and green found on the bottle of the product are also used in decorating the billboard. The man also has two of the colours on his clothes. Green symbolises nature, black displays the raw power of the product and white assures the audience that the drink is healthy for consumption.

Plate 4.36, a billboard advertisement of Adonko Alcoholic Bitters, is similar to the display on Plate 4.35. The name given to this product is even more suggestive, as it mimics the Yoruba word for the male sexual organ. But since the advertiser is aimed at teasing the audience with innuendo, the name is balanced with the word ‘bitters’. The suspicion of the audience is confirmed from the represented participants. The two of them are carved in the structure of love and so, they are iconic of a loving relationship. However, in addition to that, both of them are making gestures that have a sexual undertone with their fingers. Though the man is holding a cup of the drink, he is also pointing his left index finger in the direction of the woman’s pointed bottle. Kids use this kind of joke when they are trying to describe what they know about sexual intercourse.



**Plate 4.36** An expressive couple advertises Adonko Alcoholic Bitters

Though the represented participants are given a close shot, they only have eyes for each other. They are so engrossed in a world of their own and the audience is not really noticed. The women's dressing also raises some questions. If the man is all dressed up, why is the lady displayed in a white underwear and a wrapper? The fact that she is smiling erases any possibility of her being coerced into anything. She is bold to be dressed like this and displayed for this purpose. This connotes a kind of audacity that is a little rare in the woman. However, the boldness displayed is one of the high points of this product. The two of them are placed under the linguistic message. Instead of writing love out in full, the iconic representation of love is used to lend credence to the relationship that exists between the couple. The word 'Adonko' stands out, though the whole expression is in capital letters because it is doubly articulated. On the horizontal axis, the couple is placed at the centre to connote their importance to the advertisement.

#### **4.4.4 Youths and the quest for a change**

One of the ways by which the advertiser tries to reach the audience is to ensure that their interests are represented, regularly. As a result, the advertiser studies the society to ensure that as much as possible, especially where such would be to their advantage, the society is

replicated in advertisement. Though visual advertisement allows creativity, there is also the need for special care on the part of the advertiser to make sure that the right message is sent. Once members of the society can relate with what is being said, it becomes very easy for the advertiser to get his products, services and ideas sold. Today's society is one where the youths are constantly changing the order of things. They seem to delight in doing whatever is capable of bringing about a change.



**Plate 4.37.** The new face of alcoholic drinks with Orijin

Plate 4.37 advertises Orijin. The salience of the young man is non-negotiable because of his position and his being the foregrounded image. The represented participant is strategically placed at the centre of the billboard to connote that his presence and all he signifies are the essence of the advertisement. The first striking feature of the billboard is the unusual nature of choices and representations. The young man has a dark green turtle-neck top under a patterned jacket. The inner top signifies inner strength and admonition to taste what is inside the bottle of the product. The colour of his jacket agrees with the colour of the text. This connotes coherence and an agreement between what is shown and what is said. In a way, the text acts like an anchorage, according to the classification given by Barthes. All the buttons on the jacket are let loose and a dangling chain is on his neck. The whole appearance is completed with a dark pair of glasses and the top part of a toned hairstyle. The use of the dark pair of glasses suggests his wish to have his identity hidden. It also connotes the advertiser's desire to make the interested viewer believe the depicted individual could be him. The young man is, thus, an icon of change.

His mode of dressing is an obvious departure from the general outlook of represented participants in billboards advertising alcoholic drinks, but the young man does not mind. In fact, he is confident of the 'rightness' of his portrayal and encourages the audience, with his left hand to join the 'movement', since that is where the 'real deal' is. The linguistic message is an anchorage. **STAY TRUE TO YOU AND CREATE SOMETHING NEW** gives power to the belief of the young man. The text is all written in capital letters, making 'to you' and 'new' bolder than the other words for double articulation. The text denotes a suggestion but connotes the acceptance that though the whole idea looks new, it is worthy of emulation because it is original. The newness of the idea is emphasised by the situation depicted at the background of the billboard. It also suggests that 'you' (the initiator) and 'new' (the idea) are the most important.

Unlike the others where the background is either plain or designed in colours, the background of this billboard carries the picture of a two-storey building, the roofs of two or more houses and a fairly busy road. All these are odd but as the text and the whole idea already forewarned, oddity is acceptable and it does not connote inferiority. The depicted background connotes reality and possibility, both of which are attested to by the close shot given to the young man and the equal power between him and the viewer. The popular commercial minibus, 'Keke' is also depicted at the background to connote the realistic nature of the product and its affordability. 'Keke' is patronised by several persons as the nature of the vehicle allows ventilation and easy commute, none of which impedes the process of transporting passengers. The connotative meaning of this is that though the product could look cheap and out of place, it can favourably compete with other drinks as it performs all the basic functions expected of a normal alcoholic drink.

The use of yellow in different shades connotes several ideological meanings. Yellow signifies enlightenment and creativity, both of which are celebrated by the represented participant. His back is slightly turned towards a black-brown background to connote an individual's emergence from redundancy. His emergence is into a bright area and the effect is beginning to show in his general outlook. The depiction is an encouragement for a better future and its brightness instills optimism and positivity. The young man's carriage connotes an 'I-do-not-care' attitude, as if he already foresees opposition to his innovation.



**Plate 4.38.** Advertising the usual in an unusual way 1



**Plate 4.39.** Advertising the usual in an unusual way 2

Plates 4.38 and 4.39 are designed with the masculine and feminine T-shirts, respectively. It is a combination of innovation, youth and gender. The viewer, at a first glance, emerges

confused because of the design. A closer look forces the individual to have various thoughts running across his or her mind. The two billboards are designed the same way, with the exception of a conscious effort to demarcate the masculine T-shirt from the feminine one. The arms of the one meant for the man are longer than the other one. Both of them have arms that are clearly outlined and the feminine T-shirt has the addition of a neck, a part of her face and the lower part of her hair. Apart from the T-shirt, the notice ‘**VACANT!**’ is placed at the top of the billboards and the linguistic message ‘**I am Available**’ is placed at the centre of the T-shirts. Phone numbers are placed at the base of the billboards.

Just like in the plate advertising Orijin, these billboards are also a deviation from the norm. The head in the masculine T-shirt is intentionally missing as a way of inviting people’s patronage. It connotes the availability of the space for interested people. Not including a face in the picture communicates to the audience that any interested product or service can be advertised on the billboard. Since it is an unusual way of advertising, the viewer is interested in knowing more about the ‘product’ on sale. The target is, thus, the curiosity of the audience, which is finally going to become the driving force. The physical body is intentionally manipulated to present something different from the norm, to the audience. The partly-revealed head in the feminine T-shirt performs two functions: it acts as a removal of doubts on whether or not the two T-shirts are the same and also performs the function of a tease. It is a way of engaging the interest of the audience and saying ‘if you want more, get in touch with the phone number provided’.

The advertisement is clearly an innovation meant to attract the youth in ‘body’ and in ‘mind’. This is a postmodern age where young people tend to do the exact opposite of what is generally accepted. For example, wearing rags is celebrated by some youths, instead of clothes, and there are particular styles of dressing, which totally negate the norm. The rebellious nature of such young people makes them bent on upturning whatever culture seems to have imposed on them. The word ‘**available**’ is intentionally used because of its ambiguous meaning. It suggests availability to whatever is conceivable. The sentence is intentionally left hanging so that the audience will fill up the sentence with whatever they want – undefined lifestyle, strange ideas, prostitution, crime and criminal activities. The list is endless. The focus is ‘I am available for whatever is



different from the norm'. Though it looks unusual, this is the kind of strangeness celebrated by majority of the youth. It is the age where strangeness is celebrated at an alarming rate, and the same is copied with speed and relish. Hence, the usual (norm) is depicted as boring and a concept not worthy of being explored.

#### 4.4.5 The relation of professionalism and empathy

Another strategy by which advertisers exploit the consumerist tendencies in the audience is by designing the billboards with a touch of professionalism and a show of empathy. Members of the audience appreciate it when an advertisement displays the producer/service provider's sound knowledge about the subject of discussion. Such are seen to know what they are doing and even if the product advertised is expensive, the viewer wants to believe patronising such is safe. In addition to the display of sound knowledge, the audience also appreciates it when there is a sincere show of understanding.



**Plate 4.40.** Mortein advertisement displays empathy

Plate 4.40 is a billboard advertisement of Mortein. Though the billboard looks a little bare, its message is still communicated with ease. The salience of the woman is ensured as she is placed at the middle, holding out a sample of the product being advertised. The background of the billboard is red to signify life and blood. This is intentionally used to depict what the product is all about. Apart from the visual representation, the linguistic message reads '**Fight Malaria with Mortein**'. The verb 'fight' is intentionally used to show the advertiser's understanding that Malaria is an enemy that needs to be fought, not

tolerated. Since the advertiser sees it like this, the viewer is assured that the product being advertised is capable of doing justice to the assignment of killing mosquitoes. The same idea is sold to the audience in Plate 4.40, and this time around, the word ‘**finish**’ is used to show that the drug being advertised is capable of seeing to the end of malaria. Without additional promises, this advertisement reassures the audience that the advertiser and his or her product can be trusted.



**Plate 4.41.** Combisunate assures the audience with professionalism

Food is one aspect where members of the audience exercise great caution. Advertisers of food items are aware of this. As a result, in addition to proving to the audience that a food item is prepared under hygienic conditions, they also show the audience that they are professionals at their jobs. Breakfast is seen as the best meal of the day. This explains the mantra by the American pioneer in the field of nutrition, Daisie Adelle Davis “eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and supper like a pauper”. Plate 4.42 advertises Peak Milk, with emphasises on breakfast. The audience finds it easier to patronise a seller who displays a sound knowledge of what they profess to do. The linguistic message **Ounje owuro dara julo pelu Peak (breakfast is best with Peak)** is carved in such a way that both breakfast and Peak are presented as very important concepts. The salience of the two words is ensured by their bold font. However, out of the two, the advertiser knowingly ensures that both the font size and type of the product being advertised are more prominent than any other. On the denotative level, it shows the audience a sample

of the product being advertised, but on a connotative level, it shows that **Peak** is the most important item on the billboard, the essence of the advertisement.

The first part of the expression **Ounje owuro dara julo (breakfast is the best)** displays the advertiser's sound knowledge of one of the necessities of a healthy life. This is not posed as a question or a command; it is presented as a declarative sentence. While this denotes a piece of information to the audience, it connotes a voice of authority over a subject matter. In addition, it makes an indirect reference to the other meals of the day (lunch and dinner). In a quiet but sure manner, the advertiser has displayed a sound knowledge in issues that border on food. Without really directly saying much about what he or she knows or can do, the advertiser has succeeded in appealing to the audience's sense of trust. Since the idea of breakfast is already broached, making the addition of milk acceptable to the audience becomes easy. On the denotative level, **Peak** is just seen as an addition to having a nice meal. However, it connotes a completion to the suggestion made. In a way, the advertiser insinuates that **without Peak, breakfast might as well be described as a bland meal**. Hence, without really seeming to have done so, the advertiser has presented Peak as the only accompaniment to enjoying a rich breakfast.



**Plate 4.42.** Peak Milk banks on the health benefits of taking breakfast

The linguistic message is an anchorage to the image displayed on the billboard. The image is that of custard/yellow pap served in a white bowl, with a tin of the product being

poured in. The quantity of the meal as well as a tin of milk is just enough to satisfy the audience. Thus, the meal is presented as a very healthy one when its quantity and quality are considered. The information value of the image is ensured by its placement. The centre is usually reserved for the most important item on the billboard. Apart from occupying the centre, it takes a good part of the left and right sides. It is also given a medium shot and made to display its richness; a tin is opened and poured into a bowl of pap/custard.



**Plate 4.43.** Olympic and its promise of a healthy breakfast

Plate 4.43 is similar to the previous plate. Apart from the fact that it advertises Olympic, a type of milk, it also shows the intellectual ability of the producer and the reliability of the product, indirectly. Just like Plate 4.42, this one also tells about the importance of breakfast, with an addition though. The emphasis in this advertisement is on health. The linguistic message **low cholesterol breakfast** has its prominence on **low cholesterol**. The producer has been able to show the audience that though breakfast is important, it is better to ensure that the breakfast is a healthy one. The use of the adjective **low** shows that the producer is an experienced dietician, who knows the level of what is needed in the body. Since everyone appreciates healthy foods, this advertisement can easily be used to attract the attention of the audience. A rich display of a small size of the product is shown as a sample is opened and poured into a cup to connote its richness. There is also a subtle

indicator to the affordable nature of the product. Though the display of the tin and a sachet denotes varieties, it connotes affordability, despite the fullness.

Another addition to this is the display of a man holding a sachet of the product. Though the picture is silent about the educational attainment of the represented participant, the physical appearance of the man shows that of a person who knows what he is doing. He holds a sample of the product and points at it with one of his finger as if to say ‘this explains the satisfaction seen on my face’. The man himself is beaming in a very easy way. The image of the man is an icon of satisfaction. He also looks healthy to attest to the promise of ‘low cholesterol’ in the product. The billboard seems to be divided into three: the represented participant is placed at the left, samples of the products appear on the right, and the linguistic message is placed at the upper centre. While the segmentation makes the billboard look beautiful, it also passes across a subtle message; with low cholesterol breakfast that is possible through Olympic, a man/woman’s health is ensured. The choice of displaying a man is intentional. Men are known to be involved in a concept only when it is a serious one; they rarely have time for flimsy issues. Displaying a man who shows his satisfaction so easily attests to the authenticity of the product and the benefits the audience stands to gain from it.

#### **4.4.6 Doing it the way the audience appreciates**

The audience also appreciates it when things are done to their taste. In order to prove this, an advertiser is expected to include whatever is appreciated by the audience. This is done in various ways. The bottom line is that the advertisement shows that the producer understands the audience, their needs and preferences, and that products are made just to suit their tastes. There are even times when such concepts look very expensive and almost unbelievable. The advertiser does nothing to correct this opinion but uses such to their advantage to show how important the audience is to them.

##### **4.4.6.1 The love for free things**

This is the first category under this section. The advertisement is made to look as if it is all about the audience. As a result, everything the audience appreciates is exploited in a creative way to make them feel important. The first concept in Plate 4.44 is the obvious attempt at showing the continued relevance of gender in advertisement. Though both

images are cartoons, they are created as gendered ones. In addition, there is the subtle attempt at creating humour with the extended necks of the portrayed images. In a way, the picture on a denotative level, acts like an anchorage to the name of the product ‘Long throat bottle’. The effect of this is emphasised by the way both images stretch their necks. Their salience is ensured by their locations (at the centre of the plates). The expression ‘long throat’ is an indication that the advertiser recognises the audience’s need for more of the product. Without really asking, the advertiser assumes for the audience that the drink is so good, that more of it is appreciated. Instead of making the audience feel bad about wanting more (being greedy), the advertiser teases the audience and celebrates their need for more.



