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## The effectiveness of multilingual marketing/advertising messages by Nigerian manufacturers

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### Abstract

A well designed product's package is very essential for effective communication as it facilitates the delivery and accurate decoding/interpretation of the marketing message(s) it contains. However, communication can become complicated when the marketing message is conceived to be bilingual or multilingual in view of targeting linguistically heterogeneous consumers. Because multilingual messages/texts' designers usually make extensive use of typography and graphic design (to differentiate between linguistic codes involved in the composition of the message and to ultimately make these compositions readable and intelligible to potential decoders), we used a textual analysis and a user study to reveal incidences of reduced effectiveness – nay ineffectiveness – of marketing messages featuring on the packages of some products made in Nigeria or marketed by Nigerian firms. This study is based on a content analysis and two focus group discussions. The content analysis involved a dozen marketing messages by Nigerian manufacturers from the food and drugs sectors. It considered multilingual phrases and sentences contained in the messages as units of analysis. The paper presents a critique of these multilingual marketing messages with respect to the use of typography and graphics. It analyses the presence and use of typographical markers and graphics in advertising messages to differentiate between languages. It reveals that most Nigerian designers dominantly use punctuation and less spacing to differentiate between the linguistic codes employed in the construction of marketing/advertising messages. Furthermore, some of the multilingual phrases and sentences do not have typographical markers to emphasize these linguistic differences. The texts therefore remain mostly compact and hardly or less legible. The two focus group discussions conducted with multilingual and unilingual expatriates helped elicit consumers' capacity to spot information presented in the multilingual message as well as explain how (in)effective the advertising messages may be in explaining the characteristics of the products been advertised. The discussants identified a number of weaknesses that pointed to the reduced effectiveness of the advertising messages.

**Keywords:** typography, graphic design, multilingual marketing messages, effective communication

### 1. Introduction

The systematic use of multi-lingual messages is progressively becoming a dominant and practical approach in the advertising and marketing of Nigerian manufactured products. A considerable number of Nigerian multinationals (from almost all industrial sectors) increasingly target international markets in the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) region and even beyond and are consequently bound to increasingly resort to translation or multilingual communication in their marketing and advertising campaigns (Endong, 2013, p. 34; Salaudeen, 2008, p. 42; Leurent, 2008, p. 45; Goura and Obi, 2001, p. 16). They formulate marketing/advertising messages in multiple languages. These multilingual messages are artfully designed and delivered via product information featuring on packages. Information delivery is, in principle, in a way as to distinguish the English versions of these messages from their translations into other mod-

ern European languages, notably French, Portuguese, Spanish and the like. The mobilisation of translated advertising and marketing messages has thus led to the use of multilingual texts (inscribed on packages) for the promotion of Nigerian manufactured products.

Setting a multi-lingual message on a package is a veritable complex task, especially in situations where the package offers a relatively reduced space. In line with this observation, Balius (2012, p. 32) insightfully posits that linguistic differences between different language and reduced space are often sources of headaches to the designers. He contends that "languages determine the way we see texts, their particular hues and the amount of space we need for a certain amount of text (its length). Some specific combinations of letters appear more frequently in one language than in another, so each language defines its own visual conventions that affect the reading process".

The designer is often bound to work under serious constraints. He has to maximise the space available and design the package – deliver the message through the package – in a way that the linguistically heterogeneous consumers being targeted will all be effectively reached (Cater, Day and Meggs, 2012; Stanway, 2014; Ishida, 2001; Pareek and Khunteta, 2014; Achoimre, 2014; Balius, 2012). In other words, the designer is to design the textual contents of the package in a way as to facilitate the effective dissemination/transmission and decoding or interpretation of the marketing/advertising message in all the languages involved. As Nakilcioğlu (2013, p. 35) succinctly puts it, the most important characteristic of a print message is that “it carries the communication message directly to the reader. The reader should be able to read and understand the message carried to him/her as fast and as easily as possible”.

