

## UTILISATION OF AESTHETICS IN TELEVISION ADVERTISING

Ezekiel S. Asemah<sup>1</sup>, Leo O.N. Edegoh<sup>2</sup>, Comfort A. Ogwo<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Kogi State University, Anyigba, &

<sup>2</sup>Department of Mass Communication, Anambra State University, Uli,  
NIGERIA.

<sup>1</sup> [asemahezekiel@yahoo.com](mailto:asemahezekiel@yahoo.com), <sup>2</sup> [godloveslon@yahoo.com](mailto:godloveslon@yahoo.com), <sup>3</sup> [comfort\\_ogwo@yahoo.com](mailto:comfort_ogwo@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

*The paper set out to examine the relevance of aesthetics in television advertising. The rationale behind the study is to find out whether aesthetics in advertising persuades consumers to patronise advertised products. The paper is anchored on two theories; they are social judgement theory and pleasure aesthetics theory. The paper gave a conceptual clarification of advertising and aesthetics. It identifies the aesthetic elements in television advertising to include: sound, dance, music, character, colour, etc. These elements are very important in television advertising because they go a long way in persuading people to patronise advertised goods and services. The paper concludes that television advertising needs aesthetic elements to appeal to the people. The paper recommends, among others that, advertisers should endeavour to make the audience have an aesthetic experience in the product or service that is advertised and that there is the need for products and services to be constantly advertised so as to make consumers to be loyal to such products and services.*

**Keywords:** Advertisement, Product, Persuasion and Aesthetics

### INTRODUCTION

Every business function requires an efficient communication system, in order to ensure successful performance. Advertising as it is called today is a specialised form of marketing communication. As a consumer, you are exposed to hundreds and may be, even thousands of commercial messages every day. They may appear in the form of billboard, newspaper advertisement, television commercials, etc. These are just a few of the many communication tools that companies and organisations use to initiate and maintain communicate with their customers, clients and prospects. Advertising is just one type of marketing communications. Advertising plays an important role in an organisation; helping to generate revenue and profit by stimulating sales. Advertising raises market awareness of an organisation's products and services and generates leads for a sales force to follow up. By building a brand image for products, advertising differentiates the products from competitors and helps to create customer preference. It also helps to develop a corporate image that builds market confidence and trust in an organisation as a supplier.

Before television, much of advertising was done on radio. The voice of the actor was more important than the appearance. With the advent of television in the 1950s, the methods of advertising shifted, as did the importance of aesthetics. Advertising became more visual, so the appearance of the actors and the environment as a whole took on new meaning. The essence of aesthetics in television advertising, as noted by Zettl (1990), is to clarify, intensify and interpret events for a large audience, in order to help the audience see the world from a new perspective and experience it in heightened ways while also subtly manipulating viewers' perception. Thus, advertisements are aesthetic events that are to be enjoyed as much

as the cues that are used in them. It is against this background that the paper examines the use of aesthetics in television advertising.

### **Advertising as a Concept**

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal communication link, initiated by an identified marketer, to establish or continue exchange relationships with customers and at times, with other stakeholders. Companies advertise to: build awareness, position a product/brand, build preference and differentiate their products/brands. Asemah (2011) says that advertising is any communication that is paid for, identified by a sponsor, directed at a target audience, through the various mass media like radio, television, billboards, newspapers and magazines, with the aim of creating awareness about goods and services. Arens (2008, p.7) says that advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products, services and ideas, by identified sponsors, through various mass media. In the same vein, Dominick (2007, p.321) sees advertising as any form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services, usually paid for, by an identified sponsor.

The foregoing implies that advertising is the process of creating awareness about goods, ideas, products and services. Thus, every organisation that wants its products to be known has to create awareness through advertising. This perhaps explains why Anyacho (2007, p.6) says that advertising involves research- consumer research, product research, marketing analysis, getting the appropriation and developing creative strategy and plans, tactical decisions in regards to budgeting expenditures, media and scheme insertions and broadcasts. The purpose of advertising is nothing, but to sell something -a product, a service or an idea. Thus, the real objective of advertising is effective communication between producers and consumers.

