

Effectuating Acclaim Through Evaluation: An Appraisal of 2015 and 2019 Presidential Campaign Advertisements in Nigerian Newspapers

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Abstract

Political Campaign advertising texts are often used by political actors to proclaim an enthralling self-image in the minds of the voters. Though extant literature reveal that linguistic investigations have been carried out on varied strategies and structures in this self-glorification exercise, hardly do we have any that has critically explored how evaluative language process is involved in the enchantment process. This study therefore examines the attitudinal evaluative strategy involved in the effectuation of such persuasion-induced discourse function in the presidential campaign advertisements of the two major political parties in Nigeria. The study draws data from ten paid advertisements published in two Nigeria newspapers - "The Guardian" and "Nigerian Tribune" - in January/ February 2015 and 2019, respectively; and subjected them to postulations from two different but relevant frameworks (Functional Theory of political campaign discourse and Appraisal Theory). The results show that attitudinal evaluative processes (i.e., Judgement, and Appreciation) were used to effectuate Acclaim discourse function in the texts. This study has exposed the link between assumptions in two different theoretical frameworks hitherto not considered related. Further study could involve looking at how evaluative language is deployed to construe attack discourse function in campaign advertisements.

Keywords: Acclaim, Evaluative language, Judgement, Appreciation, persuasion-induced function

Introduction

Persuasive language serves the arts of politics at every turn (Biltzer, 2021). This is because persuasion is a crucial element of any political discourse. This assertion is also a consequence of the fact that "the consent of the governed is the ultimate sanction of all political authority" (Feld, 1958 p.78). Political office seekers therefore need to justify and gain popular acceptance for themselves and their policies. Political advertising messages are one of the ways politicians use in promoting the needed co-operation with target-audience through varied linguistic strategies. In this instance, political actors use the vast resources of language to enhance their political fortunes.

As explained by Onwuamalam (2016), language of persuasion is at work whenever a writer/speaker seeks to secure the assent of others to his ideas or beliefs through arguments, information, and aesthetic. Evaluation is one of such persuasive linguistic strategies/resources that are used in several genres of political discourse (Livnat & Lewin, 2016). One of the political discourse genres wherein persuasion is regarded as its main focus is political advertising. This might be adduced for the reason why examination of the persuasive strategies as an intrinsic feature of political advertising has been widely pursued. Thus, scholars explore how political actors adopt different language strategies to gain the confidence of the electorates for the acceptance of specific ideas, concepts, and candidate. For instance, Benoit (2014; 2017) while examining purpose of political campaign discourse, summarises the tactical functions embedded in it to three, viz., acclaim, attack, and defence. According to him, the persuasive tact is used for self-praise (i.e., acclaim) or criticizing an opponent (i.e., attack). The alternative to these two is defence, and its function is to re-evaluate a negative appraisal from an opponent. He posits further that every political campaign discourse contains at least one of these triadic strategies. This study will therefore be focused on how the

process of evaluation was used in effectuating self-praise tact (termed acclaim in the functional theory) during the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria.

The idea of looking at evaluation as a linguistic tool to effectuate the discourse function of acclaim is hinged on the belief that evaluation plays pivotal role in almost every aspect of our language use. The concept of evaluation is regarded as an intrinsic aspect of every discourse. However, many writers and readers are hardly conscious of it being constructed in texts they encounter and produce (Mauranen, & Bondi, 2003). Scholars have not only subscribed to the assertion that the concept is a regular feature in every discourse, but they also see it as a pivotal tool of persuasion. Stubbs' (2016) assertion that evaluative language is a tool of persuasion increases the curiosity to examine its role in political advertisements.

According to Bednarek (2006, p.4), evaluation pervades human behaviour, and it is most difficult if not impossible for one to speak without imposing evaluations on one's utterance, most especially when we interact with others. Going by this assertion, one could justifiably argue that the concept of evaluation is crucially attached to interaction in different discourse genres, including political campaign advertising. This notion is further strengthened by Khan and Geer's (1994, p.5) postulation that "political commercials provide information to voters that may alter the considerations of citizens when they evaluate candidates". This thus suggests that evaluation is intrinsically involved in persuasive discourse like political campaign advertising. Given the fact that political advertising texts are purposefully used for persuasion, one could not but be curious to explore how it is deployed in a specific political context to get a clearer picture of its usage. Much more, like Trudgil (1983), I believe that a study of language without bringing out its relationship with the society will take out its glamour. Though extant literature reveal that linguistic investigations have been carried out on varied strategies and structures in this self-glorification exercise, hardly do we have any that has critically explored how evaluative language process is involved in the enchantment process in the Nigerian political campaign advertisements. Therefore, this treatise is contextualised in the Nigerian political setting.

As an interactive communicative discourse, advertising aims at persuading the target audience to gain their trust of the reality of the promoted product. Taking into consideration the fact that this common intention is achieved when advertising expresses values shared by the target audience, it is believed that advertising reflects cultural milieu that characterizes the society. I therefore join scholars who believe that social and cultural factors impact and constrain social interactions (e.g., Dvorak, 2016; Lemke, 2016). Therefore, I perceive persuasion in campaign interaction as a form of social action. This is because "people generally bond and create community around some shared set of core values" (Dvorak, 2016, p.86). In essence, the persuasive acts in political campaign advertising involve negotiation of social actions. In this situation, negotiating values of self in relations to the social needs of the society is involved. Therefore, the study examines the phenomenon of evaluation from the perspective of the Appraisal Theory, a framework that takes negotiation in social relations into consideration. The thrust of this study therefore is to explore the evaluative language processes involved in the effectuation of the acclaim discourse function in the Nigerian political campaign advertising discourse.

