

ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL OF PERSUASION IN PEAK MILK TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Emmanuel Nyong INYANG¹

¹Lecturer, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria
Corresponding author: Emmanuel Nyong Inyang; e-mail:mannyinyang@yahoo.com

Abstract

There is stiff competition in the Nigerian business environment occasioned by the proliferation of various brands of goods and services. Some products have however, remained visible on the counters of almost every shop or open market in Nigeria in spite of the competition, and one of such products is Peak milk. This article examines the application of the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion in Peak milk television commercials in order to see what elements the advertisers of Peak milk use to attract potential consumers, how the elements are used and if they are capable of influencing the consumers' buying behaviour. The article employs a semiotic approach in analysing some selected peak milk commercials - the horizontal and linear relationships that exist within them, that make it probable for potential consumers to choose peak milk in the midst of many other brands of milk and dairy products.

Keywords: *Peak milk, television, commercials.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian business environment is intricate and besieged as so many activities take place within it, which make decision making among interested parties extremely laborious. Many businesses and investors have lost money and patronage as a result of inappropriate exhibition of their products, services or ideas to prospective consumers. A lot of companies flood the business environment in Nigeria, however, while some seem to be successful in the packaging and distribution of their products and services, others still struggle to reach their target audience. On the other hand, consumers are faced with the problem of choosing from the wide array of products and services presented to them especially with the help of the mass media. Many companies spend money on commercials and sales promotion only to discover that many people do not remember their products or are

not persuaded enough to purchase them because the persuasive elements employed in the products' advertisements cannot pass across the message as intended by the advertiser, nor influence the consumer to procure the products. SHARMA & SHARMA insists that television commercials should be able to carry the positive message and to attract the consumer to the products, through the use of elements like sound, colour, graphics, lighting, models, special effects, music, etc (SHARMA & SHARMA, 2009).

In spite of the struggle for space within the Nigerian business environment, FrieslandCampina WAMCO seems to have been a part of Nigerian homes since 1954 through its flagship brand "Peak Milk". Peak is a very popular brand of milk that has since become a household name for dairy products in Nigeria, as it pioneered the manufacture of evaporated milk and it is the market leader in the introduction of fortified based milk products in Nigeria with ISO 9001:2008 certified and the first dairy company in Nigeria to be HACCP certified. According to Wikipedia, FrieslandCampina WAMCO Nigeria Plc. has continued to play a leading role in the production, processing, packaging, marketing and distribution of various milk products in Nigeria with an annual turnover of 112 billion naira as at 2012 and a dominant market share driven by her key brands, Peak, Three crowns and Friso.

This article seeks to analyse select Peak milk television commercials to see how FrieslandCampina WAMCO Nigeria Plc. was able to persuade and maintain its customers in spite of the emergence and proliferation of milk and other dairy products produced by rival companies within the Nigerian business environment, and to ascertain the ways these

television commercials pass across messages through the central and peripheral routes of persuasion to different consumers of Peak milk.

Objectives of the Study

This article is guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the persuasive elements employed in select Peak milk television commercials
2. To examine the routes through which these elements are transmitted to consumers, and
3. To ascertain if these elements and or the routes through which they are transmitted are capable of influencing individuals and families to purchase Peak milk and other dairy products belonging to the FrieslandCampina WAMCO Nigeria Plc. company.

2. THE CONCEPT OF TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

According to Abideen et al., television commercials are fundamental advertisements that are transmitted through the television. Television commercials represent a span of programming paid for and produced by an organization that conveys a message concerning a product or service (ABIDEEN, FAROUGH & LATIF, 2011). The revenues obtained through the release of television commercials provide a significant portion of funding for a majority of privately owned television networks.

In general, the vast majority of television commercials or advertisements consist of brief spots, typically ranging in length from a few seconds to several minutes. Television commercials are known as infomercials and will typically last 30 minutes to one hour. Television commercials that assume this length are used to promote a wide variety of product or services that are typically marketed to individual consumers (ABRAHAM, 1997). Borce et al. state that television commercials are used to spark the interest in a product or service (BORCE, THILL, DOREL & WOOD, 1995). Without commercials, the majority of a company's products and services would not maximize their ability to reach mass markets, to globalise a product or to demonstrate a strong market presence and persuade

customers. Companies pay much money for commercial /advert space in order to effectively reveal their products or services to the general public.

