

## Review

# A Sociolinguistic Perspective of Medical Services Advertisement on Urbanlife Television, Lagos, Nigeria

Adeniji Olayinka Olushola

General Studies Department, School of Communication and Liberal Studies, Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria.

Corresponding Email Address: adenijiola93@yahoo.com

### Abstract

**Broadcast advertising is observed to be an extremely effective form of marketing but its application to medical services and equipment raised some curious concerns when the ethics of the medical profession are applied. Observations at the BT Diagnostic and Health Centre in Ikeja revealed a direct canvass for patronage by the hospital through an electronic device with captivating language to attract patronage from the public. This study investigated the language features used to convey information to patients in order to persuade them to patronize medical equipment and services. The research design was content analysis and Urbanlife Television was the instrument for data collection. Twenty medical services and equipment advertisements were randomly selected and subjected to content analysis. The theoretical framework for the study was sociolinguistics. Findings revealed a dominant use of nouns and long noun phrases, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs and adverbials, simple present and present continuous tense, short sentences, avoidance of negatives, repetitions and functional sentence types for conveying informative and persuasive messages to patients in order to retain their attention and patronage while being attended to. The study concluded by supporting the call for the removal or review of restrictions on medical equipment and services advertisement especially in the electronic media to advance the awareness of the public on the latest trends in medical services and equipment.**

**Keywords:** Medical services, Equipment, Advertising language, Urbanlife Television.

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, public-private partnership in the provision of specific medical services in the medical profession has become a common practice. Adebayo (2012) reported that BT Health and Diagnostic Centre, a private hospital located within the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria, is one of such hospitals equipped with modern diagnostic equipment where patients from both private and public hospitals in the state currently patronize more than others because of the ambience, services and better relationships with the clients. However, there was a need to make a conscious effort to bring the knowledge of this medical centre to the large population of patients who wanted prompt and efficient services with convenience. Therefore, a captivating modern broadcast technology, Urbanlife Television was strategically located at the reception of the hospital with informative and persuasive messages to attract the attention of the customers/patients, entertain and inform them with

persuasive and instructive messages while being attended to with a view to retaining their patronage but its application to medical services and equipment raised some curious concerns when the ethics of the medical profession are applied.

In this study, the main focus was on the sociolinguistic perspectives of advertising language. Therefore, the study attempted to investigate the use of outstanding language properties available to construct and communicate persuasive and informative messages on television to advertise medical equipment and services. It also aimed at showing the mutual influence of technology and language on each other apart from examining the creative and dynamic qualities of language used to adapt to change. Besides, the study investigated the role of advertising language in the dissemination of information in the medical profession through particular language features and their effectiveness in persuading or predisposing patients

towards the advertised medical product or service. The research questions are as follows:

What are the general lexical and grammatical features of advertising languages? And what are the general lexical and grammatical features of the medical advertising messages found in Urbanlife Television at the BT Health and Diagnostic Centre, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria? Do the general features found in the advertisements in Urbanlife Television match with the findings of general features shown in the literature review? If so, what are the reasons for the similar approach? If not, why use a different approach?

### Significance of study

The study is important because it will show the importance of language in adapting to technological development or change expressed through new medical terminologies as well as the informative and persuasive functions of language as a medium of communication. Besides, the study is important because of its support for the removal or review of restrictions on the advertisement of medical equipment and services especially in a developing country such as Nigeria in order to inform the large population of ignorant patients and medical practitioners about the availability of modern medical equipment and services apart from creating opportunities for economic activities and creative use of language.

### Literature Review

Vaicenoniene (2006) affirmed that the spread of globalization and marketing during the last century triggered the proliferation of advertising genres and that in order to capture the attention of consumers, convey the message and persuade them, advertising texts use a range of manipulative language devices. Wikipedia (2015) pointed out that television advertising is a span of television programming produced and paid for by an organization, conveying a message meant to market a product or service, characterized by catchy-phrases which may remain for a long time in the minds of the consumers. Alexis (2014) stated that medical advertising is a very hot topic for many reasons noting that in Europe it is illegal to advertise pharmaceuticals in magazines and other media outlets including television, while it is allowed in the United States and New Zealand. Also, Makinde et al. (2014) in a study noted that advances in the management of clinical conditions are being made in many developing countries including Nigeria but the code of medical ethics prevents medical practitioners and providers of health services from advertising the kind of services they render unlike medical tourism facilitators (individuals and companies that connect patients to medical providers across

countries) who continue to market healthcare services across countries over the internet and social media. The implication of the foregoing is that patients/customers and even medical practitioners may have limited knowledge about current advances in the medical world and may be denied current medical services owing to lack of publicity. This may also account for the Urbanlife Television of BT Health and Diagnostic Centre (Adebayo, 2012), a private hospital equipped with modern diagnostic equipment located within the premises of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria, in line with the global practice of public-private partnership in providing specific medical services and equipment. Patients' attention was engaged with advertisement messages on the giant HD screen of Urbanlife (internet) Television communicating information about the equipment and services rendered by the hospital. Without any advertising or marketing strategy consumers/patients would be unaware of the medical equipment and services rendered at the medical centre which could lead to a huge final loss.