Theoretical Orientation

This study is anchored on two theoretical frameworks, viz., Functional Theory of political campaign discourse and Appraisal Theory. The study leans on functional theory of political discourse because the focus of the exercise is on acclaim discourse function, a conceptual idea conceived in the framework as an image laundering tact. The framework stipulates that when candidates jostle for political leadership positions in a democratic setting, they establish the competitive edge they have over their opponents through triadic discourse functions termed (a) Acclaims, (b) Attacks (c) Defences. Since the conceptual idea

of this study is that the discourse functions are construed via evaluation, the exercise also complementarily adopts appraisal theory which stipulates the functions of evaluative language use in discourse. These theories are briefly discussed in turns in subsequent sections.

Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse

Election in a democratic setting is a competitive game wherein candidates jostling for political offices usually try to gain competitive edge over their opponents. Campaign messages provide an open platform for candidates to showcase the edge they have in terms of competence and policy issues. To accomplish this aim, political actors creatively deploy campaign messages either to present themselves positively or present opponents negatively to the public. This may explain the rationale behind Benoit's (2004) position that campaign messages are functionally designed, and the functionality is seen in the way campaign discourse creates preferability through three persuasion-induced discourse functions, viz., acclaim, attack, and defence (Benoit (2017).

The foundational premises upon which this notion is hinged are: (i) Voting, as a competitive phenomenon, requires that a candidate must be perceived as *preferable* to opponents; (ii) An individual candidate cannot be preferred to his opponent unless he is distinguished; (iii) Political campaign messages are the means for establishing distinctions and (d) Campaign discourse creates preferability through three discourse functions of acclaims (positive statements about oneself), attacks (criticisms of an opponent), and defences (refutations of attacks from opponents). The focus of these discourse functions is usually on two main issues, viz., policy and character.

One of the arguments laid bare in this theory is that the past deeds of a candidate in an office could be used as evidence of how he/she will perform in an elected office. For this reason, both incumbent party candidates and challengers are likely to discuss the records of candidates' performances in the past (Benoit, 2014). The truism here is that when candidates discuss their own record, they acclaim but when they discuss their opponents' past deeds, they attack.

Appraisal Theory

This study applies Appraisal Theory as espoused by Martin and White (2005) because it provides important theoretical bases for a comprehensive study of evaluative stance in texts. The framework has been effectively used in various research areas such as advertising, communication and journalistic, political discourses, narratives, conversations, emails, and academic writings (Krizan, 2016; Don, 2007; Hood, 2004; Macken-Horarick, 2003; White, 1998). The successful usage in those areas "...led to the decision to apply it to advertising which is often characterized by the use of creative expressions" (Krizan, 2016, p.4). As a useful tool in the investigation of interpersonal layer of meaning, it will be an apt instrument in the examination of the interactional message of persuasion between political advertisers and the target audience. This view is germane because language use in advertising often involves evaluation of the participants it engages. It helps in reflecting values, norms, and relationships through attitudinal judgement (Krizan, 2016).

Martin and White (2005) regionalized the domains of the appraisal theory into three major components: namely, *Attitude*, *Engagement*, and *Graduation*. A succinct description of each component reveals that attitude has to do with feelings, including emotional reactions, judgement of behaviour, and evaluation of things. Engagement, on the other hand, deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voice around opinions in discourse. Graduation, on its own, involves the grading phenomena that indicates how feelings are amplified and categories are blurred. The concentration here is on attitudinal component. The component is clarified graphically below:

Table 1.1 Attitudinal Evaluative component

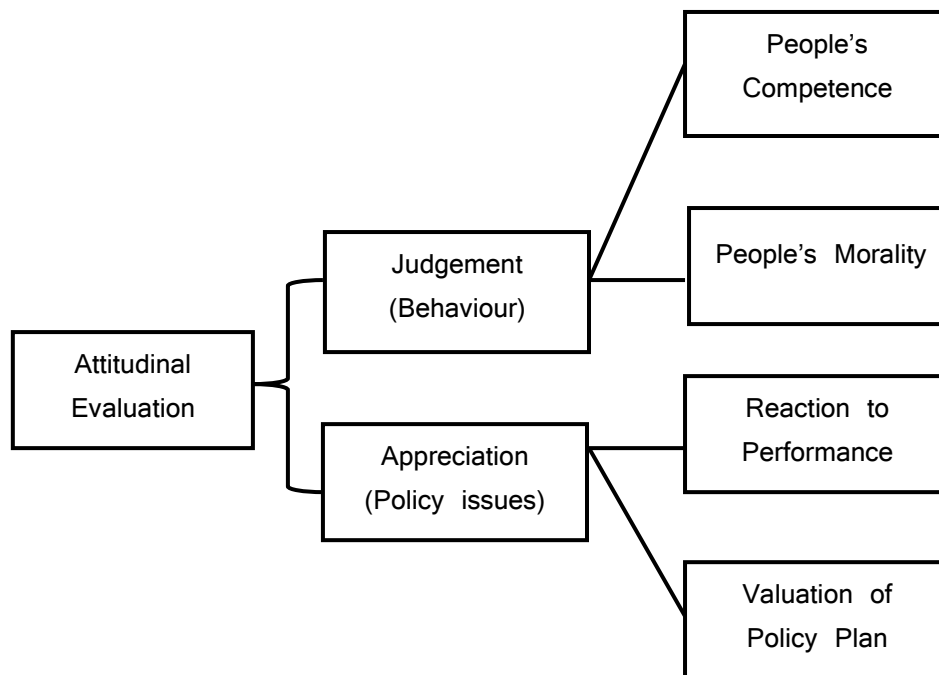


Figure 1.1 above shows the attitudinal evaluative component, one of the three major classifications in appraisal theory as used in this study. Though evaluative process of Attitude is sub-classified into three; viz. Affect, Judgement and Appreciation, this exercise is however focusing only on how two out of the three subcomponents were deployed to effectuate Acclaim discourse function. The two subclasses of attitudinal evaluative process focused are judgement and appreciation which deals with how text producers attach inter-subjective assessment to participants or process in discourse event. According to (Martin & White, 2005, p.42), these evaluative processes reflect and emphasize our “positive” or “negative” judgements on human behaviours, and assessment of objects or artefacts. Since the focus is on acclaim discourse here, the emphasis will be on the positive judgement of human behaviours, and assessment of policy issues. Let us look at each of these.