In his efforts to facilitate effective communication with a variety of targeted consumers, the designer often employs phenomena such as typography and punctuation among other reader devices (Chan Ik and Ho Eun, 2013, p. 393; Learner, 2012, p. 1; Ashipu, 2009, p. 116). The designer equally relies on such devices as drawings, images and graphical illustrations as the primary components of visual language to support the conception and visualization of marketing ideas, information and messages (Learner, 2012, p. 1). Though

## 2. Conceptual framework

In this section, we give attention to the explication of two key – concepts namely multilingualism and effective communication. The two concepts enjoy multiple definitions by theorists and communication professionals. For the sake of clarity, the study will hinge on specific conceptual definitions of the terms.

### 2.1 Multilingual communication

Multilingualism is associated with the use of two or multiple linguistic codes in one and same communication context. It inevitably involves the use of code switching or code mixing in the delivery of the message in a communication situation (Achoimre, 2014; Bulawka, 2012; Isdhida, 2001; Balius, 2012; Liali and Omobowale, 2011; Ugot, 2009). It is based on this conception of multilingualism that this study defines multilingual advertising/marketing messages as information conceived in various languages and contained in a same marketing/advertising message. In the context of Nigerian product advertising, ideas and information are often conceived in English and partially or totally translated in multiple languages including French, Spanish, Portuguese or Arabic). These messages target linguistically heterogeneous readers/consumers.

visual communication may be exploited to effectively deliver a multilingual message, typography appears the most appropriate and commonly used by designers. As Nakilcioğlu (2013, p. 52) insightfully contends,

The fundamental function of writing is to transfer thoughts and knowledge. During this communication, typography is the fundamental element that makes the writing legible and elegant. Even in the books that were written by hand a hundred years ago, the fundamental concern is legibility. No matter how aesthetically perfect the writing is, if it cannot be read, it cannot fulfil its fundamental function of “transferring knowledge to its readers”.

Using a textual analysis and a user study, this paper is based on two principal objectives. It seeks both to:

- a. Examine the use of typography and graphic design in the construction of multi-lingual marketing messages appearing on the packages of a dozen products made in Nigeria or marketed by some Nigerian firms.
- b. Show – through a user study – the extent to which the use of such devices is effective in differentiating the various versions of the marketing messages as well as in presenting (in the various languages) the characteristic of the products being advertised/marketed.

### 2.2 Effective communication

Though enjoying various definitions, the concept of communication is generally viewed as a process involving the sending, reception and reaction to messages. In effect, in a communication context, a message is sent by the source, to a person or a group (communicatee), ideally in a manner that the latter will understand it. No doubt, Oyewo (2000, p. 157) defines communication as “the process of transmitting, receiving and acting upon message/information, thoughts, ideas, attitudes and feelings through mutually agreed understandable/determined codes/symbols”. This definition indicates that for communication to be effective, the encoding of the message by the source should be effected according to linguistic codes and other conventional signs that are mutually intelligible (understandable by both the sender and the receiver). As Liali and Omobowale (2011, p. 474) succinctly put it, “true communications through the use of certain language(s) with social circles requires mutual intelligibility of meanings for appropriate understanding to avoid the problems of (mis)interpretations”. This brings to the fore the imperativeness to produce meaning during the information exchange. In line with this, Nwamuo (2010, p. 21) views communication as the deliberate creation of meaning through the

systematic use of signals and symbols. Nwamuo (2010, p. 21) further offers the following definition of effective communication:

Effective communication is the act of sending a message in such a way that the decoder or receiver understands clearly the full meaning of the message. Whether it be intra-personal, inter-personal,

### 3. Literature review

This section of the paper is principally concerned with a review of studies devoted to the use of typography in multilingual print communication. It addresses two issues, namely the importance of typography in effective advertising/marketing communication and the typographical treatment of multilingual messages.

#### 3.1 Typography, graphic design and effective communication

A vast literature has sought to examine typography, graphic design and effective communication across various visual, print and audio-visual media (Stanway, 2014; Chan and Ho-Eun, 2013; Nathaporn, 2013; Leaner, 2012; Carter, Day and Meggs, 2012; Ashipu, 2009; Staniscia, 2008; O'Sullivan et al., 1994). These studies argue that the appropriate use of typography and graphic design is mainly for the purpose of (effective) communication. No doubt typography has often been viewed as the study of how letterforms are used to create effects from bold to elegant, and from delicate to aggressive (Ampong, 2011).