On the other hand, competing for the business of the consumer is regarded as an important part of gaining patients. Consequently, broadcast advertising was adopted by the BT Health and Diagnostic Centre because it is considered to be a highly effective form of marketing which is ubiquitous and increasing in number and frequency (Healthcare Success Strategies, 2014). In achieving this lofty objective, the language medium needs to be carefully selected, especially in a medical setting like Nigeria, given the fact that language is the driving force that determines the effectiveness of advertising messages. It may be inferred from the foregoing that there are three interconnected variables here- advertising (such as medical equipment and services), television (Urbanlife Television) and application of language (medium of communication). Thus, Moore (2005) noted that technology influences language in ways that are not always conspicuous and that technology is related to language in the sense that both natural languages and technologies are important in enabling us to do all sorts of things in almost any area of human activity such as the advertisement of medical equipment and services of Urbanlife Television at the BT Health and Diagnostic Centre afore-mentioned.

Similarly, Mensah and Ndimele (2013) argued that communication is aimed at attracting audiences' attention and that it could motivate interest, change perceptions, stimulate desires and manipulate social values and attitudes. This may also be connected with the objective of the BT Centre so as to gain patronage for their equipment and services by stimulating the interest of the audience through manipulative advertising messages. Furthermore, Sandage et al. 1997 (cited in Akinbode, 2012) argued that advertising is a form of communication, the market instrument which advertisers

use to influence the behaviour of consumers at the point of purchase while language is a very powerful tool in advertising and advertising language is unique in terms of usage especially in broadcast media (television). Again, this argument reflects the support that language for advertisement of medical equipment and services on television and its implication from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

Mahoney (2014) noted that in some ways, it is surprising that languages change for a variety of reasons one of which is in response to social, economic and political pressures as new technologies, industries, products and experiences simply require new words such as medical products/equipment and services and through our interactions, we pick up new words and sayings and integrate them into our speech. This view is in consonance with the approach of SU and Zhang (2012) who explored advertising language from the perspective of sociolinguistics and noted that advertising language is affected by such social factors as social changes, regional variations, gender role and age difference.

In the same vein Natek, (2012) claimed that the rapid development of technology has a considerable consequence on the way people live now and with the Internet becoming all-pervading, the pace with which people live and work has picked up. Natek 2012, noted also that changes in the way people communicate and changes in the language they use (like medical equipment, services, etc.) to reflect these changes/developments are only some of the many changes development have brought along.

Sun (2014) stated that in today's business community, advertising is almost ubiquitous which has led to the attention of the main career of many linguists advertising - advertising language and that the ultimate function of advertising is to persuade the customer to make a purchase, which determines the style and features of the language. Thus, Tanaka (1999) had argued that the continued restriction of in-country health facilities and physicians from advertising their services is unduly harsh and does not provide an equal trade zone for health facilities and the entrepreneurs who invest in them.

### **Theoretical framework**

Sociolinguistics formed the theoretical background for this study because it centred on language use in advertising to communicate messages through a modern day technology, (internet) television. Evans (2014) had argued that the television with its powerful visual potency would only become functional and retentive through the persuasive and communicative use of language. In other words, mere picture or image messages on television may not be potent enough. It may depend on language use to render the messages forceful.

Furthermore, Wolfram (2012) viewed sociolinguistics as language used symbolically to represent fundamental dimensions of social behaviour and human interaction, which in this case is the advertisement of medical equipment and services on television as messages are built to, according to Urbanlife Television (2015), in an interactive and persuasive way to influence human behaviour in particular environments or contexts to patronize advertised services and equipment. Therefore, Wardhaugh (2010) contended that whatever sociolinguistics is, or in any conclusions we come to must be firmly based on evidence. Again this is of significance to this study as the advertisement of medical equipment and services on television is an activity that functions inside the human society such as the BT Diagnostic and Health Centre with an attention attracting electronic advertising device, the Urbanlife Television located in Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria. The selection of Urbanlife Television can be related to the observation of (2000) that the standard way in which sociolinguists investigates language use is by random sampling of the population, selecting a number of linguistic variables and then testing to see the frequency with which they produce particular variants and the results are then set against social indices.

Also, Akinbode (2012) agreed that interactional sociolinguistics is a theoretical and methodological perspective on language use that is based in linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. This is of interest to this study as it aimed at investigating the interactive potentials used in medical advertisement on Urbanlife Television. It is a known fact that as human beings, we need to communicate with other people. In order to achieve this, Rakman and Setiawan (2014) noted that there would be the need for a tool called language to be used in a bid to persuade consumers to patronize advertised equipment and services. In addition, Chomsky (1965) hypothesized that an indispensable property of language is its ability to express indefinitely many thoughts and react appropriately in an indefinite range of new situations such as the advertisement medical equipment and services on television being investigated in this study.

