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"The language of advertising and its Socio-cultural implications for the consumer"
"THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONSUMER."

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Author's Note

Recent developments in the area of commercial advertising and comments on the side-effects attendant upon the use of certain products have revived my long-standing interest in the language of advertising. This article was written more than four years ago and has been altered slightly to take historical perspective into account.

I am still convinced that the subject requires discussion on a national level and that both the advertiser and the consumer will be the wiser for it. The views and interpretations contained herein are my own, although the influence of other writers on the subject will be apparent throughout. I have no claim to any expertise in the subject of advertising as such; but I have professional interest in the functions of language in social, political and economic interaction.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Historical Note

In Western Europe, the language used in advertising has enjoyed the attention of scholars and literary giants for some time. For example, it seems clear to me that George Orwell identifies with his hero Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, where advertisers and advertisements are condemned for their "goofy optimism". J B Priestley describes an advertising agency in *They Walk in the City* as "A small army of extremely clever and quite unscrupulous persons, trained to lie with enthusiasm".

G N Leech's doctoral thesis, now published by Longmans as *English in Advertising: A Linguistic Study of Advertising in Great Britain*, is of particular interest because it was written by a linguist. The author has fashioned a technical terminology which any one addressing himself to the subject can use. However, there are certain fundamental differences of approach taken by Leech in Britain and that which I feel obliged to take in this paper about our country.

In the first place, Leech restricted himself to advertisements on television, whereas here one has to take newspaper, magazine and radio advertising into account, if not give priority to these organs, because very few Blacks have access to television in this country. Secondly, Leech does not commit himself to any judgement either as to which advertisements are the most likely to succeed in eliciting the desired response, or to the socio-cultural consequences of positive response to these advertisements for the consumer. I am interested in both aspects of this question.

Linguistics has been broadening its scope to include, however marginally, certain areas of study (psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy - to name but a few) which in the past were deemed to lie outside its domain. Most linguists now accept that to discuss language leaving out its socio-cultural setting is uninformative, that language form is intimately related to its function in social interaction. These factors will be taken into account in this article.

There is, in analysing the language of advertising, an essential difference to be drawn between what the copywriter intends to convey to the potential customer, and the meaning which the customer reads into the message he receives. On this matter I shall rely on personal experience.
Most writers on this subject have observed certain general features of the language of advertising which are used by copywriters. For example, copywriters tend to break the rules of the grammar of a language and to commit many other deviations from the norm. My own view is that the language of advertising has a grammar of its own, its own orthography carefully and appropriately fashioned to perform well-defined functions.

Standard advertising language is a good example of a symbolic system adapted to a particular goal: and one of the interests of studying it is that of finding out how its features reflect psychological strategy and other aspects of the situation for which it is designed. It is often described as "loaded language" because it is deliberately intended to persuade people to change their buying habits and to reinforce their feeling that they are a class apart as a result.

The features of the language that do the trick are not always obvious, because they do not have to be obvious to persuade: on the contrary. It is in cognisance of this fact that Vance Packard's book is called The Hidden Persuaders.

Just as the aims of the advertiser are practical, well-defined ones, so are the formal demands made on the language he uses. Advertising houses urge copywriters to prefer the familiar word to the unfamiliar one: but to use the familiar word unfamiliarly if possible. This often results in some syntactic peculiarity which inevitably catches the eye of the reader. For example "unzip a banana"; and "a petrol miser" (on a car for sale). In both examples the advertisement owes its force to what the consumer surely regards as an incongruous juxtaposition of two lexical items which is discordant with the layman's expectations.

In transformational-generative grammar (Chomsky, 1965) terms, the verb "unzip" will have selectional restrictions in the lexicon specifying that it is a transitive verb which takes as its object a lexical item having such features as "item of clothing" or an item such as a "purse". Foodstuffs, including bananas, would therefore be excluded from the list of items which can be unzipped.

Similarly, "miser", a usually perjorative term used to describe certain categories of people, will attract amused attention by being applied to a non-human object. However, this epithet will be regarded as laudatory for a car in a country where petrol prices are forever soaring. The copywriter is thus making maximum use of creative licence. His writing is preceded by detailed empirical research, and the things he writes about are those that matter for the potential customer: clothing, footwear, patent medicines, household appliances, furnishings, food, alcohol, motor vehicles, publications, toys etc.

Buying or failing to buy certain products, the potential customer is told, will influence certain human relationships favourably or adversely.
An advertisement on Radio Rhodesia's African Service urging people to buy household furniture on Hire Purchase (HP) terms told the sad story of a father who insisted on paying cash for everything he bought. But his pay was not high enough to enable him to save money at the same time. Consequently, when his son died in an accident, the father was unable to meet the funeral expenses. The advertisement ends with a jingle "In this country of ours we were the first to trust you".

The success of such an advertisement depended on two factors: the community's well-known disgust with people who fail to honour their dead; and the self-confidence and pride enkindled among the Black community by being told that a particular chain of stores has broken the ice and placed its trust on them. The copywriter's text is thus based on the results of careful research into local realities.

To be successful, advertisements must (Leech, 1966, pp 27-29) draw attention to themselves; sustain the interest they have created; be memorable, and, finally, prompt the right action. These are practical and specific requirements which any advertising copy must meet. What the copywriter selects from the community's linguistic code, the way he arranges and adds to it, are the objects of study. My comments on particular advertisements will be directed at the copywriter's ("creative artist's") attempts to meet the requirements mentioned above. But since these publicity copies are usually supplemented by pictures - especially in TV and magazine advertisements - attention will also be paid to these "visual aids".

As far back at 1933, F R Leavis and D. Thompson published their views on the impact of advertising during the industrialisation and urbanisation of a hitherto pastoral society - a situation comparable to that of the Blacks in our country. In Culture and Environment, these authors quote an American copywriter's manual as saying, "The advertisement must be the wittiest piece of writing in the newspaper in which it appears. It must challenge comparison with the editorial pages", where "witty" is to be understood as "pithy" and "humorous". They found that copywriters characteristically used certain grammatical categories and constructions more than others: thus imperative constructions were the most common, followed by compound words, especially adjective compounds.

