



## Perspectivation in Nigeria's Political Visual Communication: A Social Semiotic Analysis

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**Abstract:** Considering the fact that the use of visual resources in political communication is advancing globally, this paper discusses perspectivation as a social semiotic strategy deployed in selected Nigeria's 2011 newspaper campaign advertisements. This is done with the goal of unveiling text producers' deliberate visual representation of candidates and issues. Data comprise 60 full-page newspaper campaign adverts which were purposively selected in line with the research interest of the study. A critical analysis of the data was done using the analytical tools of Social Semiotics with insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Findings show that newspapers create social space for advert producers to explore semiotic resources for power contestation in Nigeria. Producers deploy visual resources such as typography, metaphorisation, information value, framing, among others to represent political candidates positively/negatively respectively. Viewed against Nigeria's fledging democratic background, the study concludes that newspaper advert visual representation of politicians is influential in citizens' positive/negative perception of political candidates during campaigns because of its underlying ideologies which are strategically presented in naturalized advertising discourse.

**Key words:** Perspectivation, Politics, Power, Social Semiotics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Advertising, Newspaper, Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

There is a growing discourse on the ways in which images are becoming a prominent means of constructing meaning about politicians and their struggle for power in modern day democracy. In arguing for its usefulness in Nigeria's campaign discourse, Ademilokun and Olateju (2015) note that visual images provoke deeper feelings, and stir the people to certain required actions more than spoken or written language. They further note that visual images are used for popularization of politicians and political parties preparatory to elections in the country. These are valid observations of some of the purposes which visual communication serves during political campaigns in Nigeria. However, it should also be noted that the interest of campaign discourse producers may not always be explicit. Findings from existing studies suggest that media political campaign advertising, rallies and indeed all forms of political discourse, could be manipulative (Van Dijk, 2006; Oamen and Fajuyigbe, 2016). This is because the interests of politicians and their supporters are often tacitly backgrounded in advertising discourse so that the undiscerning electorate could be deceived by its naturalized ideological content (Osunbiyi, 2001; Cummings & Wise, 2005).

Political campaigns are important to electoral process and in Nigeria political parties deploy creative use of language in marketing their candidates to the electorate during campaigns. The study of the use of language in Nigeria's political campaign discourse has received a lot of scholarly attention (See Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013; Taiwo, 2008; Opeibi, 2006). Political parties also employ visual communication in

promoting the image of their candidates during campaigns. Indeed, Elebute (2013) in his study of the use of the visual media in Nigeria's political campaigns since 1963 posits that visual concepts have been useful in educating Nigerian citizens on the nation's democratic process. However, not much has been done in the critical study of the use of semiotic resources in newspaper campaign advertisements produced during Nigeria's political campaigns. This paper therefore intends to study the ways in which advert producers deliberately use semiotic resources in representing Nigeria's political candidates to the electorate during campaigns.

## **Perspectivation in Visual Communication**

Wodak (2009) identified five strategies of positive-self presentation and the negative presentation of others. They are referential/nomination, predicational, argumentation, perspectivation/framing and intensifying/mitigation strategies. Perspectivation as a discursive strategy refers to the means by which producers express their point of view and involvement/distance in the reporting, description, narration or quotation of relevant events in persuasive rhetoric. Perspectivation is achieved in visual communication through the interactions between represented participants (the people, places and things depicted in the images) and the interactive participants (the people who communicate with each other through the images; that is, the producers of the images and the viewers). Kress and Leeuwen (1999) posit that producers' selection of a perspective or point of view in representing participants implies expressions of attitudes which are often socially determined. Visual resources such as size or frame of an image, image

act and gaze, layout, etc. could be deliberately deployed to project producers' point of view in visual communication. Considering the fact that the major objective of political campaign discourse is to achieve a positive image of a politician (Frolova, 2014), this study focuses on investigating the ways in which visual communication is employed by campaign advert producers to strategically project political candidates from positive/negative point of views to the readers.

