UNPACKING SEMIOTIC RESOURCES IN COSMETIC ADVERTISEMENTS

Prof. Ephraim Chukwu [1], Chinwe Innocentia Ahumaraeze [2]

[1]Depertment of English and Literature, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
[2]Directorate of General Studies, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria

Corresponding author: *Chinwe Innocentia Ahumaraeze
Email: iahumaraeze@yahoo.com

A B S T R A C T

In recent times, there has been a shift away from monomodal communication that depends on language (spoken and written) as the only available meaning making resource. Advances in technology have given rise to multi literacies which employ a wide repertoire of modes in communication. Media communication, thus, has become multimodal given its penchant for the fusion of multiple modes as meaning making resources. It is against this backdrop that this study explores the semiotic resources used in cosmetic advertising. It foregrounds the use and interaction of verbal and visual modes as components of advertising discourse. The paper argues that aside language, there are many other meaning making resources advertisers use to persuade and influence their target audience. The researchers adopt the social semiotic approach of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as an aspect of the multimodality framework. This approach stipulates that there are multiple modes of signification and representation which include language, visual, aural, spatial and gestural modes. The study, thus, sets out to explore all meaning making resources in cosmetic advertisements and their manipulative apparatus for appealing to the target audience. The research adopts the descriptive qualitative method of data analysis to examine five advertisements from the internet sites of Nuban and Zaron cosmetic brands. Data were analyzed using the tenets of multimodality and semiotics. The study finds out that other modes of representation like colour, gaze, visuals, frames, gesture, angle of interaction, information value as well as text are embodiments of meaning which combine to make ads more compelling, catchy and irresistible. The paper then concludes that though there are meaning potentials in these multiple modes, their use and exploration should be craftily mastered so as to produce texts that are coherent, meaningful and persuasive.

K E Y W O R D S

Semiotics, Semiotic Resources, Modes, Multimodality, Social Semiotic Approach, Cosmetic Advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

The overarching principle behind every communication is signification, representation and, by extension, meaning construction and deconstruction. Be it narratives, exposition, poetic construction, advertising and their likes, interactants strive to convey meaning and portray ideologies using a wide array of resources at their disposal. Such resources include language and other semiotic signs. Signs, thus, are the composites in communication and range from linguistics to semiotics. UK essays (2018) posit that in communication such as advertisements, signs like speech, symbols, paintings, body language and music combine to construct meaning and, thus, are regarded as meaning making constructs. The foregoing typifies that meaning construction has a wide scope and is facilitated by variants of choices interactants make. Jhalloy (1990) in Tehseem and Kalsoom (2015) posits that construction of meaning occurs at different stages where meaning is transferred from sign to sign. This is implicative of the negotiation of meaning encoded or hidden in signs used in communication.

Though signs are potentially meaningful, sign users recreate meanings of signs using their background. Chandler (1994: 12) submits that signs are devoid of inherent meaning but become meaningful when potentiality is negotiated and subsequently invested with meaning. This investiture leads to signification where a sign is imbued with the capacity of referring to or standing in for something else. This submission re-echoes Williamson's (1978:19) position that advertisements do not create meaning at first time but invite us to make transactions and negotiation of meaning from the signs we are exposed to so as to arrive at the intended meaning.

Semiotic resources are conglomerates of signs. Traditionally, semiotic resources are considered to be signs comprising the signifier – an observable form (movements and facial expressions) and the signified− the perceived meaning (disapproval or warning) (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). The author goes further to submit that semiotic resources are "actions and artifacts we use to communicate" and include physiological products, gestures, body movement, technological productions and handicraft. These semiotic resources are employed in social communication where theoretical semiotic potentials are drawn into use to unearth their actual semiotic potential which doubles as their actual meaning. Thus, they become resources for meaning making used by individuals to fulfill their basic communication needs.

This study hinges on the exploration of these semiotic resources as used by advertisers to convey their acts of persuasion. It espouses the meaning potentials and affordances of semiotic resources in cosmetic advertisements. It is hinged on the premise that there are meaning potentials which the society is aware of and there are those lying potent and latent and waiting to be discovered and projected. This study projects the semiotic resources and their affordances as devices used by advertisers to attract and, by extension, persuade the target audience. Tahseem and Kalsoom (2015) argue that these devices and choices which range from linguistic, visual, text and contextual are strategies which exert power and manipulative control over the target consumer's beliefs and thought patterns. It is premised on this that the study explores the linguistic and semiotic polarities in cosmetic advertisement with a view to unearthing their meaning making potentialities and affordances. In exploring meaning making resources in semiotic advertisements, the study adopts multimodal social semiotic approach which focuses on the use of multiple signs of signification to generate meanings through their representational, interactive and textual/compositional functions. Five advertisements from two local cosmetic brands in Nigeria were examined to highlight how meaning is constructed and negotiated from semiotic resources that populate cosmetic advertisement and how these adverts differ in their meaning construction by deploying multimodal resources.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Advertisements employ not only language but also visual images. In the conveyance of messages, signs, symbols, images and verbals are fused into complementary wholes. The use of visual images in advertisements is tasking as there are issues to consider which range from object and colour selection and choices, placement of objects / images and other forms of representation. Again, the question of unraveling the significations embodied in each representation arises as readers are expected to negotiate the meaning of signs. Najafian and Ketabi (2011: 5) aver that social semiotic analysis exposes how readers make sense of and understand ad

messages. Given the wide array of semiotic resources employed in cosmetic advertisement, there is usually the problem of unmasking the hidden and implied meaning in them. Thus, making language users increasingly aware of the implicit meanings in ads, their interpretation of the implicit meanings and foregrounding the persuasive imports of the paradigms of semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising become the problem which this study sets out to tackle. The interpretation of sign meaning goes beyond sign denoted representations. Signs could suggest meanings beyond them as they gather associated meanings with cultural stances. Ali and Ullah (2015) note that connotative meanings can be constructed from different signs ranging from arts, painting, sculptor, pictures and architecture. This study sets out to espouse all levels of meaning interpretation in cosmetic ads using semiotics as paradigm.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The motivation for this study is to explore the semiotic resources in cosmetic advertisements with a view to espousing the processes of signification and meaning mapping. Communication and meaning construction rely on language use in conjunction with other semiotic resources. In multimodal communication and analysis, linguistic resources and their formatting, typography as well as the visual images used intergratedly is highly meaningful constructs. In a bid to make cosmetic advertisements captivating and persuasive and, by extension, increase sales, various artifacts such as speech, gestures, symbols, visuals and other signaling tools are drawn into the domain of social communication for meaning construction. This study, thus, aims at exploring, identifying and analyzing the meaning making constructs in the visual and verbal modes of advertising texts. The study focuses on the interplay of the two modes, the kinds of meaning they afford and how persuasive strategies are activated through their combination. The purpose of the study is summed thus:

- To identify the semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising
- To explore the linguistic as well as semiotic resources used in cosmetic advertising
- To extract and classify the semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising
- To analyze meanings couched in signs and other forms of representation

1.3. Significance of the Study

This research hopes to contribute to the body of scholarship in the use of semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising by espousing multiple modes of signification and representation using social semiotic insights. The study will, thus, be significant in more ways than one way. It will provide insights to signs as signifying systems that are inherently meaningful. Through the findings from this study, people will become aware of advertising messages and the effects they wield through their ability to understand the meaning and imports of the multiples modes of message conveyance. Prospective advertisers will benefit as it will equip them with the nuances of meaning in signs as potent persuasive tools and effective communication modes. Students of semiotics of language and advertising will also find it a reliable research resource.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2. I. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This section presents a review of concepts that are relevant to this research.

2.1.1. Advertising, Communication and Language

Advertising is a concept that thrives on the use of and the interplay of the dualistic notions of language and communication. Language is conceptualized as a distinctive human activity that functions in the exchange of thought and ideas whereas communication is the exchange of information and ideas between people made possible through the use of words and signs of language. Widyahening and Hum (2015) aver that in advertising, language functions as mediation equipment where it prioritizes the content of communication in a transactional function and connects people (sender and receiver) in an interpersonal function. The foregoing typifies that advertising connects language and communication in one indivisible whole. Farida (2020) submits that advertising harps on language use to convey messages about products which are couched in strategies of persuasion. Advertisements captivate people and lead them to derive meaning hidden therein. The appeal

advertisements exude does not come from the use of language alone as they employ captivating visual images with potentialities of drawing / attracting the attention of the target audience to the products.

Still on the explication of the concept of advertising and its interplay with language and communication, Arens, Weigold and Arens (2013) posit that "advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods, services and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media". Ads employ highly potent persuasive language with the capacity of drawing out people's loyalty to a brand and, by extension, increase sales. Lending their voices to the foregoing, Kenechukwu, Asemah and Edegoh (2013: 952) submit that the heart of advertising lies in its ability to sway buyers to buy particular products as well as force them to maintain such patronage. Kruti and Alen (2019) posit that advertisements are imbued with persuasive strategies because they are intended to induce people to buy. Deducible from these viewpoints is that advertising uses alluring language to convince people to consider a product and that, advertisers use the nuances of culture to create copies that are laden with strategies that are persuasive and capable of appealing to the sensibilities of the target. It is pertinent to point out that this is done using not only structured linguistic elements but other signifying systems like visuals, colours, images, gaze, gestures, paintings and their likes. This leads us to the explication of semiotics coming up subsequently.

2.1.2. Semiotics

Semiotics has been a system of inquiry in existence since the ancient times, though not in the form it assumes today. Ancient scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates and Augustine of Hippo have contributed to its description using terms like semesiology and semiology. The modern semiotics has developed through the works of Ferdinand de Saussure, who studied it from a linguistic perspective, Charles Sanders Peirce who approached the concept from a logical and scientific point of view and Umberto Eco who worked on interpretative semiotics. All semioticians mentioned describe its origin, nature, composites and use.

Semiotics as a field and methods of inquiry has received various definitions and interpretations that point to its origin. It has, thus, taken developmental turns as different schools of thought have emerged from it. Semiotics is seen as having signs as its focus. Zoest cited in Sari (2017: 41) defines semiotics as "a science that learns about a sign and anything to do with it, the functions of sign, the meaning of a sign, the relationship between a sign and another and the process of sending and receiving messages by those who use the sign". The modern semioticians, Saussure and Peirce studied this concept using two terminologies semiology and semiotics respectively. Saussure cited in Chandler (1994) asserts that semiology is a "Science which studies the role of signs as part of social life". Being a linguist, Saussure gives semiology a linguistic basis by stating that semiology has its genesis in linguistic but its laws could be transferable to other fields of inquiry. He asserts that "the laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge" (cited in Chandler, 1994).

From Saussure's perspective, semiology engages language and its function in society. Linguistics being law dependent, its laws of engagement and functioning translate to laws of engagement in other fields of human engagement where linguistics is operative and, by extension, indispensable. The Peircean developmental tradition of semiotics gives a somewhat differential perspective. This, we conclude through his definition of the concept as cited in Gorlee (1994:50) as "the quasi necessary, of formed doctrine of sign. Signs in general (are) a class which includes pictures, symptoms, words, sentences, books, libraries, signals, orders of communication, microscopes, linguistic representatives, musical concerts, performances of these". Deducible from Peirce's definition is that semiotics is all encompassing and larger than linguistics as it engages all elements that are representational, whether verbal, non-verbal or pictorial. Semiotics explores all forms of human reality. As Cobley (2010:5) is keen to point out, semiotics is "an enduring enquiry into the boundaries of illusion and reality, a practice of interrogating signs…". Semiotics is, thus, a broad branch of enquiry which has been in practice in ancient history, though its practices were not clearly streamlined. Cobley (2010:5) avers that semiotics is both a field where other disciplines are operative for more than a century now and a discipline with minute degree of institutionalization, which came into prominence in the 60s.