### **Aesthetics as a Concept**

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgements of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as critical reflection on art, culture and nature (Wikipedia, 2012). Aesthetics, as noted by Akpan and Etuk (1990, p. 3) may be provisionally defined as the science or the study of beauty. Akpan and Etuk's definition implies that aesthetics deals with beauty. It is helpful to recognise that the term "aesthetic" may be understood first in a descriptive, anthropological sense. From this angle, to identify certain cultural items as aesthetic is not to praise their beauty or excellence, but merely to describe their chief defining feature: their membership in a class of experiences understood to be fictional or imaginary, understood to occur in a symbolic, culturally-agreed-upon imaginative space -- a theatre; the intimate, privatised spaces of our experience of television; the vast ritual amphitheaters of the ancient world; the dark communal space of the movie-house -- where "real" experience is re-presented, re-created, symbolically displayed. Ford (2009) has this to say about aesthetics:

The word – aesthetics – derives from the ancient Greek word *aisthanomai*, which means perception by the senses. As such, it is used in modern English as a noun, in the sense that something can appeal to the senses. Since the meaning of the word relies upon sensory perception, its definition is fluid, varying through time and it is subjective, differing between people and cultures. In a more general sense, aesthetics as a philosophy refers to the study of sensory values. This means the judgement or evaluation by the senses and through time has come to refer to

critical or philosophical thought about art, culture and/or nature. A subfield of axiology, the philosophy of art, aesthetics is interested in ways of seeing and of sensing the world. As a field of study, aesthetics involves ways of seeing and perceiving the world, as well as, new and novel interpretations. In a contemporary sense, aesthetics can be used to reference a particular style or design. For example, a culture that uses a motif through many areas of design and function can be said to appreciate or adhere to a specific aesthetic.

The above assertion shows that aesthetics is concerned with the way people perceive things in the world. This perhaps explains why Fleck (1996, p.345) avers that aesthetics is a subtle chain that binds together, all facets of living, to create beauty, inspiration, order, satisfaction and renewal. This informs why people take decision consciously or unconsciously on daily basis. Zettl (2008) sees aesthetics as the study of certain sense perception that can be most effectively clarified, intensified and interpreted through a medium. To Paul (1994), cited in Udende (2009):

Any aesthetic work is to appeal to or sensitise any or a combination of our senses or taste. Every aesthetic work must cause people to feel and experience what the artiste has felt and experienced. As soon as the listeners or viewers or even spectators are affected by the same feelings, which the artiste felt, experience has been clarified and intensified, thus aesthetic communication has been experienced.

Going by the above assertion, aesthetic has to do with the way we perceive things; especially how we see and interpret such things.

## **THEORETICAL BASIS**

Two theories have been chosen to serve as the theoretical framework for the study; they are social judgement theory and the pleasure theory of aesthetics. Social judgement theory is a theory of attitude change, which was developed by Muzafer Sherif and Carl Hovland in 1961 (and later by Carolyn Sherif). As its name suggests, it is a model of judgement, which means that it declares that the audience interprets (judges) a message. Social judgement theory states that you have a statement or message and you accept it or reject it based on your cognitive map. You accept or reject a message based on your own ego-involvement and if it falls within the latitude of acceptance. The social judgement theory (SJT) is a persuasion theory. Arising out of the socio-psychological tradition, it focuses on the internal processes of an individual's judgement with relation to a communicated message.

The foregoing implies that the audiences interpret messages and decide whether or not to accept the message, based on their understanding of the message. People receive messages and interpret such messages; thus, if they look at the message from a positive angle, it will have positive effect on them; but when they look at it from a negative angle, the message will have negative effect on them. The theory is relevant to the study in the sense that it describes how people judge messages and interpret them, after which they take action. Thus, consumers must see the advertisement of products from a positive light before it can have effect on them.

The major assumption of pleasure theory of aesthetics is that the beautiful is that which gives us a distinctive sort of pleasure or satisfaction. Since it talks about pleasure or satisfaction, it is also known as hedonism; from the Greek word hedone, which means pleasure (Akpan and Etuk, 1990). As noted by Schwarz and Winkielman (2004), aesthetic pleasure is a function of

the perceiver's processing dynamics: The more fluently perceivers can process an object, the more positive their aesthetic response. We review variables known to influence aesthetic judgments, such as figural goodness, figure-ground contrast, stimulus repetition, symmetry and prototypicality and trace their effects to changes in processing fluency. Other variables that influence processing fluency, like visual or semantic priming, similarly increase judgements of aesthetic pleasure. Thus, beauty is grounded in the processing experiences of the perceiver, which are in part, a function of stimulus properties. The relevance of the theory to the study is that advertising message or campaign must be beautifully designed before it can have influence on the people.