### **Social Semiotics and the Critical Study of Visual Communication**

Social semiotics is an approach to the study of semiotics which views language and other modes of communication as social practice. Social semioticians posit that sign making is a motivated activity deployed to express meaning rather than a random use of signs. In this regard, they share Critical Discourse Analysts' preoccupation with the study of ideology and power relations in seemingly neutral discourses of institutions (Anthonissen, 2003). However, while much of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research has focused on the study of texts and talk, social semioticians examine ideology in linguistic and nonlinguistic modes of texts. They argue that no single semiotic code can be understood in isolation since meaning resides in the multiplicity of codes deployed in texts (Hodge and Kress, 1995). Media platforms under which newspaper advertising discourse falls, involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic elements. A holistic investigation of all the semiotic modes employed in its meaning making should therefore yield a more robust research outcome (Kress, 1997; Anthonissen, 2003).

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) studied the emerging prominence of visual images in the communication of ideas. In their critical analysis of semiotic modes, they explained that the Systemic theory of functional use of language could be extended to describe the 'grammar' of visuals. They adopted Michael Halliday's (1985) metafunctions in describing the roles of visuals in the representation of reality (ideational metafunction), interaction (interpersonal metafunction) and message (textual metafunction). This paper follows this critical view in its investigation of visual communication in Nigeria's 2011 presidential campaign advertisements. Thus, it critically investigates the use of semiotic resources in newspaper advertising visual communication in order to unveil the perspectives adopted by the discourse producers in representing three presidential candidates. In analyzing discourse participants' representation, image act, gaze, size, information value, placement, salience and framing among others are examined.

The paper focuses on the social semiotic analysis of campaign adverts produced for Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari and Nuhu Ribadu who were the three major presidential candidates in the Nigeria's 2011 general elections. The 2011 presidential election was crucial because the People's Democratic Party (PDP) had been in power for 12 years. As the incumbent president, its candidate Goodluck Jonathan had the enormous resources of his office at his disposal for the electoral campaign. Nevertheless, PDP also had internal frictions at this time, particularly with the choice of Jonathan, a southerner. Some of PDP stalwarts opposed his

emergence because they felt it signalled the end of the party's power rotation arrangement between the north and south. Jonathan's key political opponents were Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Nuhu Ribadu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Buhari was contesting for the presidential seat for the third time but CPC was new and had limited access to government resources. ACN on the other hand was better resourced financially than CPC because they had five state governors and 16 senators. However, Ribadu was making his appearance in Nigeria's presidential race for the first time. The struggle for power was therefore rife among the candidates and their political parties during the campaigns. Therefore, the semiotic resources such as photographs, cartoons, typography, layout among others deployed to represent these political candidates within the nation's socio-political context in 2011 are worth a critical investigation because they should aid the understanding of advertisers' strategic use of visual perspectives in the positive or negative representation of political actors in Nigeria's newspaper campaign advertisements. The critical perspective is emancipatory because it is concerned with unveiling hidden persuasive and manipulative discursive practices. The specific objectives of the study are to: critically examine the visual resources deployed to represent the political candidates; discuss the semiotic strategies employed by text producers to influence readers' perception of political candidates; and relate the texts to the socio-political contexts of their production.

### **Persuasive Discourse and Newspaper Political Marketing in Nigeria**

Persuasive discourse is defined by Lakoff (1982 cited in Hardin, 2010:155) as 'the non-reciprocal attempt or intention of one party to change the behaviour, feelings, intentions, or view point of another by communicative means'. Advertising, propaganda, rhetoric and religious sermons are examples of persuasive discourse. Scholars (Cook 2008; Opebi; 2004; Hughes 2003; Olujide *et al*, 2010) agree that political advertisements are produced primarily to elicit specific behaviours, such as voting, and/or increased awareness of a candidate or party. Although the newspaper is about the oldest medium of mass advertising, its choice as a means of advertising all over the world has been challenged by the audio and audio/visual advantages of radio and television respectively. Nonetheless, it could be argued that in Nigeria, the factors of tangibility, access to the target audience, short lead time and easy production of visuals have helped to keep newspaper as a significant means of reaching the electorate during campaigns. Researchers (e.g. Opeibi, 2004; Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013 and Oamen, 2015) have studied the use of language in newspaper campaign advertisements in Nigeria. They agree that text producers explore language resources to favourably sell their candidates to the electorate. Horsbol (2006) however insists on a more robust approach to the study of political newspaper adverts, stating the usefulness of multimodal perspective in robust investigation of the genre. Perhaps the closest study to this in terms of context and focus is Ademilokun & Olateju (2015). The study, which is a