It is pertinent to point out that succeeding semioticians have always stood along these battle lines of whether language is subordinate or super-ordinate in its relationship with semiotics. Saussure's most pronounced slant is that linguistics is only one branch of the general science of semiology (as cited in Chandler, 1994). This submission sees linguistics as a semiotic sub- field. Hams (2010: 318) avers that this perspective in the linguistic-semiology relationship was reversed by Barthes who treats semiology as a language sub premised on the primacy of language from which the affordances of other sign systems find derivation. The researchers note after Allot (1994) that this battle of supremacy should not be extended for "how can one say that language is the semiotic prototype if there is absolutely no consensus about the proper way to characterise and analyse language and "how can one say that language is an exemplar, a specimen of a sign system, subordinate rather than super-ordinate, if the methodology for analyzing sign systems are apparently lacking". The concern of this present study is not to ascertain which is first in the supremacy ladder. For this, the researchers assert that semiotics has become an apparatus for knowledge enquiry in all fields of human endeavour. It is in line with this that Cobley (2010) asserts that the "overarching aim of semiotics is to study semiosis (the production and comprehension of signs as it manifests itself in human and non-human spheres)". To balance this as a work set in the linguistic domain, the researchers submit that semiotics is a sub-field of linguistic inquiry that investigates the representational use of signs to signify and comprehend realities in human encounters and interactions. This realization mirrors Morris's (1938) formulation as cited in Randviir and Cobley (2010, 129) that semiotics be studied under syntax to investigate the relation of signs to other signs, semantics to ascertain the relation of signs to their objects and pragmatics to foreground the relationship of signs to sign users and the context in which signs are used.

2.1.3. Social Semiotics

Social semiotics is a broad approach to the study of semiotics. It is rooted in the study and analysis of signs used in social context. For social semiotics, language is not divorced from social context. This view stipulates that linguistic forms and other signifying tools alone cannot determine meaning as the social and cultural contexts of communication help in the understanding of the representation of such communication tools. Social semiotics, thus, focuses not only on the signs but also on the sign users and context of sign use. This underscores Hodge and Kress' (1988:261) submission that "social semiotics is concerned with the social meanings constructed through the full range of semiotic forms, through semiotic texts and semiotic practices". This typifies social semiotics as espousing how individuals within a social context make sense of and understand messages embedded in texts produced using a wide array of semiotic resources. Jewitt and Oyama (2001:134) emphasize this in their assertion that the "social semiotic analysis of visual communications involves the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted". Whereas semiotics concerns itself with the study of signs, social semiotics beams its focal lenses on signs as they are used in social contexts. Meinhof (2004:263) draws this distinction in his postulation that "semiotics and social semiotics differ in that the later in particular explores the correspondence and interconnection between social practices and discourse". This is what Kress (2010: 54) sees as its point of departure from other forms of semiotics. He, however, adds that within these social practices, individuals do not only use signs but also create signs that are "socially shaped" and transform them into socially available resources for meaning construction. This makes them agents of sign creation and meaning mapping. Social semiotics' anchorage on context projects its pragmatics inclination. Signs are not studied in isolation as the context of sign use is a factor in the interpretation of signs. This implies that signs alone cannot determine meaning as the cultural and social contexts of sign use are major determinant of interpretation of represented signs. Signs are perceived and used in interactions using culturally engineered rules of exchange. Randviir and Cobley (2010:118) note that social semiotics deals with 'critical sign study' which focuses on the 'specific and strategic ways in which signs are deployed in social formations'. Its domain is the analysis of signs and signifying processes as used by interactants in cultural contexts.

The foregoing typifies that social semiotics takes everything into consideration; the sign itself, the sign user/maker and the cultural and situational context of sign use. Thus, social semiotics' context relation is a major interface with pragmatics, what Randviir and Cobley (2010:129) term its pragmatic heritage. Chandler (1994:10) on social semiotics postulates that there is a shift away from the theoretical classification of sign

systems as explorations in modern times tilt towards the "exploration of modes of production of signs and meanings". For Chandler, modern semiotics focuses on the way in "which systems and codes are used in social practices. He concludes that the determinant factor in semiotic inquiry now is on the works / activities performed through signs and how such activities transform the codes and individuals using the codes.

2.1.4. Sign: Typologies and Properties

The proceeding section dwells on semiotics as the exploration of the domain of signs used in communication. What, then, is a sign? The study of signs and their signifying systems, though novel, has gained prominence in scholarship. From the Peircean semiotic framework, a sign is viewed as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity (Peirce 1955, cited in Gurdin 1994:58). For Peirce, sign is not restricted, rather, it is perceived as anything which determines something, refers to something else other than itself. Thus, all things perceivable in the physical realm or biosphere are regarded as signs. This view of sign is science-based. There is also a language-based approach to sign identification. For Saussure, signs are linguistic concepts only and are embodiments of language that comprise two properties of signification, signifier and signified (National Open University, nd). Still on the explication of the concept of sign, Danesi (2004:4) submits that sign is anything that stands for something else as it can be an ideology of politics. The foregoing illustrates that signs could be categorized into a dyad; verbal and visual signs. Dyer (2009:12) avers that both the verbal signs (linguistic resources) and the visual signs (semiotic resources) wield influence on the sign receiver's thought process. He illustrates using the verbal sign "beautiful in and out" used in ad copy and says that the expression makes the target audience think about the product as a gateway to glamour and, thus, remains an imprint on the minds of such audience. Dyer (2009:65) gives an insight into visual signs by submitting that in ads, they wield greater influence as they make advertisements interesting, attention-attracting and easy to understand. Thus, visual signs make for easy understanding given their penchant for making apt descriptions and indelible imprints on the minds of the receivers.

