

## HIV/AIDS Awareness Advertising: Representation of the Linguistic and Socio-cultural Repertoires on ZBC/ TV

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses HIV/AIDS advertisements in the electronic form focusing in particular on the manipulation of the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire of the target audience in sense creation as part of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. By utilizing the communication and discourse analysis models as the methodological tools, this paper analyses the ambiguities and accuracies in the advertisements focusing on language use, socio-cultural references and the reception of the advertisements. This study is based on selected advertisements screened on the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Television (herein referred in this paper as ZBC TV) in the first half of the year 2009. The paper argues that though the advertisers carefully manipulated the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire of the recipient audience, inadequacies, ambiguities and assumptions were also detected in the advertisements thereby reducing their effectiveness in their intended purpose.

**Keywords:** Advertising, communication, electronic media, discourse analysis, language  
**JEL Codes:** I14, I18, I310, M370

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (herein referred in this paper as HIV/AIDS) epidemic has proved to be a devastating challenge to Africa in recent years. The most noticeable effects of the crisis have been illness and death, with the impact of the epidemic also affecting households, schools, workplaces and the economies in the continent. Although access to antiretroviral treatment is starting to reduce the death toll in other countries, this has not been the case in a country like Zimbabwe, which has been experiencing a tense political and social climate. This has made it difficult to respond to the crisis, because it was a crisis within a predicament which had resulted in numerous problems which include among others an unprecedented rise in inflation, severe cholera epidemic, political violence, and the collapse of the health system. The government's response has been demonstrated by the adoption of a national strategic framework on HIV/AIDS and a National AIDS Policy, and creation of the National AIDS Council (NAC) by an act of parliament and the introduction of the Aids levy on all tax payers to generate all needed resources to support HIV/AIDS interventions (USAID, 2002). However, in Zimbabwe just like most African countries, the government has struggled to effectively implement HIV/AIDS prevention programs, as a result the civil society particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become legitimate players in trying to improve HIV/AIDS education (Griffiths, 2005:2).

Since there is currently no chemical cure or vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS (Boller and Bush, 1991), the only weapons available are public information and education. The prevention of the disease is the only assured cure which is available, therefore awareness and education have been adopted as tools to inform and provide the public with facts to prevent new infections, reduce fear and misconceptions, and reduce stigma and discrimination. This study stems from the observation that awareness and education are processes which are made possible by the communication course of action. This verbal communication is

made possible by the use of language. In this regard there is a close relationship between language and society (Wardhaugh, 1986, Ngugi: 1981). Therefore, there is a pronounced symbiotic interconnectedness between awareness, education, communication, language and society. This paper argues that pivotal to this relationship is language; it facilitates communication in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns.

There are several ways which can be used to make these awareness campaigns possible, and these include, workshops, talk shows, music, plays, pamphlets and through the electronic and print media. Since these awareness campaigns are there to curtail a deadly scourge which has infected and affected many people in the country, there is a deserved need to make a progressive and constant check on the effectiveness of these methods. This paper analyses the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire used in HIV/AIDS electronic advertisements to establish the accuracies and ambiguities generated. This is because "the media's role in affecting knowledge and beliefs is in part a matter of how language is used" (Retzlaff and Ganzle, 2008). Precisely, the focus is on HIV/AIDS advertisements screened on ZBC/TV during the first half of the year 2009. These advertisements are sponsored by PSI Zimbabwe which is a donor funded, non-state actor and are produced on its behalf by the advertising agency Global Media Zimbabwe.

## **2. POSITIONING LINGUISTIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN HIV/AIDS ADVERTISEMENTS**

The Oxford Paperback Dictionary (1998) defines a language as a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings using conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures or marks having understood meaning. This definition indicates that language can be verbal or non-verbal, and its function is to facilitate communication, an avowal supported by Ngugi (1981). Thus language is meant to serve the communicative function in human existence. This communicative function is simply conveying messages from one person to another (Severin et al, 1979). This shows that all communication is meant for social interaction which involves the creation and exchange of meanings through messages. Advertising as a practice of communication is based on the creation of meaningful utterances to the audience for it to be effective.