According to Brassington et al., television commercials are regulated by FCC; television commercials cannot market illegal products, use foul language or solicit violence in any fashion (BRASSINGTON & PETITT, 2011). They cannot mislead an audience about the characteristics of an underlying product which is deemed illegal. As a result of these restriction, all television commercials must maintain the integral aspect of advertising in general.

Television commercials mainly seek to persuade consumers by using catchy jingles. Television commercials may decide to use comics, films, models, colours, music, sounds to catch the attention of consumers and also provide important information about various goods or products. Ghulan et al. assert that the goal of all television commercials is to leave a lasting image on a consumer base (GHULAN et al., 2012). Television commercials attempt to achieve this feat by using visuals or words that "stick" in the consumers' mind. To persuade consumers to purchase or research a particular goods or service, television commercials can use the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, which carries elements from the peripheral routes and also the message from the central route. Television commercials are typically instituted and created by advertising agencies. These companies develop television commercials based on the underlying product and the manufacturer who produces the product. Television commercials help to identify products, communicate product information, encourage product usage, increase brand preference or loyalty and expand product distribution.

3. ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL OF PERSUASION

The Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion is a dual process theory developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo in 1980 that attempts to explain how attitudes are formed and changed by processing stimuli. The

impression of this theory is that the persuasion level of a message can affect the desired effect of the message. ELM can be applied in advertisement, marketing, media, and psychology. The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion has two major routes to persuasion which are: the central route and the peripheral route.

The central route: Messages from this route are likely to result from a person's careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of information in support of an advocacy. It involves a high level of message elaboration in which a great amount of cognition about the arguments is generated by the individual receiving the message. The result of attitude change will be relatively enduring, resistant and predictive of behaviour.

In the central route, listeners /viewers will focus on the argument, key points, logic, and source. The substance of your message is what persuades in this case (deep processing of information). The central route uses; (a) motivation (b) strong argument (c) message substance.

The peripheral route of persuasion results from a person's association with positive and negative cues in the stimulus or making a simple inference about the merits of the advocated position. The cues received by the individual under the peripheral route are generally unrelated to the logical quality of the stimulus. These cues will involve factors such as credibility or attachment to source of the message or the production quality of the message.

Under the peripheral route, people allow themselves to be influenced by others (superficial processing of information). The peripheral route does not read much about a particular product, unlike the central route which reads more about a product before purchasing it.

The peripheral route uses models, colour, music (voices), emotional statements or stories which pass the message. What determines the efficacy of this route to the audience is significance (interest) and the disposition of the audience at the time – is it bad timing, is the audience excited, sad, etc.

The Elaboration likelihood model of persuasion suggests that television commercials should be able to carry both routes in their commercials, using an element that best describes and explains the commercial and also a message conveyed to the consumers.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

This article employs a semiotic approach to analyse select Peak milk television commercials. Semiotics is a science that studies the life of signs in society; it is the reverse of the positivist method of content analysis. Semiotics provides us with a potentially unifying conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms for use across the full range of signifying practices, which include gesture, posture, dress, writing, speech, photography, film, television and radio. It can help explain how signifiers like sound, colour, graphics, lighting, models, special effects, music, etc. used in television commercial help in creating realism in television commercials.

Embedded in these commercials are signs which can be understood by the relationship between the signifier and the signified (SEALED, 2004). Semiotic analysis is used in this article to interpret the signifiers which are used in forming the commercials. The signifiers are aspects such as: the characters used, graphics, colours, sound, special effects, object and wordings, etc. These elements are usually employed in the conception of commercials/adverts.