The article being advertised assumed the status of a landmark or watershed to demarcate the past from the future: the customer's life is unexciting and infested with problems until he buys the article, thereby inexorably transforming and improving himself. This is the essence of the message conveyed by the compound adjectives and commands. Orthographic deviation (eg wrong spelling and unconventional capitalisation) is also widely used.

Lexical innovation consists mainly in neologism: the concoction of words which, nonetheless, conform to the morpheme structure conditions of the language being used. In other words, the new lexical items do not violate
the phonological rules of the language spoken by the community for which the advertisement is written. For example, one of the syllable structure rules of Shona states that there should be no consonantal segment in syllable final position. So the names given to new products designed for the Black market will all have a vowel as their final segment in conformity with the words of the language which have gained institutional currency and are contained in the lexicon.

Similarly, the Zimbabwean English neologisms in "Fanta freshivates" and "Our oranges have peelability" are possible English words since they are formed by analogy with such well established words as "activates" and "probability", respectively.

Ambiguity is also widely used, eg "Ours is the only paper left"; or "We have been pouring throughout the reign, 1952 - 1977", the punch line used by the brewers of Guinness in their sales drive during the Queen's Silver Jubilee. Alliteration also recommends messages to memory: "This is Texan territory; better taste Texan: Texan tastes better" and "Be a bottle stopper swopper".

Leech's analysis of the language of advertising may be characterised as a product of the strict linguistic taxonomic approach - consisting mainly of the completely unevaluative count, labelling and classification of lexical items and grammatical constructions typically used by advertisers. This contrasts sharply with the approach adopted by Leavis and Thompson in Culture and Environment. As their title suggests, they are concerned with man in relation to his cultural and physical environment. They discuss advertising only as one of the ways in which the media can be used to change the face of a community's life, endangering what they call "the organic community" by propagating new, untraditional values. They take the view that education should supply the student with an awareness of his environment, both physical and intellectual - "the way in which it affects taste, habit ... attitude to life and the quality of living ... a critical habit must be systematically inculcated" (1933, p 4).

A healthy eclecticism - call it "critical attitude" - towards the language of advertising may be fostered through an analysis such as the one attempted here.

It is now quite clear that advertising has become part of applied psychology, ie successful copywriting depends on insight into people's minds, not individual minds, but into the way average people think and act. Thus Gilbert Russell has said:

Advertising is becoming increasingly exact every day. Where instinct used to be enough, it is being replaced by inquiry. Advertising men nowadays don't say 'the public will buy this article from such and such a motive', they employ what is called market research, to find out the buying motives as exactly as time and money and opportunity permit, from the public itself.
It is because such detailed research precedes the writing of any advertisements that most of them are addressed to the real problems facing ordinary people. For example, in advertisements for patent medicines the copywriter capitalises on people's fear for their health. Advertisements for cosmetics and make-up also depend for their success on women's fear of encroaching old age - as do the advertisers of hair-pieces for men who have gone bald. The product is presented as the panacea guaranteeing stability and improvement. So copywriters can boast among themselves, "Fear is a great salesman". Richard Hoggart has this observation to make concerning market research and the use to which its results are put by advertisers, "At bottom the case against advertising is the same as that against political propaganda, and much religious proselytising and any other form of emotional blackmail... Advertising tries to achieve its ends by emotionally abusing its audiences. Recognising that we all have fears, hopes, anxieties, aspirations, insecurities, advertisers seek not to increase our understanding of them, but to use their existence to increase the sales of whatever product they happen to have been paid to sell at any particular time".

Where dress is concerned, for example, one is left with the impression that one has a social obligation to the neighbours and friends to dress in a particular way: the fashionable attire is apparently prescribed by the community but in fact by the designers. Yet other items, especially cars and tobacco are advertised as "the good-fellow tickets to first-class passengers only" (Leavis and Thompson 1933 p 94). In other words, such products are bought and enjoyed by an exclusive class, an elite characterised by certain superior tendencies in taste.

2.0 Truth in Advertising and Local Perspectives

A perennial and usually polemical debate in advertising revolves around the question of truth. The detractors of this industry have been engaged in acrimonious debate with its proponents in Western Europe for a long time, as the quotations from Orwell, J B Priestly and Richard Hoggart will have indicated. The extent of this confrontation may become more apparent by reading T Millum's (1975) opening chapter in Images of Woman: Advertising in Women's Magazines. S Chase and F J Schlink quote this advice given to copywriters by a baby food manufacturer:

As for this baby food stuff, for God's sake put some sob stuff in it ... And make it beautiful too ... and make the words sing. Heavens, there isn't a woman in the world who cares about facts ... Tears! Make them weep!
This is an extreme case. But nevertheless the danger of "lying with enthusiasm" has its source in this unbounded desire for success by businessmen. The critical question is, to what extent can a balance always be struck between making "the words sing" and telling the truth about a product?

Our society has an over-supply of emergent, aspiring young businessmen and executives. Their impact on the advertising market will be considerable. They have to have an awareness of the questions which other nations in similar circumstances have had to contend with.

Does modern advertising justify itself as an industry by its (some would say 'alleged') function of bringing knowledge of desirable merchandise to the public, or does it condemn itself by using empty language to make people buy what they cannot afford (hire purchase) and want what they do not need, as the disillusioned consumer would have it?

Given the structure of the Black community in this country, its economic weakness and potential, an industry whose aim is to 'advise' the people as to which clothes to buy, what kind of food to eat, beer to drink, which cars to buy or be driven in, the perfumes to wear in order to win friends and maintain certain vital, social relationships, (such an industry) deserves a searching study. After many years of development, the languages (English, Ndebele and Shona) used for advertising in this country have become a powerful weapon which, if unscrupulously and ruthlessly used could dislocate the cultural outlook of the people beyond recognition. The "progress" from a pastoral life among the Black people to a stage when even the farm worker is psychologically a town bird, has been facilitated as much by legislation as by organised advertising. Many immigrants from the rural areas have found the yawning discrepancy between the city life portrayed on radio on the one hand, and the harsh reality of squalor and deprivation on the other, a potent teacher.