multimodal discourse analysis of visual images employed in political rallies during the 2011 electioneering campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria endorsed the significance of semiotic artifacts for motivating the Nigerian public during political rallies. The study particularly noted that the use of semiotic artifacts for campaigns in Nigeria reflects discourse participants' ideologies and political leanings. This study is also focused on the investigation of visual communication in Nigeria's campaign discourse. However, while Ademilokun & Olateju's research is focused on a multimodal analysis of artefacts such as vest, head wears, *ànkàrá* and surrogate languages as signifiers, this study critically examines discourse producers' strategic deployment of semiotic resources in representing political candidates positively/negatively in selected Nigerian newspaper campaign adverts.

### Methodology

The data for this study are drawn from newspaper campaign advertisements in seven national dailies in Nigeria: *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *THISDAY*, *Daily Trust*, *Daily Sun* and *Vanguard*. A total of 126 political advertisements by the two major contending political parties were elicited from the archives of the newspapers. These comprise 18 samples from each of the newspapers. Choice of the newspapers was influenced by the assumption that they were used by the political parties for advertisement placements due to their wide circulation in the country. However, ownership and domain of circulation were also salient factors which informed our assessment of the national representation of the newspapers. *The Punch* and *Nigerian*

*Tribune* are owned by South Westerners, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* by South Southerners, *THISDAY* and *Daily Sun* by South Easterners and *Daily Trust* by a Northerner. In addition, data were gathered from newspapers published between 14<sup>th</sup> January and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011. This covers the peak period of the political campaigns for the presidential election. The data were limited to campaign advertisements of presidential candidates of PDP, CPC and ACN.

### Findings and Discussions

Due to space constraints, the discussions centre on some samples of the data gathered for the study. The study revealed that visuals were used as a means of signifying the candidates as desirable or undesirable during the campaigns. The adverts produced for the incumbent president strategically represented him as a charismatic, capable and ideal leader while those produced for his opponents revealed opposition's resistance of the incumbent's hegemonic control of power. In the analysis below, samples of political adverts which portray these observations are examined.

### Visual Metaphorisation of Political Actors

Metaphor is an important linguistic and cognitive tool used in politics to influence the minds and choices of the people (Kamalu & Iniworikabo, 2016). Beyond the traditional perception of being a 'trope' or figure of speech, metaphor has been identified in critical studies (Taiwo, 2013; Ezeifeke, 2013) as a major vehicle for understanding our physical, social and inner world. Metaphor functions by mapping conceptual structures from a relatively familiar source domain unto a less well-known target domain (Lakoff, 1993

cited in Musolff, 2012). In political discourse, metaphor would require that a reader/listener associate connections of experiences with the relation between frames deployed by the text producer (Kamalu & Iniworikabo, *ibid*). in campaign advertising, this mapping is sometimes done with the use visuals to infer positive/negative identities for political candidates and their opponents

respectively. Figures 1, 2 and 3 below are examples of the ways in which advert producers exploited visual metaphor to implicitly represent Jonathan and PDP negatively and Ribadu and his running mate, Fola Adeola positively. In Figure 1 below, cartoon is used as a semiotic resource to attack Jonathan's image.



Fig. 1: *The Punch*, April 3, 2011

The advert explores the shared socio-cultural context for its meaning signification. An umbrella which is the symbol of PDP is used metonymically to satirise the party and its candidate. Metonymic use of images is popular with political cartoons whereby characters are used to represent something or somebody else it is related to or associated with. The cartoon illustration shows a man, tacitly used to represent the PDP leadership, walking comfortably in the rain under the safe cover of an umbrella. His comfort is contrasted with images of mass suffering, portrayed by men and women standing in the rain without any form of protection. The top left side of the advert contains the headline and copy which both decry the adverse social situation of Nigeria and the insensitivity

of the PDP government to the sufferings of the people. The top right side contains the imperative ‘Vote ACN’ and the ACN logo, symbol and slogan ‘Democracy for Justice!’