As the sign remains the most focused object of inquiry in semiotic studies, semioticians and succeeding researches have tried to isolate its composite properties. Saussure in Chandler (1994) identifies dyadic properties of sign: signifier and signified. Though these two composites of sign differ, they are nonetheless inseparable. The signifier is the material aspect of a sign, that which can be perceived with the senses when a sign is mentioned while the signified is the mental concept, the object itself. Farida (2020) tries to give a distinction between the two concepts by asserting that the signifier is the meaning- making attribute of a sign (word, image, sound) while the signified is what is evoked or awakened in our minds when exposed to the signifier. Chandler cited earlier calls signifier 'vehicle for the meaning" and signified 'the meaning being conveyed' by the sign.
Peirce's description of sign composites is triadic. First, he identified three properties of signs to include representatum, object and interpretant where representatum is the form of the sign which could be letters (orange), object is what the sign makes reference to (external reality of sign-actual fruit) while the interpretant is that which the sign denotes "the sense made by the sign (orange-juicy spherical shaped fruit with yellowish skin (National Open University).

Peirce again isolates the modes of sign to include icon, index and symbol. The icon is that sign which resembles its object in some ways. It either looks like or sounds like its objects. Gurdin (1994:58) cited earlier opines that the iconicity of "sign mirrors that a sign vehicle derives its meaning from an object" and that "this is consequential on formal or physical similitude". He identities maps, photographs and onomatopoeic words as iconic signs. Thus, iconic signs share a relation of similarity with its object. Sabri (2019:29) and Crystal (2008:234) note that the icon is the pattern that physically resembles what it stands for or refers to. Crystal asserts that icons are approximations of reality. To give his view clarity, Sabri illustrates with the expression "a portrait of your face is an icon of you". Chandler lists imitative gestures, portraits and metaphors as iconic signs and avers that as the sign represents its object by similitude, it is used as a sign of it. Thus, the likeness parameter draws an icon to its object. In cosmetic advertising for instance, the images of celebrities used are iconic signs given that similitude draws them to their object in reality.
The index is a sign which is logically connected to its object. This implies that the signifier has direct association/link to the signified. Indexes exhibit temporal and spatial connection to the objects they represent

(van Niekerk, 20018, Gurdin , 1994). Van Niekerk also project a causal connect between an index and it object and notes after Dirven and Verspoor (1999) that an index indicates something in the immediate proximity. Thus, smoke indexes fire. For Sabri cited earlier, an index is an evidence of what is being represented as scowling facial expression is indexical of displeasure or disapproval while dark clouds is an index of impending rain. Indexes share close proximity with what they refer to or precede them or share a casual relationship as seen in smoke-fire indexing. Suffice it to say, then, that an index is a precursor to its object for its presence confirms the existence of its object.

The symbol is seen, on the other hand, as that sign which enjoys neither similarity nor logical connection with its object. Taliseem and Kalsoom (2015) submit that symbolic signs project an arbitrary and conventional relationship between signifier and signified. They illustrate using soft skin as symbol of young age and white skin as symbol of beauty. The authors conclude that cosmetic advertisements use symbolically conventional signs to drive home their art of persuasion. Thus, signs and their objects are connected arbitrarily, an example being lexical items in a language. For Sabri cited earlier, symbolic signs have no resemblance or connecting links between signifier and signified. They are culturally bound and learnt. In many cultures, white is a symbol of purity, perfection and wholesomeness while gold and blue (navy) symbolize royalty. Symbols, given the fact that they share no visible link with their objects, are subject to change. As Brummett (2006:13) dims it fit to say, an apple could symbolize temptation as well as good health. Nair (2011) cited in van Neikerk (2018) asserts that anklets which hitherto projected immorality is viewed today as just an ornamental piece. Van Neikerk summarises that the change talked about affects only the signified while the signifier remains the same.

2.1.5. Sign as Meaning-making Resource

Another property of sign worth pointing out is its meaning-making attribute. It has been noted in the foregoing discourse that signs are employed in communication given their penchant for being meaning repositories. Kress (2010:59) avers in tandem with the notion of sign as repository of meaning when he asserts that all signs have inherent meaning in a social semiotic multimodal account. Meanings embedded in sign representation are extricated through signification, the process that "decentres fixed meaning" (Derrida in Danesi, 2010:145) and shows the relationship between sign and reality, referent and object (Benveniste in Cobley, 2010: 295). Thus, signs lend themselves to many interpretative possibilities as they are naturally polysemous. Researchers have isolated three levels of meaning: denotative, connotative and mythological/ideological. Barthes (1964) sees denotative as first order meaning that operates at the literality level and is definitional, connotation as the second order meaning that exploits the cultural components of the producer in communication event as meanings are assigned on the basis of emotional and socio-cultural associations. Mythological/ideological meaning is an extension of the connotative meaning as it uses the connotational and cultural associates a sign gathers to underpin ideologies and worldviews. Barthes illustrates with the French society where a bottle of wine is used to illustrate these three levels. Dunn, Barban, Kingman and Reid (1990) note the contextual dimension to meaning where understanding of signs used in communication is dependent on and influenced by the context in which the signs make appearance.

2.1.6. Semiotic Resources

Semiotic resource is a major term is semiotic studies. The discourse above has established that in multimodal communication, modes combine to produce meaning. All modes weaved together in a multimodal text to generate meaning are called semiotic resources. van Leuwen (2005:3) opines that the term is credited to Halliday who sees the grammar of a language as a "resource for making meaning". Thus, semiotic resources are "actions and artifacts we use to communicate" and include physiological products, (vocal productions, facial expressions and gestures) technological productions (ink, paper, computer and designs) and hand craft (sewing, painting) (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). The author goes further to say that semiotic resources are signifiers, observable actions and objects that are employed in social communication which have both theoretical and actual semiotic potentials seen from their past and potentials uses by language users who find them relevant. What van Leeuwen draws our attention to here is that semiotic resources as used in communication are not only theoretical constructs but actually meaning generating elements given the uses they have been put to and the meanings that have been and could be unearthed from their use. Thus, semiotic resources are meaning making

constructs employed in social communication. They are culturally engineered tools for meaning representation and signification. It is pertinent to point out that these resources are themselves signs which lie at the centre of every semiotic enquiry and analysis.