## OBJECTIVES / FUNCTIONS OF ADVERTISING

The purpose of advertising is nothing, but to sell something -a product, a service or an idea. The real objective of advertising is effective communication between producers and consumers. The following are the main objectives of advertising, as noted by Puranik, (2011):

- a. **Preparing Ground for New Product:** New products need introduction because potential customers have never used such products earlier and the advertisement prepares a ground for that new product.
- b. **Creation of Demand:** The main objective of the advertisement is to create a favourable climate for maintaining or improving sales. Customers are to be reminded about the product and the brand. It may induce new customers to buy the product by informing them of its qualities, since it is possible that some of the customers may change their brands.
- c. **Facing the Competition:** Another important objective of advertising is to face competition. Under competitive conditions, advertisement helps to build up brand image and brand loyalty and when customers have developed brand loyalty, it becomes difficult for the middlemen to change it.
- d. **Creating or Enhancing Goodwill:** Large scale advertising is often undertaken with the objective of creating or enhancing the goodwill of the advertising company. This, in turn, increases the market receptiveness of the company's product and helps the salesmen to win customers easily.
- e. **Informing the Changes to the Customers:** Whenever changes are made in the prices, channels of distribution or in the product by way of any improvement in quality, size, weight, brand, packing, etc., they must be informed to the public by the producer through advertisement.
- f. **Neutralising Competitor's Advertising:** Advertising is unavoidable to compete with or neutralise competitor's advertising. When competitors are adopting intensive advertising as their promotional strategy, it is reasonable to follow similar practices to neutralise their effects. In such cases, it is essential for the manufacturer to create a different image of his product.
- g. **Barring New Entrants:** From the advertiser's point of view, a strongly built image through long advertising helps to keep new entrants away. The advertisement builds up a certain monopoly for the product in which new entrants find it difficult to enter.

## **Aesthetics Elements in Television Advertising**

The whole essence of advertising is to persuade people to buy products. Aesthetics is all about beauty. The likely aesthetic elements in television advertising are: sound, music, character, colour, etc.

### ***Sound***

Sound is very important in television commercials. Sound makes a television programme lively; without sound, it becomes difficult to actually follow a television programme. Thus, sound adds to the beauty of a television advertisement. There is the need to make use of good and attractive sound. The sound used should be such that can draw attention to the commercial. Where ever you are and you hear the sound, you are bound to be attracted to the advertisement. There is the need to use sound at the beginning to draw the attention of consumers to the product.

### ***Characters***

The characters used should be attractive enough. The characters should be able depict exactly what the advertisement is saying. What this signifies is that the consumers who see the advertisement will assume that as soon as they use the product, they will look like those characters used to advertise the product. Immanuel Kant summarises the individual aspect of many aesthetic judgements when he says that a man will not argue if another tells him that something is pleasing to him, rather than pleasing in and of itself. For Kant, aesthetic value, like everything else, does not hold beauty or truth in objects, but rather, in definitions. This means that the characters must be seen to be beautiful. From the Kantian perspective, the beauty of the thing is the recognition of a truth that is both universal and subjective.

### ***Dance***

Dance in television advertising is a way of influencing people to purchase the product. The dance has to be well done, to capture consumers' attention. Advertising is the communication method by which we mediate reality and meaning through life themes and life projects. Dance and its influence on consumers and their behaviours would be situated in the symbolic, experiential and embodied aspects of the consumption cycle informing the consumer's identity. What we will evaluate are the emotional, affective, aesthetic and hedonic dimensions of dance relative to television advertising in a consumer culture theory frame. Dance in television advertising is a visual, regardless of how the dance is being executed in the commercial.

### ***Music***

Music is a peripheral cue, capable of impacting attitude toward the advertisement and therefore the brand under different levels of involvement—both central and peripheral route processing, depending on the situation the consumer is in. More, visual components are processed faster and generate feelings. Musical structure in advertising influences emotional responses and behavioural intentions towards products. Music is a language that communicates on three levels: The sensual at the levels of both mind and body; the emotional as in meanings associated with moods and feelings, which cannot be stated verbally; and the intellectual in terms of structure. Because of these aspects of music and influence on human beings, it influences ones interpretation and response to the advertisement. Music contributes to the rhetorical task in ways as various as language. In so doing, music is used to execute cognitive and affective tasks related to the message and content by shared cultural meaning.