The postmodernist perspective in print message design, advocates a reader-based communication approach as it stipulates that “a piece of graphic design as well as art, is incomplete until the reader interprets it” Staniscia (2012, p. 2). In the same line of argument, Nathaporn (2013, p. 26) asserts that “in communicating by means of letters [...], the sender must consider the readability and recognition of the audience. Otherwise, the message sent out may trigger miscommunication”. This post-modernist concept of the reader is in line with Barthes' declaration that effective communication should be based on of the “Death” of the author (the encoder) in favour of the “Birth” of the reader (the decoder). The post-modernist conception of typography deviates remarkably from the Modernist's one, whose aim was to reach universality, objectivity, and functionality. Typography is, according to the post-modernist perspective, subordinated to the text and its content. According to this school of thought, “it is not the designer/typographer's business to interpret literature in his own way. Literature can speak for itself. His task is to make easier reading”. However, to some post-modernist critics as Warde cited in Staniscia (2012, p. 2–3), “it is left almost completely

the group or mass communication, the major purpose is to effectively communicate ideas to the receiver.

In this study, focus will be on seeing how typography and design are used by Nigerian firms to effectively communicate their marketing/advertising messages to multiple (linguistically heterogeneous) consumers.

open to the typographer to interpret the copy in his own personal way” in advertising communication. “The importance of the message [...] must be brought out by typographical means, for it is the visual impact on the public that matters and not so much the legibility”.

Typography is used in various print communication contexts, notably the setting of text messages. Ashipu (2009, p. 116) has identified it as a rhetorical device in some newspaper (print) communication in Nigeria. He notes that, most newspapers lay-outs exploit typography to give “a distinctive journalistic characteristic in media writing generally”. However, typography is to be apprehended as a reader device. A proper use of typographical markers and graphic design (spacing, punctuation, boxing, colouring, capitalisation and the like) inevitably reduces a number of barriers to communication, notably syntactical and semantic noises. It enables the communicator to design the print message in a more meaningful and readable way. Typography is therefore a potential tool for a more expressive and effective communication. Hostetler (2013, p. 28) notes that:

The use of typography is the primary means of presenting ideas and messages for expressive communication [...] Typography has a dual role: to represent a concept, and to do so in a visual form. This interplay of meaning and form brings a balanced harmony into the stage both in terms of function and expression.

Nakilcioğlu (2013, p. 47) asserts that the first and most important duty of the designer is to choose the appropriate letter and typeface. When this choice is made correctly, the first design problem is resolved. According to him, when used properly, the different font specifications of writing (notably typefaces, sizes and so forth) make the script (product package) attract more attention to the parts it wants to direct the reader's attention and thus makes sure the subject is better understood (Nakilcioğlu, 2015, p. 52; Nathaporn, 2013, p. 26; Chan and Ho-Eun, 2013, p. 394; Kidd, 2011, p. 12; Heller and Ilic, 2012, p. 11; Learner, 2012, p. 4). In line with this, Hostetler (2013, p. 27) further observes that:

Each typeface has its own individual identity because of different proportions and a variety of line weights, widths, directional slants and so on. These individual qualities clearly determine that each typeface demonstrates a different use and purpose for expression. A well-combined variety of typefaces bring variations of expression and harmony to the design. Awareness of these classifications is an essential tool in developing a designer's ability to select an appropriate typeface that enhances the expressive message in typography.

Studies in information design and psychology have equally shown that typeface in particular can affect readers (audiences) in two principal ways. The first way is by creating connotations (for instance novelty, potency, elegance) above and beyond the denotative message contained in the text (Rowe, 1982; Bartram, 1982) and the second way is through interaction between the connotative meaning of the typeface and the denotative meaning of the text. This means that when there is consistency between the typeface and meaning of the text, the perception by audiences of the message (of the text) is strengthened (Foltz, Poltrok and Potts, 1984; Lewis and Walker, 1989).

