# ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISEMENT OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN TWO POPULAR MARKETS IN ZAMFARA STATE, NIGERIA

**ISAH ABDULMUMINI**

Department of English and Literature, Federal University Gusau Zamfara State, Nigeria
E-mail: isahmafara76@gmail.com

**Abstract**- It is very clear that Traditional medicine (TM) may be dangerous to the body of its consumers due to the inadequate knowledge on proper dosage in its administration and the danger of the ingredients used in its production. Despite that, the sellers make a lot of money in its business. This is because many of the target customers especially in the rural areas are easily convinced and attracted by its sellers as a result of the style used in advertising such products. This research takes a look at the style of language used in such business on market days in Talata Mafara and Shinkafi local governments. Talata Mafara and Shinkafi markets are popular not only in Zamfara state but also in the country as a whole. They both operate once in a week and attract large turnout of people both from within and outside the state and even from the neigbouring countries. Traditional Medicine sellers (TMS) use attention orientation, identification focus, prevention focus, resultant focus and strategy focus as strategies for their advertisements. They also use Qur'anic quotations to attract attention because the majority of the customers are Muslims in the study areas. The data were collected through field trip by tape recording the advertisements of such products on four market days in the study areas and was analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. Hausa language is used by the sellers in the adverts and this is because it is the native language of the majority of the inhabitants in the study areas. It shows that, despite the danger attached to the use of TM, people patronise it in large quantity for medical treatment.

**Keywords** - herbs, language, sellers, style of advertising, traditional treatment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, traditional medicine (TM) has been misinterpreted, suppressed and at most persecuted. This is because of the Traditional Medicine Sellers' (TMS) extensive knowledge and independence which pose a threat to the modern medicine. In addition, they are placed outside the economic and political control of the government.

Previously, the fear of laws of the government has caused a severe decline in traditional medicine selling and has forced most of them to do their work quietly within a circle of trusted patronisers.

But with the new resurgence of ethnic practices and alternative medicine all over the world, TM is now gaining strength and is making a slow but sure return especially in northern Nigeria. In view of the above, this research is aimed at studying as well as analysing the language used by the TMS in advertising their products in Talata Mafara and Shinkafi local government areas of Zamfara State, Nigeria. Over the years, TMS generally have developed a method of carefully selecting words with different kinds of meanings in order to sell their products.

This stylistic use of language, sometimes end up attracting consumers to a particular product even when they might not have a need for it. It is against this background that the study would be conducted to find out the manipulative use of language and its consequences on clients. This will therefore be documented for future reference.

## II. TRADITIONAL MEDICINE DEFINED

Traditional medicine has been variously defined by different scholars, researchers and organisations. WHO (1999) defines it as the ancient and cultured bound medical practice which existed before the application of modern science to health.

In a related perspective, Adesina (2009) sees it as a cultural gem of various communities around the world and encompasses all kinds of folk medicine handed down by the tradition of a community or ethnic group. The traditional medicine programme of the WHO (Rukangira, 2001) defines TM as the sum total of all the knowledge and practices whether explicable or in explicable used in diagnosis, prevention and elimination of physical or mental imbalance and relying exclusively on practical experience and observation handed down from generation to generation whether verbal or written.

## III. ADVERTISING DEFINED

Lasker as quoted in Williams (2004) who is regarded as the father of modern advertising defined advertising as "salesmanship in print, driven by a reason why".

But that was long before the advent of radio, television or internet. However to Bernstein (1997), advertising is the origination and/or communication of ideas about products in order to motivate consumers toward purchase.

## IV. METHODOLOGY/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The data for this research were collected from secondary sources and through field trip. The researcher took his time to travel to the study areas where observation and tape recording techniques were used in the data collection. The TMS images were captured without their consent while advertising their products in the markets under study. These strategies were adopted in order to get the natural data.

The data collected were analysed within the analytical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a deconstructive approach to the study of written or spoken words, visual images and other forms of semioses (signs and symbols) as means of discourse. It allows for a wide range of data including interviews, documents, invented examples and other non-naturally occurring talk (van Dijk 1991; Obeng & Hartfort 2002; Chilton 1990).