**Plate 4.44.** Pepsi celebrates the audience’s crave for the extra with long throat bottle

Unlike some of the other billboards already analysed, the principal meaning in Plate 4.44 resides in the linguistic messages. A distinct difference between what was obtainable and the new product is made by the use of the adverb ‘now’ at the beginning of **NOW 20% EXTRA**. The extra is presented as an attractive addition to the audience with the promise that it makes no difference in the price – (**@ SAME PRICE**). The audience appreciates a bonus, no matter how small, especially when such makes no difference to the original price. In fact, some persons are known to patronise some products because of the promise of the extra. The effect is emphasised by the expression **The new 60cl**. The adjective **new** helps to clear any doubt the audience could be entertaining about the initial expressions being a mistake.

The salience of the linguistic messages is ensured by the use of capital letters for the first two expressions. Colour is also used to ensure that a clear demarcation is made between the linguistic messages and the background colour of the billboard. Apart from making the messages clearer, the use of colour also helps to ensure their salience. A kind of synchronisation is also achieved by the use of colour. All the colours used for designing the billboard and the images represented are part of the colours on the sample of the product presented. While this connotes harmony, it serves as a reminder that the whole concept, regardless of the benefits, are from Pepsi.



Plate 4.45. The love for freebies with Guinness

The concept employed for advertisement in Plate 4.45 is similar to the one in Plate 4.44; it is the presentation of advertisement with the promise of something free. The linguistic messages are also mainly used as the vehicle of communication here and the images seem more like an anchorage. **N2, 000, 000 TO BE WON EVERY MATCH WEEKEND** is written with a double emphasis; it is not only written in capital letters, it is also made to appear in colours that sharply contrast with the black background of the billboard. The amount to be won is intentionally written in yellow to make it stand out. The emphasis on it makes it very difficult for the audience to ignore the advertisement, without a reconsideration. In fact, because it is a lot of money, it happens to be one of the first items on the billboard that attracts the audience. The tone guarantees a level of surety, which helps in assuring the audience of the reliable nature of the promise.

The inclusion of the period (**EVERY WEEKEND**) is intentional; it draws more crowd and turns it into a **weekend** necessity for lovers of such a match. The effect of the first expression is reinforced by the second **PLUS EVERY GOAL EVERY GAME WINS**

**AIRTIME.** Without much explanations, this additional linguistic message reassures the audience of the possibility of winning a gift every weekend. On the denotative level, this is a normal gift that is given as a compensation to the audience of the matches. However, on a connotative level, it is a bait that is used to draw people. The advertisement is intentionally silent on the conditions that every interested participant would meet before they are considered eligible for the gift. In addition, an audience would only make a connection between Guinness, the product being advertised and the cash gift to be won, after giving the billboard at least, a second look. These are intentionally done to ensure that the bait is more pronounced and easily noticed by the audience. Once the interest of the audience is successfully captured, they may not really mind making a little sacrifice to enjoy the bonus.

Plate 4.46 is another billboard in this category. It is a concept that involves using a kind of bait to get the audience. Unlike the other two billboards in this category, this one is designed with three represented participants and several linguistic messages. The creative nature of the messages and images is ensured by the harmony in them, though in different ways, they speak the same language. This advertisement is using a form of discount as a bait. Though all the represented participants are active, they are attesting to what the linguistic messages say, in different ways. They perform the function of an anchorage; the expressions on their faces depict a state of awe at the message the linguistic messages are passing across.



**Plate 4.46.** Price slash as a lure for more customers



The feeling of amazement is instilled into the audience right from the way the service is tagged; right from the title **Ibadan biggest %Price% Slash Ever**, the service provider's use of words instigates the audience into patronage. The adjective **biggest** attests to the fact that this service is the first of its type in terms of magnitude. The word **slash** connotes a major cut in the former price. The choice is intentional to connote a great discount; the kind that cannot go unnoticed. The tone of the expression also assures the audience in a sure way. Apart from the way the service is tagged, another linguistic message intentionally coined to make the audience appreciate the service being rendered is **20% Discount in the month of July**. Though this is also a form of bonus, the expression is intentionally silent on whether or not this expression is the same as what the tag given to the billboard says.

Under the linguistic message, there is a list of items presented as if to buttress the point made earlier:

**1000 FLIERS – N16, 000**  
**200 COMPLIMENTARY – N5000**  
**100 A3 POSTER – N6500**

Though the list looks a little detailed on the first look, a critical look shows that one of the most important items has been left out; a transparent show of the big slash, as claimed in the advertisement, should show a difference between what is obtainable with other service providers and this particular service. That would have made it easy for the audience to agree or disagree with the claims made by the service provide, and not present it like the audience is forced to see things from the perspective of the service provider alone. The last expression placed at the base of the audience supports this point. Though it looks like a thoughtful gesture that a contact is provided for the audience who is interested in the service, the way it is phrased connotes an enforced offer. The expression **0802 343 7295 – CALL NOW** borders on an imperative one. As such, without really meaning to do so, the audience is being forced to patronise the service. In a way, the advertisement restricts the audience to a particular option, and suggests a time limit to enjoying the bonus.

In addition to the meanings communicated through the linguistic messages, the images help to doubly articulate the meaning in the expressions. The three individuals displayed on the billboard are all dazed by the offer. Though the three of them show different levels

of amazement, it is glaring, from their expressions, that the offer is one that leaves the viewer in wonder. While the two young men cover their mouths as if they are too dazed to talk, the lady spreads her hands, with her mouth hanging open to show a situation that leaves one tongue-tied. The salience of the three represented participants is ensured by their placement and the colour of their shirts. The lady's shirt is pink while the two young men put on different shades of blue. In a silent way, the pink complements the blue and makes the beauty of their wears one that cannot be ignored. The complementary nature of the pink top connotes the support given to the expressions of the men by the lady's.

The offer is so amazing that they are left in awe. The lady, however, takes it further. Though her own expression also starts in amazement, it goes further to the invitation of people to come and see (patronise) what has got her so rattled. Thus, while informing the audience of the existence of this price slash, the service provider has been able to show the feelings of anyone who gets to enjoy the offer. The advertisement is an invitation to others who would be missing a lot if they refused to come and see for themselves. All of these so much contribute to the 'hype' given to the service that the service offered is pushed to the background; the benefits the audience stand to gain are instead fronted. The service, **printing** is pushed to the right tip of the billboard. It is a location that can easily be missed by someone who is more concerned about the bonus. For some members of the audience, even with the **biggest slash ever** claim that is made, they may never give it a second thought because they really do not need such services. Capitalising on the bonus at the expense of the service provided is to ensure that the audience gets captivated by the bonus, and that the service is later given a reconsideration, when/if it is finally known.

#### **4.4.6.2 Acceptance/celebration of the culture of haste**

Another method by which providers of goods and services get the patronage of the members of the audience is by showing an understanding of why they are always in a haste and celebrate their means of ensuring that this is made possible. These days, members of the public seem to have more to do in so short a time. As a result, survival seems to be based on how hurriedly one can get to a place, meet someone and close a deal. Service providers show their empathy to make the audience believe that they understand the plight of the audience and are working to ensure the difficulty is totally erased. Each service is provided with the utmost aim of catering for the audience's peculiar needs.



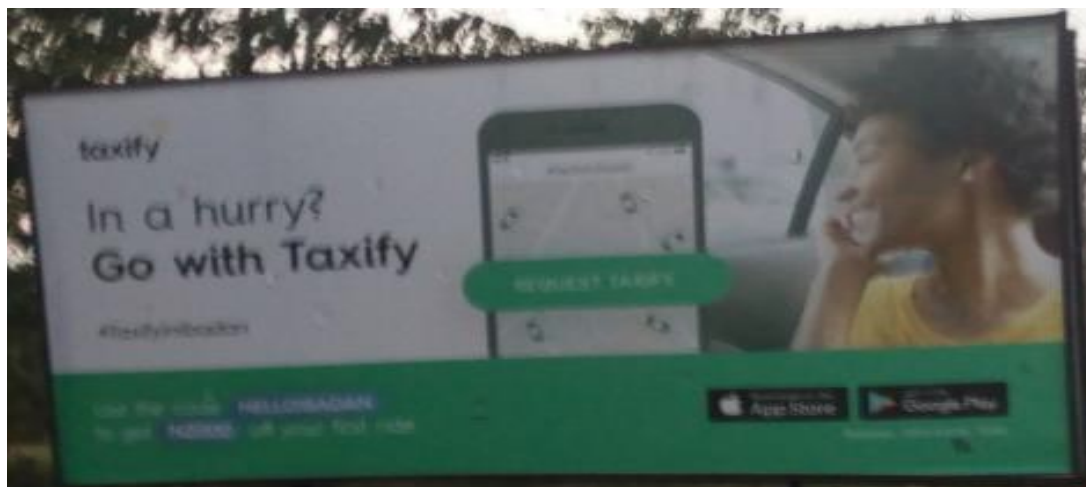
**Plate 4.47.** OPay presents an easier way of commuting

Opay is a service that helps to commute passengers to their destination in a very short time because of the nature of the tool used – a motorcycle. Apart from its swiftness in getting passengers, it is believed to be capable of finding its way on a busy road. Since virtually everyone is in a hurry to get to their destination, some members of the public find it easier to use this service than go in a car. Though the financially buoyant may not really mind the price, more customers are attracted if the price is user-friendly. The service providers know this and use it to draw the audience. The first point of attraction on the billboard is the satisfaction expressed by both the representative of the service providers (the bike man) and the young woman who is the customer. She looks happy and satisfied. Also, unlike customers of some other products, she looks proud to be associated with this service and is not hiding her face. This connotes a sense of pride and satisfaction in the services offered.

The representation of the billboard is iconic of a happy customer who is satisfied with what is being offered. This level of satisfaction is depicted in various ways. The first is the linguistic message **Now in Ibadan**. The use of the adverb **Now** shows a difference between a particular time before the advertisement and the time of the advertisement. Without seeming to do so, it shows the audience an addition to making life easy for them. Right under the first expression is the one that suggests easy accessibility to the service. Since the world has become a global village, the audience finds it easier to access some

things online. It also makes it faster to get, as more time is saved, once there is a good network. A discount is also said to be available to online payers only. In addition to the speed of a motor bike the service providers' promise that **every trip** costs **N50** draws more customers. The lady is comfortably seated with a helmet on her head to connote that the service providers care about the comfortability and the safety of the audience.

Plate 4.48 advertises Taxify. This is also a means of transportation, though, unlike the previous billboard, this advertises a car service. The importance this kind of service places on customer's satisfaction is seen in the depiction of the customer. The young woman who happens to be the customer is seated at the space popularly known as 'the owner's corner'. She is not just seated comfortably, she is making a call. The easy smile on her face shows that she is happy with herself, at least at the moment. The call she is making is a function of the comfortability provided by the service, as her attention would have been taken by something else if she was not enjoying the ride. Her looks also depict that of a young woman. This connotes a representation of the lifestyle preferred by most youths; they are known to appreciate such convenience.



**Plate 4.48.** Taxify proffers solution to delayed trips

The advertisement also shows its connection with the digital world. Technology has allowed the society to move from its former manual style to where virtually everything is possible using the internet. The billboard displays a phone which shows the workings of Goggle map. This is an enticing bonus as members of the audience sometimes do not know how to get to their destination. In addition to the advantage the exposure of the drivers gives to locating the audience's destination, the Goggle map also helps. The

billboard also provides pieces of information on how to download the application needed for the service. With all these provisions, a person who already had misgivings is likely going to change his/her mind because using the application is made quite easy.

The linguistic message **In a hurry? Go with Taxify** supports the image displayed. In a way, the tone of the message suggests that the culture of being in a haste is not only recognised, it has become accepted and service providers are making use of this, to their advantage. However, instead of making it look like they are feeding on the audience's plight, the service providers have channeled the service to make the audience feel special. They are made to understand that the audience's comfort, above every other thing is what they (the service providers) are after. The represented participant is so comfortable with the service offered that though she is in a hurry, she is not tensed because she believes in the ability of the service providers not to disappoint her. This is a strategy employed for advertisement by the service providers. It connotes the possibility of enjoying oneself, even on a busy day.

#### **4.4.6.3 Crave for instant gratification**

Another strategy used by advertisers is to celebrate the crave for instant gratification. In a way, this is similar to celebrating the hasty nature of the audience. The difference is that while the former is focused on getting somewhere, the latter is on satisfying one's hunger, the easiest way, and within the shortest possible time. The culture of haste is manifesting in various aspects of the audience's life. Even when it requires the addition of a little more money, some members of the audience would not mind, as long as it makes getting their desires satisfied, instantly. In advertisement, this service is decorated and made to look like a sacrifice made solely because of the audience's comfort.



**Plate 4.49.** The possibility of instant gratification with Gala

Plate 4.49, a billboard advertisement of Gala, is sparsely decorated, unlike some of the other billboards; apart from the slogan of the product and the logo, the only other item on the billboard is a picture of the product. In a way, it describes the non-elaborate steps in getting the product. The displayed image of the product shows one that is just moderate in size. Contrary to the opinion that such things have little or no impact, the slogan says **Instant Refuel**. The salience of the slogan is ensured in several ways; it is the only linguistic expression on the billboard, it is placed upon a red background and written in white and it is placed at the centre of the billboard, though towards the base. All these help to ensure that the audience does not miss it.

The use of **Instant** suggests a kind of food that is precooked and satisfies promptly. Thus, it satisfies an immediate need. Apart from its prompt attendance to what it is meant to do, it is also presented as being of great impact. The use of **Refuel** suggests a state of replenishment, after a run down. In a way, it celebrates hard work; a person needs to refuel after they have exhausted their supply of energy. In addition, it encourages the audience to go for a kind of food that is readily available and does not stress them; it is a good type of food because it supplies lost body nutrients. Thus, the advertisement recognises the audience's need for instant gratification and provides a means to getting it satisfied. The billboard is dominated by red and a little of white to denote beauty. The two colours are intentionally chosen to perform more than aesthetic reasons; while red

connotes life, white connotes purity. Hence, the advertiser tells the audience that though it is just a type of snack, it is capable of giving life (the ‘fuel’ promised by the name of the product). This explains why red is chosen as the dominant colour. White is also used to buttress the reliable nature of the food. Since it is easily absorbed by the body and its effect is usually unavoidable, people are careful about their choice of food. The use of white here tells the audience that the product is safe for consumption.