### 3.2 Use of typography and design in multilingual advertising messages

Multilingualism in print advertising plays multiple functions ranging from symbolism and identity formation to globalisation. The symbolic and identity formation functions of multilingualism are viewed in the fact that certain languages are considered to function as symbolic vectors of stereotyping and requisites for the reproduction of fixed images about native speakers of those languages.

Citing Hamaan and a number of other authors, Bulawka (2012, p. 65) contends that a number of positive ethno-cultural stereotypes have often been associated with particular international languages (notably French, English, German, Italian among others) and by extension, with native speakers of these respective languages. Such stereotypes are often creatively mobilised by advertising copy writers and designers in labelling the product they advertise.

The cultural stereotypes are surprisingly similar in [many different] cultural and linguistic contexts. Thus, French conjures up image of elegance, sophistication, refinement and fashion, [...] Italian evokes association with tasty cuisine and 'sporty elegance' while German symbolises good quality and prestige. As the above examples demonstrate, the use of linguistic symbolism capitalises on the positive stereotyping and has as its main goal evoking favourable associations in the mind of the reader (Bulawka, 2012).

Globalisation is perhaps the most obvious function of multilingualism in international advertising. In effect, the hidden power of ethno-symbolism evoked through the use of different linguistic codes in advertising is in line with the worldwide trend toward the internationalisation of information in general and the internationalisation of the commercial text in particular. It is generally believed that by using many linguistic codes, the advertising message is aimed at many linguistic communities. According to Balius (2012, p. 32), multilingualism is dictated by the forces of economic globalisation. It should imperatively be envisaged in the promotion of a product aimed at the global market. He notes that:

Languages are usually the first barrier we encounter when we have to communicate with or relate to other cultural realities. Being able to express ourselves in one language is insufficient nowadays. Economic globalisation compels us to treat markets with respect, so if a product hopes to successfully survive it must position itself respecting local idiosyncrasies, just as any expression that aspires to be cultural (a publishing product, for instance) and hopes to transcend its local context will have to address multilingualism as a true necessity.

Multilingualism therefore follows the informational paradigm – one of the various approaches that examine the effect of language in advertising. This approach focuses on how easily consumers can comprehend and respond to information provided in a particular language. It stipulates that, for communication to be effective, information should be presented in the language of the targeted consumers. In line with this paradigm, English would be ineffective if consumers in an ethnic subculture could not comprehend the advertising message (Achoimre, 2014). Multilingualism (through translation of information on product and product use) offers the possibility to reach diverse audiences and linguistically heterogeneous consumers. However, as earlier mentioned, implementing a multilingual message is often a complex task for the designer. Indeed, such a task is very much characterised by a panoply of linguistic, cultural, aesthetic and ethical dimensions (Achoimre, 2014; Bulawka, 2012; Ishida, 2001). The designer in such a context is always compelled to observe a number of subjective – and more or less intuitive – approaches as well as a number of conventions and principles that normally varies depending on a number of factors. These factors include the linguistic differences between the languages involved in the composite text and the space available (the message expand) and the ultimate function of the text (Bouayad-Agha et al., 2004; Paris et al., 2012; Balius, 2012; Kodie and Ciarlone, 2008; Achoimre, 2014).

Ishida (2001) notes that what is paramount in multilingual texts construction is the splitting of the text in meaningful units of information. The splitting should be

in a way that will not impend translations into the various languages involved in the multilingual communication. He further notes that designers in such situations must consider linguistic differences in the implementation of the messages, especially when the message is to be accompanied with translations into various languages. “Designers must be careful about how they split up and reuse text on screen, since the linguistic differences between languages can lead to real headaches for localisers and may in some cases make a reasonable translation impossible to achieve” (Ishida, 2001).

This aspect of designing is very important as the purpose of labelling any product is to provide consumers with all of the relevant information about the product they are buying (Achoimre 2014, p. 78). For the designing of a multilingual advertising message to be effective, it is essential that the translation be accurate and reflects the true nature of the product in the various languages. “Misspellings and poor translations can prove costly, even though the packaging may only contain a few words. Such errors may also reflect badly on the organisation in question” (Achoimre, 2014).