2.2. EMPERICAL REVIEW

This section surveys works that have previously studied semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising. Ali and Ullah (2015) adopt Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to provide semiotic insights into cosmetic advertisement in Pakistani print media. Their study aims at exploring denotative, connotative, deep and symbolic meaning of brand names, texts, logos, pictures and colour schemes employed in advertisement copies. Their choice of Barthes' semiotic theory is because it comprises linguistic, denotative, connotative, coded iconic and non iconic messages. This theory was used to unearth the denotative, connotative and symbolic composites of five cosmetic advertisements selected from two print media, May and The News Publication for 2011-2012. The authors use both qualitative and quantitative research methods and in their qualitative analysis, they unravel denotative layers of meaning as is seen their first data where "poly colours" used as ad slogan denotes many shade of colour of hair which also connotes that variety of hair colours makes a person smart. There is also coded iconic message where a young lady in white jersey has a prestigious look because of her golden hair which lies on her shoulders. There is also the use of golden, grey white and purple colours to symbolise prestige, diffidence, dignity (dorminance) and perfect appearance respectively. Their work reveals the inherent meaning in semiotic resources.

Baykal's (2016) research centres on the exploration of multimodal strategies in advertising, focusing on the interplay between verbal and visual modes. Using critical discourse analysis as working framework, Baykal portrays the use of descriptive and persuasive verbal and visual strategies to foreground beauty and, by extension, attract customers. This work focuses on mascara ads in the Turkish context, sourcing data from two female magazines, Seninle and Elele which were analysed with the lenses of multimodality. This study reveals that ads set ideals for perfect female look as this is shown using the eyelashes where qualitative verbal ideals like "long, thick and curved eye lashes" are linguistic frames that interact with the visual frames in an intersemiotic structure of parallelism. Baykal submits that it is the idealized images of body across visual and verbal modes that compel women to go for the brand so as to be beautiful and accepted by the society. He reveals that colour is used as a visual modality to designate attractiveness and appeal while gaze is used as a resource to show the relationship between images and images viewers. The study concludes that resources of prominence, colour, gaze, distance, frames, information value, size and linguistic structure help foreground the role and importance of the product being advertised. Syahdini Zahra's (2019) study focuses on connotation in the tide of the video of L'Oreal Paris advertisements and categorized signs into three; pictures, utterances and body language. Zahra adopts the descriptive qualitative research method to analyze data sourced from YouTube that contain 3 videos of L'Oreal Paris cosmetic product advertisements. Using the categories of signs as pictures, utterances and body language, Zahra delves into the concepts of signifier and signified, denotation and connotation as aspects of meaning. In the first video used in analysis, Zahra isolates picture comprising of a woman in a sitting position facing an elephant which is a symbol of power and intelligence in many cultures. This pictures connotes that the product has power to drive to the fore the positive energy and inner beauty within a person. Using body movement in video 2 where a hand is trying to reach the sun and then, a woman tries to reach something in front of her, this researcher connotes that impossibilities are extinguishable through concerted efforts as achieving prefect beauty is possible through the use of the advertised products.

The review of these studies has presented the gap for this present research. For the most part, significance has not been given to the study and analysis of semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising using the lenses of multi modal social semiotic theory, though some semiotic resources have been isolated and their denotative and connotative meanings x-rayed. This research, thus, hopes to contribute to the body of scholarship in the use of semiotic resources in cosmetic advertising by espousing multiple modes of signification, representation and meaning construction using social semiotic insights.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research adopts multimodality as a working framework. It hinges on Kress and van Leuwen's (2006) social semiotic theory of multimodality which has the capacity to isolate and categorize all semiotic resources employed in cosmetic advertising as well as bring to the fore the meaning constructs of these resources in the ads studied.

MULTIMODAL THEORY

Multimodality is a theory of meaning and communication that stipulates that there are various modal resources for meaning construction. Multimodality is the domain of enquiry that explores semiotic resources that generate meaning. Multimodality attained prominence in scholarly discourse in the 60's as works of Roland Barthes positioned it as a disciplinary approach. It deviates from focus on singularity of mode as there is a shift away from the over dependence on text as sole meaning making resource. In multimodality, almost everything is considered a meaning making resource. So aside language (text), images, visual, aural stimuli and virtually all sensory stimuli are considered. For Kress (2010:1), multimodality explores the use of and interactions of multiple modes of information exchange which include text, colour and image, not in isolation but in a holistic exploration. He goes further to say that the use of multiple modes (writing, image and colour) together has great benefits as each mode does specific things: image shows what takes too long to read, colour highlights aspects of the message while words name what would be difficult to show. Ali and Ullah (2015) citing Symbolism of Colour (nd) point out that red in multimodal texts symbolizes strength and power, blue symbolizes royalty, calmness, confidence and intelligence, white symbolizes purity, coolness and perfection, black symbolizes power, prestige and elegance while purple symbolizes dignity, ambition and nobility.

The foregoing indicates that the modes of communication are not only textual but also spatial and visual. Thus, composition and representation abound in these other modes and they are shaped by the system where they are operative and fuse into multimodality. It also specifies that the multiple modes play complementary role in meaning construction. This is buttressed in van Leuwen's (2005) submission that the verbal and visual modes enjoy a co-operative relationship with one mode extending or elaborating the potential meaning of the other. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) extend this thought by asserting that the perspective of multimodality is that communication involves more than language as it harps on other modes of message exchange (visual modes of images, gesture, gaze picture, colour, typography) to generate meaning. The authors conclude that it is when these modes are given a holistic exploration that their meaning potentialities are activated for meaning conveyance and realization. Multimodality has permitted a cultural dimension to its study. The modes of meaning construction are culturally bound as their use can only operate within societal and cultural limitations. Kress (2011) underscores this slant in his postulation that "modes are framed as one field, as one domain and are treated as one connected cultural resource for representation and meaning making". What Kress implies here is that cultures design and allow the modes to operate as meaning making apparatus, used and understood by all within such cultures. Thus, modes are culturally structured resources for representation and meaning construction and range, from writing to layout, images, speech, and moving images.