Judgement

This is a sub-component of attitudinal appraisal which deals with positive or negative valuation of human behaviour and character. The rating is usually in the consideration of ethical/moral and other conventionalized standards. The proclamation or expression on attitude here is used for praising, condemnation, or criticism (Ademilokun, 2016; Martin and White, 2005). In like manner, De Souza’s (2006) suggests how evaluative judgement is identified in a text. She believes that judgement refers to how writers/speakers evaluate themselves and other people in terms of their character and social behaviour in relation to culturally established sets of moral, legal, and personal norms. In essence, this evaluative instrument could reveal the way political candidates/parties shore up their images (acclaims) and/or diminish their opponents’ images in campaign advertisements. In this study, it is seen as linguistic structures that are used to assess human character (i.e., competence and moral issues).

Appreciation

This is another sub-component of attitude appraisal that is concerned with the authorial use of linguistic resources (i.e., words, phrases, clauses, sentences) to express positive or negative valuation of entities or phenomena. Shedding light on this, Martin and White (2005, p.43) assert that: “appreciation involves the

evaluation of semiotic and natural phenomena, according to the way they are valued or not in a given field". It could, therefore, be inferred that appreciation is linked to the aesthetic qualities of an entity or a phenomenon. The valuation is, therefore, on social values of objects, artefacts, states of affairs and processes. It is, accordingly, appraisal resources that political advertisers could use in building desirable personal identity and/or criticizing their opponent's ideologies. The valuation, as perceived in this study, is on policy statements and accomplishments.

Method

The objective of this study is to examine the linguistic processes of evaluation in construing the persuasion-induced acclaim discourse function in the 2015 and 2019 presidential campaign advertisements of the two major political parties in Nigeria (APC & PDP). Archival method is used to obtain information needed for the study. This mode of obtaining data is supported by Geiger and More (2011) who assert that past information generated from the archival repository like library, a safe place or a website for references, and detective work could be used as data for analysis in research. The newspapers used for the collection of the information were therefore sourced from the libraries of Ladoko Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho. The library is reputable for keeping such documents as will be required for analysis in this study. The library is veritable in getting the needed detailed information because daily newspapers in which these past advertisements were published are safely archived therein.

Twenty advertising texts were extracted from "The Nigerian Tribune", "The Nation", and "The Guardian" newspapers. These newspapers have widespread acceptability throughout the country. They were chosen because it was observed that they did not discriminate against any of the political parties. For instance, the PDP advertisements were published in "The Nation" (owned by a stalwart of APC, the opposition party). Aside from this, the newspapers have no influence on the content of the advertising texts. The contents of the advertisements were therefore solely that of the parties that paid for the advertisements.

The sampled texts were advertising messages published in the newspapers between November 16th and April 9th, 2015 for 2015 Presidential elections and between 18th November and 21st February 2019 for the 2019 presidential election respectively. The advertising messages of the two parties were chosen to establish a comparable balance of texts and to ensure that issues that have practical impacts on governance in the country are selected. This is because each of the two parties have had opportunities to rule the country.

Though the print advertisements under scrutiny combine both verbal and non-verbal information, the focus in the analysis will be on the verbal elements. This is because the analysis of linguistic elements used in the texts are detailed enough for the objectives of the study. Additionally, pictures, as objects of visual perception, are merely used in complementing the linguistic message. Therefore, it is believed that the textual elements convey enough information needed for the objective of the study. Ten of these sampled advertisements were purposefully selected for analysis because they featured acclaim discourse function. It is believed that the number of samples chosen for analysis were adequate for qualitative study as this quantity is far more than 5 sample data said to be sufficient for qualitative study (Bowen, 2006).

These campaign messages are unitized into themes. The identified themes are then classified according to the evaluative function they performed (i.e., positive Judgement and Positive Appreciation). Linguistic structures that positively appraise character are classified as Judgement while those that evaluate policy accomplishments or plans are termed Appreciation.

Literature Review

Observation from literature reveals that evaluative property of interpersonal meanings has been the focal point in research areas such as journalistic discourse, narratives, conversations, e-mails, and academic writings. The success in these areas led to the decision to explore its usage in the advertising texts which are often characterized by creative language.

Among the advertising discourse in the literature is Krizan's (2016) who examines how advertisers construe attitudinal judgment in British commercial advertisements. In specific term, the judgmental categories of propriety and capability were focused. Using statistical analytical method, the frequency distribution in the use of these two categories of attitudinal judgment was carried out. In the process, it is discovered that brevity of the advertising texts and creative use of language lead to ambiguity. In this wise, capability and propriety participate in double coding. To solve this ambiguity, the study focuses the denotative meanings of the texts of advertisements in their contexts of usage. The results of the study reveal that the attitudinal judgment categories of capability and propriety could impose values upon the potential customers and, invariably, on the society. The fact that attitudinal judgment is an evaluative resource that has been successfully investigated and proved to be a persuasive instrument in a genre of advertising indicates that it could feature in political advertising. There is, therefore, the probability that political advertisers exploit attitudinal judgment to shore up their image.