**Plate 4.50.** Peppered Rice Take Away offers a relief to the audience

Plate 4.50 advertises a service that provides a solution to the ‘long wait’ for good food. Unlike the previous billboard that advertises a kind of snack, Plate 4.50 advertises peppered rice. One of the first points of attraction is the display of various types of food, especially rice. Some of the foods displayed are jollof rice, fried rice, white rice, beans and porridge. Hence, though the emphasis in the way the service is tagged is ‘peppered rice’, the advertiser is making efforts to inform the audience of the availability of other meals. The producer has tried to keep to their promise of the foods being ‘peppered’ by ensuring that, in addition to the pepper that must have been used to spice the ‘mixed’ rice and other meals, a portion of pepper which must have been prepared with some other ingredients is served on the food. Pepper is valued by many people, especially in this part of the country. This explains the saying in Yoruba ‘emi ti ko j’ata, emi yepere ni’ (a

person that does not eat pepper is really light). This is because, in a way, the presence of pepper in a meal is believed to contribute to its health benefits.

The display of these meals suggests that they are likely going to be meant for a particular set of people because of the distance and the price. This question is, however, preconceived by the advertisers and answers are already provided in the linguistic message that is placed directly above the meals.

### Affordable and Tasty Meals

# Delivered to you

The linguistic message is intentionally divided into two and given different font sizes to give the latter more salience than the former. Though every first word in the first line is written with initial capital letters, the second line, whose first word is the only word written with initial capital letter, seems to swallow the first line. While this denotes beauty, it connotes the essence of why the linguistic message is displayed like that – to show the audience that though the service providers have affordable meals to deliver, it is more important to them to ensure that the meals get to the audience. This also erases the headache some members of the audience might have had in considering how their orders would get to them.

Though there are other images and linguistic messages on the billboard, the combination of this particular linguistic message and the display of meals is made to be more salient than the rest in various ways. The font of the message and the size of the meals are not only displayed in a conspicuous manner, the two are strategically placed and allowed to run from the left side of the billboard to the right side. Both of them also occupy the centre of the billboard. It is, thus, very difficult for the audience to miss the display.

There are several means used by the service providers to emphasise the fact that members of the audience can easily get the meals delivered to them without stress. One of these is the way the service is tagged '**Peppered Rice Take Away**'. The name is not only written in a special font, it is placed at the upper left hand corner of the billboard. **Take Away** is written in another colour to ensure that the message is noticed by the audience. Though it is a special type of food, members of the audience are made to understand that they can eat it in the convenience of their homes. Apart from this, members of the audience are



given two different phone numbers to call, one of the numbers is even repeated. The Instagram handle of the service is also provided, to show the thoughtfulness of the service providers in ensuring their audience gets the best. A cartoon-like representation of the mobile system utilised is placed at the left side of the billboard to, yet, tell the audience that getting the meals delivered is not an exaggeration. It is the service provider's way of telling the audience that even from the comfort of their rooms, they can place their orders, for any of the delicious meals, and only come out when the order arrives.

The quality of the meals is shown from the creative use of colours. Just like in the former plate, red and white are mainly used to tell the audience of the life their meals give and the hygienic condition, respectively. The service providers have gone to great lengths to ensure that the audience's crave to have their needs met, at the shortest time, is satisfied. The crave is not condemned in any way, rather, the service provider shows an understanding of the audience's desire and provides a solution that looks almost too good to be true.

As an afterthought, the address is placed towards the base of the billboard. Unlike the other items on the billboard, however, it is written in a fairly small font and would likely be seen by a member of the audience who either reads everything or is bent on knowing the address. The connotative meaning of the choice of this font size is to show the audience how much the service provider cares and that, to them, the audience may not bother themselves about going to the location to buy; the service provider is ready to take this particular burden off their neck. As usual, the advertisement is silent about the prices the services promised would cost. This non-inclusion is intentional; since there are several services promised, the price may likely scare the average man or woman away. However, since the services promised are so attractive, they are likely going to ensure a sustained interest of the audience when the price is finally known.

#### **4.4.6.4 The lopsided definition of beauty**

When it comes to representing beauty in advertisement, the concept is portrayed in a lopsided way. Images are displayed, with perfection shouting at the audience. Representations that are far from being realistic are given to images to ensure that the idea of perfection becomes ingrained in their psyche of the audience. Apart from the constant

use of a particular gender, intentional choices are made based on size, colour, shape and, sometimes, status. Advertisers are interested in ensuring that this interpretation of beauty retains its status quo. Thus, even when the advertised product or service is not gender-specific, advertisers ensure that the feminine gender is used. In fact, visual advertisement uses the feminine gender when the product or service being advertised has nothing to do with this gender. At such times, the feminine gender is just employed to grace the face of the billboard because of her beauty. In such advertisements, she is used as a decorative tool.



Plate 4.51. Beauty as defined by Classic Soaps

The first thing that attracts one's attention on Plate 4.51 is the aesthetic quality of the billboard. In addition, it is creative and orderly. The bars of soap advertised are brought out of their packs and arranged, to avoid confusion. The tag for each is also placed right under the soap being advertised. Though the varieties of soap occupy a major part of the billboard, there are also linguistic messages and the image of a woman deployed to advertise the products. The linguistic message **Beautiful glowing skin** is placed at the upper part of the billboard to ensure that the audience notices it. It is written in white and lined with blue to add to the aesthetic quality of the billboard. The blue lining of the edges of the letters makes the linguistic message stand out. It is an anchorage to the image of the woman displayed at the lower right corner of the billboard.

Without much effort, the audience can easily see the beautiful glowing skin of the young lady. Though she is not gloating, the easy smile on her face attests to the fact that she is aware of her own beauty. **Enjoy silky and healthy skin every day** is the other part of the

linguistic message used to emphasise the initial one. In a way, the arrangement of the soaps has a feminine undertone. As if to buttress this, several of the products displayed carry the image of a woman. This is supported by the only represented participant on the billboard, a feminine image. The representation is likely going to give the audience the impression that the soaps are meant for just the feminine gender. A good look at the advertised products, however, shows that they are used by both genders. The choice of the young woman is intentionally made because the advertiser believes that she has whatever is needed to do justice to the advertisement.

Apart from the choice of gender, the woman is chosen with particular features that define beauty, as a concept, from the advertiser's perspective. The little that can be seen of the height of the woman shows that she is of average weight. She can be described as a slim lady. She is also a young woman and this explains why her skin is glowing with so much ease. She is also fair and her skin is spotless. Thus, in terms of age, shape, size, complexion, this advertiser has made particular choices, from a variety of others. In addition to the natural features of the woman, her skin colour is enhanced by the fact that she must have devoted some time to making up her face and the hair. Thus, though she is advertising varieties of soap, her face and her hair suggest she is on her way out. The upper part of her body also suggests that if she is already dressed, the dress is a little off the shoulders, possibly an 'off-shoulder' style.

Though there are at least two choices to the ones made, the advertiser has intentionally chosen these because of the general definition given to beauty. The definition is, however, lopsided because of the existence of other choices, some of which may be preferred by some other persons. For example, instead of a woman, a man could have been a chosen, an elderly woman instead of a young one, a dark woman instead of a fair one and a plump woman instead of a slim one. Apart from these binary opposites, there are also choices based on a difference in shade. It is even possible that the image displayed is next to an impossible one in the real world. However, the ideal is advertised here, instead of the real because of what the advertisers believe the audience wants. The woman is presented in this perfect state because of the advertiser's attempt to tell the audience that the product is capable of making them look just like the woman displayed.



**Plate 4.52.** The woman gives meaning to beauty with Pure Skin

Plate 4.52 is similar to Plate 4.51. Plate 4.52 is also portrayed as a feminine product, although it is a body cream available to both genders. A young woman is displayed on the billboard as the only represented participant. The little we can see from the close shot she is given shows that she is slim. She is also fair and spotless and can be taken for a young woman. Her placement on the left side connotes a given state, as if it is not new to advertise a type of cream with the feminine gender. The location connotes a status quo that is already generally known by people. In fact, as far as the advertiser is concerned, using a feminine gender is a given. As if she is trying to show the audience the effect of the cream on her body, the woman raises one of her hands but stylishly draws the attention of the audience to the smoothness of her skin. In addition, her upper arms are left bare to tell the audience that the product is real and trustworthy.

The name of the cream, **Pure Skin**, is also an anchorage as it supports the smoothness of the represented participant. The use of **Pure** shows that as far as the advertiser is concerned, purity is best defined through the quality of the represented participant's skin. Though the woman's voice cannot be heard, her thoughts are vocalised through the sign she makes with her hands. She is trying to tell the audience that the cream is responsible for the purity and the smoothness of her skin. Just like in the previous billboard, the advertiser has made an intentional choice of the gender represented, here. As far as the advertiser is concerned, not only is a woman a better choice for the advertisement, only a

woman with her specific characteristics would do a good job. Therefore, without its being printed in black and white, there is a tacit agreement on what beauty is all about and who could be described as being beautiful.

#### 4.4.6.5 Portraying the ease and the possibility of enjoying certain ‘luxuries’

Apart from the basic necessities of life, some things are seen as important provisions needed for a happy life. Though some are termed luxuries, their effect in the lives of people that value them is gradually giving them a different definition. In fact, some members of the public see them as necessities. As a result, whenever a situation suggests the possibility of getting them, members of the public are almost always interested. The peculiar nature of these desires and the definitions given to them by the audience make it easy for advertisers to present a perspective that cannot be easily ignored. Though some may not mind ignoring their importance, advertisers present them as necessities to a fulfilled life.



**Plate 4.53.** Making the impossible an easy feat with Mega Growth

Plate 4.53 presents the image of a woman whose satisfaction is unmistakable. She is portrayed as a woman who is very happy with the state of things. In a way, the audience is easily attracted to her and whatever she represents. Her rich hair is also flowing in a carefree manner to suggest a woman who is not bound by anything. Hair, for a woman, is seen as a necessary asset. In fact, the male is not left out as some men get worried when the growth of their hair is hampered. Thus, for a woman, it is seen as a very important completion to her good looks. This explains why a woman becomes worried when/if she begins to lose her hair. Such a woman would not mind looking for solutions, no matter

how difficult it sounds. It is, therefore, not a surprise when a product is presented as one capable of solving this problem, without stress, and people are interested in getting it.

The name of the product itself, **Mega Growth**, raises the faith of many women who have lost the hope of ever regaining their hair. There is even an addition here as the adjective **Mega** creates an expectation that can be better termed ‘a magic’ in the minds of some women; ‘mega’ means ‘impressive’, ‘excellent’. It suggests that the result of the product being advertised is massive. As if to buttress what is already stated in the name, the linguistic message emphasises the ease of getting one’s hair back. The expression **GET THAT HAIR BACK AS EASY AS 1 2 3** is created with a sense of humour. The figures 1 2 3 are one of the first contacts a baby has with the educated world. A normal baby is expected to be able to read these figures, without any difficulty, after a while because they are seen as the easiest. Comparing the process of regaining the hair with 1 2 3 thus shows how much the advertiser trusts the product. The figures are also used to tag the three products of Mega Growth being advertised – conditioner, moisturiser and oil.

The linguistic message is also meant for a particular group of people – women who have lost the richness and length of their hair. Out of every 10 women, there is the possibility that about four have issues with their hair. If the society’s definition of beauty did not include a healthy flowing hair, maybe such women would have been unbothered with their hair. However, since the hair is so important, some women would give anything to have their hair back. In fact, hair loss is indirectly tied to why some women have lost some of their confidence, and feel like an important part of their lives is missing. It is, therefore, not a surprise that the product being advertised would get customers a little easily. Despite the fact that some women have bought fake hair products, and some are still being cheated, some women are never tired of trying something new, peradventure it would work for them.

The image of the represented participant passes across a lot of messages. It is that of a contented woman who has found a lasting solution to a problem that has bugged her for so long. She is truly relaxed and her stance calls out to the audience. This is buttressed by the fact that her eye contact is both a demand and an offer; though she is looking directly at the audience, her eyes are closed. The audience is, thus, drawn into her and enticed into

knowing what makes her so happy. Her hair is left flowing as if to attest to the wonder of the product. The little that can be seen of her front hair speaks of health; she does not have a receding hairline. The hair is also dark, to show that the hair is not affected in any way. She has a big laugh on her face. Though her voice cannot be heard, the effect of the laugh is infectious and the audience cannot help but be drawn in. On the whole, the advertiser depicts the image of a woman who is satisfied with the result of the product being advertised. The expression **Get that hair back** suggests that the represented participant must have, at a time, suffered hair loss too. If she is this happy after using the product, then, the audience might as well be confident of regaining hers too. The adjective **'that'** connotes the ability of every woman to grow her hair in a healthy way, if only she uses the right product.



**Plate 4.54.** Dabur Herbal Toothpaste makes the audience's secret crave a possibility

Apart from ensuring the mouth does not smell and that the teeth do not decay, another thing people want is to ensure the teeth are white. White teeth give confidence of a kind that may not be obtainable in another way. Though persons who are blessed with it may not really appreciate a white set of teeth, individuals who do not have it may not mind taking steps towards getting it. Some persons even see it as an impossibility. Such individuals are thus attracted when/if a product is promised to be able to make their teeth white, in addition to other basic functions. Plate 4.54 advertises Dabur Herbal with emphasis on white teeth. The linguistic message is a challenge, carefully covered with

humour. The salience of **Show Me Your 32 Teeth** is ensured in various ways: the initial capital letter used for every word, its placement at the top of the billboard, as if it is the topic/the essence of the advertisement, the fairly big font size of the message and the use of colour.

The linguistic message is a mild challenge thrown at the audience but the effect of this is toned down with the humorous impact of the message. Thus, on a denotative level, the message sounds like a joke but it connotes a challenge; white teeth are regarded as a great gift that can easily boost the confidence of the owner. Without seeming to say so, the message challenges persons whose teeth are not white to work towards getting it. Unlike some other concepts where problems are identified without a single solution proffered, this particular advertisement identifies a problem and provides a ready-made solution. Though it is a possibility that could look elusive to some people, this advertisement makes it look real. Apart from the possibility, it is also presented as a very easy stage to attain.