The communicative function of language can be split into four different functions that serve special human needs and these are; the expressive, directive, aesthetic and phatic functions (Ogutu in Mutasa, 2006). These are explained as follows:

- a. the expressive function is responsible for conveying feelings and attitudes, as noted through the use of strong emotion filled expressions that help the sender relay the necessary message to the receiver (Halliday, 1985:17).
- b. the directive function serves to influence the change of behaviour and attitude of other people, it is accomplished through the use of commands and requests (Fiske, 1992:98).
- c. the aesthetic function is about the use of language to display the linguistic artefacts. It involves making language choices and arranging them in such a way that makes the outcome beautiful, fascinating and interesting to hear or to read. It is the use of language expressions to beautify the language in a bid to achieve meaning (Stubbs, 1996:15).
- d. the phatic function points out to have its major thrust to keep communication channels and social relations in good repair (Halliday, 1985: 14). It is the use of language that establishes social relations and how a human being acknowledges the presence of fellow human beings and shares their feelings.

In practice these functions overlap and facilitate one another to serve the communicative function. Based on the abovementioned functions of language, this paper argues that the communicative function of language can be fully realized if modes of communication make use of the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire understood by the audience. In this paper, linguistic repertoire refers to the linguistic resources local to a society which enhances communication between members, which include among others their local language and the right choice of language elements which result in accurate meaning and minimizes ambiguities. Similarly socio-cultural repertoire refers to the objects and practices, or simply cultural products which serve particular socio-cultural purposes in a society, which its members identify with.

As case in point, advertising is a mode of communication which employs language and which targets a particular audience at a particular time for a particular purpose. Advertising is defined by Mathur (2005:1) as a “paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas by an identified sponsor...” It is a public promotion of some product or service; it is a form of communication that typically attempts to persuade customers more of a particular brand of product or service. Thus the objectives of advertising include being informative and persuasive so that the target audience would understand the purpose of the message in a manner which the advertiser feels will also address his needs. Advertising has gone beyond the commercial imperative, and as established in the preliminary stages of this paper it has been adopted as a tool for information dissemination as part of HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. It can be a useful tool in this endeavour since it is a form of communication which is, as noted by Sandage, (2000:15) “used with persuasive intent by identified sources through the media, with their intent ranging from altering behaviour to affecting the way people think about a particular social or economic position”.

However, HIV/AIDS advertisements are different in intention from the commercial advertisements which are driven by the profit imperative and as such they tend to adopt a persuasive discourse. The present advertisements are meant to raise HIV/AIDS awareness in a bid to positively influence the behaviour of people to prevent new infections; correct misconceptions about the diseases; reduce discrimination and stigmatization, and also instil hope to those living with the HIV virus. Therefore high levels of objectivity and are called for in these advertisements so as to accurately inform the public about the disease. On this basis, this paper argues that advertisements which are highly premised on the traditional features of commercial advertising where there are such aspects like ambiguity, neologisms, hyperbole and weasel words which constitute the persuasive discourse are not ideal for the highly delicate HIV/AIDS pandemic. The advertisements in the media should not leave people guessing on the intended message; rather they should aim for accuracy and reduce ambiguity. As pointed out earlier in the foregoing, the advertisers should avoid this by constructing their advertisements based on the linguistic and socio-cultural resources familiar to the target to enhance the meaning making process.

### **3. CONCEPTUALIZING THE MEANING-MAKING PROCESS IN HIV/AIDS ADVERTISEMENTS USING COMMUNICATION AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS MODELS**

The concerns of this article fall in the realm of sociolinguistics and it makes use of the communication and discourse analysis models. On communication models it is informed by the basic message communication and human communication model which sum up a series of events that take place in communication. The focus on communication models is necessitated by the fact that the present article takes advertising as a type of communication, meaning that advertisers have to discover and use the best methods of communication to communicate effectively in the advertisements. By giving an overview of the communication models the writer lays down the ground for understanding the communication process vital in analyzing the advertisements.