Unwittingly or not (and there is no attempt on my part to extrapolate the experience which other cultures have gone through to the local scene) advertisers have persuaded people that their old ways are decadent, that the family life portrayed on radio and TV is the model for emulation by the progressive and ambitious. In this context, a rigorous and systematic analysis of the linguistic strings being pulled by copywriters, and an indication of some of the possible consequences of losing "the organic community" seems to be warranted.

However, a straight jacket linguistic approach which does not relate linguistic factors to social context, such as Leech's, is inadequate. Inclusion of the social and cultural dimensions completes this essential discussion of a phenomenon which the purely linguistic investigation merely hints at. Language study is thereby related to what is valued, liked, feared or despised by a society.

In this country, the desire for acquiring material wealth has become all-consuming and has cut down the size of the extended family, one of
the defining characteristics of Black culture. The meagre income tends to spread very thin unless one confines one's responsibilities to the nuclear family. Hitherto, success has tended to be "relative": the more successful one is, or seems, the more relatives one accumulates. Those who had nothing to lose by calling you "cousin" will call you "brother" and "confide" in you when you seem to be materially well-off. The rabid acquisitiveness of modern society has been engendered and is being sustained through advertisements which make people feel dissatisfied with their present condition unless they transform themselves through purchasing a particular product.

Whereas before, a school teacher, for example, was expected to pay school fees and buy clothes for everyone ranging from his own nuclear family to third cousins, today he can hardly afford to be so culture-bound. His own children, having been exposed to advertisements on radio and TV, in magazines and street corner posters, no longer want to sleep on the bare ground but on a comfortable spring-mattress; they no longer drink water when thirsty, but Fanta orange, which "freshivates"; nor do they wear tennis shoes or go bare-footed to school: they wear "BATA bush babes". Confronted with this situation the by-now desperate school teacher has two alternatives: he can either renounce his responsibilities to the extended family; or he can retain these responsibilities by buying most of what he needs on hire purchase - which, in this country, is very easy to arrange.

Many take the latter alternative, and almost invariably end up in financial difficulties, their fate having repercussions throughout the extended family. Those who choose the former alternative may enjoy material success in the nuclear family, but they often become ostracised. And the odium directed against one who 'snubs' his 'next of kin' in this way and chooses mammon, can be debilitating.

This is the social reorganisation (disorganisation?) which the creative copywriter's neologism "Fanta freshivates" can, however indirectly, trigger off. We need to pay attention to the linguistic trigger as well as to the social bang in any serious analysis of advertising. It is obvious that social and economic factors have to be taken into account in order to explain linguistic behaviour of various types. And here the object of study is the deliberate and professional manipulation of the linguistic code of a society by advertisers.

3.0 The Advertisements

3.1 Beauty Products

That women worry more about their appearance than men is common knowledge. They create a public image with which they want to be associated. A woman's presence expresses her own attitude towards herself and also the way she wants people to view her. When she has established an image of herself and found it to be acceptable and even admirable, her problem is to find ways of maintaining it.
The single most effective device she uses is make-up; make-up to arrest age and to conform to popular definitions of beauty. The manufacturers of perfumes know these perennial feminine preoccupations and their advertising campaigns take these facts as their launching pads.

Radio Post\textsuperscript{10}, monthly magazine aimed at the Black market, has a regular feature on "Health and Beauty". This series of articles demonstrates clearly that advertisements make certain assumptions about the public for which they are written. And the assumption in the "Health and Beauty" series is that the public do not know the workings of the human body. So the advertisement is really a detailed expose designed to inform, especially to make the potential buyer aware of the speed with which the human skin inexorably but clandestinely deteriorates. The various types of cosmetics recommended are the only means of controlling, if not arresting, such deterioration.

In the March (1978) edition of Radio Post five skin types are distinguished and described in fairly technical language – and unfamiliar terms used to describe one's health tend to generate fear, "the great salesman". First, there are what are called NORMAL skins, i.e., those with "an almost perfect balance of moisture and oil ..." Normal skins result from the "skin's acid/alkali mantle" releasing "enough oil (sebum) to lubricate and protect the skin" and thereby preventing excess moisture being lost to the environment (my own emphasis). The skin thus has to be cared for with the same vigilance we exercise when we are in charge of a piece of machinery (lubricate). At the same time it has to be guarded against the elements (protected) like a newly born baby. And a balance has to be maintained. The imagery is very complex, conflicting even, but it hammers the point home: the human skin is like a machine which needs regular lubrication; a vulnerable infant which needs protection, and finally, an edifice which has to be balanced.

But these normal skins, which need no medication, we are told, are rare after the age of twelve. After the age of twenty-five, deterioration sets in:

(i) natural oil production slows down;
(ii) production of collagen - "the substance responsible for the skin's elasticity and flexibility", slows down – this for two reasons:

- the sun, wind, cold, overheated rooms and
- improper cleansing of the skin.

All these factors "band together, and work against your looks" and "... drain away your skin's precious moisture ..." The next result is that "instead of your skin looking like a peach, it ends up looking like a prune; unless you faithfully follow a skin care routine" (own emphasis).
This makes it quite clear that after a certain age, anyone wishing to maintain a youthful appearance is on the defensive, working against fearful odds. All the natural factors listed above "band together and work against" one. This is the language of conflict. Although the decay may be clandestine and slow, it is steady. The consumer's position is made quite clear: on her own, she is helpless, and doomed by an inexorable and inevitable process; but, armed with faith in certain recommended products, she is invincible.

The second type of skin is called OILY SKIN, in which the acid/alkali balance has been lost. This condition can be treated by products that will reduce the oil to the desirable level, in addition to the skin care routine.

DRY SKIN, the third type, "feels taut and looks dry". The answer is products with more oil and moisture, also for lubricating and protecting.

COMBINATION SKIN has a bit of each of the preceding types and is said to be a very common type. The last type, SENSITIVE SKIN, is nearly always dry and needs "special protection products, free of alcohol".

Having exhausted all the dangers that can befall the unsuspecting ordinary person, the copywriter then leads her to the 'doctor'. Prefacing the advice with the age-old adage "no doctor treats himself", the copywriter introduces the "ideal and best" advice centre, namely a good beauty salon where "experts will analyse your skin and suggest a beauty care programme and products".