Another study by Kheovichai (2014) explores the link between evaluative language and persuasion in an online product advertising discourse. The study posits that positive evaluative language is often deployed in advertisements to make products attractive and desirable. It is, therefore, believed that language use in advertising is usually couched to give a vivid and captivating description of the functionalities of the products. The successful application of the appraisal theory in the analysis of online advertisements of commercial products raises the hope of its success in political campaign advertisement which is the focus of the present study

Jalilifar and Savaedi (2012) also investigate the evaluative strategies deployed by presidential candidates in both United States of America and Iran during the national elections of the two respective countries. Using appraisal theory, the study examined the attitudinal evaluative strategies preferences of the two candidates in their campaign speeches respectively. The findings reveal that significant differences exist in the deployment of the two appraisal resources by the winners and losers in the USA and Iran, respectively. In the two contexts, it was revealed that judgement and affect appraisals were predominantly applied but the application of appreciation resources varied. It was conclusively asserted that socio-economic, national, and international political issues were the factors responsible for the choice of attitudinal markers used in the two contexts. This aptly suggests that examination of the use of evaluative language in political discourse is a burgeoning area that is worth an inquisition.

The use of evaluative strategies in politics is also the subject of investigation by Helander (2014). The study comparatively examines the alignments in the speeches of two historically well-known British prime minister (Churchill's 1939 speech and Blair's 2003), on how negative and positive judgement were deployed by the two individuals at different periods of their administrations. The study specifically uses Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory to examines the different alignments on the grouping of "us vs. them", "positive-self and negative other" presentation, and the strategies of legitimization.

The results of the analysis clearly demonstrate that both Blair and Churchill used positive judgment. It is also revealed from the study that Blair, however, employed the negative counterpart, while only one instance of this concept was found in Churchill's speech. In addition, the speakers aligned themselves with certain individuals and policies, and dis-aligned with oppositional forces using positive judgment, as well as

negative judgment (more in Blair's case than in Churchill's). The positive and negative judgments were used in relation to themselves, their nation, and others. This clearly demonstrates that the two speakers positively aligned themselves with ideas and the people deeply. The fact that Blair deployed negative judgement indicates his unaligned posture with oppositional forces and ideas. This is an indication of changes in the political speeches of the two prime ministers and, possibly, a feature of gradual shift in the trend of political concepts of Britain. The results support the fact that investigation of evaluative use of language in political discourse assists in revealing the systemic shift in political policy.

In 2012, Jalilifar and Savaedi examine the evaluative strategies used by presidential candidates in Iran and America during national polls of these two countries. They employed Martin and Rose's (2003) "appraisal framework". The study investigates preferences of attitude made by candidates in their speeches, the frequency of explicit attitudinal meanings and graduation resources to detect the possible differences between Iranian and American speeches. The results show significant differences among the winners and losers in Iranian and American contexts. In both American and Iranian contexts, affect and judgment were basically employed by the winners. Appreciation resources, however, are found to vary in different contexts. The researchers maintain that political, economic, social, and international factors lead to differences in the nature and kind of attitudinal markers.

Ajilore's (2015) study, though is similar to the present study but different in contextual focus (genrewise), explores acclaim, attacks, and defences in Nigerian gubernatorial debate. It applies functional theory of campaign discourse, a framework designed for United States by Benoit (2004, 2007) for US political debates to analyse Lagos State gubernatorial debate on television. This, perhaps, is an attempt to prove the workability of the theory in an African setting and also show the sequence of similarity and the difference between US political debates and Lagos State (Nigeria) debates. As a comparative study, the exercise presents the sequential pattern in Nigerian debate that is different from what observable in US political debates. In contrast with the acclaims, attacks, and defences order in US debates, candidates in the Nigerian context, distinguish themselves from their opponents using the major functions of campaign discourse in a reversed order, that is, attacks, defences, and acclaims.

The study thus shows that the theory could be applied in African context. This then justifies its application in the present. However, the present study is different in some respects. While Ajilore's work is centred on television debate, the focus here is political campaign print advertisement. Another point of difference is that the present study does not just identify the discourse function but dig into how evaluative language process is involved in the effectuation of the discourse function of acclaim.

Goźdz & Pontrandolfo, (2014) compare the evaluative patterns in the judicial discourse of American and Italian criminal judgements. The paper thus exposes the pivotal role of evaluative phraseology typified in the legal genre of the judgment. The contrastive cross-language study is made up of approximately 1,000,000 tokens from each of the Italian and American judicial texts respectively.

To discover the evaluative patterns in the two sub-corpora, the analysis adapted Hunston's (2008) semantic sequences approach, (i.e., the *Noun+ that*-clause ('*N che*'). The interim results indicate that there is a striking similarity in the manner the American and the Italian judges process evaluative meanings. This finding is a proof of the assertion on the evaluation crucial role evaluation plays in almost every aspect of our language use. The fact that it is intrinsically present in judicial discourse of American and Italian language discourse prove further the veracity of the assertion. It is therefore a concept that is worthy to be examined in other context as is being done in this exercise.

Having reviewed some studies on evaluative discourse, let me also turn attention to how Functional Theory has been applied in political discourse. Extant literature reveals that the framework has been a useful tool

in analysing varied election electioneering campaign messages such as candidacy announcement address; presidential, vice-presidential, and gubernatorial debates and so on (Benoit, 2017, 2014, 2007). Some of the issues that have been addressed on discourse functions are: (i) Acclaims are made more than attacks in the campaign texts; (ii) Incumbents acclaim more than attack in campaign speeches; (iii) Challengers do attack more than the incumbents; (iv) Several studies have also been carried out on discourse functions of political discourse. Let us examine a few of such studies.