### **Factors impacting medical service advertisement**

Owing to the dynamic nature and relevance of the medical profession, healthcare providers have been observed to heavily invest in equipment and acquire knowledge and skills that will help provide better quality and up-to-date services to the population they serve while at the same time sustain their practices. Thus Adebayo (2012) confirmed this observation by reporting that the BT Health and Diagnostic Centre is a magnificent private hospital located within the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria, equipped with modern diagnostic

equipment. Makinde et al. (2014) claimed that this kind of investment could include considerable strategic investments from which most physicians and practitioners fail to adequately reap their profits which may be attributable to their inability to advertise the kind of services they offer at their health centres. Sadly, what is even more alarming and of great concern to this study was the statistics given by Makinde et al. (2014) that approximately 30, 000 Nigerians are estimated to spend US\$1 billion annually on what they described as “medical tourism”, (which is the travel to another country for the purpose of medical treatment) and this can be described as massive financial resources, which could have made better the local industry had the resources been invested in Nigeria. Perhaps it was in a bid to avert such monumental financial or economic waste that may have prompted the location of the Urbanlife Television at the BT Diagnostic and Health Centre by its management in order to create awareness, stimulate interest and patronage of the centre’s medical equipment and services by the densely populated patients in the economic capital of the country.

Urbanlife Television (2015), a broadcast media organization probably found the strategy of Urbanlife Television appealing which is based on addressing distinct customer segments by reaching out to them in contextual environment where they sit and spend significant amount of time with a giant HD screen displaying appealing messages with stunning graphics. This is significant in two ways from the point of view of sociolinguistics. First, the location of Urbanlife Television in an environment where people meet is an illustration of the social function of language. Functions of language, according to Orwig (1999) include interacting with other people, socializing, establishing and maintaining relationships and influencing people. These functions are in tandem with the marketing strategy of Urbanlife Television and the economic desires of BT Diagnostic and Health Centre which include establishing and maintaining relationships with consumers and influencing them via Urbanlife Television’s appealing messages and stunning graphics to patronize their equipment and services. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the features of advertising language in general and medical advertisement messages on Urbanlife Television in particular as the electronic advertising outfit has claimed to specialize in converting bored visitors (potential consumers) to captive viewers so as to notice and patronize advertised equipment and services.

### **Features of advertising language**

Vasiloaia (2015) stated that advertising in its simplest sense means the act of drawing attention to something, notifying or informing somebody or something and that the language of advertising is able to take on any form that is required for communicating its message with

basic features, such as the simple syntactic structure, the direct appeal to the recipients, the high rate of repetition etc., thus covering and utilizing the entire linguistic gamut. This may account for the choice of the broadcast media to advertise medical services and equipment to consumers. After all, according to Vasiloaia, speaking the language of the recipient is one of the major prerequisites of successful sales talk. It has to be noted that the description of the linguistic features of advertising language here does not represent a comprehensive overview, but rather an operational selection with regards to the numerous linguistic features available or possible.

In a related study, Grey (2014) listed and explained the general features of advertising language out of which many may appear in broadcast advertising while some may be absent. According to Grey, the general features of advertising language include the use of hyperbole with the frequent use of adjectives and adverbs, limited evaluative adjectives, long noun phrases, short sentences, simple vocabulary, avoidance of negatives, present tense, neologism, euphemism, humour, repetition, potency and glomoration.

Evans (2014) also examined the features of language and observed that the choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is vital and the visual content and design in advertising has a very great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it and that advertisers adapt language to their own use by taking compound words and use them as adjectives which often later become widely used in normal situations a very positive way, emphasizing why one product stands out in comparison with another.

Consequently, it is vital at this juncture to summarise the identified general features of advertising language. They include adjectives and adverbs, personal pronouns, comparatives/superlatives neologism, simple vocabulary, compound words, repetitions and direct appeals or imperatives, among others identified above to watch out for before attempting a detailed analysis of how much of these featured in broadcast advertising so as to identify any deviations or innovations as used in Urbanlife Television.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design for the study was content analysis (Stemler, 2001) and Holsti (1969) defined it as any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. Thus the instrument for data collection for the study was Urbanlife Television at the BT Health and Diagnostic Centre, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria, from which empirical advertising messages recorded were transcribed and subjected to analysis based on two

categorizations. According to Cook (1992) four ways of categorizing advertisements could be identified: medium, product, technique, and consumership. The medium and product categories were of great interest to the study. The first category was used to identify the medium of advertising (Urbanlife Television) while the second category was used to identify the advertised products (medical equipment and services). Thereafter a qualitative approach was adopted in this research to analyze the selected data. A total of twenty advertisement messages were randomly selected within the month of October, 2014, recorded, transcribed and subjected to analysis. The twenty selected advertisement messages were analyzed accordingly from two different directions: first to ascertain whether the general features found in the advertisements in Urbanlife Tv matched with the findings of general features shown in the literature review and explain the reasons for the similar approach and second, if not, ascertain the reason for the use of a different approach. The results would be logically presented for clarity and comprehension.