This is a powerful advertisement and will convince anyone who worries about presentability and old age. The analysis of skin types and the pervasive reminder that decay is inevitable, that most environmental factors gang up together against the hapless person engender worry and dismay. The beauty salons and the expert consultants are the only friends one has. The reassuring pat-on-the-shoulder "Please remember - you are only the customer - you don't have to buy anything" is, at best, curious. A customer who does not buy is a contradiction in terms.

The advertising strategy adopted in the series "Health and Beauty" is subtle. No product is mentioned by name: but if both the copywriter and beauty consultants in the salons are sponsored by the same manufacturer, we have a complete commercial circle.

By contrast, Helena Rubenstein's advertisement in "The Herald" of 16 May 1978 pulls no punches. Entitled "The Science of Beauty", this advertisement also hammers on the problems related to ageing and how they can be combatted. "Whatever your age, skin type or complexion, there's a treatment collection at Helena Rubenstein's that's right for you" - my own emphasis - showing that the message is addressed to the whole spectrum of our society.

There is BIOCLEAR for teenagers - "an unusually effective, blemish-fighting skin-treatment". No lexical item goes unmodified: the adjective "effective" is premodified by the adverb "unusually", the
compounding of "fighting" with "blemish" and of "treatment" with "skin" also helps to foreground the message. We are not talking about any "fighting" but "blemish-fighting", nor about any "treatment" but "skin-treatment". The language of war is again prevalent: "blemish" the aggressor, "skin" the victim and BIOCLEAR the rescuer.

SKIN DEW is for twenty-one year olds, those in the morning of life, the age of full blossom when everything that is good must be preserved. Skin Dew "maintains" the skin's "proper moisture balance, freshness and radiance". This heyday of life passes away at thirty-plus, we are told, when skin cells become tired, inactive. Helena Rubenstein offers rejuvenation, if not rebirth, namely "newborn skin". She has actually "created SKIN LIFE": the sagging and wilting skin absorbs life from the product endowed with that precious commodity by Helena Rubenstein - it is a life cycle.

But the title of the advertisement - "The Science of Beauty" - still has to be justified. So we are told that the treatment ranges were "researched developed and tested..." before being put on the market. The buying public must be reassured: these cosmetics with the magic touch will not harm them.

The advertisement for Berkshire Pantiehose in the "Rhodesia Herald" of May 21, 1978 is also addressed to the women public. The language text is complemented by pictures of three pairs of women's legs, two white and one black and all wearing Berkshire Pantiehose. We'll give you legs you never thought you had", proclaims the advertisement. The product is therefore a means of realising one's neglected potential. "That's a genuine promise, baby. Every style and fashion shade in Berkshire's pantiehose range, has that extra something. That something that turns mere legs into show-offs!" Normally there is no need for a punctuation mark after "range" in a sentence such as that first one. But a comma is used here in order to make the sequence"... has that extra something", stand out from the rest of the sentence because it is the punch line to be foregrounded and remembered by the customer. In fact "that... something" is repeated at the beginning of the next line, not a complete sentence but only a N(oun) P(hrase) + Relative Clause construction, although it is punctuated like a complete sentence.

There is here a parallelism in the structure of the language used which is a characteristic of advertising copy, namely the juxtaposition of evil and good, the transition from one to the other being mediated by the product on sale:

"mere legs"  ---  "show-offs"

just like

"oily skin"  ---  "balanced skin"

DISSATISFACTION  ---  BLISS
"Call it second-skin fit - call it sheer excitement - call it world-beating quality", the text concludes. Two favourite devices of the language of advertising - compounding of lexical items and commanding the customer - are exploited to the limit.

There are two points to be made here. First, the customer is made to enjoy some elusive, substitute "freedom". The advertiser provides a range, not only of goods, but a range of names for them: the customer is free to choose.

John Berger\textsuperscript{13} puts this most succinctly: "Publicity turns consumption into a substitute democracy. The choice of what one eats (or wears or drives) takes the place of significant political choice. Publicity helps to make and compensate for all that is undemocratic in society", (1972, p 149), particularly a capitalist society.

Secondly, there was a deliberate drive in this country then to lay emphasis on the international character and viability of the products on sale. Berkshire (note the name) panty hose have "world-beating quality" and, "Rhodesia is one of the few countries in the world where every pair of pantyhose perfected at the Berkshire Mills, has the closest possible going-over, for quality, strength and flawlessness". Most countries would find it unnecessary to give "the closest possible going-over" for anything to a product which has not been produced but "perfected" by a factory.

The emphasis on the international character of products is attributable to the need to assure fashion mongers that what they were buying not only excelled locally, but internationally as well. Emphasising the international aspect of the goods also served as a substitute for actual international experience and travel for most customers. Berkshire are "the sheerest, shapeliest show-offs in the world".

### 3.2 Household Furniture

As I said in the introduction, advertisers spare no effort to identify real human needs and buying motives. Once these are identified they are put to lucrative commercial use.

In as far as furniture and domestic chores are concerned, the aim of the advertiser seems to be to assist in two ways. In the first place, the customer must be made to feel some social obligation in making the home presentable; secondly, looking after the home must not be seen as a chore but a worthwhile undertaking. The cliche "The women's place is in the home" must be metamorphosed into a compliment. Detergent manufacturers, for example, must try to avoid creating the impression that women have no motive for using their products than to be clean, to protect hands and to wash objects. Housewives need reassurance of worth.

An advertisement for kitchen furniture in the April 1978 edition of Talk\textsuperscript{14} is a case in point. "Jazz up your kitchen ...it's no longer a drab hole
of drudgery but a room to live in, laugh in, entertain your friends in .." The range of furniture offered also enhances one's feeling of freedom of choice: "There's really no excuse for a dreary kitchen ... Rhodesian manufacturers have worked hard to produce the complete range of cookers now available ... under one roof at the Whitehouse(1) in Manica Road". A wide range of refrigerators is also advertised - "from small table top models suitable for bars and bachelor flats to family-sized twin door models, in fact something to suit every need .. and colour".