One of the works of Benoit (2007) examines acceptance addresses from 1952 to 2000. The positive statements (acclaims) about the candidates in those speeches amounted to 77%. The attack discourse function, i.e., criticism of the opponents, accounted for 23% statements while a paltry 0.7% of the utterances constituted the defences. The results further indicate that though all candidates made acclaim, but the reality was that the incumbents candidate did acclaim more and did attack less than the challengers. The fact that the incumbents had the privilege of discussing their deeds in office in the past is said to be responsible for the heightened contrasts. Another outcome of the study has to do with focus of assertions in the acclaims and attacks. In addition, the findings reveal that the acceptance addresses tilted toward policy (55%) more, with fewer assertions on character (45%). General goals and ideals were used more often as the basis of acclaims than attacks

Benoit, Blaney and Pier (2010) examine the discourse functions in nominating convention keynote speeches of the two major political parties in the US, viz., Republican party and Democratic party, between 1960 and 1996. The thrust of the study is on the frequency distribution of the discourse functions and the findings reveal that acclaim and attack are the common discourse functions used in the speeches. The speeches are said to contain 51% acclaim, and 49% attack, while defence occurrence is just 1%. The rare occurrence of defence, according to the study, is because there is no immediately prior provoking attack and the fact that keynote speakers do not the opposition to dictate the grounds of their speech. It is also found out that speakers from both parties address issues on character and party policies but that the challenger often attack more while the incumbent keynoters do make more acclaim more than attack.

Meta-Analysis of Research on the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse William L. Benoit Functional Theory has been applied to a variety of election campaign messages, including candidacy announcement speeches; TV spots; debates; direct mail brochures; candidate webpages; nomination acceptance addresses; vice presidential debates; senate, gubernatorial, and mayoral debates; senate, gubernatorial, and house TV spots; and debates and TV spots from other countries.

Another study on discourse functions has to do with a meta-analysis on various Functional Theory predictions. In the study Benoit (2017) tests the following hypotheses: (i) attacks are less common than acclaims; (ii) policy is discussed more than character; (iii) when discussing past deeds incumbents acclaim more and attack less than challengers; (iv) attacks, and policy statements, in general outnumber primary campaigns; (v) when addressing general goals and ideals, attacks are more common than acclaims. The results of the study indicate that only two hypotheses were not confirmed. The findings among others show that general goals were the underline factors responsible for more acclaims and fewer attacks than future plans. It is also revealed that more attacks and fewer acclaims were deployed by candidates than other sources.