On the left side of the advert, there is an empty space between the copy and the cartoon, the type that Van Leeuwen (2005: 12) refers to as ‘no-man’s land’. However, the vectors formed by the raindrops connect the participants in the cartoon to the headline and vividly reinforce the suffering of the people. The long shot of the cartoon illustration and its lack of sharpness of details strategically backgrounded its participants. The men and women were pictured from the oblique perspective without direct gaze at the reader and this implies that they were preoccupied with their unpleasant situation. In addition,

their facial expressions are not distinct and this implies dehumanisation of Nigerian masses under PDP administration. However, the man under the umbrella who is a semiotic representation of Jonathan keeps a somewhat direct gaze at the reader but his head is tilted to an angle and he appears to be peeping at the reader from under the umbrella rather than keeping a confident gaze with her/him. The impression created by this representation is that the man looks insincere.

On the right side, the top content of the advert intrudes into the picture space and this arrangement implies sameness or relationship between ACN logo, symbol, slogan and its candidates. The logo and photo also rhyme through

common features of size and sharpness of colour so that they are the most salient elements in the advert. This signifies a demarcation between the chaotic world of the Nigerian masses under the PDP government and the promised calm world of the ACN candidates. In contrast to the participants in the cartoon, the ACN candidates on the right are visually represented through close shot, direct gaze and friendly looks as warm and willing to enter into a cordial relationship with the reader. In all, the central message of the advert is that the Umbrella and by extension PDP government provides protection only for party leadership, their members and supporters rather than the masses.



Fig. 2 is an ACN advert, which also presents a caricature of Jonathan and PDP. The metonymic representation of PDP and its candidate is achieved through the use of an illustration of a man holding a damaged umbrella. The colours of his attire are significant. His shirt is yellow and this signifies excitement, youthful exuberance and

sunshine. His trousers are purple. This signifies nobility or the notion that the wearer is influential. His shoes are blue and this suggests calmness. In sum, his attire suggests that the cartoon character is a leader who is excitedly on a mission or journey. It is important to note however, that the artist deliberately introduced some dimness into the

brightness of his yellow shirt which means that the excitement of the wearer has somewhat been dimmed either by challenges from the opposition or corruption. The yellow shirt has red stripes which are also found on the damaged umbrella. This signifies a connection or relationship between the man and the damaged umbrella.

It is noteworthy that the cartoon character holds on to the damaged umbrella. This suggests that he considers it useful to some extent. However, the condition of the umbrella affects his posture so that he droops and looks crooked as he walks along. It is important to note also that though the pictorial perspective of the illustration is frontal, the man looks down at the umbrella rather than the reader. In other words, he is preoccupied with the damaged umbrella rather than the

reader. The long shot of the picture also signifies social distance between him and the reader, which means that he is detached from the reader and seems to be involved in his own troubled world. Presented in this way, the advert suggests that PDP is not a dependable party and thus its presidential candidate could also not be reliable. The alternative leadership is presented in the pictures of the ACN presidential candidates who are attired officially in dark suits, white shirts, red ties and recommended eye glasses. Presented in this way, Ribadu and Adeola are positively represented as technocrats and the ideal leaders of a modern democratic government. In addition, their frontal and direct gazes indicate their well-defined focus and desire for a close relationship with the electorate.



Fig. 3: *Daily Trust*, April 14, 2011

Fig. 3 is another metonymic representation of PDP which was issued to delegitimize the reliability of the party and its candidate. The cartoon is an illustration of a man and a woman with a baby strapped to the woman's back walking under a perforated

umbrella. The implication of the state of the umbrella is that it can no longer satisfactorily perform the function for which it was made which is to protect its carrier from rain or sun. This observation is demonstrated by the rain pouring down on the people under the

umbrella through the holes in it. The presentation of a pictorial frontal angle of the man and woman reveals their facial expressions. Their direct gazes show their worried looks and portray them as sufferers rather than significant societal figures. The medium long shot also supports this view of their social estrangement. In sum, the cartoon represented ACN's claim of Nigerian masses' anguish under the leadership of PDP. On the other hand, the pictures of ACN candidates which show their attires, frontal pictorial angle, close shot and direct gaze positively represented them as purposeful and amiable technocrats. By placing contrasting chaotic cartoon situations beside the calm context of the ACN candidates the symbolically suggests the promise of a more stable and efficient nation under the ACN leadership.