## V. TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Traditional medicine has developed in various communities in Nigeria in response to the health needs of the people. There is the common saying that "what the toad will eat, God will not put on a tree." Even if such needs of the toad develop or grow in space, they will surely come to the ground if they are to satisfy the needs of the toad. Many communities have, therefore, since creation, developed various traditional systems using locally-available resources for the alleviation of their health problems. As Tella (1986) noted, traditional medicine is as old as the hills in Nigeria. The development of traditional medicine in Nigeria has led to various categories of healers, the various healing methods, strategies and medicines or remedies now known. The British colonial masters brought in orthodox medicine and, today, both systems of medicine exist in the country; both have the primary objective to cure, manage or prevent diseases and maintain good health.

Most Nigerians, especially those living in rural communities do not have access to orthodox medicine and it is estimated that about 75 per cent of the populace still prefer to solve their health problems consulting traditional healers. Where such access exists, the rising cost of imported medications and other commodities used for medicines have posed a big problem. Besides, many rural communities have great faith in traditional medicine, particularly the inexplicable aspects as they believe that it is the wisdom of their fore-fathers which also recognise their socio-cultural and religious background which orthodox medicine seems to neglect. Recent reports show that more people in the world embrace traditional medicine. In 1996, WHO published (WHO Policy and Activities in the Field of Traditional Medicine) that in China, the ratio of medical doctors to the population stood at 1:20,000 compared with traditional practitioners ratio of 1:2000, and in Swaziland, these figures are respectively 1:10,000 and 1:100.

Diseases or complaints of a special nature such as hernia, snake bite, arthritis, gout etc. have been treated using herbs alone or in admixture with animal parts, plants and minerals. Today, plant medicines include vincristine and vinblastine isolated from the Rose periwinkle and used to treat childhood leukaemia and Hodgkin's disease, Reserpine extracted from the African or Indian Rauwolfia and used in tranquillisers, diogenin extracted from the yam and used in the treatment of rheumatism and to produce oral contraceptives and the shea butter which showed nasal decongestant activity etc.

Non-plant medicines include the bee venom which is used in the treatment of arthritis and the civet cat exudate which has shown anticonvulsant effects. Plant extracts and chemicals with muscle relaxant properties have been used by the TBAs to assist in child deliveries. All these facts point to the values of medicinal plants and their importance in traditional medicine in present day Nigeria (Adesina, 2009).
This research discovers that both in Talata Mafara and Shinkafi weekly markets, TMS use some strategies to advertise their products. Five methods have been established. They are:

1. The use of vehicles (motor cars) to move from place to place. The vehicle is equipped with a public address system in order to attract customers' attention. See fig. 1 below:

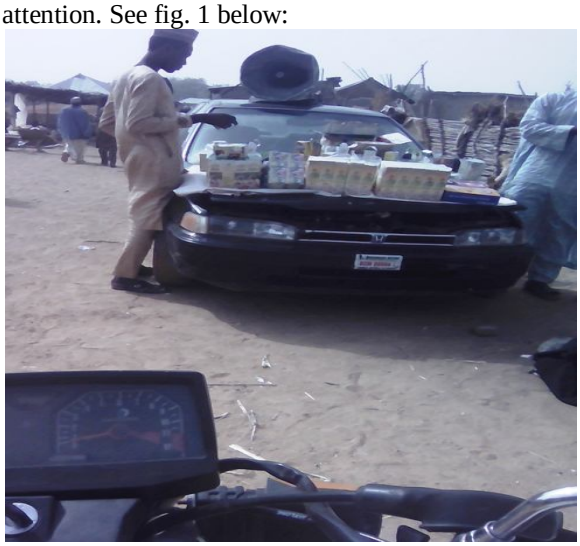


**Fig. 1 Source: field trip (December, 2016)**

2. Another method adopted by TMS is the use of motorcycles and bicycles carrying their medicines. A public address is mounted and music is played so as to attract passersby. See fig. 2 below:



**Fig. 2 Source: field trip (December, 2016)**

3. Some TMS carry their products in a bag and begin to move on their feet from place to place and house to house advertising their products and services. These types hardly use the public address system but advertise their medicines orally. See fig. 3 below:

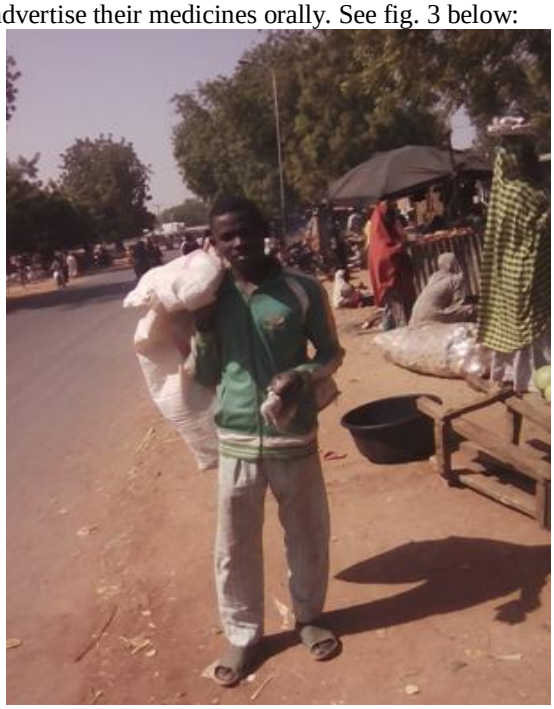


**Fig. 3 Source: field trip (December, 2016)**

4. Another method used by TMS is the use of wheel barrows in advertising their products on market days. See fig 4. below:



**Fig. 4 Source: field trip (December, 2016)**

5. The last but not the least method of advertising TM is those who remain seated in an open place in the market by the road side on market days displaying their medicines. See fig. 5 below:



**Fig. 5 Source: field trip (December, 2016)**

All the above are found in Talata Mafara and Shinkafi markets which operate on Tuesday and Thursday every week. While those with shops and those who stay in their residences attend to their patients because they already became popular.

However, we need to know that, now there are those who employ the use of modern means of advertising their medicines through the use of electronic media such as radio and newspaper. But in the case of these study areas, only local radio stations are used for such advertisements. Usually, an expert in the media field is hired to air all the necessary information regarding a particular product and the traditional healer who offer such services as well as his/her address and phone numbers are made known to the public.

## VI. LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISEMENT AS USED BY TMS

The study of discourse in language is part of the research into the basic functions of units above the rank of the sentence. In discourse, scholars have tried to find out how and why people use terms such as informative, elicitations and the like and their implications for listeners. Coulthard & Montgomey (1981) proposed units in the analysis of long utterances and these are those which open and close transactions.

TMS try to bombard prospective customers' visions and sense of hearing with a lot of emotive words such as best, finest, quality, top, king size etc to entice them to buy their products without really thinking much about it. They also use phrases or expressions which are popularly admired by people such as babu kamar shi (none is like it), tabbata ka sayi na kwarai (make sure you buy the best), kada ka bari a baka labari (you can't afford to miss it) respectively.

In advertising their products and services, TMS also structure their expressions and language in such a way as to produce a dramatic effect. Words such as bashi, kyauta meaning 'credit' and 'gift' are very

powerful in advertising products by the TMS in the study areas. Everybody likes (especially in villages where the inhabitants are mostly peasant) free products and services and their inclusion therefore produce positive response from consumers.

In Nigeria, advertising tends to persuade people or warn them against social evils and dangers of some products. Many government advertisements are on preventive health care. A Nigerian customer is a hungry, angry, peasant and frustrated person who does not know where to turn for solace in terms of health services. An average customer of TM in Talata Mafara and Shinkafi can therefore be easily cajoled into patronising TMS especially drugs at affordable price.