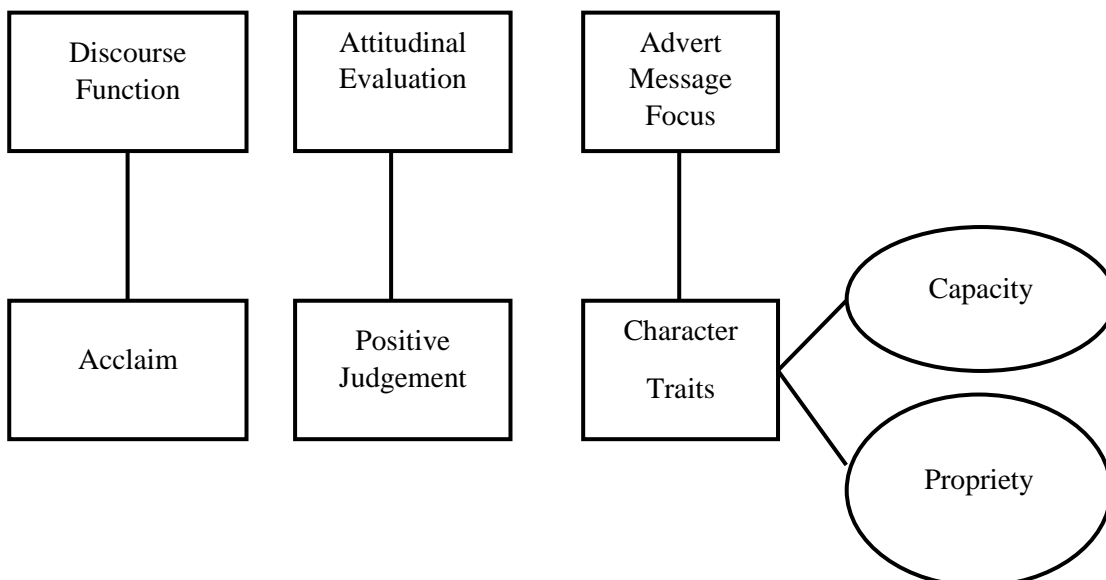
Findings and Analysis

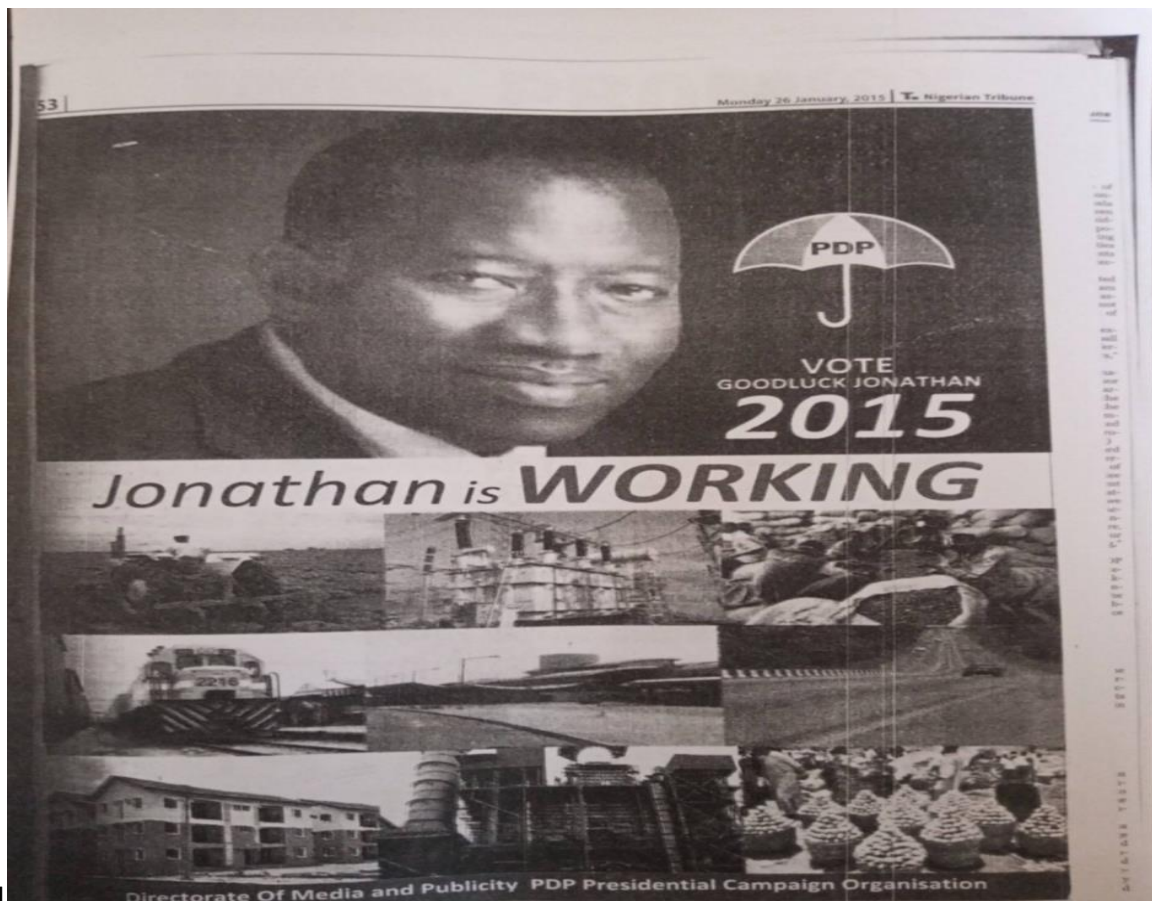
The spine of this study is that the discourse functions in the political campaign advertising texts are effectuated through evaluative language processes. The questions to be answered here are: (a) What are these evaluative language processes? (b) How did advertisers process them in the sampled texts? Given

that Acclaim is the discourse functions focused on in the study, attention is now on the evaluative processes involved in the actuation of the discourse function. The procedure examines how different sub-categories of Attitudinal evaluation were used to effectuate the Acclaim function. Out of the three sub-categories of the attitudinal process of evaluation, the study examines how Judgement, and Appreciation were used in effectuating the function of Acclaim in the advertisement texts. This section, therefore, explores how each of the sub-categories was used as an evaluative process to effectuate Acclaim discourse function.

Attitudinal Evaluative Judgement Construing Acclaim

This process of evaluation of human behavioural values is classified into capacity and propriety. To construe acclaim, evaluation of “capacity” is characterized by expressions that show approval of appraiser’s leadership capacity/capability. This assertion stems from the premise that such judgement is shaped by commonly held socio-cultural beliefs and values (Robinson,2006,P.8). Below is the figure depicting the conceptual idea:





Advert 1

Table 1: Evaluative

Advert text (Expression of Acclaim)	Evaluative process of Judgment (Positive Evaluation)
(1) Jonathan is working. (Advert 1, "Nigerian Tribune", 26 January, 2015, pg53).	Positive evaluation of Capacity: The advert message praised Jonathan for his competence

The acclaim extracted from advert 1 is presented and analysed in table 1 above. The evaluative theme is a simple sentence which was succinctly used to positively evaluate President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s capacity in governance. Jonathan, then the incumbent president, was the presidential candidate of the ruling party PDP) during the 2015 presidential election. The simple sentence has a subject-verb structure (Jonathan + is working). As a declarative statement presented the candidate as a competent leader. The use of present continuous tense, “is working”, portrayed the candidate as being active in his duty as the president who was relentlessly working for the betterment of the country. The picture painted here is made clearer when we consider the aspect that positively evaluated his policy accomplishments.

Table 2

Advert text (Expression of Acclaim)	Evaluative process of Judgment (Positive Evaluation)
(2) A man well-educated (See advert.2.).	<i>Positive evaluation of Capacity: Acknowledgement of Jonathan intellectual capacity (knowledge)</i>
(3) A man who understands the problems of Nigeria and Nigerian people (See Advert 2).	<i>Positive evaluation of Capacity: Jonathan was positively appraised to have the ability to process the problems in the country and was sympathetic to the Plights of Nigerians</i>
(4)A man that can provide solutions to the problems of Nigeria (See Advert 2.).	Positive Evaluation of Capacity: Jonathan was judged to have the capability to attend to the problems in Nigeria
(5) A man that can give Nigeria a new direction (See Advert 2).	<i>Positive evaluation of Capacity: Jonathan assessed to possess the needed knowledge for a new direction for the country.</i>
(6) The track record of President Goodluck Jonathan has shown that he is a man of destiny (See Advert 2).	Positive evaluation of Capacity: The assessment of Jonathan’s records proved his <i>Competence (experience as an evidence of competence)</i>
(7) A man who is dependable, reliable, and loyal to the cause of the country. (See Advert2).	Positive assessment of Propriety: Jonathan adjudged to possess accepted moral/ethical/social requirements for the cause of the country

the acclaims evaluative expressions identified in advert B are highlighted in table 2 above. As observed,