**Perspectivation in Pictorial Representation**

Pictures could be tactically employed in political campaign adverts to represent a candidate positively or negatively. In analysing pictures as a form of visual art in campaign advertisements, attention is paid to the form of the work of art, as well as what it represents because the two cannot be treated separately (Grant,

2002). For example, Fig. 4 below is a PDP advert picture of Jonathan through which the producer sought to establish identity between him and the Nigerian Muslim electorate. The close shot photograph affords the reader a detailed view of Jonathan's attire from head to shoulder. His attire includes a turban and thus gives a visual impression of a Christian presidential candidate who has affinity with the Islamic religion and culture. His direct gaze signifies a connection between him and the reader in order to compel her/him to enter into some form of solidarity with the incumbent. When a represented participant looks directly at the viewer's eyes in photography, it connotes a direct visual address with the reader and also represents the participant as demanding that the reader enters into some form of relationship her/him (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996). The plain and dark background of the picture foregrounds Jonathan's image and makes him the object of the reader's attention. In sum, while his direct gaze, pictorial colour and shot are employed to connect him with all readers, his attire strategically projects a bond between him and Muslim electorate.



Fig. 4: *Daily Sun*, March 16, 2011

Fig. 5 presents a covert taxonomy of three pictures of Jonathan, Namadi Sambo, his running mate and Shehu Shagari, the first civilian president of Nigeria. This was used to visually establish similarity in the personality and political influence of the participants and also to signal Shagari's endorsement of Jonathan's candidature. His power and position were given salience through the size of his picture which was the biggest of the three pictures. The dressing of the three participants represents them as civilian leaders and this is useful for endearing them to the electorate. The producer

sought to establish solidarity and friendship between the PDP candidates and the reader through their look. In addition, the oblique perspective of Shagari represents him as focusing on Jonathan and Sambo rather than the reader. A vector formed by the direction of his glance connects him to the other participants and demonstrate his approval of the two candidates. In this way, the pictorial representation enacts the discourse of power because it visually displays the level of influence that Jonathan and Sambo have with former political leaders of Nigeria.



In Fig. 6, a discourse of exclusion is enacted through its pictorial presentation of Muhammadu Buhari and the late General Sani Abacha. Sani Abacha was one of Nigeria's military dictators that died in 1998, while still in power. The producer strategically establishes similarities between Buhari and Abacha who has been criticized severally for his past corrupt and despotic leadership. The black and white presentation of the

participants' close up pictures strategically decreases the authenticity of the participants' personalities. Kress and Leeuwen (1996: 163) explain this strategy in photography thus:

*We judge an image real when for instance its colours are appropriately as saturated as those in 35mm photographs. When they are less saturated we judge them 'less real', 'ethereal', for instance, or 'ghostly'.*

The military outfits of the participants also aid the producer’s intention to delegitimize Buhari. By presenting them in military uniforms, the producer tacitly hinted at a universal tendency among military leaders to be despotic. Indeed, there is no direct eye contact between Buhari and the reader. Rather

he is reprinted as speaking to an unidentified participant. On the other hand, Abacha gazed directly at the viewer but not in a friendly way. Rather, his gaze is presented as aloof and calculating. The two participants are thus depicted as distant from the reader.



Fig. 6: Nigerian Tribune, March 29, 2011

Fig. 7 is an example of ACN’s use of pictorial strategy to campaign for a needed change of leadership in Nigeria. The setting of the bigger picture in the advert reveals a shanty settlement with five participants. A nude child is backgrounded at a distance standing by the door of a bamboo hut. This way, he served as a link between the children in the picture and their poor accommodation, thereby reinforcing the producer’s message of abject poverty of the Nigerian masses. Four participants are foregrounded and arranged in covert taxonomy, a form of classification which according to Kress and Leeuwen (*ibid*: 81) helps to establish a sense of commonality among the participants of an advert. Three of the foregrounded children are clothed in rags while one is unclothed similar to the child by the bamboo hut’s door.

The medium shot of the participants and the mixture of direct gaze and its absence among the children indicate some level of societal estrangement between them and the literate, middle/high class newspaper reader. Although some of them look directly at the reader, yet it is done from a detached distance and so does not reflect any form of identity or affinity. In fact, the second and third foregrounded participants (from the left) appear pensive and uncertain. Their pictorial presentation seems to say ‘although we are part of you, yet we do not belong in your world’. The second picture in the advert is that of Ribadu who wore a smile and directly looked at the reader as if inviting her/him to a close relationship. When a presidential candidate is strategically represented this way, he is portrayed as affable and

willing to enter into a relationship of social affinity with the reader.