The communication models apparently describe the communication process emphasizing the need of common ground between the speaker and the receiver, in this context the advertiser and the target audience. In this light, this paper argues that one of the basic obstacles of public information campaigns is “lack of congruence between the sender/persuader/speaker) and the receiver (recipient/ addressee/listener)”. In the basic communication model, communication begins with the source or sender who formulates the idea and puts it in appropriate words symbols or pictures (encoding) and when the message is sent the receiver derives meaning from it through decoding (Arens, 2004:9). To augment this, Harnish (1997:347) says the message model of communication entails that the speaker encodes the message and produces sounds which are decoded by the listener. As case in point, language used in HIV/AIDS advertisements achieves its role of communicative purpose when the intended audience receives the advertisers’ point with the same meaning that the author of the advertisement had when the advertisement was crafted. Language in the advertisement is the tangent to both effective and ineffective communication. If the intended audience or part of it fails to fully comprehend the language in the advertisement, communication fails since communication is “the passing of information, the exchange of ideas, for the purpose of establishing a commonness or oneness of thoughts between sender and receiver” (Belch et al, 2004:138). The argument in this paper is that communication between the advertiser and the audience is

achieved if it is done in a language which is native to the audience. More so the diction is supposed to be clear and unambiguous.

The exposé on the communication models helps out in the clarification of the elements that are integral in the communication process. However, "there is a far more to language and its comprehension than is immediately apparent to the eye or ear at the shallower levels of print or sound" (Smith, 2006: 80). The physical aspects of language contain insufficient information to convey meaning completely and unambiguously. There are utterances which can be interpreted in a different way which might result in loss of meaning in the HIV/AIDS advertisements. In this article the deep meaning of the advertisements is revealed by the use of critical discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis is described as a methodology for the micro analysis of texts in context (Yule, 1996. Fasold, 1990). Fairclough (1995: 131) argues that "language... is always a socially and historically situated mode of action... it is socially shaped, but it is also socially shaping or constitutive". This means that language is a social and cultural fixation which is used to construct reality, and in the communication process the receiver comprehends reality in a similar manner if he or she can draw on the linguistic and cultural resources possessed by the sender. For that reason, the advertisements should be analyzed from the context from which they were produced and are received. This is substantiated by Severin (1975:15) who says; "each person's communication depends on...who you are, what you are, know, what you have been told before, what your attitudes are, influence what you say, how you say it, what message you receive and how you receive them". Indicative of this is the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoires which are integral in the interpretation of the advertisements.

This theoretical conceptualization of the advertisements enables the paper to expose both the surface and deep structure meaning of the language as it is used in the advertisements. Advertisements should not imply more than what they say. It is important to find out how the target audience interprets HIV/AIDS prevention messages represented in the advertisements from a Zimbabwean context. This is because advertisements make use of language, and this language is a cultural asset for the transmission of knowledge and information (Hubbard, 1978:13). For the advertisements to be effective, they should be done in local languages and draw on direct and indirect references from the culture of the audience because "a language is learned and is used within a cultural context drawing distinctive functions and meanings which must be assimilated by language learners if they are to control the language as native speakers control it" (Rivers, 2002: 317). It is important to realize that whenever language of a people is studied, the cultural context of that people should not be left out.