### Medical equipment and services advertisements analysis

Medical equipment and services advertisement messages are informational texts which comprise a number of terminologies, descriptions, names of diseases, medical tests and equipment, instructions, etc. Observations revealed that nouns and long noun phrases, pronouns, verbs (linking), adjectives and adverbials featured prominently in medical equipment and services advertisement messages. Besides, functional sentence types, repetitions, hyperboles, abbreviations (neologism) and the use of capital letters were observed.

### Nouns and Noun Phrases

Johnson (2013) explained that nouns are traditionally defined as “persons, places, things, and ideas,” while noun phrases are defined as phrases that consist of a noun or pronoun and any number of constituents including adjectives, determiners, prepositional phrases, verb phrases, and adjective clauses. Examples of nouns which were mainly names of some ailments and medical services were observed in some of the selected advertisement messages subjected to analysis: anaemia, bone, cardiac, diabetes, endocrinology, renal, immunology, tumour markers. Ultra sound scanning, Fluoroscopy, Mammography, Magnetic Resonance Imaging Real time X-ray imaging, Computed Tomography Scanning (C T Scan), and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).

The nouns above were selected to inform

consumers/patients about the kinds of ailments that could be diagnosed and tests that could be conducted at the centre in order to influence them to patronize the centre’s services. Again, examinations revealed the use of the small letters at the beginning of some of the nouns listed above while others were written with the initial letters in capital. This was because of the rules of capitalization in medical transcription that the names of diseases that include proper nouns, eponyms or genus names should begin with a capital letter while common names of diseases, among others should begin with a small letter (The MT Assist, 2015). Also, some abbreviations such as CT Scan and MRI were observed to have been used as nouns in line with the submission of Natek, (2012) that the rapid development of technology has a considerable consequence on the way people live now and changes in the language they use (like abbreviations of medical equipment and services) to reflect the changes/developments that technology has brought along. Besides, it confirmed the fact that in medical terminology, the capitalization of letters bears significance as to the meaning of certain terms, and this is often used to distinguish terms with similar abbreviations (Medical Terminology Abbreviations, 2015).

Also, examination revealed a pervasive use of long noun phrases which comprised a noun as the head and other constituents including adjectives, determiners pre-modifying the head, while prepositional phrases and adjectival clauses served as post modifiers as illustrated below:

#### Noun Phrase

1. *Our patient care / team / of medical specialists / is highly trained and aims to deliver the best*  
premodifiers / head / post modifier  
possible patient /client in an atmosphere of excellence.

#### Noun Phrase

2. *Our aim is to make /our diagnostic and health screening /services /of international standards*  
premodifiers / head / post modifier  
available to you at affordable prices.

#### Noun Phrase

3. *We are equipped with / the latest / state /of the art machines /that each utilise cutting edge*  
premodifiers / head / post modifier1 post  
modifier2  
*technology,* and enable us conduct a wide range of pathology tests, revealing a wide range of diagnostic possibilities.

It is obvious from the examples above that long noun phrases were used to depict the kind of medical people/personnel found at the medical centre (example 1), apart from the kind and quality of services rendered at the centre (examples 2 and 3 above).Examinations further revealed that noun phrases performed subject function as demonstrated by example 1, object function as demonstrated by example 2 and prepositional complement as illustrated by example 3 above. It is also

relevant to note that the long noun phrases used here are informative and aimed at influencing or persuading consumers in a familiar way with pre-modifiers (determiners and adjectives as illustrated in examples 1-2) and post modifiers (prepositional phrases and adjectival clauses as illustrated in examples 1- 3 above) to patronize the equipment and services of the centre.

### Pronouns

Observations revealed that there was a frequent and repetitive use of the first person personal pronoun which included both the subject and object forms:

1. *We* are equipped with the latest, state of the art machines that each utilise cutting edge technology, and enable *us* conduct a wide range of pathology tests, revealing a wide range of diagnostic possibilities.

2. *We* explore human images using the most advanced techniques including state of the art Ultra sound scanning, Real time X-ray imaging (Fluoroscopy), Mammography, Computed Tomography Scanning (C T Scan), and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).

3. *We* are committed to taking excellent care of our clients' health through professional and comprehensive diagnostic and preventive healthcare services.

4. Let *us* transform your working experience!

Similarly, the second person pronoun featured significantly in the data studied as demonstrated below:

5. *You* are watching URBANLIFE.

6. Life gets better while *you* wait.

7. Our aim is to make our diagnostic and health screening services of international standards, available to *you* at affordable prices.