Following Ventola (1987), the language of TMS can be represented by the following:

**1. Attention orientation:** What the TMS do here is to introduce the medicine for sale in a particular street or area. They inform people the available medicine for sale with the micro phone. They alert the prospective buyers with Hausa expressions/utterances like:

To gamu Allah ya sake kawo mu da ingantaccen maganin nan, Mallam ko Malama kuzo a baku (We have come again with the qualitative medicine, please come and get one).

It should be noted here that, TMS mention the fact that they have brought it again. This shows that it was not their first time of being to the areas and this encourages buyers to keep coming. In the process, they also mention their names and background.

**2. Identification Focus:** Here, the TMS mention medicines and their uses, e.g.,

Maganin nan bana shafawa bane, mun riga mun hadashidomin maganin tsutsar ciki da Dan kanoma (the medicine is not meant for rubbing on the body, we have already prepared it for the curing of worms and dysentery…)'

In this technique, a number of diseases or symptoms of diseases are enumerated and people who suffer from such diseases tend to move near the TMS or be tempted to do so especially when those diseases defy western medicine in the individual.

**3. Prevention Focus:** Here, the TMS prescribe how to use the medicine, the people that can use it, the time and with the food that goes with it. e.g:

Zaka iya zazzage maganin cikin kunu ko shayi bayan ka ci abinci, yara na sha manya na sha meaning 'you can put the medicine in some pap or tea, both children and adults can use it'.

**4. Resultant Focus:** Here, the TMS enumerate the resultant healing of the medicine such as quick and fast relief from pains etc. With this method, the interested buyers will be tempted to draw near and buy. Examples of expressions used include:

Mallam idan ka sha tabbas zaka dawo nema nai meaning 'if you take it definitely you must come back looking for it'

**5. Strategy Focus:** The technique used by the TMS here is that the advertiser will first of all assume and announce the presence of some imaginary customers just to attract the real customers. Secondly, they announce the price, and thirdly, they use swearing words. These strategies include:

Mallam ka zo a baka ne? guda daya za'a baka ne? guda daya naira goma yake, guda uku naira ashirin 9you too have come to get one? Each one is ten naira but three ties are twenty naira). They also use swearing words like:

Na rantse da Allah na kwarai ne, idan ka sha bai yima aiki ba Allah ya isamma (I swear to God it is genuine, if you take it and it didn't work may God's wrath be upon me). Wallahi a gari kaza an bani kyautar dan maraki inji kwamishina saboda jin dadin maganinnan (By God, I was offered a cow in one village by a commissioner who used and enjoyed this medicine) etc.

## VII. ANALYSIS

From the foregoing, we can observe that TMS employ a number of strategies in order to advertise their products and services which also serve as means through which they can actualise their dreams.

It is worthy to note that the places under study (Talata Mafara and Shinkafi) have a great number of elites that can read and write in English language but TMS never care to advertise their products and services in English. They only use the language of the immediate community which is Hausa in order to reach to the common man. That shows that the majority of the consumers are the local people.

Although the TMS show up in the markets every blessed week, they use encouraging words such as sai wata rana meaning 'when we leave it will take a long time before we show up here again' indicates that the TMS have a lot of communities they visit and therefore if they leave, the opportunities of having the medicine again is uncertain.

The TMS also employ a number of strategies to convince the customers that the medicine is genuine. The use of swearing words like wallahi meaning 'by God' it is genuine' and idan ka sha bai yi ma aiki ba Allah ya isamma (if you take and you are not healed may God's wrath be upon me) instill confidence in the customers' minds that the medicine is genuine. This is because the areas under study are Muslim dominated environments. They believe that an individual may not pray for God's wrath on himself simply because of material benefit. So, even if the product is not genuine they will be patronising it without any reservation and the TMS can take that advantage to deceive the general public especially now that people want to enrich themselves through any means without thinking of the consequences of doing so.