#### **4. THE PRESENTATION OF THE HIV/AIDS ISSUES IN ZBC TV ADVERTISEMENTS: A LINGUISTIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS**

The sample of advertisements analyzed in this section is based on the data collected between January 2009 and July 2009. The survey shows that HIV/AIDS messages have become a 'chorus' on ZBC TV, for hardly a day passes without a countable number advertisements being screened. This is indisputable considering the alarm that has been raised by the disease and also considering that "the media play a salient role in moulding and expostulating the thinking of the society. It possesses an immense power to change attitudes" (Lean, 2007:19). However, an irregularity was noted on the linguistic representation of the advertisements. Approximately 65% of the advertisements are in English in a country where there are far less than 5% of native speakers of the language. Glaring is the fact that the remainder of the advertisements are done in only two local languages which are Shona and Ndebele, which though they constitute the majority of the population, there are more than fifteen other languages spoken in the country (Hachipola, 1998). More so, the advertisements are mere translations of the English versions, without getting into details, translation has got its shortcomings. This is a reflection of a flawed language policy in the country, which by default favours English as the official language and the political and diglossic contestations which give an edge to the two national languages, Shona and Ndebele. The advertisers risk excluding certain groups of the population by being linguistically insensitive.

The broadcasting of the HIV/AIDS advertisements is strategic. They are broadcast during commercial breaks at prime viewing times averaging between four and ten o'clock in the evening anticipating the

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accessibility of the audience. This is supported by Arens (2004) who argues that “in an effort to ensure that the adverts receive maximum attention from the audience; the advertisers have targeted broadcasting slots, such as primetime viewing to make sure that the advertisements inform, communicate, and persuade”. Likewise, the PSI advertisements are broadcast during the commercial breaks of the news hour at eight in the evening, popular local films, *Studio 263* and *Amakorokoza*. These are expensive advertising slots which PSI can afford because it’s a donor funded organization. They are also screened countless times before and during half-time of high profile soccer matches.

The main themes evident in the HIV advertisements are fighting stigma and discrimination of the infected; prevention of new infections; and the raising of hope for those living with HIV. Since the focus is on linguistic and socio-cultural resources evident in the advertisements, the analysis focuses on those done in local languages.

Sandange (2000:5) avers that advertising “has its intent ranging from altering behaviour to affecting the way people think about a particular social or economic position. It is of a persuasive intent which means that it tries to alter the behaviour of a people, levels of awareness, knowledge and attitudes in a manner that would benefit the society”. The PSI has advertisements which disseminate education aimed at discouraging premarital sex through the message of abstinence. The popular advertisement with this theme has a Shona version which says;

*mukadzi chaiye, akasimba haafurirwe zvepabonde kunyange nehama. Mukadzi chaiye anozvichengetedza kubva kuHIV nekuramba zvepabonde kusvika abvisirwa roora.*

(a real woman, who is strong, is not influenced even by friends and relatives, a real woman protects herself from HIV by abstaining from sex until she is married)

In this advertisement there is syntactic parallelism which is the repetition of structures or words “*mukadzi chaiye*” (real woman). Besides, making the sentences in a text interconnected, repeating an attractive term ‘real woman’ attracts attention as captured by Halliday (1985:29) when he says “repetition is an effort to draw the attention of the consumer”. In this case, the repetition of ‘*mukadzi chaiye*’ (real woman) makes the female audience eager to know what is expected of a real woman since it is a human’s nature to desire to be good in the societies they live as summed up in Aquinas as quoted by Stump (2003:84) who says “human beings desire the fulfilment of their perfection”. The advertisement also dismisses the perceived myth that women have got no control over their sexuality in most African societies. Women actually have power to make a choice on their sexuality. After all, the message targets those who are still single; the destiny of their life concerning sexual matters is in their hands.

The message in the present advertisement is on abstinence and a real woman is considered to be able to abstain from sex until she gets married. This and other related advertisements educate on morality and less on physical knowhow of the disease. This is not an entirely new teaching which is brought by the advertisement. A life of purity and chastity has always been a virtue in the Shona and Ndebele cultures which are the dominant ones in Zimbabwe. The traditional society had an organized system of education with regards to the socialization of the child. Education on sexual matters was part of the knowledge which was acquired by young people in preparation for adulthood. They were warned to keep their purity and to be chaste until they get married (Gelfand, 1979).