The first person personal pronoun was used here possibly to avoid the superfluous and monotonous repetition of the name of the medical service provider, BT Health and Diagnostic Centre and perhaps for conciseness or brevity in order to reduce the length of the sentences. Besides, the second person personal pronoun was possibly used here to address the consumers or viewers in a friendly way. It could be inferred, therefore, that it suggested a familiar language or a friendly attitude towards the viewers so that they would be favourably disposed towards the advertised equipment and services.

### Adjectives

Some comparative, superlative, evaluative and descriptive adjectives were observed in some of the selected messages for analysis as shown by the expressions in italics below:

1. The *best possible* patient/client in an atmosphere of excellence.

2. Life gets *better* while *you* wait.

3. Experience *MORE* while you wait!

4. We explore human images using the *most advanced* techniques

5. We are committed to taking *excellent* care of our clients' health through *professional* and *comprehensive diagnostic* and *preventive* healthcare services.

6. We are equipped with the *latest* state of the art machines.

In order to make stronger the reputation and quality of the advertised equipment and services, superlative adjectives such as "best" and "latest" were used hyperbolically to suggest how much current the medical centre is, a very positive way of emphasizing why the centre's equipment and services stand out in comparison with others. Moreover, evaluative and descriptive adjectives such as "advanced", "excellent", "professional", "comprehensive" and "preventive" were used to make the reputation of the medical centre stronger, which is, building a brand for it with a view to influencing consumers to patronize the advertised services and equipment. In addition, comparative adjectives were identified as illustrated in examples 2 and 3 above in which "better" and "more" were used to give consumers a kind of re-assurance apart from trying to convert the bored visitors (potential consumers) to captive viewers so as to notice and influence them to patronize advertised equipment and services while waiting.

### Simple Present and Present Continuous Tense

Particular emphasis was focused on the verb "be" as it was used to state certain facts about the equipment of the medical centre at the moment of this study. It was also used to give information about the diagnostic abilities of the centre, as well as statements about the quality and capability of the centre's medical personnel. The use of the verb "be" in the simple present was therefore used to make a positive claim at the moment of this study about the health centre as indicated in some of the investigated messages, particularly with the forms "is" and "are" as illustrated below:

1. Our Patient Care Team of medical specialists *is* highly trained and aims to deliver the best possible patient/client in an atmosphere of excellence.

2. Our aim *is* to make our diagnostic and health screening services of international standards, available to you at affordable prices.

3. *We are* equipped with the latest, state of the art machines that each utilise cutting edge technology, and enable us conduct a wide range of pathology tests, revealing a wide range of diagnostic possibilities.

Examinations established the fact that the present forms of "be" "is" and "are" were used repeatedly in the sentences above to create what Kovalyov (2004) described as "positive sentence", that is, positive claims

about the advertised services and equipment of the centre in order to stimulate the interest of consumers/patients rather than other centres.

Furthermore, the present continuous tense usually formed from the present tense of the verb “be” and the present participle (-ing form) of a verb was used to talk about the present for something that was happening at the moment of speaking (or broadcasting), e.g.

4. You *are watching* URBANLIFE.

Observations revealed that there was the use of capital letters to reflect the name of the electronic media in order to draw attention of the viewers to it. Besides, this simple declarative sentence was used repeatedly to inform the viewers or consumers about the action that was going on at that moment probably because it was a way of meeting or receiving consumers/patients in a friendly way when they arrive at the centre’s reception in particular where the giant HD screen was located. Then the present continuous tense was complemented by statements in the simple present sentence:

5. *Welcome* to BT Health and Diagnostics Centre.

6. *Life gets better while you wait.*

7. *Experience* more! *While you wait.*

8. *Let us transform your working experience!*

9. *Be healthy!*

10. *Be well!*

11. *Be informed!*

The foregoing buttressed the fact that language is interactive or a tool for establishing relationships as Orwig (1999) had reported. Short sentences for impact on the reader. This impact is especially clear at the beginning of a text, often using bold or large type for the “Headline” or “slogan” to capture the attention of the reader.

## Adverbs and Adverbials

Hartmann and Stork (1972) defined an adverb as a part of speech which can be used to qualify a verb, an adjective or other adverb while an adverbial was defined as a name given by grammarians to a structure which functions as an adverb ( in modifying a verb, an adjective and other adverb ) but which does not have usual formal features, i.e. does not end in (-ly). Adverbials found in the data subjected to analysis took the forms of adverbs, a gerund or present participle, prepositional phrases and adverbial clause as demonstrated in the sentences below with adverbs and adverbials in italics:

1. Our Patient Care Team of medical specialists is *highly* (adverb) trained and aim to deliver the best possible patient/client *in an atmosphere of excellence* (prepositional phrase).

2. Our aim is to make our diagnostic and health screening services of international standards, available to you *at affordable prices* (prepositional phrase).