A pilot psychiatric study in the US (V Packard, 1957, pp 72-73) found that the home freezer came into widespread use after World War II. Most families were filled with worries because of uncertainties involving not only food but everything in their lives. Such people began to think nostalgically about former periods of security and safety - especially about childhood when Mother never disappointed them. The researchers concluded: "The freezer represents to many the assurance that there is always food in the house, and food in the house represents security, warmth and safety ... The home freezer becomes a frozen island of security". Families who sacrifice virtually every cent to buy a freezer like the Jones's find that it soon becomes a frozen island of emptiness: expensive freezers and cookers tend to increase electricity consumption.

The advertiser for "Whitehouse" freezers was fighting against odds, as the message says. Because research had apparently shown that Rhodesians were loath to part with their old fridges - 55 per cent of European households had owned their fridges for more than ten years; "while an amazing 16 per cent" had owned theirs for more than twenty years. So the advertiser gave a word of warning: trade-in value decreases rapidly; and spare parts for old fridges are hard to come by. This is an instance of advertising performing a dual function: a commercial as well as an informative one.

But furniture advertisements aimed exclusively at the Black market are an entirely different matter. Here the advertiser is not selling emotional security, but prestige and exotic success. Furniture is a status symbol: one's social standing is enhanced by the quality of the furniture and the prestigious store from which it is purchased. The product is the ladder for the social climber.

These upward strivers who sought exclusivity in their home surroundings were promised just that by BRADLOWS in their Sunday morning programme on the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation's African Service. The advertiser used two different texts during the programme. Both have this common characteristic: that the delivery is a slow, deliberate narrative, making an objective analysis of the way people live in modern society.

The first text made use of a well-known advertising technique, namely, parallelism. Parallelism is when two elements of structure are deliberately juxtaposed for comparison. The assignment of significance to a
parallelism rests upon a simple principle of equivalence. Every parallelism sets up a relationship of equivalence between two or more elements. And its interpretation involves appreciating some external connection between these elements; and the connection is usually one of contrast, similarity or climatic progression. The relationship between the elements compared in the text in question is one of contrast. (The text has been translated from Shona and divided into three thematic sections): "Everyone wants to dine in well-furnished surroundings these days; to sit on soft sofas, and to sleep in comfortable beds.

No one wants to eat sitting cross-legged, making it difficult to swallow food; or to entertain friends sitting on prickly pieces of wood; or to sleep bundled up close to a burning fire. All these antiquated practices are frowned upon by every modern person.

Our country is exceedingly progressive. Everyone is craving for modern, luxurious and genuinely strong furniture which can be found only at Bradlows Stores..."

There are three aspects to this advertisement. The first sets out what is claimed to be what every modern person craves, the heights to which they feverently want to ascend; the second is a disparaging expose of what must be the way of life of most people, which they are persuaded to despise. The final phase offers the goods which will transform the dreams outlined in the first into reality.

Eating sitting cross-legged is compared and contrasted with dining in well-furnished surroundings; prickly pieces of wood are set against luxurious sofas; and the bare, cold ground is contrasted to comfortable beds. Throughout, the social perspective is emphasised by the constant reference to what everyone wants and to what everyone frowns upon. This perspective is the external connection which helps us to interpret the parallelisms in the text.

In the second text used by this firm, the emphasis is again on present unsatisfactory realities compared to an enviable future - the gap being bridgeable only through the product on sale. The message, in short, is this: despise your present status; envy yourself as you will become, we are here to help:

"These days our way of life is changing and improving as no one has ever witnessed. Old men and women, young men and women, are all in a scramble; no one wishing to be left behind; or to wear any but the best clothes, the most modern.

Now, let us address ourselves to the question of household furniture. Bradlows Stores continually keep their eyes open to the way people live and the manner in which our country as a whole is progressing."
Therefore, if you are thinking of embellishing your home with furniture which is commensurate with modern progressive living standards, visit Bradlows...."

The main difference between these two texts is that whereas the first is a straightforward publicity piece for furniture, the second asserts that buying modern furniture such as that found at Bradlows is only one of the several symptoms of a widespread malaise. There is a mad stampede from a backward past to a better future, and even our old fathers and mothers, the repositories of our culture, are said to be involved.

Advertisements work on a natural appetite for happiness. But they do not always satisfy that appetite. Thus John Berger (1972, pp 132-3), "The more convincingly publicity conveys the pleasure of bathing in a warm, distant sea, the more the spectator buyer will become aware that he is hundreds of miles away from that sea... Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product... The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be..."

Envy which could result from the purchasing of such furniture as that advertised by Bradlows is, however, not internal. It is envy of one by one's neighbours. This underlines the social perspective once more. The happiness which one derives from being envied is what constitutes glamour. Berger, however, makes one sobering observation about being envied: that it is a solitary form of reassurance since it depends upon not sharing one's experience with those who envy one. One is observed with interest, but cannot afford in turn to observe with interest, otherwise the spell will be destroyed.

As the Bradlows advertisement above shows, advertising is a form of social communication. Advertisers construct a "social world" around the product, making the appeal to the consumer somewhat indirect, being transmitted through the social connotations. Thus on the Black market advertising is often linked to people's aspirations in a society where social mobility is widespread. There is the aspiration drive, the achievement drive - culminating in an individual and his family moving from one level to another. This is the metamorphosis of goods and property into socially acceptable symbols of success, giving higher social status to the protagonists.

Hence the most widely exploited and effective strategy used to sell products (including furniture) is testimonial advertising. Black personalities of indisputably high social standing (footballers and DJ's are examples) are shown on TV or in newspapers and magazines inviting potential customers to enjoy a certain product with them. The football fans are used to seeing photographs of their idols and their families drinking a particular tea or of the idol on his own
shaving with Lion Blades, "the extra-sharp razor blade". The words accompanying such photographs always attempt to link success with the product, suggesting that the latter is the catalyst for progress to dizzy heights. For example "Smart successful people shave with Lion Blades," and "Joko, the top tea for top people". The saying among Blacks that "So and so is smart like a white man today" is probably responsible for one curious feature of the shop window displays which were to be found in the Market Square area of the City and in General Dealers in the 'African Townships'. All the dummy models for children's clothes and those for older people were white, although the stores catered almost exclusively for Blacks. The one exception I found was the picture of a beautiful black woman in a night dress, advertising blankets!