More so the dominant religion in Zimbabwe, which is Christianity, regards premarital sex as fornication and is a punishable sin as evidenced in the book of Hebrews 13 verse 4 which says “marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Life Principles Bible, New King James Version). Therefore, the understanding of this advertisement by most of the audience in the Zimbabwean context is not disputed since the subject is not strange to their life practices and philosophy. The advertisement has got enough linguistic and socio-cultural resources for its comprehension by the audience, it fully exploits the philosophy of the particular society such that out of this advertisement, women are informed and empowered. The decision lies solely with the individual to put it into practice otherwise there are no ambiguities or alien culture-specific references.

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The gender discourse of equality, topical in the country, championed by a number of non-governmental organizations and the government with its National Gender Policy, is evidenced by the existence of the parallel advertisement to the above which goes

*"murume chaiye haamanikidze mukadzi kuenda pabonde...asi murume chaiye anozvidzivirira kubva kulHIV nekuramba zvepabonde kusvika abvisa roora".*

(a real man, does not force a woman to have sex with her...but a real man protects himself from HIV by abstaining from sex until he is married)

If there was no such advertisement which is directed to men, then it could have been argued that the sponsors are sexist or gender insensitive. However, the present advertisement shows that PSI Zimbabwe as an organization, apart from the point that HIV/AIDS prevention requires both sexes to be on the lookout, has also adhered to the topical issues of gender equity topical in contemporary Zimbabwean society. Reflecting on the traditional society upon which the core culture of a society is derived, sex education as pointed earlier was to both young women and men with the same idea of instilling values of morality based on sex abstinence before marriage. It can also be observed that the two advertisements are poetic in nature and they have connecting words which Kenworthy (1992:92) says serve to signal relationship between the clauses and the listener, for example *asi* (but) ties the clauses together to enable the attainment of meaning after pointing out what a real man does not do, the other side of the connecting word shows the responsibility expected of him. The phrases *mukadzi chaiye* (real woman) and *murume chaiye* (real man) imply that men and women who do not respect their partners' sexuality are not 'real'. In this case, the language and surroundings of the sponsor of the advertisements as well as the audience have been fairly exploited. This is worthwhile in working towards addressing the community on virginity and chastity, delaying sexual activity thereby reducing chances of contracting the HIV virus.

If abstinence was going to be practiced it was going to be ideal, however it is a basic truth that though it is a possibility, many find it to be an impossibility. Some indulge in extramarital sex and have multiple sexual partners. For this group of people and others there are what are called 'life-saver' advertisements. These are there to encourage safe sex, or in other words, to discourage unprotected sex so as to minimize the chances of the spreading of HIV. For example, the one in isiNdebele which says:

*Emakhondomu aqinile aloncedo njalo athembekile. Sebenzisa elilodwa ngazo zonke izikhathi...*

(condoms are strong and effective, use one every time...).

The advertiser employed vocabulary chains which are features of cohesion, which are described by Brigid et al (2006:8) as the association between words from which the meaning of advertisements is derived without the influence of the reader or listener. This aids the advertisements to achieve the informative and persuasive intent even though the condoms are not proved to be hundred percent effective. This reflects that language, if properly manipulated, is a perfect medium of communication making people realize meaning, in this advertisement second language speakers can be accommodated. The advertisement also uses closed forms of texts that strongly encourage and prefer a particular meaning allowing little space for the readers to deduce their own, which would certainly be different.

However, the term *amakhondomu* (condoms) which is the focal term in the advertisement and the details on how it should be used, is not easily received in the Zimbabwean society where it is a taboo to succinctly discuss sexual matters in public. In this society, such things are better not said. The advertisers fall short of creating a euphemism in the indigenous language which is the custom for terms of a sexual nature, instead they adopt the borrowing strategy. Some members of the society argue that openly discussing issues of sexual nature encourages promiscuity. This is a plausible argument considering that the commercials are indiscriminately screened on the only television station in the country. Thus Baran (2006: 389) points out that advertising has also had a negative impact on the audience especially children for some advertisements are not age conscious.