5. SYNOPSIS OF SELECT TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Peak Generation 2 is the story of a family that is about to be served breakfast by their mother. At the sight of Peak milk in the tray, the whole family gets excited, the daughter begins to imagine and wish that one day she will be able to treat her own family to the goodness of Peak milk, which always brightens the face of every family member. Her imagination is cut short by her mother, who asks her to serve the family and in astonishment, she seeks confirmation from her mom as to whether she is really to serve the meal. The sight of peak milk poured into the meal brings about so much excitement and smiles on the faces of everyone seated for breakfast.

Peak - Kanu (Milk at its peak) is a story of a teenager Papilo, who is always happy playing football. Papilo is sent by his mom to buy Peak evaporated milk and he plays his ball down to the market. As he is about to collect the milk

from the seller, the milk slips from her hand but Papilo uses his leg to trap the milk not allowing it fall on the ground. The seller gets thrilled and says to him: "Papilo, one day I know say you go make us proud". Twenty years after Papilo (Kanu Nwankwo), scores goals and wins medals for his country and he comes home to visit his mother; he is surrounded by children which he encourages that Peak milk can strengthen and give them a brighter future, as it has always done from generation to generation.

Peak 456 advert focuses on a little girl too smart and inquisitive for her age, she asks critical and intelligent questions that astonish the adults around her and leaves them in awe. The advert suggests that her daily consumption of Peak 456 has brought about her brain development.

Pecadomo featuring Ada Ameh and Ushebe is a story of a mother's visit to her son. Before her arrival, her son is in the kitchen preparing a delicacy. He leaves the kitchen to open the door for her with so much excitement as she joins him in the kitchen to see what he is preparing but to her surprise, she finds him using Peak milk to make garri (Eba). She queries her son and with so much excitement, he reveals to her that Peak milk can do so much - that it can be used to prepare semovita, rice, kunu (her favourite drink) etc. In fact, Peak milk can do more than she can even imagine. He even confides in her that he blends Peak milk with malt drink when he wants to make love to his wife, and that it enhances their lovemaking experience. Mother leaves the kitchen to the living room to call her husband to buy two Peak milk and malt drinks, mix his and drink and keep one for her.

6. SYNTAGMATIC STRUCTURES OF THE COMMERCIALS

Peak Generation 2 opens with members of a family seated round the dining table in preparation for breakfast while the mother walks into the dining room with a tray in her hands, containing breakfast for the family. The camera then focuses on the daughter who is dressed in her school uniform and lost in her thoughts and imaginations before zooming into a tin of Peak evaporated milk. There is a flashforward showing the daughter's imagination. She imagines herself as a

mother, carrying her family's breakfast in a tray, serving her husband and children as everyone feels very happy. The sight of Peak milk in the tray, in fact, the next scene shows a hand pouring peak milk into a bowl of cereals and a cup of tea and two boys smiling. While still in her trance, mother interrupts her, places her hands on her shoulder and asks her to serve Peak into the meal on the dining table. The next scene shows the girl cheerfully serving Peak into her brother's cereal as they both smile while their father smiles at their mother, who smiles back with a slight nod. The last scene shows the girl holding and looking at a tin of peak evaporated milk and thanking Peak for always being there for her.

Peak - Kanu (Milk at its peak) opens with Papilo playing football with his friends outside his home, the camera pans to his mother, walking from the kitchen towards the door as she calls on Papilo, and he walks towards her. The next scene shows Papilo's mom rubbing his head as she gives him money to buy her Peak milk. Papilo takes the money and plays his ball towards the market. He passes by an old man sitting along the road and the man smiles cheerfully at him as he plays with his ball happily. The next scene shows a woman sitting in a kiosk, as Papilo bows his head to greet her and hand the money to her. As she is about to hand the milk to Papilo, it slips off her hands and Papilo quickly traps the milk with his leg preventing it from falling to the ground. The camera then pans to the woman perplexed and smiling as she pronounces: "Papilo, one day I know say you go make us proud" while Papilo turns and waves at the woman. The next scene shows Papilo sitting and pouring Peak milk into a bowl as he eats and smiles passionately. Papilo is then shown grown up, wearing a Nigerian football jersey and kissing a medal. The next scene shows Papilo playing for Nigeria in a stadium, he scores a goal and his teammates gather around him celebrating the victory. The next scene shows Papilo on a visit to his mother, escorted and surrounded by a teenager and a man carrying football as they come to welcome him. As he walks to the house with all the children surrounding him, he tells them how Peak has been building the strength and dreams of Nigerians. The camera then focuses on Papilo as he walks into the house, and