Scholars have continued to study the modality of representation and have isolated five which include linguistic, visual, aural, spatial and gestural. The New London Group of scholars propounded these stratifications. Fillmore (nd) re-submits the stratifications of The New London Group thus:
- Visual mode-images and characters, video, colour, visual layout, design, font size, symbols, formatting, visual data (charts, graphs) animation, use of bracket around font.
- Linguistic mode – written / spoken words organized into sentences, paragraphs.
- Aural mode – music, sound effect, tone of voice, volume of sound, ambient noise, silence, accent.
- Spatial mode – physical arrangement, organization and proximity of text.
- Gestural mode – movement, facial expressions, hand gestures, body language and interaction with people

It is pertinent to point out that these modes work in tandem to create the actual meaning in representational structures where they are operative. Thus, there is a property of multimodal texts which Liu and O'Halloran (2009:369) refer to as intersemiotic texture. This is the relationship the modes share; a semantic relationship of

the modes realized through cohesive device of intersemiotic parallelism – cohesive relationship that connects language and images operative as a similar form. The authors also refer to homospatiality as a spatial parallelism between language and pictures on the visual mode and parallel structures on the verbal mode (Liu and O'Halloran, 2009: 372).

Many approaches have evolved from the concept of multimodality as researchers continue to enquire into its nature and use. This paper is based on the social semiotic approach to multimodality. The researchers adopt this approach given its tendency to study signs in their social context. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) adopting the Hallidayan categorization of the functionality of language in his Systemic Functional Theory capture the meaning potential function of visual compositions to include ideational (representational); the role of representing the world around us, interpersonal (interactive); role evident in the social interactions and relations we enact and textual (compositional) which binds elements of the text and makes them cohere with our social and environmental situations (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996,15).   Kress and van Leeuwen opine that the ideational metafunction is representational as images represent aspects of the world as either narrative or conceptual, where the narrative representation shows actions in reactional process and vectors are formed by eyelines or direction of the gaze of the represented participant(s). The interpersonal is also interactional in nature as it explores how representations in a visual composition interact with viewers through gaze, frame, social distance and angle of interactive (as cited in del Saz Rubio, 2018: 193)

Gaze as an aspect of the interactional function of the visual composition establishes the connect between represented participant(s) and viewers and could be demand, when there is direct eye contact between image and viewer or indirect/offer when no direct eye contact is established and participants are represented as objects of contemplation for the viewers. Baykal (2016:57) avers that in an offer gaze, the represented participant(s) enter into a visual interaction with the viewers and demand(s) some kind of response. Size of frame or social distance captures the shots/positions of images as close-ups, medium and long shots. Adham (2012) states that close personal distance is when images are seen from the shoulders up and thus projects feelings of warmth and closeness because of the close proximity to the viewers while far personal distance creates distance between participants and viewers given that images are seen from the waist up. Angle of interaction as an aspect of the interactional function in visual grammar relates to the involvement or detachment of represented participants and viewers. Involvement is denoted by images on the horizontal angle while power is denoted by the vertical angle (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 129).

The textual metafunction describes how elements of a text are knitted together to generate meaning. Machin (2001: 63) posits that the signs in a visual structure must "hang together and be coherent with the context in which they are produced". Textual meaning can, thus, be realized through salience achievable through the use of and interaction of typeface, font, colour, tone, directional lightening, size of image, foregrounding, location, overlap and repetition of elements (Machin, 2007:89). Information value is also an aspect of the textual composition of visuals. Images are placed in different locations of the visual space in these structures: left/right, top/bottom and center/margin (Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 197). The authors posit that in placement of images, the new information (what message is being passed across) is kept on the right while the given (what the viewers are familiar with) is kept on the left. In like manner, the top of the visual space holds ideal structure while the bottom projects the real information. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:186) commenting on the ideal/real structures in advertisements aver that the top mirrors "the promise of the product" while the bottom projects the product and vital descriptions on it. Still on structuring of items on the visual space, there is the centre and margin divide where things that are considered crucial and vital to meaning making are placed at the centre while those that are marginal are placed at the periphery.

The third aspect of the textual metafunction of visual compositions is frame. Frames structure the positions of images in the visual space, whether they are placed together or separated. Najafian and Ketabi (2011b) postulate that images are separated through frame lines or pictorial framing devices. Items in a visual composition are connected if there are no visible framing devices as that stresses group identity but when they are marked off from one another, there is disconnectedness that results in differentiation (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 203). Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) assert that multimodal texts make meaning in multiple ways like placement of images, use of font and size of font, visual modality, framing and colour. This implies that in order to function

as a full system of communication, all semiotic modes serve diverse representation and signifying functions (Kress and Van leuwen, 2006: 41). Lending weight to the treatise, Jewitt (2017) submits that the social semiotic approach to multimodality unearths processes of meaning making and how they structure individuals and societies given that meaning is derived from social actions using semiotic resources as tools. Multimodality is replete in advertising discourse for it employs multiple modes to heighten persuasion. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) subsume the tenets of their social semiotic approach in the postulation that representation of social aspects of life are done using words, images and colour as semiotic resources. The researchers adopt this approach given its tendency to x-ray the embodiments of advertisements, their signification and meaning constructs.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the descriptive qualitative method of data presentation and analysis. The research data are the verbal and visual signs in 5 cosmetic advertisements selected from the internet sites of Nuban and Zaron cosmetic brands (htpps://nubanbeauty.com, https://ng.zaroncosmetics.com) . The data sourced from cosmetic advertisements were selected randomly and were scrutinized to extract the semiotic resources. The data were then analyzed to extract their compositional specifics and inherent meanings.