The represented participant is a young lady who is in the process of brushing her teeth. She has a smile on her face, is giving a practical demonstration of how the product being advertised is used and her action agrees with what the linguistic message says. The message is an anchorage as it enlightens the audience on what the represented participant is doing. The woman's smile denotes a happy state. She is an icon of satisfaction and fulfilment, won by the application of certain principles. The genuineness of her smile is not lost on the audience as they are drawn into achieving what she has. For persons who see getting white teeth as a 'must have', the product is worth a trial. Until they get their desire, their present state looks undesirable.

#### **4.4.6.6 Family as a core value**

The family life is a core value that is highly celebrated in the society. Even for people who find it difficult to keep their families together, there is a natural appreciation for this unit and everything that is attached to it. As such, some individuals are ready to give whatever it takes to enjoy such. Since service providers are interested in making impact and ensuring that the audience buys their ideas, they know that whatever is appreciated by the audience is the best to employ. It is, therefore, not a surprise to see that representing the family in billboard advertisement is a trend.





**Plate 4.55.** Getting it together with Campaign for Family Planning

Plate 4.55 is an advertisement for a service and it is displayed with the picture of a couple. The billboard campaigns for family planning, showing a husband and his wife engrossed in a discussion. The two of them are dressed in casual clothes, the kind that Yoruba couples put on at home, to connote that they are both in a relaxed mood. The husband is talking and making reference to himself while the wife smiles. From the expression on the face of the wife, the couple is discussing an intimate matter and this time, it has to do with family planning. The husband is not playing a decorative role; he is really involved in the discussion.

This is a great improvement on the image of the stereotypical Yoruba husband whose interest is rarely on such things. The usual belief is that he is too preoccupied with other important duties to consider 'such flimsy' issues. The linguistic message '**get it together**' shows that the depicted husband sees this duty as part of his, too. It also connotes his great love for his wife as family planning helps the family to get an orderly lifestyle and prolongs the life of the wife. It also shows that he is a responsible man who knows the side effects of giving birth to children he may not be able to take care of. To him, his role as a husband and father should not be decorative. The wife's folded hands on her belly depict a little surprise at the change and a happy welcome of the development.

The billboard is divided into two, with a part carrying the images and the other displaying the linguistic message. The left side, which is seen as the given, carries the images of the couple. While this is yet to be the status quo for all advertisers of goods and service

provider, it is surely an improvement to see the man openly celebrated as a part of the family. It is especially noteworthy to discover that he is represented as a happy part of the family. Thus, the location of the image on the left side of the billboard connotes a state that is already gaining recognition and acceptance in the media space. The fact that the couple only seems to have eyes for each other shows the dedication of the partners to their relationship and whatever they are discussing. The man is, thus, an icon of the emerging family man who takes his responsibility seriously. Their concentration on each other connotes an offer; the audience is pulled into their conversation and made to develop interest in whatever makes them so happy.

The second half of the billboard carries the linguistic message. The division of the billboard also suggests that the linguistic message is an anchorage, providing a written explanation to the happy mood displayed by the couple. Thus, '**Get it together**' would be the written explanation to why the couple is so satisfied. On another level, the couple represents the ideal picture of a happy home. At this second level, the linguistic message is a relay. Here, the couple is passing across a message to every other couple out there on how to create a happy home. The couple is, thus, an icon of the ideal couple and the linguistic message, the antidote for such. Getting it together is a function of unity and a kind of growth occasioned by the decision of two different people to look in the same direction.

Plate 4.56 is the depiction of a whole family to advertise Feedwell Supermarket. Though it is similar to the previous billboard, it is also an improvement to the image of the man. While the previous billboard celebrates a happy and responsible husband, the focus of Plate 4.56 is on a happy and responsible head of the family (husband and father). The family comprises the father, the mother and two children. They are all casually dressed to suggest that they are at home. This connotes a happy family who finds joy in relating. The father is depicted at the background and he seems to have his hands around his family. The members of the family also seem to be resting on his chest. The wife is seen resting on a part of his chest to connote his strength, her love for him and his level of reliability. The members of the family are smiling to show that they are satisfied and comfortable with the role of the father. The children are both girls and the father seems genuinely satisfied to show that despite the sex of the children, they are both loved. The

father also seems to be the spokesman for the family and this is accepted from the smiles of the family.



Plate 4.56 The happy family with Feedwell Supermarket

Depicting the father as the voice for the family connotes that he spends quality time with them and he is familiar with their needs. The man's hand is raised as if in greeting to the viewer. Their coming together is fused and forms a unified whole. The family is tagged 'the wise family' and this may not be far from the truth. The text '**...We stock what others don't have**' is denoted to be said by the father. This is a pointer to the fact that the man is a responsible father and husband. This is a great improvement to the former father figure who, sometimes, exists in his own house as a visitor. This father does not only know about the needs of his family, he also accepts the facts that the duty is not for his wife alone but theirs, from the use of the personal plural pronoun 'we'.

The man is an icon of the emerging head of the family who is serious with his responsibilities. As far as he is concerned, his roles transcend the dictates or expectations of the general society. He is interested in what makes his family happy. Thus, while the linguistic message **We stock what others don't have** can be easily taken as the voice of the service providers, it can as well be a relay; where the message is taken as the voice of the depicted head of the family, who makes his own rules, based on what he believes is right. His person, and by extension, his family are, thus, presented as role models to other families out there. This also explains why the family is described as a **wise family**. The

husband is portrayed as an individual who does things he believes are right, regardless of what the society says. While the girl-child is not seen as irrelevant, some families celebrate male children. In fact, some persons believe that a man is yet to have children if he has only female children. For this man, however, the narrative is different. Even with his female children, he is satisfied and does not feel he is less of a successful man. In fact, in a way, he believes he has what others lack.

#### **4.4.7 The relation of culture and visual representation**

Advertisers are good at exploiting situations to their advantage. Whatever is appreciated by the audience is fully utilised. This is, however, done in a creative way to ensure that the audience does not feel used. Culture is another tool advertisers and service provider employ. Since it is the way of life of a people, everyone belongs to a culture and is always proud to be associated with it. Whenever there is need to defend the honour of their culture, no individual has to be begged before such is willingly done. This explains why individuals are happy when/if their cultures are celebrated. For some individuals, it has become a weakness as they are always found defending their cultures, even when issues that need to be addressed are concerned.

The vulnerable nature of the audience is also exploited by advertisers. Culture makes several individuals very sensitive and has become a fertile ground for such people to be exploited. Language, for example, is a very strong cultural heritage. It is, therefore, understandable that members of a cultural group would have very strong emotional attachment to the use of their language. Plate 4.57 draws the attention of the audience easily by the representation of the Yoruba culture. The first idea one gets from looking at the represented participant displayed in the plate is that of a king, popularly called a 'kabiyesi' in Yoruba land, the billboard is designed with a personality who has all the 'trimmings' of a Yoruba king. The represented participant is a man who is fully dressed in the traditional attire of 'ofi', 'iyun' (beads) and an 'abeti-aja' cap made from the same material of the clothes. The 'overalls', popularly called 'agbada' is richly designed at the front as befits a king. He also has beads on his neck and his two wrists. The beads at the neck are of two layers, worn the traditional way. Though he is placed at one end of the billboard, his salience is ensured by his dressing.



**Plate 4.57 Goldberg shows an affiliation with the Yoruba culture**

The outfit of the man is doubly articulated by the text. “Eni Iyi Re O!” (This is an Honourable Person) is placed right beside the man as if to equate the linguistic message with the image. The font and size of the message connote its importance; it is not only bold, the initial letter of every word is capitalised. Diacritics are also placed on the words to denote a composer who is well versed in Yoruba Language. Understanding the text, however, rests heavily on the ability of the reader to speak Yoruba. All these are employed to connote the high regard the producers of the advertised product have for Yoruba culture. Their rich use of the language and the celebrated individual displayed connote that the advertisers share in the appreciation Yoruba people give to things that are dear to them. The advertisement is designed to appeal; to show Yoruba people that the advertisers do not only respect the Yoruba, they also identify with some of their practices. The represented participant is displayed as a voice and a custodian of Yoruba culture.

The information value of the advertisement is also ensured through the use of various techniques. Though the linguistic message starts from the left towards the centre of the billboard, its salience is equated with the image of the man to visually project his importance. The direct eye contact he makes with the audience also suggests ‘demand’, as a means of establishing a kind of relationship with them. He is also given a medium shot to connote the possibility of the audience becoming so recognised with Goldberg. Apart from exploiting cultural resources, a bottle of Goldberg is placed beside the man to depict a kind of symbiotic relationship between the two. Though the linguistic message refers to the man, it also connotes an affiliation with the drink. The representation suggests what

happens when a man takes the drink that is being advertised; such becomes 'eni iyi' (an honourable person) because the drink has the potential of making one become 'honourable'. Just like some actions can do, the act of drinking Goldberg is depicted as one that is capable of making a person become honourable. Since everyone appreciates being seen in this light, this advertisement offers the possibility of 'becoming honourable' on a platter of gold. The success of 'selling' this kind of belief is ensured by the transience of billboard advertisements and the consumerist nature of the audience; the aspiration of every person for affluence and aggrandisement.

Plate 4.58 presents another billboard where culture is utilised as a tool to draw members of the audience. In addition to the use of the Yoruba language, the advertiser here uses a celebrated value. The first thing that draws one's attention is the overall use of Yoruba language. **SE AFIKUN OKUN RE LOJOOJUMO** is the only linguistic message on the billboard. It is presented as the most important element on the billboard because of its salience; it is written in white and placed over a shade of red background, every word is written in capital letters, it is placed right at the centre of the billboard, with surrounding space to ensure that it is not missed. In a way, the advertiser tries to make the audience feel that this is the most important message.

The fact that it is written in Yoruba language, without a subtitle in another language, calls out to speakers of the language with ease. Without much effort, speakers of the language feel special and believe the advertisement is dedicated to them. The use of the language gives them a feeling that their culture is worth celebrating, hence, the use of their language on the billboard. The fact that the language is not just the dominant but the only language used for communication on the billboard tells the audience that their culture has become so recognised that it deserves such a recognition. The linguistic message is not just written, it has diacritics. While this denotes the possession of a sound knowledge of the language by the advertiser, it connotes that the advertisement is meant for speakers of the language.



**Plate 4.58.** Dano reaches its audience through Yoruba language

In addition, the use of the expression **SE AFIKUN OKUN RE LOJOOJUMO (Add to your strength on a daily basis)** is the advertiser's way of telling members of the culture that their value for the regular consumption of good food is recognised and appreciated. In a way, it suggests that the advertiser already believes the culture values consuming good food regularly. Though this is not stated, it is implied. It is the advertiser's way of demonstrating a good knowledge of the culture; only a person who knows one is aware of values one celebrates. It is, thus, very easy for members of the audience to feel they owe the advertiser the obligation of returning the gesture (by patronising the product).

Another billboard that makes use of culture to entrap members of the audience is Plate 4.59, an advertisement of Seaman's Schnapps. Just like in the two previous ones, culture is celebrated in this billboard, though in another way. The first thing that attracts the attention of the audience is the display of a creative narration – a family who is visiting or has come home for a holiday is being entertained by their parents. The audience's attention is easily drawn to the intentional choice of particular items by the advertiser to pass across their message. The first is the difference in age. There are three generations depicted on the billboard; the grandparents, the young parents and a grandchild. Conscious efforts are made to show the difference even in their hairs; the grandparents'

hairs are already turning grey while the young couple still has dark hair. The wife even has a kind of artificial hair fixed. Another is the marked difference in their clothes. While members of the young family, including the baby, are dressed in ‘city clothes/English wears’, the grandparents are dressed in modestly sown native wears.

The physical context also has elements that attest to the presence of a city life and a village one. The background displays green vegetation, the kind that is usually absent in the city. While it adds to the beauty of the billboard, it is iconic of nature, a state of life that remains uncorrupted by the influx of foreign bodies. A stream is also at the background to connote calmness. All these are indications to the richness of one’s culture. On the left side of the billboard, the front part of a fairly big vehicle is seen. This is another piece of the city life. Though the advertiser represents both in the billboard, there are conscious efforts to show a dominance of the village life/culture over the city. Apart from the clothes worn by the young family, the only other indicator to their kind of life is the peeping front part of the vehicle. The fact that the vehicle is not clearly seen connotes its presence for a short time.

The young couple seem to be on the receiving end. While the man is sharing a special moment with his father, the woman is trying to introduce the baby to the mother-in-law. The father is pouring some gin for the son from the outstretched cup and both of them look satisfied and happy. The women, on the other hand, are trying to ensure the baby enjoys the introduction to his/her grandmother. The couple looks comfortable and has come home to spend some time with the grandparents and receive their blessings. The linguistic message **BLESSINGS FLOW FROM YOUR ROOTS** is placed at the top of the billboard as if a topic is written. In a way, it explains the display under it. It is an anchorage to the whole image. The **roots** as used here refer to one’s origin, the source of one’s life and one’s culture. A person’s roots form the foundation of such, and cannot be forgotten.





**Plate 4.59.** Celebrating the audience's roots with Seaman's Schnapps

The linguistic message shows the importance of not forgetting one's roots, and this agrees with what is shown in the images. According to the message, blessings flow from the roots. It means a person who cuts off communication with their roots would not have the blessings that come from them. Part of the blessings from the roots, as depicted by the represented participants on the billboard is the introduction of values and traditions. The father and the son are in the process of sharing from a bottle of gin. They are likely discussing. From this, the son learns how to share happiness with others as he listens to the father for advice. The women are also involved in the processes of teaching and learning communion with members of the family. Even if the woman belongs to another culture, introducing her to what is valuable to this particular culture ensures it is passed to her child.

It is glaring that the two couples are comfortable. Though the children are casually dressed, a critical look at them shows that they have an easy life. However, this advertisement still encourages the relationship between the old and the young generations because no matter the success of the new generation, there are blessings that can only come when an individual has a contact with his/her roots. The parents are also comfortably dressed, though in native wears. In fact, their dresses are sown in a civilised way to connote that the tradition is not backward, and that unworthy practices are already discarded.

The idea that the advertiser is passing across to the audience is doubly articulated in the second linguistic message **Come Home with Seaman's**. **Home** as used in this advertisement is synonymous with **roots**. Home is a place of rest, where everyone retires

to, after a day's work. It is also seen as a place where an individual can enjoy nature, after a day's encounter must have exposed one to several artificial things. Seaman's Schnapps is intentionally tied to home. It is a strategy that tells the audience the benefits that reside in taking it. Linking it with the idea of one's roots suggests that just like no one can ignore their roots and remain a success, it is impossible for one who truly wishes to relax to do it without Seaman's Schnapps.