3.3 Pandering to Male Chauvinism

When advertisers discover a trait of character in a social group, they tend to build their sales promotion campaign around it. This is particularly noticeable in advertisements addressed to men in the African community - usually advertisements for clothes, food and beer. For example, "Castle: the mansize beer!" But of course nowadays women brandishing equally full pints of Castle are to be found in most drinking places, perhaps asserting their equality with men.

The February 1978 edition of PARADE\textsuperscript{15} carried a colour advertisement for Dairyboard Cheese:

"Dairyboard Cheese, the food for men! (accompanied by a picture of a virile man eating cheese and smiling mischievously), Men really enjoy the taste of delicious Dairyboard Cheese - especially with their beer. Every one of the many kinds of Dairyboard Cheeses has a taste that makes men want MORE".

Then four types of cheese are given, namely CHEDDAR, CHESIRE, MATOPOS and GOUDA, which evidently differ only in their colours, "white", "whiter", "orange" and "red-skin" respectively. If this advertisement were meant for the white market the copywriter would have said something about the different tastes of the types of cheese. The cheeses are "delicious" especially when eaten while one is drinking beer. One assumes that the Dairyboard has no interest in people's beer consumption. But if it seems that beer-drinking is most men's favourite pastime, then they will not seek to compete with the Breweries. Instead, men are advised that beer and cheese are complementary. Together they make "men want MORE!" The "MORE!" is made prominent by capitalisation and punctuation because it is a deliberate ambiguity: men demand more cheese or, their sexual prowess is augmented. The copywriter is capitalising on the ubiquitous belief among the Black community that cheese has this latter effect on men.
The advertisement ends, like most, with a command: "Get your wife to buy a different Dairyboard Cheese every pay day". Again exploiting the male chauvinist in men, this particular command is peculiar: the advertiser is commanding the man to command, not ask, his wife to buy cheese. The role of the Black man as the boss of the family is not challenged: on the contrary.

The anecdote of the white headmaster who offered a Black pupil a piece of cheese and got the unexpected reply, "Thank you Sir, but I have never tasted cheese" is now a joke of the past. Eating European foods and drinking his beer are activities which are part and parcel of the process of "civilisation" and upward striving. A similar new development in Black society is the acceptance of life insurance.

This is not a precaution which Black people were accustomed to taking, although we have no qualms about insuring our cars. The latter is, of course, compulsory, whereas the former is not. The second reason for this attitude is that we do not want to contemplate death, and insurance salesmen used to be quite blunt about the reasons for buying policies: "You may die and your widow and children will be left stranded", an observation which is calculated to end all conversation on a hostile note. Yet that very hostility and anger are conclusive evidence of the horrible prospect, should one not take the precautions necessary.

But the approach now is different, judging by personal experience. One is offered an educational policy for one's children: "You may in the not too distant future want to send your child to a private school. Unless you have a policy, you may find it impossible because of the high fees required". This is very attractive to most young strivers today. They want to give their children "a better chance" than they themselves have had, "otherwise no progress will have been made". But by buying an education policy one has already conceded that one does not know what the future holds. At the same time, however, one derives some satisfaction in having entered into a contract that guarantees a better education for one's children.

When next the insurance salesman returns, it is to make the customer "see sense": the educational future of one's children is just as uncertain, financially, as the future welfare of the family as a whole. The ego-gratification which has led to the buying of an educational policy is now to be exploited further. One of the real appeals of life insurance for a man, the breadwinner of most families, is that it assures him of the prospect of immortality through the perpetuation of his influence in the family. We can stand the thought of physical death now; we accept the possibility that it can be untimely. But we remain hostile towards those who invite us to contemplate the prospect of our obliteration.

Most Black men have now come round to accepting the need for protecting their loved ones "in case of any eventuality", especially in circumstances
where the buying of a policy is also linked to the writing of a will. And insurance salesmen dwell on these factors when they advertise policies both in verbal and broadcast communications. But when one thinks about this carefully, it soon emerges that this socially commendable acceptance of responsibility is not the real or main motive of a prospective buyer. We obtain insurance against obliteration through the knowledge that we will continue to dominate our families, to control the family standard of living and to guide the education of our children. "You can even leave instructions to have your wife deprived of her share of your estate if she is caught cohabiting", one young medical doctor remarked gleefully. There is some sort of trans-substantiation whereby one's spirit lives on in the insurance document and the will, and continues to command, control and guide. Insurance agents build their sales campaigns around these traits in the Black psyche, and tend to succeed.

3.4 Advertising on Radio

The difference between advertising in newspapers and magazines on the one hand, and that on radio and television on the other, is parallel to the classical distinction between writing and speech. The written message has a potential for eternal life: the spoken word comes and goes and is irrecoverable. So any spoken advertisement that seeks to influence human behaviour must be memorable. And a message is easy to remember when it is brief and capable of shocking the listener out of his apathy. Sometimes it is necessary to repeat it often enough for people to remember it.

Radio advertisements are spoken messages and they are characterised by the features just outlined. This could be seen most clearly on the average Sunday morning advertising extravaganza on the African Service of the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation. There was an average of eight musical or educational programmes sponsored by commercial companies advertising various products. No other day of the week had quite the same concentration of commercials in succession as Sunday. The reason is that on this particular day the advertisers have a captive audience.

The structure of a sponsored programme on radio is a stereotype: an introduction in which the signature tune is played then quickly interrupted by the announcer, who then mentions the name of the company and the product, "The makers of .... present ...". If it is a musical programme, the presenter plays records - usually up to two records - before urging people to buy the product.

The first programme on Sunday morning, "The National Foods Top Talent Competition" had the latter form. The company sent disc jockeys to the four corners of the country in search of local musical talent, which they recorded for the Sunday morning programme beginning at 9.30. The listeners then voted for the artist they thought performed the best and could themselves win a prize for casting their vote for the winning entry. While the programme was on the air, the commercial was repeated chorus-fashion at about eight-minute intervals:
"Today's people want only the best
That's why they choose Red Seal..."

This company (and there are several others which advertise during the week) sponsored a cultural programme. Local artists, many of them very talented, were given the chance of a lifetime. They had their first recording and exposure to millions of listeners who are the star-makers. Such a programme had a special appeal because it was an invitation to people, young and old alike, to abandon their predilection for Western popular music and to value local traditional musical talent. In the present climate such an invitation falls on open ears: after all the name of the company has the magic element National and the major commodity in the commercial, Red Seal Pearlenta, is the main ingredient for the national staple food, sadza.