The linguistic differences between languages involved are closely related to other considerations that border on the space available to display the multilingual text. Sadek and Zhukov (1997) corroborate this view when they insightfully contend that:

Languages affect our vision of texts, their specific colour and the amount of space we need for a given volume of text (its length). The Latin alphabet can present different textures, according to the language used for writing. Even so, changes in texture and colour are much more obvious when different writing systems are employed.

This indicates that typography is the principal strategic tool to surmounting obstacles linked to the implementation of multilingual text. A good mobilisation of typographical markers such as colour, spacing, boxing, font size, typefaces and the like may enormously help in differentiating between the different versions of the advertising message presented on same package. Shimp’s

(2007) VIEW-model aptly illustrates this fact. According to this model, four principles should guide package design, namely visibility, information, emotional appeal and workability. Visibility refers to the ability of a package to attract the attention of both the multilingual and the monolingual reader or viewer at the point of purchase. This visibility can be achieved through appropriate use of typographical markers (colouring, type face, space, point size and the like).

The second principle underscored by the VIEW-model (Information) refers to the inclusion of the right type and the right quantity of information in the various languages involved in the composition of the advertising message, this without clustering the text. The information principle is the most relevant, with respect to multilingualism as it borders on the amount of information to be communicated in the various languages against the available space provided by the package. The third principle (Emotional appeal) refers to the package’s ability to evoke a particular emotion and a desired mood. This is equally achieved through appropriate use of typographical markers. The last principle (Workability) has to do with how the package functions in terms of storage, protection and accessibility rather than its informational potentials.

All these observations indicate that through typography and graphic design, specific components of the message are given distinctive characteristics. In multilingual print messages, a careful exploitation of typography may permit the product package to differentiate between the different languages used to communicate properties of the products in promotion to various targeted consumers. This clearly enhances the effectiveness of the marketing and advertising message. The guiding principle in multilingual text design is that readers from all the targeted heterogeneous linguistic communities be effectively reached (Stanway, 2014). As Carter, Day and Meggs (2012, p. 114) insightfully observe, typography – as a dynamic representation of verbal language – must communicate. This functional role is fulfilled when the receivers from various cultures and linguistic communities clearly receive the typographic message and accurately understand what is in the mind of the transmitter (encoder).

#### 4. Research methodology

This study is based on two methods of data collection – namely, a textual analysis and two focus group discussions.

##### 4.1 Content analysis

The content analysis considered over 100 multilingual phrases and sentences contained in multilingual advertising/marketing messages appearing on the packages

of a dozen randomly selected products. The products considered in the study are made in Nigeria or marketed by Nigerian firms. They included *Aquabar Table Water*, *Annapurna Salt*, *Closenp Toothpaste*, *Mummy Kitchen*, *Fally White Vinegar*, *Omo Multiactive*, *Milo*, *Golden Penny Twist*, *Golden Penny Spagbetti*, *Indomie Instant Noodles*, *Golden Penny Sugar*, *Gossy Table Water* and *Ballourah Perfume*. The study considered this sample as the aforementioned products have multilingual messages inscribed on their

packages, contrarily to others that are exclusively unilingual (composed exclusively in English). The multilingual nature of the package therefore indicates their designers' attempts at reaching a heterogeneous readership and an international market.

According to a number of studies, these products (those selected in this study) are commercialised in French and Portuguese speaking country within the ECOWAS sub-region and Cameroon (Leurent, 2013, p. 63; Soule and Obi, 2001, p. 234; Endong, 2013).

The study considered as multilingual the messages that combined/mixed information presented in different languages. Most of the messages presented in products' packages offer information conceived or formulated in English, and completely or partially translated into other languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic).

The study equally considered only multilingual phrases and sentences of the messages as units of analysis and aimed at eliciting the firms' use of typography and graphics to differentiate between the different languages involved in the composition of the marketing/advertising messages. It measured the extent to which the firms make use of graphology and graphic design for effective communication of their marketing messages.