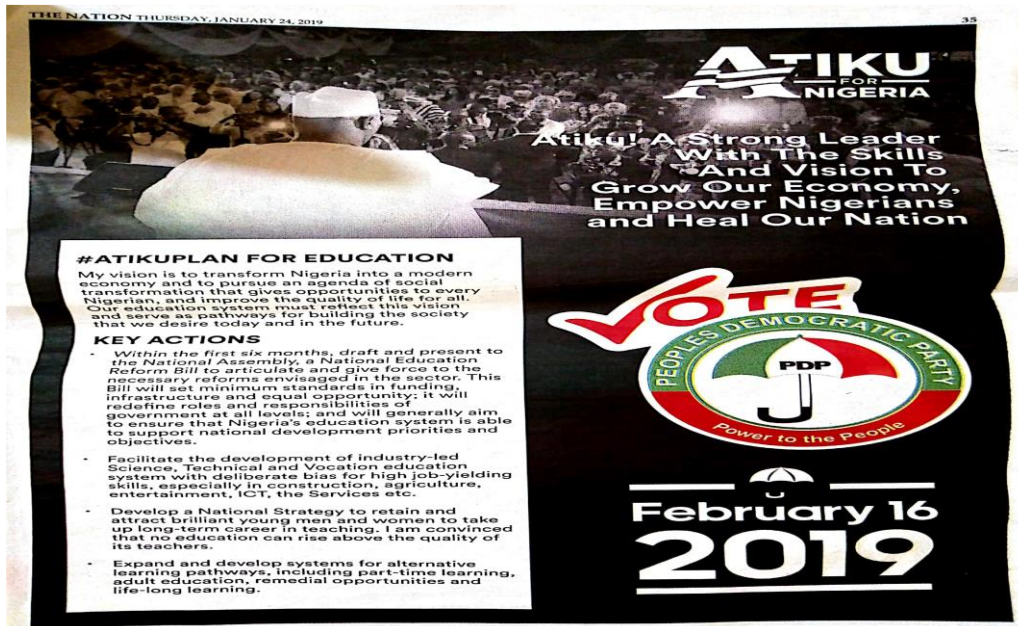
“Who is qualify to be Nigeria President?” and “Why is Jonathan the ideal candidates?”. Those could be the puzzling or the rhetorical questions in the minds of the advitiser. The seemingly proffered answers to the questions were provided themes highlighted in table 2 above. As observed in the texts, the lexical structures of the expressions are adjectival clauses that were used in describing Jonathan eulogistically, with five out of the six identified evaluative expressions primarily used to hype the capacity of President Goodluck Jonathan. Thus indicating that the evaluation was more focused on capacity than propriety. The positive profiling of Jonathan in the advertisement was used to suggest that he was qualified to be President because he combined academic qualification (he was well-educated, i.e., PhD degree holder) with the knowledge of the problems confronting the people and the nation. In essence, he had the capability to solve the problems. The use of the modal auxiliary “can”, in the noun clause, “A man that can give Nigeria a new direction”, indicated that he was a candidate who possessed the requisite capacity and capability (academic and experience) to lead the country well.

To prove to the public that the candidate possessed values that were in line with the socially held ethical norms or rule for moral action and behaviour, the candidate was assessed to be dependable, reliable, and loyal to the cause of the country (see no 7 in table 2). The evaluative frames depicted academic attainment,

ability to discern problems and proffer solutions as requisite qualifications for anyone desirous of the office of president of Nigeria.

Attention is now turned to the processes indicating how positive *Judgement* was used to effectuate *Acclaim* function in the PDP presidential election advertisements in 2019. Let us examine the sampled advert taken from “The Nation” newspaper.

Advert 3 : “The Nation”, Thursday, January 24, 2019. Pg.35.



Presented in table 3 below is the acclaim theme extracted from advert 3 and its analysis

Table 3

Advert Text	Evaluative process of Judgment
(8) Atiku! A strong leader with the skills and vision to grow our economy, empower Nigerians and heal our nation. (Advert3, “The Nation”, February 16, 2019, pg. 35)	Positive evaluation of Capacity: Atiku was acknowledged to have the requisite Competence/Knowledge on economic management that could make life better for Nigeria and Nigerians

The acclaim theme extracted from advert 3 is presented in table 3 above. The acclaim in the text is an appositive construction. This appositive construction indicated a juxtaposed relationship between a nominal word, “Atiku” and a noun clause, “A strong leader with the skills and vision to grow our economy, empower Nigerians and heal our nation”. This noun clause therefore provided some complimentary information or explanation on Atiku’s qualities as a presidential candidate. In essence, it was deployed to positively assess the presidential candidate of PDP during the 2019 elections. He was described as a strong leader who was endowed with requisite vision and skills needed for nation’s economic growth and the ability to empower the citizens. The inference that could be drawn from this extract is that the evaluative

expressions were indicative of the qualities expected of a president of the country. And the fact that Atiku possessed the qualities, he should be preferred above other candidates.

Positive evaluative Judgment was also deployed to effect Acclaim functions in the APC presidential election advertisements in 2019. Here are the analysis of the sampled texts:

Advert 4: “The Nation”. Thursday, January 31, 2019. Pg. 45.