This programme lasted until 10.00 when a twenty-minute newsbroadcast in Shona and Ndebele intervened. After this, another musical programme sponsored by Premier Milling Company came on the air. Called "Gundamusaira rorufaro" (The Carnival of Joy), it was of the first type of structure, ie the presenter played his own choice of music, punctuating the programme with the commercial in the form of a jingle:

"We like Premier mealie meal
we like Premier mealie meal
It gives us good health
It gives us good health".

The remarkable aspect of this advertisement was not the claim that Premier mealie meal gave people good health and a happy life, but that a second type of mealie meal was being pushed with the same enthusiasm by the same DJ, now representing what seemed to all intents and purposes to be a rival company to National Foods. The customer was thus once more given a range to choose from.

At 10.45 "The Ambi Generation" advertised "softer, clearer, glowing skins". The incessant refrain "Ambi people look great" was important because it reminded the listener that by using one of the wide range of Ambi products (s)he became one of a class of special people who "look great". The layman does not know what 'AMBI' stands for, but the preponderance of adjectives in the comparative inflection (softer, clearer) has in the past been responsible for the "mischievous" interpretation by young political activists who claimed that the letters A-M-B-I stand for "Africans Must Be Improved". This often spelt doom for those who used the product.

The magazine counterpart of this advertisement was accompanied by a glossy picture of two young Black couples sipping drinks in palatial surroundings. One of the women was defiantly brandishing a cigarette.
at traditional prejudices against (young) female smokers:

"Saturday afternoon and there's nothing better to do when friends drop in than sit around and have a great time (own emphasis). Fun. Friends. Good music. It's the life for the Ambi set.

And you have got to agree: They look great. For a great looking skin, insist on Ambi. Because Ambi is for the good looking men and beautiful women of today.

For a lighter, clearer complexion, use the full range of fast acting Ambi day and night products".
(PRIZE, May 1978).

In so far as it suggests that after using Ambi products people will become rich and able to afford the luxury enjoyed by the people in the testimonial photograph, the first part of this advertisement is misleading. And in claiming that these products are "for good looking men and beautiful women", the second part is also making the inverse assertion that those who do not use the products are not good looking or beautiful. This is also a non-sequitur. Finally, this advertisement also offers a "full range" of products for people to choose from. They are fast acting and to be used "day and night".

Certain that the picture of successful and beautiful people has aroused the desired dissatisfaction with one's present status and appearance, this text ends with the comforting message that these products are "fast acting" and to be used consistently - if we wish to attain greatness and success. We must change our attitude towards ourselves: we are not ugly but good looking and beautiful people; not ordinary but great, if we use Ambi products.

Another Sunday morning feature on the RBC's African Service was "The BATA Movement". This advertisement used the typical radio form for delivering its message, the song. The tempo was fast and the rhythm scintillating:

"There's a new kind of style walking our nation The great new style of the now generation BATA, the BATA movement.

Chorus: The BATA movement

People are walking it, people are talking it People all over the land are getting into BATA, the BATA movement.

Spoken: The BATA movement: get into it!

From the bottom of your soul you can feel the vibrations From the bottom of your heart you can feel the sensations Of the BATA, the BATA movement.

Chorus: The BATA movement."
This advertisement is full of ambiguities. The very title of the programme "The BATA Movement" is two-pronged, semantically. "Movement" is usually understood in terms of political, artistic or other cultural consensus of people sharing the same beliefs. This particular movement, on the other hand is one of people whose defining feature is the wearing of BATA shoes. The opening line of the song is "There's a new kind of style walking our nation". The people referred to walk wearing BATA shoes and the trend is nation-wide. This is a characteristic only of modern people - "the new generation".

These people do not only wear BATA shoes, they "talk"about it. The implication is clear: if you do not wear BATA shoes you will have nothing to talk to friends about.

This indirect persuasion not being enough, the advertiser reinforces it with a command, "The BATA movement, get into it". Then we are treated to some more ambiguity: "From the bottom of your soul, you can feel the vibrations of the BATA, the BATA Movement". The "bottom of your soul" can be understood in either or two ways: first, as an alternative expression to the "bottom of your heart", secondly, as the sole under one's shoes. But we are really not meant to think much about the first interpretation, unless it is to serve only as a stepping stone to our understanding of the second, ie, the advertiser swearing to the sincerity of his message with his soul. The second meaning gives further evidence in support of our interpretation of movement as referring to people walking en masse, marching in BATA shoes, and making the earth vibrate. And the thrice-repeated chorus "The BATA Movement" is a constant reminder of the point at issue. Compared to the solemn advertisement for Bradlows furniture above, "The BATA Movement" is a light-hearted affair, although the commercial message comes through clearly enough.

### 3.5 Sponsoring Cultural and Literary Efforts

#### 3.5.1 The fire-side story approach

The manufacturers of Colgate Palmolive presented a programme every week-day evening in conjunction with the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, a government agency. A recently published Shona novel is selected and enacted on the air, being regularly interrupted in order to advertise products manufactured by Colgate Palmolive.

This particular programme was unique in that it had joint commercial and Government sponsorship.

Shona novels have the characteristic that they nearly always push a moral in a most undisguised manner. Sometimes even the title alone tells us what the moral is. To that extent they are like the fire-side story in literary form. The fire-side story was an integral
part of our upbringing. A sage, overflowing with experience and traditional wisdom, gathered young men around him every evening and told them a story by the fireplace or DARE. He concluded by pointing out the moral in the story, or left his audience to infer it from the facts.

The advantage of the radio programme over the fireside story is that it has a wider audience. Women, who in the past would be confined to the kitchen, coming to the DARE only to serve food to the men, can now listen to the radio programme with the men.

The stories are usually about the lives of ordinary people and their interaction with people from other communities, their hopes, fears and domestic happiness and tragedies. The commercial is a chorus to the dialogue. When a story happens to arouse a lot of interest, the listeners tend to dismiss the commercial break as unwelcome interruption.