The data collected through content analysis was statistically analysed and presented in tables.

## 5. Results and discussion of findings

### 5.1 Use of typography and graphics in multilingual advertising messages

Findings reveal that most of the advertising/marketing messages contained typographical markers to differentiate between the English versions of the phrases and sentences and their translations into other languages. This is shown in Table 1. The use of these typographical markers in 69 % of the texts indicates that some of the messages may potentially be partially readable and partially understandable.

Though representing a relatively small portion of the advertising and marketing messages, the parts that do not contain typographical markers may reduce the effective communication of the messages as messages are bound, under such conditions, to theoretically be partially readable. This will be explained in greater details in the second part of this section through presentation of the results of the user study.

As explained earlier, multilingual texts are more readable and understandable when the different languages involved in their composition clearly stand out.

### 4.2 Focus groups

Qualitative data was equally collected through two focus group discussions with some heavy consumers of Nigerian products. The two focus group discussions were separately organised: the first involved 15 English-French and English-Spanish multilinguals and the second 15 unilingual expatriates. In each of the discussions, 9 of the participants were female. The focus group discussants had read and examined information presented on 5 of the selected packages (*Annapurna Salt*, *Closeup Toothpaste*, *Mummy Kitchen*, *Omo Multiactive* and *Golden Penny Twist*), in view of assessing the encoders' (designers') use of typographical markers and graphics. The investigation was designed to establish the (in)effectiveness of the multilingual messages presented on the packages, their ability to differentiate between different languages and their effectiveness in presenting product qualities in view of persuading readers and motivating consumption of the products. The questions addressed by focus group discussants included the following:

- Could you easily spot information in French or Spanish on the package?
- How readable is the information presented in French or Spanish?
- How coherent is the information on product or product use in French or Spanish?
- Does the package information layout discourage you from consuming the product?

Normally, from simple sight, the reader is supposed to spot the different versions (languages) and select the sections of the messages that present information in the language he/she understands or uses. He/she should therefore be enabled to see where begins and where ends the different phrases and sentences in the languages involved. For this reason, the typographical treatment of the text should be in a way as to separate the various versions, thereby facilitating effective communication.

As indicated in Table 2, punctuation is the typographical marker which is dominantly exploited in the presentation of the various marketing messages. It enjoys a percentage use of 55%, followed by spacing (35 %) and font size/typeface (20 %). Punctuation is used as principal reader device in the marketing/advertising messages of more than 8 of the 12 marketing messages considered for the study. The recurrent punctuation marks featuring in these texts include slashes [/] and full stops [.]. This can be illustrated with Figures 1, 2 and 3, showing typographical solutions respectively applied in implementing multilingual text in *Closeup Toothpaste* and *Annapurna Salt*.

Table 1: Phrases and sentences with typographical markers used in the studied packaging

Product's name	With typographical markers		With no typographical markers		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Aquabar Table Water	7	100	0	0	7	100
Annarpurna Salt	6	55	5	45	11	100
Closeup Toothpaste	6	67	3	33	9	100
Mmunny Kitchen	3	100	0	0	3	100
Fally White Vinegar	1	100	0	0	1	100
Omo Multivariate	8	44	10	56	18	100
Milo (Energy drink)	10	83	2	17	12	100
Golden Penny Twist	11	79	3	21	14	100
Golden Penny Spaghetti	10	71	4	29	14	100
Golden Penny Sugar	4	50	4	50	8	100
Gossy Table Water	2	100	0	0	2	100
Ballourah Perfume	1	100	0	0	1	100
Total	69	69	31	31	100	100



Figure 1: Enlarged section of side-view of Closeup Toothpaste.



Figure 2: Front view of the package of Closeup Toothpaste.

In Figures 1 and 2, the package of *Closeup Toothpaste* offers a range of product information in three languages (Spanish, French and English. Slashes [/] are used to differentiate a language from the other. In Figure 3, *Annarpurna Salt* rather uses a bullet [•] to separate the

English from the French version of the message. The slash and the dot are therefore the principal punctuation marks used by the designers of the packages considered for the study. As one may easily notice, punctuation often causes the text to be over clustered.