4.0. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Datum 1. Nuban Eyeshadow

This advertisement has milky scenery and three images. The brand name "Nuban Beauty" and monogram (a combination of upper case N and B enclosed in a diamond shape) are written in white on the packs of the two products, "Intensified" and "Obsession". The **iconic image** comprises half face of a model placed on the left side of the copy. The face exudes warmth, confidence, charm and satisfaction believed to have been gotten from the use of the product which her eyes validate. The application of the product "intensified" on her upper eyelid and "obsession" on her lower eyelids gives her eye **salience**. Again, her eye is used **in a demand gaze** where she connects with the viewers on the look they will get when they purchase and use the product. There is a **close-up shot** as only the face of the model is visible. The images are in **close proximity**. The intensified pack is placed diagonally close to the icon's head with its content to create a w-like shape. There are visible shades of gold, black brown, oxblood and gray. Obsession pack and content are also placed in like manner and touches the base of the copy, extending to the right while the pack in shades of black and red and product in shades of purple, pink, blue, white and green. The use of golden pallate from intensified on the upper eyelid of iconic image and purple from obsession on her lower eyelid projects hues of royalty, dignity and dominance which doubles as the aspirational values of today's women, and thereby, captivates and persuades the viewers to use the products to intensify their glow and charm and, by extension, make them objects to be obsessed about. White used in brand name and monogram symbolizes wholesomeness of ingredients which communicates to the viewers that Nuban products are free from harmful chemical and are, thus, friendly to the body. The model image performs representational function as it represents concept of beauty and narrate the action of the represented participant whose gaze performs interactive function by engaging the viewers in a subtle compulsion to consider her and the product that has made her appealing.

Datum 2. Nuban Foundation

The brand name "Nuban Beauty" and monogram are, as always, in white. The copy is in bluish gray background and dark brown hue. There is the use of **frame line** to separate the images (iconic images and product images). The framing is in **top/ bottom** configuration with icons on top and product image, brand name and slogan at the bottom. Thus, the **given and ideal information** which are the iconic images are on top while the **new and real information**, that is the message being passed across is at the bottom. The iconic images are in a **close-up shot** as we see from their shoulders to their head. They are also in a side posing facing right and are in different shades of brown hue. There is the use of **gaze** as the icons direct their glance to the viewers in a **demand gaze** and **vectors** are formed through their eyes which compels the viewers to see the visible glow on their skins which was achieved through use of the product. Again the slogan "…In my skin" and the description "WEIGHTLESS PERFECT SKIN" and " ALL DAY FOUNDATION' are centralized at the bottom frame and serve as the new structure, where the information being passed across is contained and, thus, receives **salience**. The use of upper case letters for the product description is a mark of **prominence**. The ellipsis before the slogan implicates that the foundation is what is being described as it could be said and seen to be in the glowing and radiant skin of the iconic image, and so it would be on the skins of anyone who adopts this product. This, thus, passes subtle persuasive message to the viewers that the product, if used has the capacity to translate one to a prestigious lifestyle and the use of different shades of skin; dark, fair and chocolate indicates that the product is friendly to all skin types. Again, the slogan "WEIGHTLESS PERFECT SKIN" implicates that the product is recommended for those who wants to achieve perfect skin and is usable " ALL DAY" and not at certain hours of the day. The gaze of the iconic images form a **vector** which directs the viewers to the slogan "…In my skin" at the centre of the bottom frame. A vector also travels from the tip of the product image and is directed to the skins of the iconic images indicating that they have achieved such glow through the use of the foundation. There is **the vertical angle of interaction** which indicates the power of the represented participants over the viewers. The foundation projects beauty as seen in the models' skins. It is recommended for those who want to achieve perfect skin and is suitable round the clock. The ideational function is seen in the use of dark skinned models to project African concept of beauty, and use of white colour to symbolise perfection. Textual function is projected through the use of frames to separate the ideal information (the models) from the real (what gave them the radiant look). Salience achieved through size and location of images is an aspect of the textual function. Interactive function is performed by the use of gaze to connect to viewers.

Datum 3. Zaron Eye Primer

This copy has an ash or grey scenery and also contains the iconic image of a Nigerian actress, Rita Dominic in a very **close shot (face and head only).** There is the **left/right configuration** as the visible face of the icon is on the right of the copy and represents the **given structure** because she is a house hold name. On the left side of the copy stands the **new structure** which the ad projects as the benefits of using the product which also doubles as the ad slogan. "SAY *amore* WITH YOUR EYES". This slogan is at the top left of the copy and points directly to the right eye of the iconic image whose face is depicted in a side pose, with chin in an upward lift both eyelids fully primed. Below the slogan is the product image lying on its side with the cap visibly black and the product name written in white top the cap which faces the iconic image. The slogan is written in white against grey scenery. All words are written in upper case except 'amore' written in italics with the first letter written in red, which is the color of the brand name. The use of a different type face for 'amore' makes it **salient** and indicates that the use of the product makes one say/make different kinds of beauty statements. There is the use of **demand gaze** as the iconic image looks at the viewers and her gaze forms an **eyeline vector** which connects both the viewer and the product image which also forms a vector that travels straight to the direction of the potential viewer. The look of defiance and confidence on the icon's face is inspiring and it projects her beauty and, by extension, makes statement of conviction to the viewer. At the bottom right, close to the icons chin is the brand name "Zaron" written in red. The use of red and white colors for the slogan as well as the brand name symbolizes that product use will bring perfection, spotlessness and innocent beauty to anyone who adopts and uses the product which itself infuses power, passion and determination. The position of the icons eyelid demands that the viewer considers them and the use of red for the letter "a" in amore indicates that only through the use of Zaron eye primer that one can make statements with the eyes. Representational function – ad slogan depicts action in real world. Iconic image with a symbolic attribute of beauty is representational. Red and white colours symbolises strength and perfection all in representational functions. Interactive function is evident in the use of eyeline vector to connect to viewers.
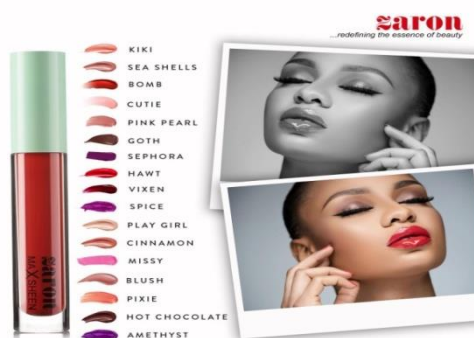
Datum 4. Zaron Maxsheen