Though the billboard shows the creative ability of the advertiser, a good look at the division on the billboard and the use of colour passes across an additional message. On the horizontal axis, the billboard is divided into three: the upper part, the lower part and the middle. While the upper and the lower parts display the linguistic messages, the middle part displays the image. The middle part is dominated by the roots/home/culture, with a peeping effect from the city life. A major part of the product being advertised is also displayed in this middle section, and, thus, it is understandable to say its salience is the most prominent. Though there are two divisions for the upper and lower parts, their effects, though felt are minute. They are given lesser prominence. In a way, the division connotes the impact of a person's roots in their overall existence and success. The lower part of the drink is immersed in the lower part of the billboard to show that it is impossible to successfully cut away from one's roots.

The general idea of the tacit division between the way each gender is primarily defined is also seen on the billboard. While the men are involved with a bottle of Seaman's Schnapps, the women are busy with the baby. In a way, it shows what is seen as important by each group. The advertiser has employed the billboard to denote the importance of one's roots and to connote the value of Seaman's Schnapps, its similarity to the analogy made with one's roots and the great importance the advertiser, and by extension, the drink has for culture. In a way, culture has been eulogised. Without much effort, this act endears the drink to culturally sensitive individuals. In a way, the drink has been able to show its love for culture.

#### **4.4.8 Patriotism and visual representation**

Another strategy that advertisers use to exploit the consumerist tendencies that may be found in their audience is their loyalty to their country. Just like when issues are related to

culture, town and language, members' loyalty is also tempted when it has to do with their country of origin. Though Nigeria is a multiethnic nation, citizens still feel it is their duty to defend the country whenever the need arises. When there is no harm done to it, citizens still like to be associated with it. Thus, when an advertisement seems to appreciate a country by giving it a kind of special recognition, citizens are interested in patronising such. A critical look at some of these products shows that some of them do not have anything in them that makes them belong to the country. This is, however, used as a bait by the advertiser who knows that members of the audience are interested in lending their support to anything 'Nigerian'.



**Plate 4.60.** Trophy celebrates Nigeria

The audience's attention is, without much stress, drawn by the efforts of the advertiser of the product on Plate 4.60 to make it look Nigerian. Apart from the thin red line, the background of the billboard is predominantly decorated with green, white, green (colours of the Nigerian flag). In a way, on the horizontal axis, the billboard is divided into three to mimic the flag; the green (which takes about 95% of the background), the white which is at the lower part of the billboard and the green used for writing out the caution. Even without mentioning the name of the country, the audience already finds it easy to associate the product with Nigeria. Apart from the background, the three represented participants are also dressed in green, white and green. It is even a little difficult to ignore what the advertiser is trying to achieve because of the arrangement of the represented participants; they are iconic of the image of the national flag. On the vertical axis, the three of them represent the Nigerian flag. The way the three of them dress and stand typifies unity, the

first item in Nigeria's Coat of Arms (Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress). The three of them are, thus, presented as icons of the symbolic code of the country.

Just like the unity noticed in other things, the three represented participants are all raising bottles of trophy, the advertised drink with their right hands. The gesture is intentionally directed to the left side of their chests to imitate the way the national pledge is recited. The gesture also agrees with the linguistic message **RAISE A TROPHY TO NAIJA'S HONOUR**. The message is an anchorage as it agrees with the image already displayed by the represented participants. The message is divided into two and all the words are written in capital letters to ensure the salience. Its division presents the first part **Raise a Trophy** as a piece of advice or a mild command while the second part takes the form of further explanation on why a Trophy should be raised. **Brewed with honour** is presented at the lower left side of the billboard. This expression presents the drink as one that has integrity. In a way, this helps to erase the doubt some persons may have about whether it is right or wrong to take this drink. As if to ensure that the effect is not missed, Nigeria is also presented as a honourable country in the linguistic message. The messages are, thus, presented in a way to show that it is only proper for citizens of a **honourable country (Nigeria)** to take what is **honourable (Trophy)**.

The similarities between the design of the billboard and that of the bottle of the product being advertised are also too many to be ignored. Just like on the billboard, green dominates the bottle and the word Trophy is written in white. The British variety (spelling) of **honour** is also intentionally used to emphasise the alignment between the drink and the country. The advertisers are trying to show their total agreement with Nigeria. The drink is, thus, presented as one that is specially prepared with the aim to satisfy the citizens of Nigeria. In a way, both Nigeria and the drink are presented as one. All these are intentionally done to solicit the loyalty of citizens who will always rise to defend the honour of their country. As if to ensure the audience gets the message, the name of the country is mentioned. **Naija** is intentionally used, to connote the relaxing effect of the drink and what the advertiser wishes it to be to the citizens.



Plate 4.61. Olive Toothpaste identifies with Nigeria

Plate 4.61 is another billboard where patriotism is employed to exploit the consumerist tendencies in the audience. This is, however, done in a slightly different way. The first attraction on this billboard is the creative representation of the map of the country. The map is decorated using the colours of the Nigeria flag (green, white and green). The map is also filled with people of the country. The advertiser has made efforts to ensure a representation of different ethnic groups in the country. Though nothing is written to identify them, the images are dressed in particular ways to signify where they represent. All of them are smiling, to connote unity of purpose. The smile makes the audience see their white teeth and attest to the fact that they are happy.

Unlike the other billboard, this makes a direct reference to Nigeria to doubly articulate the country that the product is trying to associate with. The advertiser has also ensured that the faces of the represented participants are mainly seen, the fact that they are from different ethnic groups is not lost on the audience though. Every face is, however, smiling genuinely, and all, but one, are looking directly at the audience. This, according to Kress and van Leeuwen is a demand. It demands the attention and interest of members of the audience. The effect is more felt because representatives of the various ethnic groups are speaking in unity. Though this may not be the exact situation of the country, the representation seems to give hope to citizens.

Apart from the represented participants, the advertiser also communicates through the linguistic message **Olive Keeping Nigeria Smiling**. The effect of the message is ensured by the salience given to it; though more like a single expression, each word is placed on a line, a demarcation is created between **Olive smiling** and **keeping Nigeria**. While the

first part is written with only initial capital letters, both words in the second part are all written in capital letters. There is also a difference in the use of colour. The message is an anchorage as it enlightens the message in the image. It is also a relay as it gives an extension to the meaning. **Keeping Nigeria smiling** suggests that the country values health; a person can only smile when the health is sound. It also shows that the country has the potential to be healthy/happy, though something (Olive Toothpaste) is a good tool to keep the country clean/smiling.

In addition, a major part of the billboard is designed in white, with linings in green to still emphasise its relatedness with Nigeria. The advertiser uses the idea of representing Nigeria to present the unique relationship they believe the product shares with the country. The linguistic message itself is designed in a way that while **Olive Smiling** is divided into two to start and end the expression, **Keeping Nigeria** is placed at the middle, to suggest that Olive Toothpaste is all about Nigeria. An open tube of the toothpaste is designed in a way that suggests the paste is used to write **smiling**. While this adds to the aesthetic quality of the billboard, it also suggests that the content of the product is what is keeping the country smiling. Though the billboard has several other colourful images, there is a sense of unity in all the items. This is iconic of the representation the advertiser is interested in selling to the audience – that though there are diverse ethnic groups, since they are all in a single country, there could be unity if the right thing binds them together.

#### **4.4.9 Celebrity endorsement as a crowd puller**

Advertisers also solicit the audience's patronage through the display of personalities that are appreciated by them. These persons are celebrities whose faces are commonly displayed in movies, sports and business. In a way, the advertisers believe that it is easier to reach the audience using this means because they can easily create a link between the product or service and the celebrity. Some of these individuals are used as voices to sell the products. Some of them give testimonies of using and enjoying the products. Though they are from different ethnic groups, of different academic levels, the audience finds it easy to regard them because, in a way, such celebrities are successful in their fields. The audience believes they are worth listening to. Thus, the fact that a celebrity is lending his or her voice to a product or service is seen as an indication to the good quality of such a product. In addition, some celebrities are close to heroes in the eyes of the audience. It is

seen as a rare privilege to be utilising a product that is used by a hero, whether such is a necessity or not.



**Plate 4.62.** Harpic reaches its audience through a celebrity

Celebrities are employed for advertisement to lend credence to whatever claim is made. Plate 4.62 advertises a cleaning agent with the image of Chioma Chukwuka, a Nigerian actress and a movie producer. There is harmony in the use of colour on the billboard, the model's outfit and the container of product held by her. This signifies unity. Celebrities are employed for the purpose of advertisement to give a kind of endorsement to whatever is sold and lend their voice to the subject matter. Chioma is denoted as a very happy user of Harpic and her image is a testimony to visually endorse the product. Chioma is known and her personality, appreciated. On the denotative level, her image is that of an average woman who is happy at the discovery of a good product. On the connotative level, the use of her image is a testimony to the reliability of the product. The advertiser tries to establish that the product has become so recognised that even a celebrity does not mind being associated with it; it is one thing to use a product, but another thing to, openly, testify to it. In a way, this tells the audience that since the integrity of the celebrity cannot be doubted, that of the product is also reliable.

The celebrity is placed at almost the centre of the billboard with a big container of Harpic. The text **TOILET CLEANER** is placed beside the bottle. The positioning is intentional to emphasise the salience of the message being passed across. The text denotes a description of the product that is advertised. However, its use is also symbolic; it is a symbol of the woman displayed. Since great efforts have been put into ensuring that there

is unity in the use of colour, it may not be difficult to believe that the signified of the text 'Toilet cleaner' is the woman, after all, though a cleaner is interpreted as something that is used in cleaning, its extended meaning is an individual whose job is to clean. Though in the discussion of his theory, Barthes states that a linguistic message could either be a relay or an anchorage, the text in this plate shows that sometimes, it could be both. "Toilet cleaner" as used in the billboard is an anchorage because it tells the viewer about the function of the product being advertised and it is a relay because it names the personality displayed on the billboard.

One of the most striking tools on the billboard is the dominant use of blue at the background of the billboard, on the represented participant and the product being advertised. The advertiser even uses different shades of blue. This makes the product and the message being communicated salient. Blue radiates authority and focus. According to Oeilsj (2000), blue is committed and trustworthy. In a way, the use of blue on this billboard encourages the audience to believe the testimony given by the celebrity and trust what the product is capable of doing. Its dominant use stylishly forces the attention of the audience and connotes the superiority of Harpic over competing products. It is presented as the product that does its job the best way.

Representing femininity on the billboard passes across other messages. It connotes the expertise of the feminine gender at performing this duty. Though the masculine gender also performs this, the woman is known to employ skill and special care in delivering such duties. Since the advertisers are interested in making choices that would pass across their messages with ease and accuracy, it is therefore not surprising that the woman is represented; apart from what the culture believes, some duties are naturally carried out by particular genders. The fact that a celebrity is chosen for this advertisement drives the point home. Her image connotes that of a woman who has accepted the cultural definition given to her gender, glories in her duties and is proud to tell whoever cares to listen. She is not only a testifier of the product, her image is also a double articulator of the duties the society has tagged as the woman's.





**Plate 4.63.** Juliet Ibrahim endorses Carotone

Plate 4.63 advertises Carotone with Juliet Ibrahim, an actress, a film producer and a singer. Her roles in the society attest to how recognised she is. She is in a peach gown and her face is made up. A red clothing item which looks like a tip of her brassier is peeping from her right armpit and her hair falls on the side of her left. She is depicted as taking a selfie and smiling. The background of where she stands shows a city. This connotes her own exposure and lends a kind of support to the way she is displayed; despite the fact that she is enlightened, she is, thus, portrayed because that is the way to go. Her positioning on the left side of the billboard testifies to this. It shows a given; something that many people are aware of.

Carotone is a lightening cream. Its functions are listed on the other side of the billboard and they include – nourish, protect and blend. This gives a glimpse into how members of the feminine gender devote time to their bodies. The depiction of this celebrity does two things – one, as a model, it shows that despite all the connoted messages, she agrees and does not mind associating with them and two, the fact that she is taking a selfie articulates the message, doubly. It connotes that the representation and all it stands for are not taken against her wish, they are with her permission. This is supported by the **#love yourself Juliet Ibrahim**. The way her name is written is symbolic of when a person in a position of authority puts a kind of seal on something. In a way, this testifies to the audience that it is just right to use the cream and make it do all it promises. The expression **love yourself** lends an authoritative voice to the advertisement. In a way, representing the woman on

the billboard connotes that taking care of oneself through the use of the cream is not out of place. In fact, it is appropriate as it means that the person is being fair to himself/herself.

Apart from the need to look beautiful, the use of this celebrity also helps in getting more customers for the advertiser. Since she is established in several ways, her fans are surely going to be drawn into anything about her. Some may even want to start using what she uses because they love her and would not mind becoming like her. In addition, making use of a celebrity attests to the fact that it is proper to use a feminine image for the purpose of advertisements that have to do with beauty, and it may not be unacceptable to indulge the voyeuristic tendencies of the audience. Without really saying some of these things, displaying the image of a celebrity who looks happy and does not mind representing particular ideas attest to how such concepts may deserve a second look by critics.



**Plate 4.64.** A celebrity as a testifier of Trophy

Femi Adebayo is a director, film actor and a producer. He is also a lawyer and a special adviser to the Governor of Kwara State on Arts, Culture and Tourism. Both in and out of the entertainment industry, he is seen as a success. It is, therefore, not a surprise that the world of advertisement is interested in ensuring his face graces the billboard. His jovial manner in most movies also endears him to members of the audience. Another reason why the audience may find it difficult to ignore him is because he is the son to Adebayo

Salami, a veteran actor. Thus, whether the product he is advertising is as good as what he professes or not would be based on what the audience knows about him.

The first point of attraction on the billboard is the larger-than-life effect that is given to the represented participant and the bottle. The space on the billboard is fully utilised and there seems to be no free space for anything that is less important than what the billboard displays. The celebrity is richly dressed in a complete Yoruba attire. The 'Agbada' has its front specially embroidered the way only the economically comfortable individuals in the society do. His matching cap is designed the same way. The little that can be seen of the complexion of the man attests to its richness and freshness. The man also has beads on his left wrist and neck to depict a man who understands the richness of his culture and has what it takes to utilise them.