3. Life gets better *while you wait* (adverbial clause).

4. Experience MORE *while you wait* (adverbial clause)!

5. *Welcome to BT Health and Diagnostics Centre* (prepositional phrase).

6. We explore human images *using the most advanced techniques...* (gerund or present participle).

7. We are committed to taking excellent care of our clients’ health *through professional and comprehensive diagnostic and preventive healthcare services* (prepositional phrase).

“Highly” is an adverb that was used to modify the verb “trained” to make it look superior to others and in “an atmosphere of excellence” is a prepositional phrase performing adverbial function and it was used to modify the quality and condition under which the services of the medical centre are performed in order to make it look attractive to consumers/patients and another prepositional phrase, “at affordable prices” was used to make the quality services attractive, perhaps contrary to their expectations that it would be beyond their reach. In every a sentence, the adverbial is a clause element that tells where, when, why, or how. Thus “while you wait” was emphatically used to capture the attention of the consumers in contextual environment where they sit and spend significant amount of time with a giant HD screen displaying appealing messages with stunning graphics to convince, persuade and retain their patronage. In addition, how the objectives of the centre were to be achieved was indicated with the use of gerund or present participle, “using the most advanced techniques” and the prepositional phrase “through professional and comprehensive diagnostic and preventive healthcare services”. The prepositional phrase, “to BT Health and Diagnostics Centre” performing adverbial function was used to indicate the place where the advertised services and equipment could be located.

It was also observed that there was the use of the adverbial clause:

8. Experience MORE *while you wait.*

9. Life gets better *while you wait.*

The temporal adverbial clause was used probably to appeal to consumers/patients that the period or duration of engaging their time would be brief so as to make them pay attention to the advertised services and equipment at that moment.

## Functional Sentence Types

It is noteworthy to state that one major contraption used in attracting the attention of the audience at the BT Health and Diagnostic Centre to notice and patronize advertised services and equipment was the use of functional sentence types to interact with and retain the attention of the audience by providing general information on health for both old and young, as well as information on current affairs relating to politics, sports, health, entertainment, etc. This may have been

considered to avoid monotony or boredom. Thus, the following sentence types according to functions: the declarative, the interrogative, the imperative and the exclamatory sentence were observed.

### The Declarative Sentence

O'Brien (2015) stated that the declarative sentence makes a statement which may be simple or complex and ends with a full stop as illustrated below:

1. The most commonly used letter in the alphabet / is E (simple).
2. Birds need gravity to swallow (simple).
3. Owning a pet quells stress, improves your mood and increases exercise levels, all working together to lower blood pressure (complex).
4. Yoghurt is a good source of calcium, potassium and magnesium; three important minerals that help regulate blood flow (complex).
5. Listening to relaxing music releases calming neurohormones in your body that work to reduce blood pressure (complex).
6. 85% of s plant life is found in the ocean Nigeria (simple).
7. Lightning strike the earth 6,000 times every minute (simple).
8. Lemons contain more sugar than strawberries (simple).
9. The two chambers at the bottom of your heart are called ventricles (simple).

It could be deduced that some of the examples above are simple while others are complex. They informative and positive declarative sentences used to possibly hold the attention of consumers/patients so as to notice the advertised services and equipment while waiting to be attended to. It also upheld the submission of Clereham et al. (2005) that language features in text (such as advertising messages) could be written in an assertive way and there was a clear avoidance of negative statements, questions and commands in all the advertisement messages subjected to analysis.

### The Interrogative Sentence

Similarly, the interrogative sentence was used to attract the attention and minds of consumers/patients through wh-questions and yes/no questions as demonstrated below:

1. What is the name of the substance that gives skin and hair its pigment?
2. What is the name of the biggest part of the human brain?
3. The muscles found in the front of your thighs are known as what?
4. What substance are nails made of?
5. Did you know that media consumption habits have

evolved in line with changing lifestyles?

6. Did you know?

The interrogative sentence which usually ends with a question mark was used to make the advertisement messages interactive and informative as Jain (2014) had argued, because consumers get involved by trying to mentally figure out the answers during the period of waiting as answers were provided.

### The Imperative Sentence

This is a kind of sentence used to make commands or requests and it ends with a full stop

1. Get your products noticed.
2. Target your audiences.
3. Bring back our girls.

Observation revealed that the subject of each of the examples above was omitted in line with the observations of Quirk and Greenbaun (1973). The examples above are direct appeals to consumers or viewers persuasively requesting them to perform one task or another. Besides they are short as Grey (2014) pointed out earlier. However, observations revealed that most of the persuasive appeals or requests on medical equipment and services in the advertisement messages under study ended with an exclamation mark. Consequently, they were considered under the exclamatory sentence.

An exclamatory sentence is used to express strong feelings. According to Johnson (2014) exclamatory sentences are not a distinct sentence type but that declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences become exclamatory through added emphasis that is, (by adding an exclamation mark) and they could be used to express admiration, excitement, warning, advice, fear, etc., as illustrated below:

4. Experience more! While you wait.
5. Let us transform your working experience!
6. Be healthy!
7. Be well!
8. Be informed!