This is an ad for lip gloss. The iconic images have their faces in an upward tilt and some fingers are seen indicating that they support their face or chin with their hands. The eyes are closed thereby directing attention to their fully glossed lips. The lips have full red gloss that is even dropping making them extra juicy and intense. The product image is placed beside the shades of the maxsheen on the left of the copy indicating that it was the product that gave those lips the maximum shine and flawless look that is evident in the slight pout of the lips. There are two image **frames** where a **close up shot** of an icon are depicted; one in normal colour at the bottom while the silhouetted image occupies the top position. Placement of iconic images on the right and product image and shades on the left indicates **the ideal/ real and the given/ new structures** respectively. Atop the frames are the brand name 'Zaron' in red as always and the slogan '…redefining the essence of beauty" placed directly under the brand name. The placement of the slogan directly below the brand name and the ellipsis that comes before the slogan indicate that Zaron is instrumental to redefining beauty as its use brings out ultimate beauty in the user. This premise is extended by the different hues of the max sheen in the left of the copy placed in close proximity with the product image. The colours of the max sheen denote passion (red), adoration (pink), dignity and dominance (purple). The tranquil look on the icons faces is a symbol of coolness and confidence in their beauty made visible through the use of "Zaron Hawt' and this is compelling as it draws the concentration of the viewer and further induces them to purchase and use the product, so as to redefine their beauty. Thus, the ad has made an appeal by harping on the aspirations of viewers to redefine their beauty and stay youthful. The names of the shades of the maxsheen are alluring and send out a compulsive appeal. Cutie, bomb, pink pearl, vixen, spice, blush and hot chocolate are all suggestive and appealing and draw viewers' attention to them. This advertisement functions to represent concepts in the world around us.

Datum 5. Zaron Maxi Blend Compact Powder

This ad has a sky blue and white scenery and contains a centralized iconic image of a lady with brush in her right hand and product image in her left hand, visibly applying make up to face with an air of dominance. The iconic image has a look of confidence, charm and happiness on her face as she is seen smiling. Her smile and the brush she holds to her face compels viewer to look to her face made radiant by the choice and use of maxi-blend compact powder. Her **gaze** which holds that of the viewer projects a demand gaze while the product and brush which she holds that of the viewer projects a **demand gaze** while the product and brush which she holds in her hands project **gesturing with object** which offers invitation to viewers to adopt product and, then, become spotlessly beautiful and radiant like her. The image is wearing white which symbolizes purity. The brand and product name "Zaron Maxi Blend Compact Powder" are placed on the top left side of the copy in red and black respectively symbolizing power and elegance which viewers would attain if they, like the iconic image, use the product. On the bottom of the copy is a red plane which is placed against the iconic image and contains the product descriptions, all written in white upper case letters. "FLAWLESS FINISH, ALL DAY WEAR, FULL COVERAGE, SPF, MATTE FINISH" are all benefits accruable from using the powder

foundation formula. Just like formula helps in solving problems, maxi blend compact powder is a formula for solving problems pertaining to looks. Thus, its use translates a person into the realm of beauty, radiance, elegance and power, all in representational functionality. The use of capital letters for the products name and description gives it **salience**. Again the use of red for the brand name, use of the font face for the letter 'Z' in Zaron and use of upper case letters for the product description gives them **salience,** which is functionally compositional. The iconic image is in an interactional engagement with the viewers using gaze and offer gestures**.**

Findings

- ▸ Representations of social aspects of life are done using words, images and colour as semiotic resources.
- ▸ Prevalent in the ads studied are the resources of images with demand gaze (1,2,3,5) offer gestures(4) facial expressions of contentment(2, 4,5) all in interactive function.
- ▸ Colours connoting strength, dignity, prestige, perfection, power and dominance perform representational as well as textual functions as seen in figures 1, 3, 4, 5.
- ▸ Framing devices (2, 4, 5), use of ideal/real, left/right configurations and close-up distance are textual elements that generate meaning.
- ▸ Gaze, as observed, is a compelling force that sends out messages of convictions to viewers as seen in figures 2, 3, and 4. It, thus, performs interactive function.

5. CONCLUSION

The driving effort and underlying aim of this paper has been to explore the use semiotic resources are put to in cosmetic advertising. In doing this, the researchers drew insights from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual, social semiotic approach of the multimodality framework. The paper noted that semiotic resources are all modes bound together in visual compositions to generate meaning. Thus, all tools created and used by individuals for meaning representation are semiotic resources which cut across the linguistic, visual, spatial, aural and gestural modes. The paper revealed that in unearthing the representational meanings in cosmetics advertisements, all signs are considered vital as advertisers employ not only the linguistic mode but semiotic devices of images, colours, typography, frames and locations of images on the visual space as persuasive chords and promotional instruments meant to make advertisements catchy and captivating, thereby selling ideologies of beauty and improved lifestyle to the potential viewers. The paper also harped on the metafunctions of visual composition where advertisements generate meaning while performing certain functions through semiotic resources. Prevalent in the ads studied are the resources of images with offer gestures, facial expressions of contentment, colours connoting dignity, prestige and dominance, use of framing devices, use of ideal/real, left/right configurations and close-up distance. It was also revealed that the elements of the visual composition are knitted together in intersemiotic parallelism. All elements cohere to project one unified message, despite the use of frames in some of the ads. The use of framing devices in appendices 2, 4 and 5 brought about the connectedness of the compositions. Gaze, as observed, is a compelling force that sends out messages of conviction to viewers as seen in appendices 2, 3, and 4. The paper concludes that advertisements project aspects of the world around us.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- • As all signs are embodiments of meaning, their use and exploration in cosmetic advertisement should be craftily mastered so as to produce texts that are coherent, meaningful and persuasive.
- • Readers of advertisements should heighten their critical awareness of signs and their meaning potentialities in order to extract the drive behind the production of such advertisements.

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