The man is displayed on the left side of the billboard to connote a given state. He is not playing a decorative role on the billboard. He is comfortable and satisfied with the display and even seems to understand his own power. The smile on his face is genuine and infectious, making it very difficult for the audience to remain unaffected in the presence of so much joy that is spread. As if to crown the effect of his appearance, the represented participant has on a nice wristwatch. While this denotes his comfortability, it connotes his exposure. Hence, though he is an individual who is knowledgeable about his traditions, his life is not restricted; he is also exposed to the civilised world. On his right side is a bottle of the advertised drink. The placement of the two of them suggests that the advertiser is trying to make an analogy between the represented participant and the drink. Though the effect of a non-celebrity would still have been felt, this is more powerful because the represented participant is a celebrity who is loved by several persons.

The linguistic message **Honourable . . . Abinibi Yato (Honourable . . . The uniqueness of natural giftedness is unmistakable)** looks a little ambiguous, at first. However, a critical assessment of the expression shows that it is both an anchorage and a relay to the image displayed. It is an anchorage because on the surface level, it attests to the distinct quality of the represented participant and the product. However, its extended meaning comes in when the qualifications of the represented participant are considered. Despite his learned status, he is also an actor. One of the reasons why the audience likes him is his

ability to perfectly interpret and act out various roles. When he is acting, he makes the audience feel that he is created to act that particular role. The opinion of the audience about him improves when he is discovered to act out another role in a better way.

Just like the display of the images suggests an analogy, the linguistic message also tries to make audience see the uniqueness of the drink through their knowledge of the represented participant. In a way, the audience is taken through the passage of the known (the represented participant) to the not-so-known (Trophy). It also throws an implied challenge to the audience. If something or someone is so unique, yet popular, why would some persons not know about it? The billboard is a little sparse to connote that the uniqueness and popularity of the drink may not need any elaborate advertisement before it is appreciated by persons that matter. This idea is supported by the slogan **crisp and refreshing**. As used in the advertisement, **crisp** creates the impression of something brief but concise, clean and rich. In a way, the advertiser is saying that though it may look like much has not been said about the product, its appearance and the little said can successfully show the audience how distinct the drink is, as shown by the other part of the expression **refreshing**.

The celebrity is, thus, intentionally made to grace the face of the billboard to tell the audience that only a unique figure can do justice to the advertisement of such a distinct product. In addition to the ideas already analysed, advertising Trophy using a celebrity may assist the audience in making the product more presentable than when an 'ordinary' face is used. Even if some ideas have already generated some controversies, selling them to the audience using a celebrity makes the job easier for the advertiser. This is because the love the audience has for the celebrity used as a 'wrapper' is extended to the product. One of such ideas is the fact that alcoholic drinks are not encouraged as they are not taken by individuals whom the society has a high regard for. Another is the fact that alcoholic drinks are the special reserve of men. While an affirmative statement is not made to defend any of these issues, the advertiser is making a statement through his choice of represented participant. Since the drink, as well as all it connotes, has been endorsed by a celebrity, members of the audience may no longer see it as something they should treat in a different way.

#### 4.4.10 The place of creativity in visual advertisement

Apart from the use of particular images and linguistic messages, advertisers also exploit the audience by representing ideas in creative ways. A critical look at some of the billboards in Ibadan shows that they are recreated versions of the same products. However, it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to note that some of them are mere repetitions that have been turned into new advertisements, through the aid of technology. The same idea is presented to the audience in a different way, and some members' interest would have been got, before they discover that it is only a representation of a particular product that they have chosen to ignore, because they do not need it. Some are also similar services by different providers. Such advertisers intentionally work towards outdoing one another so that the one with the highest likes gets the majority's approval.



Plate 4.65. Advertisement of space in its barest form



Plate 4.66. Advertisement of space with a little humour

Plates 4.65 and 4.66 are advertising the same service (space). The first thing that attracts one's attention is the manner in which 'space' is commodified. Just like it is done for other products and services, space is presented to the audience as an item for sale. Another point of attraction in the two plates is how service is presented in different ways. Plate 4.65 presents the availability of space in its simplest form – **VACANT BILLBOARD 08038173378**. The linguistic message is the only item on the billboard and it informs the audience of the vacancy and the contact of the person handling it. Since there is no image, it is not acting as an anchorage or a relay to anything. It does not have a double meaning, and, hence, can be hardly misinterpreted. This is one of the simplest means of advertising a space. The piece of information is handwritten and this makes it look a little crude. However, it does not distort the message passed across to the audience.

Plate 4.66 shows how the same concept is presented in another way. Creativity and technology are combined to show how a concept can be recreated in the hands of creative advertisers. The first point of attraction on the billboard is the advertiser's attempt to be humorous through the image. The image of a smiling child is presented with a fairly wide gap at his front teeth. While this is a given in every child, it first makes one wonder why such an image is represented on the billboard. The meaning is known when the advertiser sees the linguistic message which performs the function of both an anchorage and a relay. The expression **VACANT SPACE!** is written in capital letters and placed directly under the picture. It is an anchorage because it explains the essence of the picture. It is, however, humorous, because the space of a child's missing teeth is presented as a vacant space. It is a relay because the space has an extended meaning. It is the advertiser's attempt to create humour out of an everyday affair.

Any negative effect of the humorous representation is destroyed by the soft smile on the child's face. It tells the audience that the advertiser means well; they are only trying to create humour out of the situation. The courteous way the contact details are also presented attests to the fact that the advertiser means well. Instead of the way it is presented in a straightforward manner in the previous plate, this starts with **PLEASE CALL, LASTING IMPACT**. Then, three phone numbers which are presented as hotlines are displayed on the billboard. In a way, the service has been presented in a different way to the audience. Apart from the basic function of informing the audience of

the space, it has also created humour while doing so. This is the advertiser's way of telling the audience that their feelings are important; in addition to informing the audience of what is available, the advertiser also uses this to tell the audience that they are important.

Like so many other strategies employed by the advertisers, this is another means to ensure that the vulnerability of the audience is fully explored. People tend to listen more when they feel appreciated. Once they feel they are appreciated, they can make a lot of sacrifices too. Thus, instead of presenting some things in their basic forms, advertisers are involved in decorating some billboards to improve their outlooks. Technology has helped advertisers in this area a lot, as some presentations are given designs that members of the audience find difficult to believe.



Plate 4.67. Goldberg and the impact of technology 1



Plate 4.68. Goldberg and the impact of technology 2

Plates 4.67 and 4.68 are another pair of billboards where the same product is advertised in different ways. A cursory look at the two billboards makes the audience believe two different products are being advertised. However, a critical look shows that the same product is being advertised from two perspectives. Though the name of the product is represented on the billboard, different issues are given salience. This does not suggest that the advertiser sees them as different products; it is just an attempt to intentionally manipulate the audience so that by the time the novelty surrounding the unfamiliar product is unravelled, the audience's interest would have been obtained. It is a slightly funny situation because the advertiser cannot be accused of being dubious, especially as the name of the product appears on both products.

Plate 4.67 presents Goldberg with emphasis on a customised cup of Goldberg, a bottle of Goldberg, a talking drum and a drumstick. Just like the drink is already poured and the surface is allowed to entice the audience, the drumstick is also posed to play the talking drum. Though this looks humorous, it also connotes the readiness of the product to meet up with what it has promised. The linguistic message **Je 'gbadun to ga ju (Enjoy the highest form of pleasure)** is written in Yoruba and diacritics used on the expression. The way it is placed beside the images suggests an analogy. Each is presented as a complete package that also helps to give meaning to the other. In this advertisement, the emphasis is on how the product being advertised is capable of giving the audience the highest form of enjoyment. This is done through an insistent appeal to members of the audience that are culturally sensitive. The use of the Yoruba language and the prominent display of the paraphernalia of the Yoruba entice members of the audience who believe the advertiser has decided to special recognise this ethnic group.

Placing the drink with the talking drum on the left presents the situation displayed as a given. The intentional analogy is given to show that the advertised drink has all it takes to satisfy the culturally-sensitive individual. It also suggests a kind of healthy synergy; a symbiotic relationship where one is enjoyed in the presence of the other. It also suggests that the completeness of one, rests heavily on the presence of the other. The linguistic message placed at the centre of the billboard suggests the core of the advertisement. The expression **Je 'gbadun to ga ju (Enjoy the highest form of pleasure)** tells the audience



that the display of the talking drum and the drink is capable of giving the audience the highest form of enjoyment.

Plate 4.68 is also a billboard advertisement of Goldberg, though the advertiser has used technology to present it in another manner. Just like the style employed in Plate 4.67 though, this billboard is also divided into two: the left side and the centre. Another similarity is the placement of a bottle of the product and a talking drum at the left, and the linguistic message is prominently displayed at the centre. This, however, seems to be where the similarity ends. A close shot of the advertised bottle is given with the image of a talking drum printed on the outside. Unlike in the previous plate, representing the two (drink and talking drum) like this, shows a relationship that has become interwoven, where one cannot successfully separate one from the other. Here, the two are represented as one. This is a way of saying the drink has regard for tradition, and that it is meant for the culturally-sensitive individuals.

The advertiser has also made conscious efforts towards presenting the linguistic message in a new way. **OMOLUABI THE MARK OF RESPECT** is displayed at the centre of the billboard. Here, the advertiser shows that a relationship exists between respectability and the drink being advertised. An alcoholic drink is, sometimes, seen, especially by persons who do not drink, as one that lacks integrity. To such persons, drinkers are not honourable. The advertiser has, thus, fronted **respect**, and all it entails, to show that there is nothing dishonourable about an alcoholic drink. The use of **Omoluabi** here has both denotative and connotative meanings. On the denotative level, it suggests a personal address to the drink or the drinker. On the connotative level, it is presented as an icon of a respected member of the society.

Plates 4.67 and 4.68 are billboard advertisement of the same product, Goldberg. However, it takes more than one casual look to know that the same product is advertised on them. Advertisers present the same product in different ways to ensure that they exploit all they have at their disposal to get the audience. Creativity in presentation also allows the advertiser to show various aspects of the same product. As a result, if the health benefit is the focus in the first advertisement, the social impact of such on the audience could be the focus in the second display. On its own, this is capable of drawing

the audience. Presenting different perspectives is capable of enticing the audience. For some, it is like a bait; they do not get to know the aim of the novelty until they are attracted to the product. It also has the tendency to present the advertiser as one who is dynamic. Members of the audience appreciate it when creativity seems to be put to good use. The audience is sometimes made to believe the display is done for their sake; since the ultimate aim of the advertiser is to make sales, and this may still be achieved with or without the presentation of different ‘shades’ of the product, the audience tends to see it as something done to show that the advertiser cares.

#### **4.5. Reinforcing consumerist tendencies with non-linguistic codes**

Advertisers also make use of non-linguistic codes to reinforce the consumerist tendencies found in the audience. Though the use of language and images goes a long way in asserting the intent of the advertiser, non-linguistic codes also help to ensure that the intent of the advertiser gets to the audience. In a way, while language and gender help in ensuring the message is prepared to suit the advertiser’s intent, non-linguistic codes help in ensuring it remains unaltered.

##### **4.5.1 The road/market as a context of negotiation**

The physical context of the billboard is an important seller for the advertiser. No matter how creative a billboard is, its message remains unread if it is not seen. Apart from its getting seen, getting positive results relies heavily on how much impact such has on the audience. Another important factor that determines its success is if seen by the right audience; if a creatively designed billboard is not seen by persons who need the advertised good, such can be regarded as an unnecessary display. Billboards are strategically located where they can be easily seen and appreciated. The location is determined by the proximity of the audience to the area. In fact, some billboards are located right in the market, where buyers are forced into making decisions. Though the road is a major seller, the market provides a better location for particular goods as they are points of decision making for the audience. There are even some goods that are not known by the audience until they get to the market. Such advertisements serve as a means of getting them informed about the existence of such goods and services.



**Plate 4.69.** Waw brings itself closer to the customer's line of visibility

Plate 4.69 advertises Waw, a type of detergent with the smiling image of a woman who is in the process of hanging some clothes she just washed. Though the activity could be genuine, the smile on her face shows an easier way of performing a difficult task. She is placed on the left and given a medium shot. She is presented as both a demand and an offer. The direct contact her eyes make with the audience and the soft smile on her face draws the audience unto her. In a way, they are forced to pay attention to what she is saying and curious to know what has made her so happy. The audience's gaze is also drawn to the activity performed by her hands, and this is an offer.

The linguistic message **WASHES A LOT, SAVES A LOT** presents a realistic situation. Apart from the fact that the image of the woman is usually used for the advertisement of cleaning agents, it is also a fact that there is always the need to wash several clothing items. There is, therefore, the possibility to dread this duty. The linguistic message, however, gives a realistic situation. It presents the frank possibility of there being a lot to wash. It also balances it up by presenting an easy way to perform the task **SAVES A LOT**. Without details, the audience is drawn into the product being advertised. This effect is reinforced by the location of the billboard. It is placed at the entrance of Academy Market, Iwo Road, Ibadan. It is, thus, placed to ensure that people who come to buy things at the market do not miss seeing it. The linguistic message is written in capital letters and placed at the centre of the billboard to ensure its salience.



**Plate 4.70.** Tasty Tom Jollof Mix advertises in its audience's major domain

Plate 4.70 is another billboard that is strategically placed to improve sales. Unlike the previous one though, this is placed at the entrance of the market but made to face inside. In a way, it provides a good opportunity for the audience who already know about the product to be reminded. It also introduces the product to 'first-timers'. Its location makes it fairly difficult for the audience to miss it. In a way, it forces itself on the audience until a decision is made to try it (first-timers) or continue to patronise (customers) the product. A close look at the billboard shows a fairly scanty billboard with prominent items. The left side of the billboard shows an image of the product with a clear presentation of its name. Towards the centre of the billboard, a plate of jollof rice with two big pieces of fried chicken is displayed. The image is presented as an offer to the audience.

A close shot of the plate of food is intentionally given to the audience to ensure that they do not miss the 'details' of the plate. The cook has taken time to ensure that the food is properly garnished; this is in addition to the fact that it looks creamy. The height of the billboard is also an unusual one. It is noticeably lower than the usual billboard and a part of an umbrella is seen covering Plate 4.70. While this makes it very easy for the audience to see the product being advertised, it also connotes a kind of ease in getting the product. The billboard is presented as this close to the audience to tell them that though the product is a good one, it is also available. In a way, it is a conscious effort on the part of the advertiser to bridge any gap created by the society between the product and the audience.