Figure 7: *Daily Trust*, February 11, 2011

Fig. 8 below is PDP’s visual attempt at negating the idea of government’s failure to provide good life for Nigerian children. It contains two pictures which are separated by a frame. The bigger picture is that of a group of participants which includes a teacher and some school children who are involved in a collaborative classroom activity. The close shot of the picture enacts an inclusive discourse of closeness between the represented participants and the reader. In other words, the picture seems to affirm the claim that the classroom environment shown in the advert is a familiar experience for the reader also. While some of the participants are pictured frontally others are represented obliquely. However, they all look directly down at the textbooks on the table rather than at the reader. Pictured in this way, an exclusive discourse is produced in which the teacher and pupils seem to be involved in their own world of academics.

The act of looking down into the textbooks connotes the fact that the academic world lies at the feet of these Nigerians or rather that they have academic power. This is in contrast to the pensive looking children in Fig. 7 above. This picture presents a more optimistic image of the Nigerian child as the future leader who is in a purposeful process of formation. Their attires are also significant. The teacher is dressed in Nigerian attire for women, while one of the female pupils wear hijab (a head covering worn by Muslim women to conceal their hair and neck) and the others are dressed in conventional school uniform. This implies that the education system promised by the PDP candidates is all embracing albeit of modern standard. The second picture is that of Jonathan and Sambo. The picture is a close shot and they are represented as looking directly at the reader or viewer with friendly smiles. In this way, they are shown as warm, affectionate and caring and by extension committed

to realising the promise of better education and life for Nigerian children.

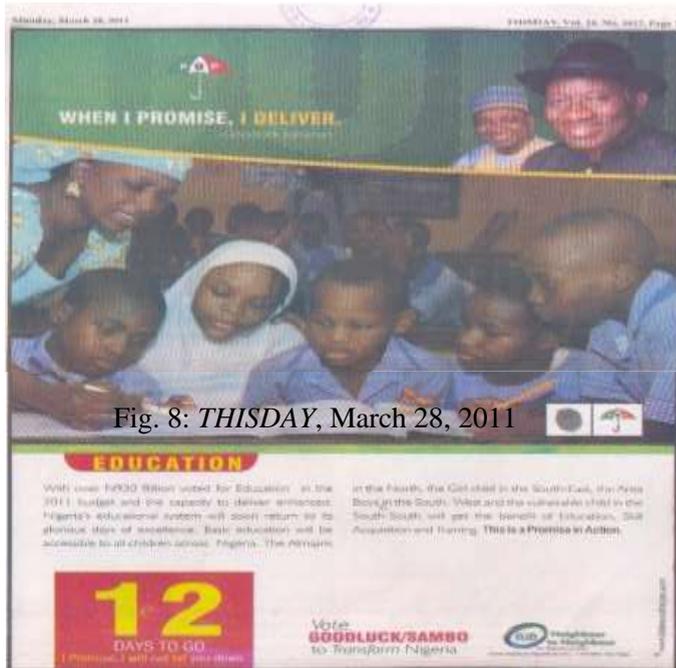


Fig. 8: THISDAY, March 28, 2011

**Perspectivation in Newspaper Campaign Advertisement Layout**

In interpreting representational and interactive meanings of campaign advert layout elements, information value, salience and framing were considered. According to Kress and Leeuwen (*ibid*: 181), ‘the placement of elements endows them with specific information values relative to each other’. In Figure 9 below, the producer employs the vertical axis and left-right information value to attack PDP’s inability to provide lasting solution to the problem of fuel supply in the country. Words and visuals are strategically combined to communicate the message. The top of the advert contains a bold headline and the picture of a very long queue of cars