### *Colour*

Colour is the sensation that is created in the eyes. Television advertising should contain colour that is attractive. The colour combination in the advertisement should be harmonious. The use of colour is very important in any production. Colour is the visual perceptual property corresponding in humans to the categories called red, blue, yellow, green and others. Because perception of colour stems from the varying spectral sensitivity of different types of cone cells in the retina to different parts of the spectrum, colours may be defined and quantified by the degree to which they stimulate these cells. These physical or physiological quantifications of colour, however, do not fully explain the psychophysical perception of colour appearance. Human brain commonly receives signals faster through eyes, rather than ears. Visual appearance is supposed to be more attractive, compared to the other senses, no matter what the presentation is. Colours are known to influence the behaviour of a person. From the standpoint of the advertiser, we can conclude that colours can determine the buying habits of customers. Companies use colours in the logo, advertising, etc., to pass the right message to customers.

### **Relevance of Aesthetics in Television Advertisement**

Advertising is a communication that is aimed at persuading consumers to purchase goods and services. This implies that every advertisement is aimed at convincing people; that is, the consumers, to take a positive step. Consumers must see something that is appealing in an advertisement before they can be persuaded to patronise goods and services. Thus, no advertisement will appeal to the people, unless it has some form of aesthetic elements. Advertising is aimed at creating perception. Burgeon and Ruffiner (1979, p. 104), cited in Asemah (2011) see perception as the process of making sense out of experience. To corner and Hawthorn, (1980, p.29), cited in Asemah (2011), perception is how an individual makes sense out of his or her own world. It is the process of forming a mental image or impression of a stimuli or object. Advertising creates pictures on the minds of the people. Thus, when there is no aesthetics in the television advertisement, the consumers will not have a positive impression about the product that is advertised. For example, in the advertisement of Delta Soap, young ladies and young men were used to advertise the product; these characters do not have pimples, they have clean skin; they are bright and shining; they use good colour, sound, music and good dancing steps to advertise the product. This shows that the advertisement has some form of aesthetics. This perhaps informs why people often patronise delta soap. The first time I (the author of this paper) saw the advertisement of delta soap, I was convinced that it was a good soap and this was purely because of the aesthetic elements used.

The foregoing implies that when television advertisement has aesthetics, consumers are likely to patronise the product that is advertised. Advertising is about selling; by nature, advertising is neither neutral nor objective. Pleading its case through the strongest, most persuasive means, advertising informs, entertains and sells. Occasionally, it even inspires. Thus, for any advertisement to persuade the consumers there has to be aesthetics; it is the aesthetics that makes the advertisement to appeal to the audience. Thus, to achieve the objectives of advertising, which among others, include: to increase usage of product, to fight competition to secure the desired market share; increase profit thereby ensuring the continued life of the business; increase sales turn over; induce higher production volume resulting from increase in demand; and to get more efficient in the utilisation of resources, as a result of increase in profitability, an advertisement must have aesthetics

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Advertising aims at persuading people to purchase products; organisations advertise products for several reasons and one of the reasons is to make people to be loyal to products. And for the advertisement to arrest people's attention, it must be persuasive. Thus, there has to be aesthetics in the advertisement. Based on the analysis, the paper concludes that television advertisement needs aesthetic elements to appeal to the people. Thus, the paper recommends that advertisers should endeavour to make the audience have an aesthetic experience in the product or service that is advertised; there is the need for products and services to be constantly advertised so as to make consumers to be loyal to such products and services; organisations should endeavour to create good image for themselves before advertising products. This means that public relations and advertising go hand in hand and it is a necessity for an advertiser to have knowledge about colours and what they can do. Black represents elegance, seduction, sophistication and mystery. White represents peace, pure, clean, smooth and youthful. The gold stands for luxury, prestige and elite. Silver stands for prestige, Scientific and cold. Yellow represents warmth, happiness and joy. Orange represents warmth, joy and vibrant. Red represents love, emotion, strength, passion and danger. Rosa is to nurture, sweet, soft, and security. Green represents nature, fertility, fresh, and abundance. Blue stands for trust, cool, belonging and reliability.

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