The examples above were used to draw the attention of consumers to the advertised messages by informing or advising them to be informed, well or healthy in an exciting way, apart from asking them to experience more of the messages while waiting in order to notice and get them influenced to patronize the advertised services and equipment.

### Managerial Implications

Advertising medical services and equipment can be potentially gainful but it connotes a number of possible ethical implications for health service providers, advertising agencies and the regulatory bodies for medical and advertising practices:



- Efforts must be made to identify the appropriate contextual and linguistic environment to advertise medical services and equipment.
- Explore the functions of language which include interacting with other people, socializing, establishing and maintaining relationships and influencing people while building medical services advertisement messages to attract attention.
- Visual content and design in advertising messages must be complemented with a language that will help consumers to identify medical equipment and services in order to have a very great impact on the consumers
- Fragmented and elusive consumers should be reached through broadcast (internet) advertising as media consumption habits have evolved in line with changing lifestyles of consumers even in Nigeria.
- Electronic advertising messages must contain complete and accurate information about medical services and equipment to avoid deceitful advertising or misinformation.
- Use a limited range of evaluative adjectives and adverbs such as latest, comprehensive, best, highly, etc. for the description of medical personnel, equipment and services to inform and persuade consumers.
- Do not make claims that are not true or verifiable.
- Care must be taken to adhere to the approved layouts for composing appealing and informative messages as approved by regulatory bodies.
- Avoid unnecessary use of capital letters for names of diseases or medical services and equipment. Adhere to the medical rules on capitalization and abbreviations to avoid ambiguity or misinformation.
- Keep to the use of short/simple sentences for simplicity.
- Restrictions on advertising medical services and equipment must be abolished or reviewed to create the platform for the publicity of latest medical services and equipment.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined medical services and equipment of BT Health and Diagnostic Centre on Urbanlife Television from a sociolinguistic perspective. It was established that broadcast advertising is an extremely effective form of marketing but its application to medical services and equipment is hindered by the ethics of the medical profession in a context like Nigeria where advertisement of medical services and equipment is prohibited or restricted. It was also revealed that there is huge investment in medical equipment and acquisition of knowledge and skills that will help provide better quality and up-to-date services to the population but there is no adequate publicity which has led to loss of investment as rich Nigerians currently spends billions of dollars abroad on health. To arrest this trend, newer and more innovative ways are now required to reach out to these

increasingly fragmented and elusive consumers and broadcast (internet) advertising must be explored owing to the fact that media consumption habits have evolved in line with changing lifestyles of consumers in Nigeria. Thus, BT Diagnostic and Health Centre in Ikeja Lagos engaged the services of Urbanlife Television and directly canvass for patronage with captivating graphics and language to attract public attention. The potent advertising strategy observed in the study was the act of addressing distinct consumer segments by reaching out to them in contextual environment (such as the BT Centre) where they sit and spend significant amount of time with a giant HD screen displaying appealing messages with stunning graphics in an interactive and informative way which underscores the sociolinguistic significance of the study. The study revealed that the general features of advertising language were persistently used to convey information to consumers in the advertisement of medical services and equipment to persuade them to patronage. Findings further revealed a dominant use of nouns and long noun phrases to identify names of some diseases and the quality of medical personnel, while adjectives were used to build a strong reputation and quality for the organization and its services and equipment. Pronouns were used to indicate friendliness or familiarity, adverbs and adverbials to reflect time, place, manner, etc., simple present and present continuous tense were used to make present and positive claims about the centre with short sentences, repetition of words and structures for emphasis, while negative structures were avoided. Functional sentence types were used for conveying informative and persuasive messages to patients in order to retain their attention and patronage while being attended to. Therefore, this paper supports the call for the removal or review of restrictions on medical equipment and services advertisement especially in the electronic media to intensify the awareness of the public on the latest trends in medical services and equipment. This may lead to more creative medical advertisement messages with language resources not only to reflect current medical trends in the world today but also to ignite more economic activities to create more employment.

## REFERENCES

- Adebayo B (2012). BT Centre: a private hospital within LASUTH. Retrieved from: <http://www.punchng.com/health/bt-centre-a-private-hospital-within-lasuth/6> June, 2015.
- Akinbode O (2012). A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Advertising Language in Selected Nigerian Mass Media Commercials. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2(8).
- Alexis R (2014). Ethics in Medical Advertising. Retrieved from [http://www.ehow.com/about\\_6533178\\_ethics-medical-advertising.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_6533178_ethics-medical-advertising.html). 1 June, 2015.
- Chomsky N (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Clereham R, Buchbinder R, Modie J (2005). A linguistic framework for