TMS also use language in order to motivate the customers to buy the medicine. The use of words like bashi (credit), kyauta (gift), na gari na kowa (good is for everybody) and so on are mostly used by TMS to draw the attention of customers to buy their medicine. On this note, Richard (1986) is of the view that "the basic purpose of advertising is to identify and differentiate one product from another in order to persuade the consumer to buy that product in preference to another". The most essential insight, as pointed out by Austin (1965) is that utterances are actions. Some actions can be performed through language (for example apologising), whilst others can be performed either verbally or non-verbally (for example, threatening). In addition, as soon as we begin to study how language is used in social activities, it becomes obvious that communication cannot take place without the knowledge and assumptions shared between speakers and hearers or writers and readers. It is also observed that TMS that can use motor cars, motorcycles, and even wheel barrows, make use of musical instruments in advertising their products and services. They play interesting Hausa poets' cassettes from time to time on a tape recorder in a loud sound so as to draw the attention of people to listen to them. Sometimes, they play Qur'anic recitation in order to identify with the customers who are mostly Muslims even though it is contrary to Islamic tradition to do so in a noisy area like market. This method is meant to deceive customers because nobody among the Muslim faithful expects a Qur'anic reciter to deceive his fellow Muslim in the name of material benefit. With modern technology, TMS use their mobile phones to play interesting songs of kannywood actors/actresses which are being admired by many people in the environments under study.It is also interesting to note that the TMS use only Hausa in their advertisements, but it evident that some of the sellers are Fulani by tribe but they do not use their native languages simply because they want to share identity with the customers in order to sell their medicines easily.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been observed that TMS use local language of the immediate communities (Hausa) in advertising their products and services in Talata Mafara and Shinkafi markets that operate on Tuesday and Thursday every week. They employ variety of strategies such as use of quotations from the Holy Qur'an and attractive Hausa words and expressions. All these enable them to easily convince, motivate, persuade, encourage and appeal to the senses of the target customers in order patronise their medicines/products.

## REFERENCES


[1] S.K Adesina, (2009) 'Traditional Medicine Care in Nigeria'. In Advertisingin Nigeria and Some Fundamental issues

[2] J. L. Austin, (1965) How to Do Things with Words Oxford: University Press.

[3] G. Bernstein, (1997) 'Demonstratives & Reinforcers in Romance and Germanic languages' Lingua 102 87-113

[4] P. Chilton, (1990) Politicians, Politics and Diplomacy Discourse and Society 1(2):201-204.

[5] R.M. Coulthard, and M.M. Montgomey,(1981) Studies in Discourse Analysis(Eds) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

[6] G. Obeng, Samuel. and B. Hartford, 2002.Surviving Through Obliqueness: Political Discourse in Emerging Democracies. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

[7] F. T. Richard, (1986) A Definition of Advertising USA: Washington State University

[8] E. Rukangira, (2001) The African Herbal Industry: Constraints and Challenges. Proceedings of the Natural Products and Cosmeceutical Conference August 2001, Erboristeria Domani pp 1-23

[9] Tella, (1986) 'Traditional medicine in Nigeria: Prospects and Problems' (Ed)The state of Medical Plant Research in Nigeria. Ibadan: University Press

[10] Van Dijk, Teun, 1991. 'Racism and the Press' In Robert Miles (ed) Critical Studies in Racism and Migration. New York: Routledge.

[11] E. Ventola, (1987) 'The Structure ofCasual Conversations in English'Journal of Pragmatics 3(3/4) 267-298

[12] F. A. Williams, (2004) Comparative Advertising Mackgrow Hill.

[13] World Health Organisation (1999) Development of International Policy on Traditional Medicine USA.

[14] World Health Organisation. WHO monographs on selected medicinal plants.Vol. I. Geneva, World Health Organisation, 1999.

[15] World Health Organisation. Regulatory situation of herbal medicines: a world wide review. Geneva,

[16] World Health Organisation. Guidelines on basic training and safety in acupuncture. Geneva,

[17] World Health Organisation, 1996 (unpublished document WHO/EDM/TRM/99.1; available on request from Traditional Medicine (TRM/EDM/HTP), World Health Organisation, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland).


★★★