The linguistic message **No stress More jollof !** is displayed at a prominent place on the billboard. The letterings can almost be touched. It is also placed on the plate of food to create a linguistic representation to the display of image. Though it looks appetising, the linguistic message suggests that it is not impossible. In fact, the claim **No stress** means that it can be got with ease. Though several persons find cooking enjoyable, no one can deny the fact that achieving the best results, sometimes, comes with a degree of stress. The claim made on this billboard, however, entices the audience into trying to verify if such a delicious meal can be prepared without stress. Since the actual purchase is made in the market, the billboard is, thus, strategically placed. The context of the market helps to engage the attention of the audience with more ease and speed than one that is seen in a moving vehicle while the woman has other things demanding her attention.

The location of any product determines its acceptability (continuous patronage) to a large extent. If the billboard advertising such a product is not situated at a vintage position, it becomes very difficult for the audience to see it. This also shows that in a way, the road is a market for these advertisements. Though instant purchases of the products advertised are not made in most cases, the foundation of whether to buy or not is made at the point of assessing the advertisement. For some people, the piece of information is saved until it is needed. This shows that apart from ensuring that the billboard is designed to carry the message, it is equally important to place it where it can be seen by the right audience.

#### **4.5.2 Creating reality with colour**

Colour is another non-linguistic code that is used to reinforce consumerist tendencies in the audience. Apart from its aesthetic quality, it also has the quality of giving authenticity to whatever is advertised. This is because it allows the product or service to be displayed the best way. This also helps the audience to relate better with the product. Presenting a colourful billboard helps a creative advertiser to properly display his interests to the audience. Since there are different types of colour, advertisers also make use of them based on their functions. Plate 4.71 advertises Supreme ice cream with a prominent use of red, purple, brown, peach and a touch of white. In fact, the audience is first attracted to the billboard because of the colours.



**Plate 4.71.** Supreme Ice Cream makes it real with colour

The creative use of colours is the advertiser's attempt to recreate the product being advertised. This is glaring from the salience given to particular colours; each colour has its peculiar effect. On the vertical axis, the billboard is stylishly divided into five, using colours. The rough surface of the layers signifies nature. The lines of demarcation are not straight but have rough edges to ensure an unmistakable resemblance with the contents of a bowl of ice cream. The left part of the billboard is painted in red to connote life. Since the product has to do with food, the dominant use of red connotes its ability to give life. Its dominant use fills the audience with a level of passion for the product. A touch of white lightly lines a part of the image to connote the safe state of the product. It indicates a sense of perfection and assures the audience that the product can be safely consumed.

Next to the white layer is the part presented in brown. Brown connotes a natural state. It radiates the feeling of wholesomeness and stability. It also tells the audience that the product is nutritious and healthy. The effect of the brown part is emphasised by the layer in cream. The creamy part attests to the name of the product. In a way, its use tells the audience that all the ingredients needed for the product are there. The pink is used to tell the audience about the caring nature of the advertiser and the product. It has a calming effect and agrees with the sweet taste of the product.

The name of the product '**Supreme**' presented is as a part of the linguistic message. It is written in purple to ensure its effect on the other colours is not missed. Purple signifies royalty and uniqueness. Whenever it is used, it gives a feeling of richness that is peculiar to what it is used for. Apart from the richness it adds to the billboard, its use connotes that

Supreme ice cream is the best of its kind. When used for a product with competitors, purple signifies that the product is several steps ahead of others. To ensure that the effect does not get ignored, purple and a lining of white around the edges are used for all the linguistic messages. **Rich and Creamy Ice Cream** is written in purple to reinforce the effect of the product's name. The combination of the purple and white connotes that though the product is rich, it is safe for consumption.

Though there is the use of several colours, each layer is carefully presented in a way to prevent an overlap, just like the layered parts of a bowl of ice cream. Each layer represents a kind of flavor. This makes it very difficult for the audience to forget, at least for a second, that an actual bowl of ice cream is not presented. The use of colours has enabled the advertiser to present something very close to reality, making it very difficult for the audience to ignore. Generally, a type of ice cream with different flavours is considered very rich as the palate of the audience is indulged. The overall effect is that the audience is made to have a glimpse into the richness of the product. The efforts of the advertiser are reinforced by the use of colours. No matter how creative an advertiser is with words, some things can only be achieved with an appropriate use of colour. It does not only enhance the aesthetic quality of the product, it also helps to present the product as close as possible to reality.

Plate 4.72 is another billboard where colour is put to use. Just like the previous billboard, this plate also advertises food. The noticeable addition, however, is that varieties are advertised. The attention of the audience is first drawn by the use of multiple colours. At the background of the billboard, there is the prominent use of white and yellow. While the white background helps to contrast beautifully with the other images and present them in a clearer way, it connotes the hygienic condition of all the food items displayed. The lower part of the background is printed in yellow to exude the feeling of warmth and happiness to the audience. The use also connotes that the food items displayed are delicious.



**Plate 4.72.** Foodies Supermarket displays with colour

On the vertical axis, circular objects with images of products and some buyers are displayed. They are presented as coloured items and this helps to bring out the beauty in them; the first circle shows shelves of food items, shop indicators as well as about five buyers, the second displays varieties of bottled products while the third and the fourth circles display snacks. The images of the items displayed look real because of the use of colour. Though the function of aesthetics is considered, the use of colour is also creative and logical; items are presented in their natural state through the use of colour. The images on the billboard present the insides of a normal food store. This realistic display helps in drawing members of the audience. No matter the goodness a shop holds, nobody knows about until it is displayed. This advertiser has decided to add aesthetic to their display to ensure that the products are presented to the audience in the best manner. In addition to this, the colour adds a level of originality to the products; the display presents the products in a manner very similar to how they are in the real world. Visuals communicate with excellence and they have the ability to influence us physiologically and psychologically (Panzaru, 2012).

#### **4.6 Discussion of findings**

Visual advertisement affords advertisers the opportunity to be creative with words and images. With images, an advertiser can achieve a lot. According to Scott (1903: 140), "at a single glance at an illustration we can see as much as could be told in a whole page of printed matter". These two tools (the linguistic message and the image) are thoroughly utilised to exploit the audience. The ultimate goal of the advertiser is to influence the human (audience's) mind and they utilise whatever tool is capable of helping them



achieve their aims. The peculiar nature of the billboard forces the advertisers to be economical with words, while ensuring that the essence of the advertisement is achieved. Scott (1903: 76) states that “outdoor advertising must of necessity be very brief and very suggestive. There is no opportunity to present extensive arguments, yet something must be done to attract attention and to beget immediate action”. The advertiser is, thus, seen utilising all the creative tools at his or her disposal to ensure a successful advertisement.

#### **4.6.1. Manipulation of language in billboard advertisements**

The language of visual advertisement is one that is specially created for the eyes. The linguistic message is generally not lengthy, as there is the feeling of a double articulation in the image. The linguistic message is concise but characterised by ambiguity, exaggeration and repetition. Some of the expressions are carved into metaphors and weasels words. On the surface, some of the messages look appropriate, until the audience is able to take a critical look at what is said. This is usually not possible because of the limited time the billboards afford their audience. Members of the public, thus, leave the location of the billboard carrying the exact surface meaning the advertiser want.

The language of advertisement is a combination of tools intentionally selected by the advertiser to achieve their aims. It is a different level of language usage where meanings are negotiated to suit the advertiser’s purpose. In creating a language that answers to their desires, the advertiser creates a merger between the choice of language and culture, exploits cultural resources and perceptions, emotions of people and common assumptions. A language that suits the advertiser’s purpose is, thus, created and used to entrap people. While performing the function of telling the audience about the existence of a product or service, the language draws attention to itself. The language becomes so attractive to the audience that they cannot avoid admiring it. In their attempt to admire its creative ability and understand what it is all about, the audience is trapped.

A noticeable struggle is discovered between the text and the image. According to Barthes, the linguistic message is employed as an anchorage or a relay. A critical look at the use of linguistic message here, however, shows its dynamic nature. There are times when the linguistic message was used just to reinforce what the image already said, sometimes, it was used to enlighten the audience on the possibility of extended meanings to the basic

meaning of the message, while at other times, the linguistic message performed the function of both an anchorage and a relay. It has, thus, been discovered that when it comes to advertisement, there is no static way of utilising the linguistic message; just like other resources, the advertiser utilises what they have to their advantage.

Generally, billboards are designed with both images and texts. While the image illustrates, the message elucidates. There are, however, several cases where the billboard is only designed with linguistic messages. At such times, the messages are given the salience that would have been carried by the images. In such instances, the messages are constructed in such a way that they can adequately cater for what the image would have done. The messages are given an additional graphic quality, which would have been ordinarily absent if images were made to accompany the advertisement. It is, however, glaring that only linguistic messages can perform this dual role; images cannot. No matter how short, images need the linguistic message to give them a kind of direction. Thus, even if it is in form of the name of the product or a slogan, images in billboard advertisements are accompanied by linguistic messages.

Images are employed for the purpose of rhetoric. Rhetoric aims at influencing the decision of the audience in favour of the good or service being advertised. This can be further divided into aesthetic and didactic functions. The aesthetic function aims at sustaining the interest of the audience in the product, through the display of beauty and finesse. Creativity is employed to present the attractive side of the products and turn them into necessities of a normal life. The didactic function enlightens the audience on the implication of the product. They also help in shaping the audience's ideologies. Out of the two, advertisers focus on the aesthetic function. As a result, more efforts are geared towards ensuring that the audience is easily drawn by the beauty they are exposed to.

#### **4.6.2. Representation of gender in billboard advertisements**

There are earmarked territories for masculinity and femininity. The representation of gender in the billboards shows the continued relevance of stereotyping; men are mainly used for outdoor activities while women are utilised for indoor activities. The utilisation of the feminine gender for indoor activities is a myth that is passed from one generation to another. Her duties are, sometimes, close to signifying slavery; she cooks, washes, cares

for the home and the children. This representation has always been in the folklore. The role has become so accepted that some women are used to it. In fact, some see it as the definition of their persons.

Also, masculinity is more represented for the advertisement of alcoholic drinks while only femininity is used for beauty products. While discussing the segregation faced by female drinkers and the expectations of the society, Dumbili and Williams (2017: 6) state that “it appears that women avoid game-playing in party spaces to maintain ‘respectable femininity’ and avoid being seen as transgressors”. For men, however, the ability to drink several bottles and not become intoxicated is applauded, encouraged and rewarded. It is even regarded as a kind of accomplishment (Dumbili and Williams, 2017). Men are also more represented for sporting activities. At the inception of major international sporting events, physical display, modesty, muscularity and sterility were some of the issues raised to exclude the active participation of women (Heggie, 2010). According to Heggie (2010:157), “the only way a woman could participate in competitive sport was through sexually segregated events”. She is considered inferior to male athletes and most times, the obsession is on her body rather than her skills (Trolan, 2013).

The study, however, showed that stereotyping is a two-faced coin. Its use sometimes has a positive effect; femininity is sometimes used as a better choice for the advertisement of some products. At such times, she is portrayed as a professional at what she does. In addition, both genders are used, though on rare occasions, in territories that used to be reserved; for example, there is a case where femininity is used as an agent of innovation and masculinity is used as a professional cook. These representations are, however, yet to meet up with what is obtainable in the real world.

Different issues are emphasised for masculinity and femininity. Special attention is paid to the attitude of the man. He is portrayed as an individual with a focus, who radiates an aura of power, confidence and dominance. He also has around him an air of detachment and this explains why he is rarely used for what the society terms ‘frivolities’. Other common areas depicted for the masculine gender include leadership, adventurism and physical activity. Fatherhood is being gradually introduced. All these are achieved through persuasive advertisement. Since the force of advertisement is too powerful to be

ignored, at times, the man becomes groomed based on the celebrated ideas. Rath and Bharadwaj (2014:17) claim that strategies in persuasive advertisements have multiple meanings which are “potent forces shaping the psychological contours of a gendered society”.

Femininity is represented with extreme preoccupation on appearance. She is the choice of gender to advertise anything that has to do with beauty. Beauty is presented as a feminine value and goal (Londo, 2006). The woman is given an image that is regarded as a perfect one by the audience. She is presented with a flawless facial expression, white teeth, perfectly-toned skin and a slim stature. Particular parts of her body are focused, depending on what is being advertised. Her hair is also made and one, sometimes, wonders if she is just coming from an event. At such times, the woman is idolised and presented in a perfect condition. She is, thus, turned into an object rather than a subject. In addition, a fairly lopsided definition of beauty is given. Representations do not always reflect the realities in the world. As such, the woman is presented as a slender being, whose outlook shows a devoted focus on diet. Representing slender women is not bad. The issue is making use of only such women in advertising feminine products, thereby ignoring other realities of women that are dark, chubby and advanced in age. Londo (2006) identified beauty as one of the defining traits of the woman, as portrayed in the magazine she analysed. According to her (2006: 9), “it is difficult to become famous and successful if you are not blessed with at least acceptable looks”. The woman is encouraged to be beautiful, not just for herself but because of the attention she stands to gain from members of the opposite sex. The pressure is not as much as it used to be though. The woman is now more appreciated for herself, with a somewhat subdued emphasis on a strive to be beautiful.

The woman is also rarely presented as an individual who exists solely for herself; she is presented in the light of her importance to other persons. Though her relevance is not underestimated, she is almost always presented as a wife, a mother, a friend or an agent of beauty. In a way, she is not given much self-importance. She is presented as a being whose existence is rated important because of what she contributes to other people’s lives. This presentation makes her look like an attachment, who is not celebrated for who she is but for what she does.

The billboards also exploited voyeuristic tendencies in the audience. This is exploited because of the advertiser's belief that people like peeping into what is hidden. Femininity is more used for this purpose because of the general belief that the woman has sensitive parts that are capable of producing the needed sensations in the audience. As a result, the feminine images are presented as partially-clothed, fully-clothed and with a teasing effect through the design of the cloth. Sex is also commodified and sold to the public. In addition to the use of sexually-clothed ladies, some advertisers make use of suggestive jokes to entice the audience. Such advertisers find a creative (indirect) way of presenting sex on the billboard, since its direct use could be termed offensive.

There is the need to rethink the influence of the media. The media has been blamed for the continued relevance of stereotyping and gender misrepresentation. It has, however, been discovered that representation is a two-way concept. Though the media is largely responsible for various representations, the audience's preference is also considered in advertisement. Thus, though the audience is largely influenced by what the media outlets present, some of these representations also originate from the audience. At such times, the media is only replicating what the audience created. In addition, some representations are offshoots of ideas that are deeply-rooted in the culture of the society. For such, the media cannot be said to be responsible for their creation. Since the media is interested in remaining relevant, practitioners also ensure that whatever is favoured by their audience is represented. As a result, the society and the media can be said to be rubbing off on each other; as the media is responsible for some representations, the audience also contributes to some.