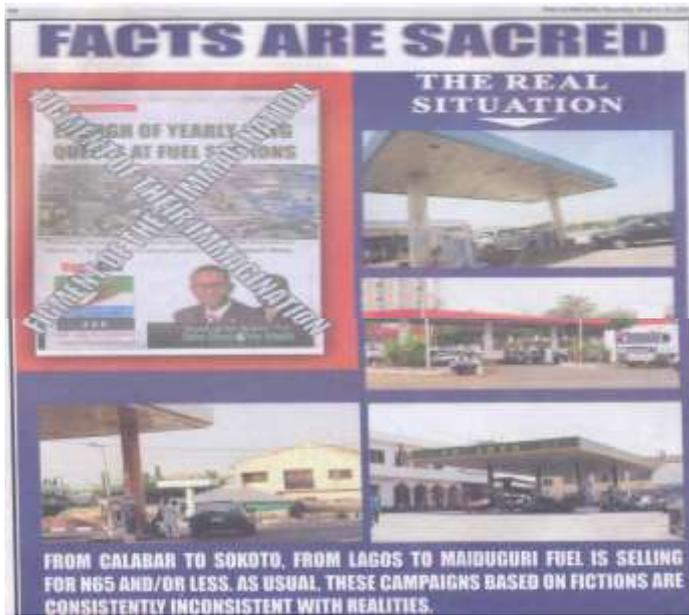
at an Oando (a major petroleum marketer) petrol station. The use of picture here is an instance of naturalistic modality in which visual truth includes the assumption that the more an image of a thing resembles the way we would see it in reality, the truer or higher is its modality (Leeuwen, 2005). The centre of the advert contains the copy while the party’s logo and the picture of the ACN candidates at the bottom are placed on the left and right respectively. In its mediating role therefore, the copy serves as the verbal explanation of the long queue at the petrol station and also introduced Ribadu and Adeola as the candidates who can solve the problem of fuel scarcity in Nigeria.



Figure 9: *Daily Trust*, March 8, 2011

Fig. 10 on the other hand, is PDP’s reaction to Fig. 9 (*Daily Trust*, March 8, 2011). A typical discourse of the powerful is enacted through semiotic resources of pictures and number to counter ACN’s claim of perennial fuel scarcity in the country. The advert contains five pictures and a body copy which is placed under the pictures. The pictures are separated by frame lines. Framing helps to signify positional differences of both parties on the claim of a fuel scarcity free situation in Nigeria under Jonathan’s administration. The semiotic potential of framing is that disconnected elements could be read as separate and independent or even contrasting units of meaning whereas connected elements could be read as belonging together in one way or

another as continuous or complementary (Van Leeuwen, 2005). The first picture on the top left corner is the ACN advert on fuel scarcity (Fig. 9), while the other four pictures show fuel stations working without any sign of queue of cars. In addition, Fig. 9 is strategically placed on the left and separated from the other pictures by a thick frame line. The distinction between the left and right is important in cultures all over the world and has been a source of meaning and morality. The left is often associated with negative moral values and the right with positive moral values. The left is also associated with the past and the right with the present (Van Leeuwen, *ibid.*). This signifies that fuel scarcity challenges in Nigeria have been resolved under Jonathan’s leadership.



In Fig. 11, the producer strategically combined visual and verbal resources in such a way that Jonathan's image is given prominence while the other candidates are backgrounded. This advert was placed in the newspaper two days before the end of the electoral campaigns for the presidential election. The producer exploits the average Nigerian's disenchantment with the military and thus deploys semiotic resource of attire and layout to directly attack the ACN and CPC candidates. Attire is used to communicate the message that Jonathan is the only civilian among the three candidates and thus is the one qualified to be a democratic president. The picture of a friendly-looking Jonathan is placed at the top of the advert which made him the most salient and eye-catching figure in the composition. On the other hand, his opponents are dressed in military uniforms and look pensive. A picture of

the map of Nigeria is placed very close to the right side of Jonathan with the phrase *fellow NIGERIANS* written on it. The adjective 'fellow' inclusively connects him to the citizens and tacitly excludes his opponents. The advert layout also enacts the 'we' and 'others' discourse as Jonathan's picture is separated from those of the other candidates while he is represented as sharing affinity with the people of the country. In addition, by placing his opponents' pictures at the bottom of the advert, the text producer strategically delegitimized their political influence. The notion of high and low could be deployed to demonstrate the participants' access to power or a lack of it. Verticality is also sometimes tinged with moral values so that high could connote positive attributes while low connotes the negative (Leeuwen, 2005).