There are several things to recommend this particular programme: it gives the budding author a very wide audience, soon to become a readership; for the urban Black it serves as a window on the world of his cultural past, if the novel has a historical rural setting. The stories stimulate deliberate discussion of customs and contemporary urban and rural life and, finally, the illiterate have a chance to participate in the criticism and development of a literature that is either entirely about Black culture or about its interaction with the culture of other peoples.

In addition to all this, the listener is also being introduced to the basic paraphernalia of Western culture: toilet soap, detergents, toothpaste, cosmetics etc. A similar approach has been discussed above in connection with the "National Foods Top Talent Competition".

The question then arises as to whether one should regard this advertising approach as being automatically desirable by the token of its sponsorship of literature. My view remains the same, namely that an assessment of the desirability or otherwise of this industry has to take the industry as a totality for one good reason. All advertisements have one common purpose, to persuade people to buy, continue to buy, and to buy more and more each time.

4.0 Motion Picture Persuasion

The average Black family in this country had no access to television. As such the amount of advertising aimed at the black market on Rhodesian TV was dwarfed by that on radio. But since the TV is such a powerful medium of persuasion, a few comments concerning its potential are in order.

Whereas in newspaper advertisements the potential customer is presented only with a picture of those who have been transformed by the product,
and on radio advertising he hears a voice, on TV advertising
he sees actual people using the product and saying how good it
is. This has the effect of making the message more immediate
and memorable.

Cinemark showed a film of the Award Winning Films of the 24th
International Advertising Film Festival held at Cannes in France
in 1977 – free of charge. The advertisements concerned covered
a wide range of products presented by commercial companies from
thirty-six countries. In his introduction to the booklet accompanying the film, the managing director of Cinemark made this point about advertising films, that "Its a fact of life that advertising films clearly reveal national and international values and life styles".

Advertising films shown on Rhodesian TV were no exception to this.
They portrayed the national mood that was characteristically our
own. For example, the advertisement for security fencing round
the home had a crack unit of "security forces" swiftly routing
an invisible enemy. This was immediately followed by a team of
fast working skilled men installing the fence - all against a
background of efficient machinegun fire. The reasons for our
ready association of matters of security with actual warfare were
obvious then.

"This festival proved that successful products can achieve recog­
nition from both a highly qualified jury as well as (from) that
final adjudicator, the housewife herself", said the managing direc­
tor. And most advertisements for household goods incorporate the
essential opinion of that "final adjudicator", passing her val­
uable experience to other women about detergents, food, clothes
etc.

One final point from the knowledgeable director, "A touch of humour
helps make the sale proposition more acceptable, memorable and in­
fluential". The brevity of TV advertisements also makes it easy
for the viewers to commit them to memory. Indeed, with the excep­
tion of two advertisements from Japan and the USA (for an adhesive
and for Coca Cola respectively) which lasted for 90 seconds, all
the award winning entries at the Cannes Festival had an exposure
duration of between 15 to 70 seconds, most of them falling in the
30 to 45 seconds range. The longer an advertisement lasts on TV,
the more expensive it is for the advertiser, and the greater the
risk of it not achieving the advertiser's goal.

A more detailed discussion of the language used in TV advertising
would be profitably directed along the lines suggested by the
remarks of Cinemark just quoted - ie the extent to which these ad­
vertisements serve as indices to national values and life styles;
the role assigned to the consumer as final adjudicator and, finally,
how the structure of the advertisements makes "the sale proposition
more acceptable, memorable and influential”.

5.0 Conclusion

The foregoing proves beyond doubt that there was a vigorous drive by various commercial companies to attract the Black customer. The drive was implicit in the concentrated efforts made through actual advertisements. Sometimes it was made explicit in newspaper interviews given by businessmen. For example, the "Zimbabwe Times"17 of the 29 July 1978 carried a 24 page advertising supplement called "The Fashion Story". In it, experienced businessmen gave their views on the buying habits and tastes of Black customers.

An Indian Trader observed that "In the early sixties, the average African consumer did not really eye his purchases with passion or enthusiasm. Clothing was just regarded as one of the consumables; to be purchased at the nearest shop.

... Today the African consumer must feel satisfied with the merchandise offered on the market ..... he wants to know the following before he finalises his purchase:

(1) What brand is he buying?
(2) Where is he buying?
(3) Will his wife like his choice?
(4) Will his friends like his choice?"

Advertisements can claim responsibility for instilling "passion" and "enthusiasm" for acquiring property into the Black consumer. A situation whereby people buy from a shop for no other reason than that it is the nearest, and buy goods for no better reason than that they are "consumable", could not be allowed to persist in a competitive industry. Since the early sixties, advertisers have succeeded in making people ask the four cardinal questions given by the Indian trader.

This is one function which advertising has performed in our society, the creation and continual remoulding of tastes.

Advertising in Rhodesia had been performing another, crucial function as it does in most developing countries - the educative function. The Black community needed to be told what patent medicines, for example, are available for curing common diseases which do not need specialist attention (hence the Sunday afternoon "The Radio Doctor" sponsored by a pharmaceutical company). The value of such a service to people with no access to clinics cannot be overestimated.

Thirdly, the strongest argument advanced by the advocates for advertising is that the economy benefits. Firms can double, if not treble, their profits over a period of time. Hence they can contribute more to the Exchequer and hence they can afford to pay their employees more.
The latter will in turn be able to spend more. The net result is a thriving, self-supporting commercial cycle. This is only an argument. What actually happens? Are pay scales in factories adjustable relative to profitability? Overall, who benefits from advertising?

From the cultural point of view, there are advantages and disadvantages. We have seen how some commercial companies sponsor literature and music by broadcasting the efforts of budding writers and singers on national radio, while at the same time others encourage people to abandon traditional life and accept values which seem commendable only because they can be commercialised. For example, it is never made clear why people who remove their natural skin using skin-lightening creams should be said to be "greater" than the rest of us.

A spirited defence of advertising seems to me to be as untenable as an impassioned condemnation of it. But I hope readers will agree that a deliberate exploration of this field in our country (perhaps at even greater length and in greater depth than I have attempted here) is warranted, if only to make ourselves aware of the pitfalls. So powerful is this instrument, language.
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15. Parade. Leonis M Lambiris (Managing Director).


17. 'Zimbabwe Times', 29th July 1978.