Table 2: Typographical markers used

Product's Name	Spacing		Point size / typeface		Colouring		Punctuation		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Aquabar Table Water	1	14	0	0	0	0	6	86	7	100
Annarpurna Salt	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	100	6	100
Closeup Toothpaste	2	33	0	0	0	0	4	67	6	100
Mummy Kitchen	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	100
Fally White Vinegar	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
Omo Multivariate	1	12.5	6	75	1	12.5	0	0	8	100
Milo (Energy drink)	8	80	0	0	2	20	0	0	10	100
Golden Penny Twist	1	09	4	36	0	0	6	55	11	100
Golden Penny Spaghetti	1	10	4	40	0	0	5	50	10	100
Golden Penny Sugar	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	100
Gossy Table Water	1	50	0	0	0	0	1	50	2	100
Ballourah Perfume	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
Total	24	35	14	20	3	4	28	41	69	100



Figure 3: A section view of Annapurna Salt

The appropriate use of punctuation helps to maximize space and present as much text as possible. Though being relatively suitable for text presented in reduced space, this typographical marker (punctuation) has the disadvantage of leaving the multilingual text more or less compact and clustered. This is true to the messages communicated on the packages of *Closeup Toothpaste* and *Golden Penny Sugar* (see Figure 1 as well as 4 and 5) among others, where succession of such multilingual (trilingual/quadrilingual) phrases and short sentences are made.



Figure 4: Other view of Anapurna Salt package

It may be relatively difficult for the reader in such context where text is somehow clustered to differentiate between the different languages at first sight and gather the information aimed at him/her. One needs to thoroughly read in between the lines to find the version of the information in the language he/she understands. This fact will also be demonstrated in the second part of this section.



Figure 5: Uni-coloured and clustered text on Golden Penny Sugar

There is no doubt that these messages could be more effective if such typographical markers as spacing, capitalization (font size/typeface) and colouring were carefully employed in the presentation of the message (Hostetler, 2006). Nakilcioglu (2013, p. 48) notes that:

The spacing between typographic elements makes the script easier or harder to read. Excessive spacing makes the message repulsive, too little spacing jams the words and lines and disrupts the appearance of the writing and makes reading problematic as well [...] Just as how sound and silence are the indispensable elements of music, letter shapes and spacing are the indispensable elements of writing. Each letter occupies a different area. And depending on the chosen font, the space occupied by letters changes as well. It is difficult to read scripts with very jammed or loose letters.

It has equally been argued that appropriate colouring can be a reader device. In effect, colour gives meaning to content (Kidd, 2011). It is not difficult to use colour, but it is important to use the right colour. Proper and balanced usage of colour is an indispensable part of a good package design (Nakilcioglu 2013, p. 51).



Figure 6: A visual of Indomie Instant Noodles

As typographical markers, spacing, capitalization and colouring enable the different versions of the information to be distinct in the multilingual text. For example, a multicoloured text – presented with different colours to separate languages – is susceptible to be more effective for the communication of the marketing message. Such multicoloured text could be seen on the package of *Indomie Instant Noodles* and *Golden Penny Spaghetti* (see Figures 6 and 7).

In Figure 6, the black and the red colours are employed to differentiate between the English/Arab and the French version of the product information being communicated. The design and typographical solutions



adopted here clearly permit the different languages involved to stand out. It facilitates readers’ spotting of the version aimed at him or her. The same comment may be made on *Golden Penny Spaghetti’s* package.

Another factor reducing the potentials of some of the marketing messages to effectively communicate product information is the fact that the phrases and sentences with no typographical markers are often trilingual or quadrilingual. Some packages are even inconsistent in the implementation of the various versions of their messages in that they present some information in two languages and in some other instances present information in three languages. Good examples are *Closeup Toothpaste* and *Golden Penny Spaghetti* (see Figure 2 and 7). In Figure 7, the package of *Golden Penny Spaghetti* presents a range of information in English which it inconsistently translates into Italian or French. This inconsistency, of course, renders the availability of particular information (which may be necessary) unpredictable by the reader.