In Fig. 12 below, the vertical dimension is also used in the placement of elements in the advert. The picture of Muslim worshippers is placed at the top of the advert, while that of Jonathan is placed at the bottom. The headline *Muslims vote wisely* is placed within the pictorial space of the Muslim worshippers and in this way indicates the referents of the headline. The copy of the advert is placed in the middle to serve as a link between the pictures. It connects the worshippers and Jonathan by stating the reasons why he should be elected instead of Buhari who the advert claims ‘chooses a radical Christian as

his Vice President’. The information value of the picture of Muslim worshippers is reflected in their act of worship rather than in the individuals. In spite of their frontal pictorial perspective, their individuality is backgrounded because of absence of direct gaze with the reader. On the other hand, Jonathan’s image is foregrounded through size, sharpness and action. He is strategically placed at the right hand side at the bottom of the advert to portray him as a new breed of political leader who is tolerant of all Nigeria’s multi-religious status.



In contrast, in Fig. 13 (*Daily Trust*, April 14, 2011) below two close shot pictures of Buhari and Jonathan are used to tacitly compare their characters on the cover page of the newspaper. Layout is employed to delegitimize Buhari as an ideal leader. His picture which was taken at the grand finale of his presidential campaign outing at the International Conference Centre in Abuja on Wednesday, April 13, 2011 depicts him as emotionally weak. Although the picture shows a frontal perspective of him, there is no direct connection between him and the reader. Rather, with the use of a circumstance

of means which in this case is a handkerchief, he is represented as if trying to shut out the rest of the country. Conversely, the PDP advert which includes a close up shot of Jonathan is placed at the bottom of the cover page to depict Jonathan as an amiable candidate. His genial smile and direct gaze directed at the reader are inviting and demonstrate a desire to connect with the reader. The dominant green background of the advert and the white lettering of the copy are also strategically employed to serve as a reminder of the nationhood of Nigeria and to stir up a sense of nationalism in the reader.



Fig. 13: *Daily Trust*, April 14, 2011

**Perspectivation in Newspaper Campaign Advert Typography**

Van Leeuwen (2006: 142) asserts that a new typography has emerged which can no longer be regarded as an ‘abstract art’ but as a means of communication in its own right. This form of typography is often employed in newspaper political adverts for strategic visual communication. In some of the campaign adverts selected for this study, producers employed typography for strategic visual communication. Typography was used to foreground

salient information in persuasive attempts deployed to influence the reader’s perception of information in the adverts. For instance, in Fig. 14 (*Daily Trust*, March 15, 2011) the text producer attempts to create identity between Jonathan and PDP and the Nigerian Muslim electorate by including an Arabic version alongside the Hausa and English versions of the advert copy. In this way, the verbal-typographic message enacts an inclusive discourse of Jonathan’s all-embracing promised leadership.



Fig. 14: *Daily Trust*, March 15, 2011

In Fig. 15 (*The Guardian*, April 5, 2011) below, graphology is strategically deployed in form of a handwritten letter to index a poor albeit ardent Hausa supporter of Buhari. In this way, the producer attempts to validate CPC's claim that its candidate is loved and supported by the Nigerian masses. ACN also ideologically indexed child

speakers in some of its adverts through the use of childlike handwriting. In Fig. 16 (*Daily Trust*, March 25, 2011) this strategy is used to index child speakers in order to influence the feelings of the reader and get her/him disenchanted with the suffering of the masses under the PDP government.



Fig. 15: *The Guardian*, April 5, 2011



Fig. 16: *Daily Trust*, March 25, 2011

## Conclusion

In this study, a critical investigation of Nigeria's campaign adverts' visual communication was carried out. This was done with a view to making clear the strategic use of perspectives in the visual representation of political actors in newspaper campaign adverts. The social semiotic analytical approach was adopted in the study of semiotic resources deployed in the 2011 presidential advert campaign discourse. The findings reveal that the interests of advert producers influence their constitution of visual elements in

campaign adverts. The study also shows that the text producers deployed semiotic resources of framing; metaphorisation, layout, typography and layout among others to tactically to project political candidates as desirable or otherwise. Viewed against Nigeria's need for voters' campaign discourse literacy, we conclude that newspaper advert visual representation of politicians serves as a force that could influence citizens' positive or negative perception of political candidates during campaigns.

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