- assessing the quality of written patient information: its use in assessing methotrexate information for rheumatoid arthritis.20 (3): 334-344.
- Cook G (1992). *Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge.
- Delmar L (2015). *Medical Terminology Abbreviations*. Retrieved from <http://www.delmarlearning.com/companions/content/1401852467/student>.
- Evans m (2014). *The language of advertising*. <http://www.linguarama.com/ps/marketing-themed-english/the-language-of-advertising.htm>. 1 June.
- Finch G (2000). *Linguistic Terms and Concepts*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Grey DS (2014). *Advertising: the features*. Retrieved from <http://www.putlearningfirst.com/language/> 2 July,2015.
- Hartmann RRR, Stork FC (1972). *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. London: Applied Science Publishers Ltd.
- Healthcare Success Strategies (2014). *Healthcare Marketing That Wins Patients, Grows Revenues and Enhances Your Reputation*. Retrieved from: <http://www.healthcaresuccess.com/>
- Holsti OR (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Jain T (2014). *What are the functions of language?* Retrieved from: <http://www.preservearticles.com/2011082611895/whatare-the-functions-of-language.html>.6 September.
- Johnson H (2013). *Exclamatory sentences*. Retrieved from: <http://www.englishgrammar.org/exclamatory-sentences/> 3 July,15.
- Johnson H (2013). *Grammatical Functions of Nouns and Noun Phrases*. Retrieved from: <http://www.linguisticsgirl.com/grammatical-functions-of-english-nouns-and-noun-phrases/>27 June, 15.
- Kovalyov N (2004). *Positive sentence*. Retrieved from: <http://www.eclecticenglish.com/grammar/PresentSimpleToBe1A.htm> l 3 July,15.
- Mahoney N (2014). *Language change*. Retrieved from: [http://nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/linguistics/change.jsp](http://nsf.gov/news/special_reports/linguistics/change.jsp). 6 September.
- Makinde OA, Brown B, Olaleye O (2014). *Medical tourism and the code of medical ethics on advertisement in Nigeria*. *The Pan African Medical Journal*;19:103
- Mensah E, Ndimele R (2013). *Linguistic Creativity in Nigerian Pidgin*. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 7(3). Pp 65-68
- Natek L (2012). *Advertising language*. Retrieved from: [http://books.google.com.ng/books/about/Advertising\\_language.html?id=iF8zvBoc9OAC&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.com.ng/books/about/Advertising_language.html?id=iF8zvBoc9OAC&redir_esc=y) . 27 June, 2015.
- O'Brien E (2015). *The Declarative Sentence*. <http://www.english-grammar-revolution.com/declarative-sentence.html> 27 June.
- Orwig CJ (1999). *Common Purposes or Functions of Language* <http://www01.sil.org/lingualinks/LANGUAGELARNING/OtherResources/CommnPrpssOrFnctnsOfLngg/Contents.html> html 3 July,15.
- Quirk R, Greenbaun S (1973). *A University Grammar of English*. England: Pearson Educational Ltd.
- Rakman A, Setiawan S (2014). *Tag: Sociolinguistics relations*. Retrieved from: [http:// www.britannica.com/E](http://www.britannica.com/E) Open Journal Systems.22 July.
- Stemler S (2001). *An overview of content analysis*. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 7(17). Retrieved from: <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=17>. 15 April,2014.
- Su B, Zhang F (2007). *Analysis of Advertising Language from the Perspective of Sociolinguistics*. *Journal of Zhengzhou Institute of Aeronautical Industry Management (Social Science Edition)*-02
- Sun GY (2014). *On AIDMA Theory in Advertising from Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Retrieved from: <http://www.dissertationtopic.net/doc/1237551> 27 June.
- Tanaka K (1999). *Advertising Language: A Pragmatic Approach to Advertisements in Britain and Japan*. London: Routledge.
- TheMTAssist. (2015). *Rules of capitalization in medical transcription*. Retrieved from: <http://www.themtassist.com/medical-transcription-course/grammar/rules-of-capitalization/> 3 July,15.
- Urbanlife Television (2015). *Advertising on Urbanlife*. Retrieved from: <http://www.urbanlifetv.net/> 3 July,15.
- Vaicenoniene J (2006). *The Language of Advertising: Analysis of English and Lithuanian Advertising Texts*. *Studies About Languages*.(9.)
- Vasiloaia M (2015). *Linguistic Features of the Language of Advertising* <http://www.ugb.ro/etc/etc2009no1/s0804%20%282%29.pdf> 12 February, 15.
- Wikipedia (2015). *Internet television* Retrieved from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Internet\\_television](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Internet_television) . / 3 July,15.
- Wolfram W (2012). *Sociolinguistics*. *Linguistic Society of America*. Retrieved from: <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/> 27 June,2015.

How to cite this article: Adeniji OO, (2015). A Sociolinguistic Perspective of Medical Services Advertisement on Urbanlife Television, Lagos, Nigeria. *Int. Inv. J. Med. Med. Sci.* Vol. 2(8): 117-126