It was observed that the previously discussed advertisement is sparingly screened, probably because of the offensive nature it has. Nevertheless the prominent group of advertisements is that of stigma and discrimination. Lean (2007: 32) propounds that unlike other diseases, AIDS is a stigmatized people who

have been categorized as belonging to the high risk group. The social stigma that is attached to AIDS has made many people...fear of being stigmatized if tested positive.

Therefore the main thrust of advertisements in this regard is to encourage living positively to those who are infected and advocating for their acceptance as any other member of the society. This is supported by Crystal (2003) when he highlights the importance of language in advertising, pointing out that "the language of advertising is generally ...positive." The advertisements in this group give hope to the infected affected. For example

*Handisi mudeparture lounge, ndiri kurarama neHIV... kuva HIV positive hazvirevi kuti nyika yaguma...*  
(I am not in a departure lounge, I am living with HIV...being positive does not mean the end of the world...)

In this advertisement, *Handisi mudeparture lounge* can be informative to those who know a departure lounge. The meaning that can be derived is that it signifies the last stage in one's life, but in this advertisement, the one who is infected is said to be not in the departure lounge. This makes the audience realize that once one has accepted his status the person can live long. Thus the advert has managed to address the community striving to positively alter attitudes of the HIV positive. The present advertisement assures the victims of HIV, people living with AIDS (PLWHA), hope for long life as long as they accept their status and live according to their medical prescription. This is facilitated by the phatic function of language which is described by Fiske (1992:67) as having its major thrust being to establish social elation with people, thus eradicating stigma and discrimination. However, the term 'departure lounge' might not be fully comprehended by a bigger audience, not in this context but its primary meaning. A departure lounge is found on a properly designed station like Johannesburg Park Station or at airports which are nonexistent Zimbabwe except for the Harare International Airport where the majority have never set foot. The majority of the viewers only find the funny part of the advertisements on the physical make-up of the persona and his pronunciation of words, without getting the intended message.

The same imperfection is observed in another advertisement with the similar message. This one says:

*Handina kukurosa 'red robot' ndirikurarama neHIV. Ndakabatwa kuti ndine HIV kwemakore gumi nemashanu apfuura...ndiri kuzvichengetedza, ndicharama kwenguva refu, uye ndichakwanisa kuriritira vana vangu...*

(I have not crossed a red robot, I am living with HIV. I was diagnosed with HIV 15 years ago... I am taking care of myself; I will live much longer and be able to look after my children).

'Robots' is the most commonly used term for traffic lights and the red robot in this case is used as danger warning sign for motorists to show the impacts the virus has on one's life. Just like the 'departure lounge' the assumptions made by the advertiser is that everyone knows the red robot and what it signifies. In this case the attainment of meaning is subjective, depending on the audience's knowledge, thus Baran (2006:384) says "there is no better way to correct a misconception than to use the speakers or accusers' own words".

The other notable aspect on the stigma and discrimination advertisements is that the advertisers adopted the autobiography literary form as mentioned by Sterns model where the persona is used to narrate his ordeal so that the advertisement would seem to portray a real life experience. This is effective because "some viewers believe that television is equivalent to reality, unless to those who have been consciously forced to think otherwise" (Duplooy, 1989:41). The use of the persona in this advertisement educates, informs and persuades people to believe that living positively with HIV/AIDS is not a myth, but a real life situation. The advertisements of this nature are treated as real life situations, so that the message can be received by the audience. This shows that the comprehension of the advertisements is determined by the words and symbols in the advertisements. The persona is drawn from the wide role of players in society such as lecturers, pastors, school teachers thus avoiding the 'somebody else' approach of focusing on the risks to specific groups. People would know that what they learn about the epidemic, they can also be affected themselves.