his mother stands up to hug him, the camera cuts to Papilo in a room with children surrounding him as he brings out his jersey and shows it to the kids and then he brings out Peak milk from his bag but the milk slips from his hand as he is about to show it to them, but he is quick to trap it with his leg, just the way he did it about twenty years ago. The last scene shows Papilo's mother covering her mouth with her hands, watching him hold the tin of milk in his hand.

Peak 456 advert starts with a view of a little girl's legs, then progresses to a kitchen showing the parents of the little girl standing while she sits and eats. The camera then zooms into a pack of Peak 456 on the table, close to the little girl as she asks her mom a question and pans to show her father shaking his head and hands. The next scene opens with the little girl in a shopping mall basket shaking a coconut, then progresses to her mother carrying a bunch of bananas and walking towards the basket as the little girl asks how water manages to get into the coconut, while the mother looks at her amazed. The camera pans to an attendant looking at the girl with admiration before turning to stack some goods on the shelf. Next, the camera hovers around the girl, her toys and her father in a living room, as she asks her father another smart question: "Daddy, how come you have hair on your face and Mummy doesn't?" The next scene opens at noon showing the girl painting on a drawing board in her room and a caricature of a doctor is shown by the board, explaining the health benefits of Peak 456 on kids between the ages of 4 and 6, then a pack of Peak 456 is shown, highlighting that it has DHA capable of fortifying children. Finally, there is a night scene in the little girl's room, the camera shows the girl kneeling on a chair by her window and viewing the stars in the sky, then her mother walks towards her with a glass of Peak 456, as she asks her why the stars only come out at night.

Pecadomo featuring Ada Ameh and Ushebe opens with a door bell ringing as Ochuko walks towards the door. As he opens the door, his mother walks in and follows him to the kitchen where he was preparing a meal. The mother queries him as he pours Peak milk into a pot on fire to stir eba (garri). The camera then zooms into Ochuko with a tin of Peak evaporated milk, as he explains to his mother, the benefits of using Peak milk to prepare

meals and all the meals that can be prepared with Peak milk. The camera then shows a panoramic view of the kitchen and Ochuko confiding in his mother how he blends Peak milk with Malt to drink before making love to his wife and the testimony it produces. The mother then excuses Ochuko to go to the living room while he continues preparing his meal. As Ochuko walks into the living room with the meal, the camera focuses on his mother on a telephone conversation with her husband, asking him to buy Peak milk and Malt, blend, drink, and keep her share for her. Ochuko stands still a while, listens to their conversation before she suddenly turns and their eyes meet and Ochuko hails her and she smiles sheepishly.

7. PARADIGMATIC ANALYSES

Peak Generation 2 suggests that Peak milk brings about joy, happiness and smiles to families, as the sight of Peak milk at every meal brightens the faces of the family. This is portrayed in the advert in the scene where every member of the family is seated for breakfast as mother carries breakfast in a tray that includes Peak milk, and at the sight of Peak milk in the tray, everyone is seen smiling. This is also reflective in the flashforward scene where the daughter is imagining that she is a mother. The same sentiment is expressed as everyone in the family appears to be excited at the sight of Peak milk in their breakfast. *Peak Generation 2* also suggests that Peak has remained potent from generation to generation, giving joy to every family that patronises it. The advertiser conveys all his ideas and emotions in just one scene; however, the music and conversations give the impression that Peak has always been there.

Peak - Kanu (Milk at its peak) also suggests that Peak milk has been a household name from generation to generation. It further suggests that Peak milk gives strength and helps to build dreams and aspirations as in the case of Papilo - a young street footballer who eventually became a national football champion.