Figure 7: Multilingual texts on Golden Penny Spaghetti

In Table 3, the findings indicate that most (77 %) of the phrases and sentences with no typographical markers are bilingual (English and French).

Table 3: Phrases and sentences with no typographical markers

Product's Name	Bi-lingual		Multi-lingual		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Annapurna Salt	5	100	0	0	5	100
Closeup Toothpaste	0	0	3	100	3	100
Omo Multivariate	8	80	2	20	10	100
Milo (Energy drink)	2	100	0	0	2	100
Golden Penny Twist	2	67	1	33	3	100
Golden Penny Spaghetti	3	75	1	25	4	100
Golden Penny Sugar	4	100	0	0	4	100
Total	24	77	7	23	31	100

Far from insinuating that the marketing/advertising messages in the present forms do not communicate information about the products to the consumers, we strongly believe that their communicational potentials is highly reduced with the partial use of typographical markers or the use of less effective typographical markers.

### 5.2 Users’ assessment of text design on product packages

Based on their reading of the information provided on product packages and their evaluation of designers’ use of typography, the bilinguals and unilingual focus group discussants assessed the effectiveness and usefulness of the marketing messages presented in foreign languages on the packages (in French and in Spanish). A summary of key comments is presented below:

- Information presented in foreign language is not easily spotted by readers because typographical markers are either hardly or inappropriately used in some of the packages to differentiate between languages used in composing the message. Text is generally compact (clustered) with no or limited use of space, point size, typeface or colour differentiation of languages. A focus group discussant noted that “from a scan of most of these packages (*Closeup Toothpaste, Mummy Kitchen*), I hardly see information in French. One may hardly believe there is use of French in the message they carry.”
- To decipher the messages, one sometimes needs to thoroughly explore the text and to select the

- parts that are presented in foreign languages. This comment was principally made by bilinguals who, being versed with two languages, could differentiate between languages. On the other hand, most unilingual readers claimed not to be able to select the portion of the messages in French or Spanish.
- c. The messages are hardly coherent in most cases where there is inconsistency in translation or utilization of typographical markers. This comment was principally made about packages of such product as *Omo Multivariate*, *Closeup Toothpaste* and *Milo*. The inconsistency in translation arises when some parts of the marketing message is translated meanwhile other portions are not.
  - d. The same, inconsistency in the use of typographical markers causes part of the messages to be compact (to appear in blocks with language mix) and less readable by unilingual readers.
  - e. Inconsistency in translation (partial translation) creates “lacuna” and disrupts the continuous flow of information about the product.
  - f. The fact that important parts of the messages like the slogan and the product’s name are not translated, may discourage a unilingual reader from continuing reading the marketing message placed on the package.
  - g. Inconsistency in use of typographical markers creates difficulties in gathering information about the product in a wholesome way.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has exploited a textual analysis and a user study to critique the marketing messages by Nigerian manufacturers. It sought to measure the extent to which these marketing/advertising messages may be effective; judging from a typographical point of view, it has identified two principal features in the marketing/advertising messages that may serve as barriers to effective communication. These include the non utilization of typographical markers in parts of the multilingual messages and the over exploitation of less effective typographical markers such as punctuation in the setting of these messages. It appears clear that such solution to typographical problems in package designing may be in line with most Nigerian manufacturers’ attempt at saving packaging cost through the provision of a heavily “loaded” package for multiple countries. However, as observed in this paper, by using less effective typographical mark-

ers (such as punctuation markers which circumstantially causes text to be compact and relatively unreadable), the manufacturers’ communication attempt may be unfruitful and their cost saving objective may not be realised.

This paper argues in conclusion that the mobilization of markers such as spacing, colouring and capitalization be very much envisaged by designers as they have greater potentials to differentiate the different versions of the messages, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the marketing/advertising messages. The paper also recommends that instead of conceiving a tri- or quadri-lingual package which may cause information to be too compacted and relatively unreadable, it is better – especially when financial possibilities permit – to produce two different bilingual versions that will be more effective in advertising the product.

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