The use of persona is also evident in another advertisement where a pastor confesses his HIV status. He addresses the church members in a posture which is religious. The choice of such persona, notable figures in the society which are regarded as epitomes of morality communicates volumes on the indiscriminate nature of the deadly virus. Lean (2007: 29) observes that “the disease has been implicated with the question of morality...many religious leaders and conservatives have concluded that the disease is linked with immoral behaviour.” This advertisement shows that anyone can contract it regardless of one’s education, political position, wealth, religious, position and social status. It dismisses the common misconception that HIV is a sign of promiscuity. Similarly, a lecturer at a teachers’ college, a school teacher, a spouse, and an ordinary family member have been used as persona in various HIV advertisements to show the indiscriminate nature of HIV virus, and also to show that being affected does not affect one’s responsibilities thus fighting discrimination.

However, the advertisement where a pastor is a persona can be interpreted differently in the statement “*pastor havana kurasa chitendero chavo kana maitiro avo*” (the pastor did not change his faith and way of doing things). The phrase is open ended and it can be interpreted anyhow, one might say the pastor did not change the way that made him to contract the virus, say if he was promiscuous. However, though the use of the autobiography literary of drawing public figures from the society is effective, more opinion makers and prominent members of the society and policy makers, sports personalities and politicians, should be involved otherwise people will end up saying lecturers, pastors and teachers are vulnerable and so they ought to.

However, Baran (2006) argues that “advertising has been deceptive, in that it implicitly suggests and sometimes promises to improve peoples’ lives, promising health, long life, sexual success and acceptance which are however subjective”. For instance:

*Ngithola ukhuti ngilegciwane le HIV kwangethusa ngoba ngangiqinile, kwakunzima umkami, kodwa ngenwa kwesikahathi ngamazisa sayahlolwa igazi... angifihli isismo sami kuyafana lokuba leBP lomkukuhlane, wonke umuntu angawuthola...*

(when I discovered that I had HIV, I was shocked because I looked healthy and strong. It was very difficult for me and my husband, but eventually after some time I told him and we both went for blood tests... I am not secretive about my status, it is like BP or diabetes and any one can get it).

By comparing these diseases the advertiser becomes unrealistic considering that these are two different conditions in contraction, prevention and maintenance of condition. They are simply exaggerations justifiable to fight stigma and give hope to the infected. An advertisement of this nature is characterized by hyperbole, weasel words and glamorization a feature which is typical of commercial advertising which in this case might be misleading and may have detriments.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Current analysis of the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoires in HIV/AIDS advertisements has demonstrated that there is a pronounced symbiotic interconnectedness between awareness, education, communication, language and society. Pivotal to this relationship is language; it facilitates communication in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. All communication is meant for social interaction which involves the creation and exchange of meanings through messages. Advertising as a practice of communication is based on the creation of meaningful utterances to the audience for it to be effective. This paper has suggested that the communicative function of language can be fully realized if modes of communication make use of the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire understood by the audience. HIV/AIDS advertisements should be different in intention from the commercial advertisements which are driven by the profit imperative and as such they tend to adopt a persuasive discourse. This paper established that advertisements which are highly premised on the traditional features of commercial advertising for instance use of hyperbole and weasel words which constitute the persuasive discourse are not ideal for the highly delicate HIV/AIDS pandemic. Communication between the advertiser and the audience is achieved if it is done in a language which is native to the audience. More so the diction is supposed to be clear and unambiguous. In the communication process the receiver comprehends reality in a similar manner if he or she can draw on the linguistic and cultural resources possessed by the sender. For that reason, the



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advertisements should be analyzed from the context from which they were produced and are received. It was established that there is poor representation of linguistic groups in the country. Though the advertisements have managed to fairly draw from the linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire, the meaning of the advertisements have been obscured by deceptive hyperbole, assumptions by the advertiser and references which are alien to the audience.

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