Peak 456 advert suggests that Peak 456 is essential for kids within the ages of 4-6, as it supports brain development. Its unique proposition is that Peak 456 contains DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid), a key structural component of the human

brain, cerebral cortex, skin and retina. Emphasising DHA as an active component of Peak 456 tends to give Peak an edge over other brands of milk for children within that age range.

Pecadomo is a promotional strategy that showcases non-conventional uses of Peak milk. It suggests that Peak milk is not just formulated to enrich tea and cereals but that it can also be used to prepare regular meals like semovita, eba (garri), abacha and other conventional delicacies. The hypothesis of *Pecadomo* (Peak can do more) is that adding Peak milk to local and continental dishes causes no harm, rather, that it helps to soothe one's skin. The multipurpose function of Peak milk is an indication that Peak is far ahead of other brands of milk.

8. FINDINGS

Rhetorical tropes

Rhetorical tropes are those signifiers used in persuading or influencing others to believe that what is signified is real. *Peak Generation 2* and *Peak - Kanu* made use of flashforward, lighting, music, dialogue, characters, camera and lens movements to create sensation. *Peak 456* and *Pecadomo* went further to use tastefully furnished apartments for status conferral - to show that Peak milk consumers belong to a unique class, a class of happy and comfortable people.

Intertextuality

The commercials analysed were selected based on certain shared characteristics. *Peak Generation 2* and *Peak - Kanu* (Milk at its peak) employed the peripheral route of persuasion and played the tenacity role, signifying that Peak is a household name, and that it has always served the needs of families from generation to generation, making them happy and building their dreams, and that it will always be there. *Peak 456* and *Pecadomo* were innovative and utilised both the central and peripheral routes of persuasion, even though they made use of tastefully furnished contemporary homes, they also did a lot of elaboration, explaining how and why their products should be used. *Peak - Kanu* and *Pecadomo* utilised famous Nigerian stars to entice their consumers, while *Peak Generation* and *Peak 456* used less significant casts.

Modality

Modality is the reality status accorded to or claimed by a sign. It assesses the likelihood of the claims made in it. In all the commercials under review, the characters employed were made to appear excited at the sight of Peak milk, signifying that if you really want to be happy, then you need to use Peak milk. *Peak Generation 2* expressed its sentiments in just one scene, music, voice-over narration and dialogue were however, used to infer that Peak is a household name. In *Peak - Kanu*, Papilo's ability to stall the tin of milk from falling to the ground is an indication that there is greatness in him, little wonder the milk seller exclaimed: "Papilo, one day I know say you go make us proud". In *Peak 456* advert, the smart questions that the little girl asked as a user of *Peak 456* is a testimonial to the fact that *Peak 456* is specially formulated for brain development. In *Pecadomo* - featuring Ada Ameh and Ushebe, Ochuko divulged his sexual antidote (Malt and Peak milk) to his mother and she instinctively called her husband to try it, this same magic bullet effect is likely to hit anyone who watches the advert.

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Nigerian business environment is saturated with more products than the consumers can consume. A lot of companies have lost patronage or even gone out of business largely due to inappropriate exposition of their produce. While some companies seem to be successful in the marketing of their products, others still struggle to reach their target audience. Consumers on the other hand, seem to be faced with the problem of choosing from the wide array of products presented to them. In spite of all these, some companies still persist and enjoy patronage from Nigerians, one of such companies is *FrieslandCampina WAMCO Nigeria Plc.* - producers of Peak milk. This article sought to find out how *FrieslandCampina WAMCO Nigeria Plc.* was able to present its products to consumers and win their patronage.

A summary of the analyses in this article discloses that Peak milk commercials make use of people, light, sound, graphics, camera and lens movements, and aesthetics. These signifiers are

directed to potential consumers through the central and peripheral routes of persuasion. Until recently, Peak milk commercials were able to woo potential consumers with mere peripheral cues – the sight of happy looking people with Peak milk in their hands was enough to sell the product but with the proliferation of other brands of milk and dairy products, recent Peak milk commercials do higher elaboration, they try to explain how their products can be used and why consumers should use them. This obviously led to the concept of Pecadomo (Peak can do more), implying that Peak can do more than one can ever imagine.

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