The contribution of the media is glaring in how such representations are made to remain relevant. The media mirrors the society and influences the attitudes members towards particular issues. Though it is a gradual process, technology and exposure are already positively influencing the way both genders are viewed. In the real world, the strict border lines placed on earmarked territories for masculinity and femininity are beginning to fade. Masculinity now functions in areas that used to be reserved for femininity and vice versa. Stereotypical bonds are being broken and the feminine gender is, with boldness, stepping into areas previously reserved for the male. The man is also willing to share the centre space with the woman. Though there are compromises in the real world, advertisers are

yet to adjust representations given to gender to accommodate them. Hence, even when the compromises are represented, there is a noticeable reluctance to match them up with what is obtainable in the real world.

The images represented are employed as signs which transcend the general duty of gracing the face of the billboard. They are expected to perform particular functions, which will ultimately lead to the audience's patronage. In the study of online advertising, Petrovici (2014: 721) identified the following as functions of symbolic communication: the information function, the ontological function, the social unifying factor, the aesthetic function and the educational function. The image performs some or, sometimes, all these when it is not represented as a mere decorative tool. All these show that though images can be used to manipulate the audience, they are also naturally persuasive (Panzaru, 2012). Apart from its solitary use, the image is believed to even perform better when it is accompanied by text. While discussing the relationship between the text and the image, Panzaru (2012:409) affirms that "without visual images, an idea may be lost in a sea of words while without words, an image may be lost to ambiguity". According to the author, the combination has the power that either of them does not possess.

#### **4.6.3 Exploitation of the consumerist tendencies in the Ibadan context**

Images on the billboards are not presented as concepts of equal status. In the billboard, there is space for a single hero. Hence, based on what the advertiser sets to achieve, a particular image or concept is made to dominate the rest. Such is given salience above the rest using colour, size, thickness and creativity. Though such items were not the only ones on the billboards, the surrounding items were mainly used as support.

The youth is used as an agent of innovation to bring in something new; a clear demarcation from the norm. The use of the youth connotes a development that is gradually evolving. The represented participant in such advertisements is presented as an encourager to the audience, telling them to break free from the age-long stereotype and step into the new world provided by enlightenment.

The overall focus of the advertiser is not the user, but the product; advertisements are more persuasive than being informative. Whatever innovation or activity is shown on the billboard is to enhance the acceptance and continued patronage of the product or service

being advertised. Since the presentation of this perspective is capable of making the audience feel bad or used, the advertiser makes conscious effort to make them feel that such displays are in their interest. Much efforts are put into making the audience feel great sacrifices have been made just for them. Once the audience takes this in, they feel obligated to reciprocate by acknowledging/appreciating the ‘great sacrifices’ made on their behalf. Great efforts are, thus, put into making the audience feel so good that they feel no sacrifice is too much.

The advertiser is interested in utilising whatever has the ability to make them gain the patronage of the audience on a regular basis. Even when such representations tend to show discrimination against their race, they still go ahead to make choices that are capable of giving their products and services a noticeable edge against competitors. The white woman is displayed as the preferred choice when the advertiser feels the need to show that the product or service being advertised is special. This shows the African mentality. Though the service is not exclusively meant for the white, the image of the white woman is utilised to sell such because the advertiser believes it is too special to be subjected to the general treatment (advertising with the image of a black woman).

The Yoruba language is specifically used to ensure that individuals who speak Yoruba language are reached. Members of the audience who cannot read or write are trapped through the visual modes on the billboards. The advertiser is seen as an individual who can foresee the challenges of the audience and proffer solutions, even before such are raised. While this suggests that they care about ensuring every member of the audience is carried along, it is, also, their means of ensuring that their messages get to every member of the audience. On the whole, the language of visual advertisement is self-reflexive; the language is employed to discourage deep reasoning. Expressions are constructed with simple meanings on the surface, presenting such advertisements as if there is no more to them. This is intentionally done by the advertiser to discourage the audience from probing into the deep (real) meaning of the advertisement.

The vulnerable tendencies of the audience are exploited in various ways. Though members of the audience are well-informed, they could also be indifferent when it comes to buying many things (Heath, 2012). Advertisers exploit the consumerist tendencies of the

audience by presenting wants as basic necessities of life. Since there are individuals who are culturally sensitive, culture is used as an avenue to get such individuals. The paraphernalia of the Yoruba is utilised to present products as those designed specially for the audience. Culture can, thus, be said to provide a soft, albeit slippery ground, for consumerism. Some other tendencies explored include sexualisation, the allure of the digital age, a lopsided definition of beauty and celebrity endorsement. Though these are utilised as baits to getting the audience, they are not presented as such. Instead, they are presented as results of the advertiser's efforts to making life more interesting for the audience. The focus is, thus, stylishly shifted from the main reason to avoid making the audience feel used.

#### **4.6.4 Use of non-linguistic codes to reinforce the consumerist tendencies**

The physical context of the billboard is utilised as a seller. As much as possible, advertisers ensure that billboards are situated in areas where the attention of the audience, on them, is ensured. The competitive nature of some goods and services makes it a necessity for the audience to be reminded of their existence. Since the final decision about whether a product will be patronised or not is made at the point of purchase, the advertiser strives to ensure that such is placed close to the seller. Advertisers also feel that the billboards should be close to points of purchase because billboards do not really provide buyers with much time to register some displays before they are forced to leave. Placing the advertisement where final decisions are to be made, thus, ensure the piece of information gets registered in the mind of the audience.

This shows that an advertiser's choice of any tool he or she employs in advertisement is rarely a mistake; every choice is intentional and targeted for the purpose of achieving particular results. This explains why Scott (1903: 144) claims that the desire of the advertiser is to "produce certain perceptions and ideas in the minds of the possible customers". So various tools are tried for success until the advertiser gets what works for the product. Once this is discovered, it is manipulated to suit the purpose it is meant for.

Though the audience is not prepared for the sights of outdoor advertisement, they cannot avoid them. Scott (1903) believes that advertisement can be voluntary or involuntary. It is voluntary when it is sought and involuntary when it is thrust on one, especially when one



is in the process of doing other things. Outdoor advertisement is an involuntary form as, most times, the audience is not, even prepared for it. This shows that, in a way, outdoor advertisement and its effects are what members of the society may not have a choice than to live with.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter has analysed the various ways by which language, gender and non-linguistic codes are employed to manipulate the values and preferences of the audience in billboard advertisement. The billboards of goods and services gathered for the study were analysed, based on the aim and objectives of the study. The findings made from the analysis have also been discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter provides a summary of all the chapters from One to Four. It also summarises the findings and gives a conclusion of the study. In order to ensure that the findings are identified and they cause no confusion, they are grouped into four paragraphs, according to the objectives of the study.

#### 5.2. Summary of findings

Billboard advertisements in the Ibadan metropolis have become a means where experts use various tools to catch and retain the attention of the audience. Though many would like to deny it, Leacock in Heath (2012: ix) affirms that advertising may be described as “the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it”. Language, gender and consumerist tendencies were exploited to present various products as necessities to members of the public. The language was intentionally coined to have far-reaching effects on the audience. This was achieved through a heavy reliance on exaggeration, metaphor, repetition, ambiguity and weasel words. Situations were magnified and particular word choices made to hold the audience glued to the advertisements. The use of language also demonstrated professionalism and empathy.

The use of gender transcends aesthetic reasons. Stereotypes were represented in various ways and for several reasons. The woman was more used for indoor activities while the man was more used for outdoor activities. It was, however, discovered that particular choices were, sometimes, made to communicate positivism. In addition, some representations depicted a gradual effacement of stereotyping, though the use is yet to match up with what is obtainable in the real world.

Various consumerist tendencies were exploited to the advertisers' advantage. The Yoruba language and other cultural codes were used to show the advertisers' affiliation with the cultures. Stereotypes were also emphasised to show the advertisers' celebration of the Yoruba culture. The woman's body was objectified and the audience was led into the culture of voyeurism. Youths were employed as agents of innovation and change. The glamour of the digital age was used as a seller to entice members of the public. Celebrities were represented on some of the billboards to lend credence to the ideas celebrated. Advertisers do not only rely on language and advertising strategies, they also demonstrate sensitivity to current social interests and appropriate such to market their products.

Non-linguistic codes were employed to reinforce the consumerist tendencies discovered in the audience and the context. The cultural codes of the Yoruba like beads, traditional outfits, the Yoruba language and diacritics were used to endear the products and services advertised to culturally sensitive individuals. Particular colours, especially the ones favoured by the products were deployed to make the billboards look real and creative. Some billboards were also turned into market spaces where the audience's preferences were negotiated.

### **5.3. Contributions to knowledge**

The study has shown what advertisers do with language, gender and other tools that they use. The study helps one to understand, in a practical way, that language transcends the simple communication of a sentence. Language has been seen as a great tool in the hands of experts and can even become a manipulative tool. Images have also been discovered, through the study to do more than decorate the billboard or draw attention. The study has shown that every choice made by advertisers is intentional and such is expected to achieve a particular result.

Apart from the language and the image, the use of the modified theoretical framework shows that advertisers manipulate the audience through their presentations. Seemingly simple tools have been analysed to become ambiguous or complex through the way they are displayed. Even similar images have been discovered to be turned into different ones

through the use of technology. The study has shown that the advertiser is a creator who decides on what effect to achieve through his or her tools and the manner of presentation.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

The peculiar nature of the language of visual advertisement has allowed the creation of a world where creative advertisers utilise words and images to their advantage. The study has revealed that choices of represented participants are made by billboard advertisers to pass across particular messages. Though what ‘sells’ may not be generally celebrated by the audience, billboard advertisers decided for their audience and introduced them to what ‘they believe was best for them’ and should be appreciated.

The study has examined various functions the language of visual advertisement performs in the hands of creative advertisers. Various representations given to gender and their implications have also been examined. It was realised that stereotypes are gradually becoming modified to match the changes in the society. The consumerist tendencies of the Ibadan metropolis were utilised to the advantage of the advertisers and some previously discarded ideas were presented as celebrated ones to the public. The billboard advertisers used their creative abilities to turn their products into celebrated necessities that are becoming accepted by the audience.

Representations of both linguistic messages and images in the billboard advertisements also showed that the advertisers transcoded their experiences of social change as signs. While doing this, they, sometimes, help in perpetuating the continued relevance of gender stereotypes. Some portrayals also showed the sensitivity of the billboard advertisers to changes around them, so that they could match up with the modifications in the society. This was not always to their advantage, as some representations could be regarded as shooting themselves in the leg. In such situations, instead of aiding the billboard advertisers’ effective communication with the audience, it resulted into semiotic failure.

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## Appendix 1



Plate 4.73. Always



Plate 4.74. King Tonic



Plate 4.75. Cowbell Chocolate

Appendix 2



Plate 4.76. Yugo



Plate 4.77. Ibucap

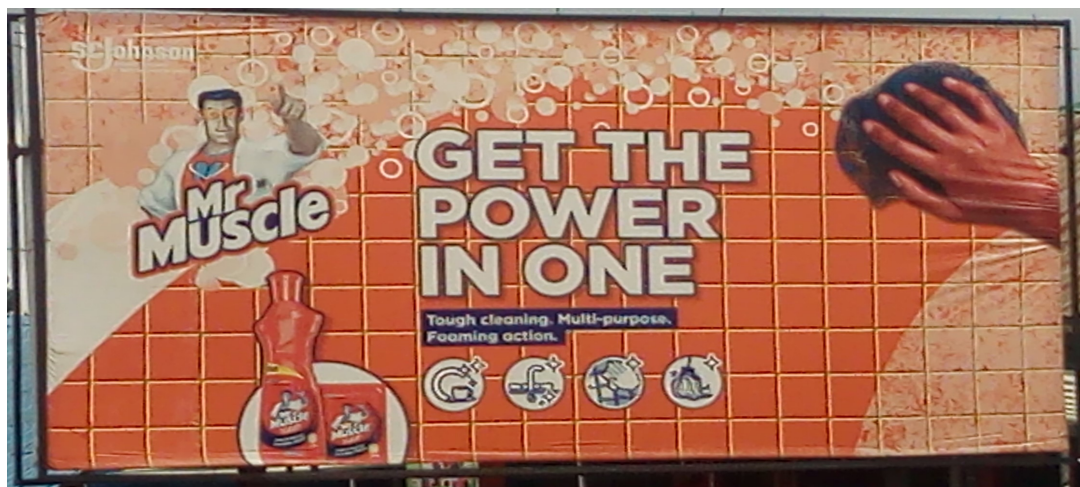


Plate 4.78. Mr Muscle



Appendix 3



Plate 4.79. Eagle Aromatic Schnapps



Plate 4.80. Bullet Energy Drink



Plate 4.81. Veleta Sparkling Fruit Drink

Appendix 4



Plate 4.82. Melody Candy



Plate 4.83. Royal Spices Academy



Plate 4.84. Jumia

Appendix 5



Plate 4.85. Serial White Gold



Plate 4.86. Training creative minds and hands



Plate 4.87. Chapman

Appendix 6



Plate 4.88. A plot of land with McDowell's



Plate 4.89. GLO Campus Data Booster

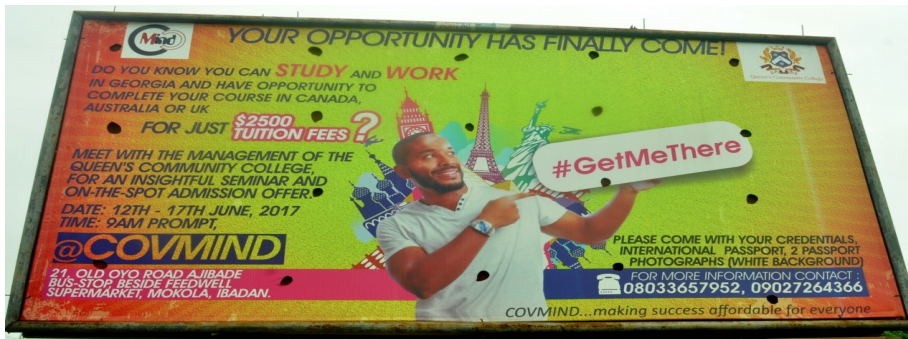


Plate 4.90. COVMIND