Advert 6: “The Nation”. Thursday, January 17, 2019. Pg.36

Table 4

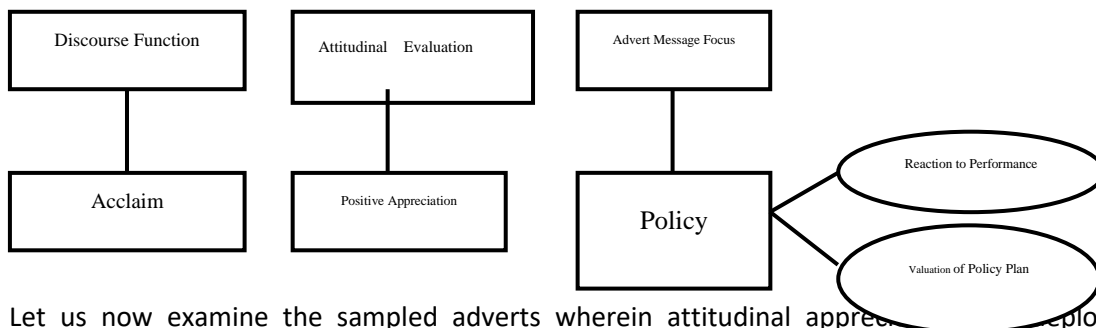
	Advert Text	Evaluative process of Judgment
14	Mr. President sir, the good people of Kano State appreciate the giant strides of your administration (APC Advert 4: “The Nation, 31 st January 2019, pg.3).	Positive Capacity: Mr. President (Buhari) was adjudged to be a competent administrator
15	Mr. President, our people deeply appreciate your exceptional personal integrity in public leadership	Positive assessment of Propriety: The advert message was used to adjudge the president an outstanding man of integrity
16	The good people of Kastina State warmly our beloved son, indefatigable, tested, and trusted leader... (Advert 6 : “The Nation”, February 14, 2019, pg. 27).	Positive evaluation of Propriety: President Buhari was adjudged as someone who was dependable, reliable, and trusted in leadership position.

The three identified themes of acclaim from Adverts 4, 5, and 6 respectively are presented in table 4. The processes of evaluation therein focused on the capacity and propriety of the APC presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari. In advert 4, the phrase, “the giant strides of your administration” positively evaluated the candidate’s administrative acumen. In basic term, it was being suggested in the advert message that his capacity as a competent administrator was responsible for the considerable progress achieved in various sectors by his administration. Similarly, the other two acclaim themes were also effectuated through positive evaluation of character. However, the assessment here was based on the candidate’s propriety. The conformity to conventionally accepted moral standards of behaviour was emphasised through lexico-semantic intensification. For instance, the phrase, “exceptional personal integrity” used in advert 5 has hyponymous relationship with “tested and trusted leader” used in advert 6. What can be inferred here is that the compounded adjectival phrases represented the yardsticks against which a competent, efficient and good president could be judged.

Positive Attitudinal Appreciation as Instrument of Acclaim

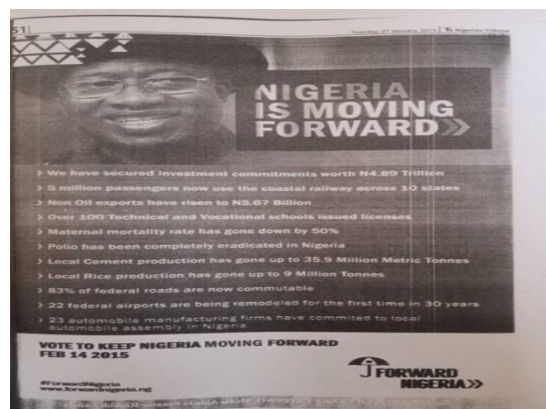
Appreciation is the second sub-class of “Attitudinal” evaluative process used in effectuating Acclaim function examined in this paper. As stated earlier, the evaluation is meant to eulogize policy accomplishments or formulations of the advertiser. The positive evaluation of policy accomplishment is therefore termed positive reaction while the assessment of proposed policy statement is regarded as positive valuation of policy plans. Hereunder is the diagrammatic representation of the conceptual idea of Appreciation as a linguistic instrument used by political advertisers to effect Acclaim function in the advertisement texts:

Figure 3



Let us now examine the sampled adverts wherein attitudinal appreciation is employed for acclaim discourse function. The analysis starts with PDP advertisements in 2015:

ADVERT 7



In the table below are the identified evaluative processes of Appreciation used in effectuating *Acclaim* functions extracted from the 2015 campaign advertisements of PDP for presidential election (See Advert 7 above):

Table 5

Advert Text	Evaluative Process of Appreciation
(1) NIGERIA IS MOVING FORWARD	<i>Positive Reaction to Performance</i>
(2) We have secured investment commitments worth N4.89 trillion	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(3) 5 million passengers now use the coastal railway across 10 states	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(4). Non-oil exports have risen to N5.67 billion	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(5). Over 100 technical and vocational schools issued licenses	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(6). Maternal mortality rate has decreased by 50%.	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(7). Polio has been completely eradicated in Nigeria.).	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(8). Local cement production has increased to 35. 9 million metric tonnes.	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(9). Local rice production has increased to 9 million.	<i>Positive reaction to performance).</i>
(10). 83% of federal roads are now commutable	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(11). 22 federal airports are being remodeled for the first time in 30 years.	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>
(12). 23 automobile manufacturing firms have committed to local automobile assembly in Nigeria	<i>Positive reaction to performance</i>

Table 5 above presents the acclaim themes extracted from advert 7 and the processes of evaluation involved in construing the discourse function. The advertising text was used to positively appraise the policy accomplishments of the then incumbent President and the candidate of the PDP during the 2015 presidential election. The headline of the advert copy, “Nigeria is moving forward”, itself made a positive assessment of the country. The use of this idiom is a personification, carved in a simple sentence, demonstrates progress. In other words, the advertisers wanted the public to know that Nigeria was making progress during Jonathan’s presidency. By implication, the public were being implored to have faith in Jonathan’s leadership style that brought progress to the country and support his bid for another tenure to maintain the progressive momentum.

Perhaps the advertisers anticipated that someone may question this acclaim by saying, “What were the indications of the progress made?” The subsequent statements of acclaim provided the answer to the question by positively assessing Jonathan’s administration achievements recorded in various sectors. As recorded in table 5, one could note that the different modes of transport (Air-rail cum road), Agriculture, education and health sectors were appraised as areas where progress had been achieved. The deployment of verbal phrases to positively describe the policy accomplishments of Jonathan’s administration, viz.: “has gone up”, “have secured”, “have risen”, “are now commutable”, were indicative of progress in comparison with what was on ground before he came to power.

Advert8

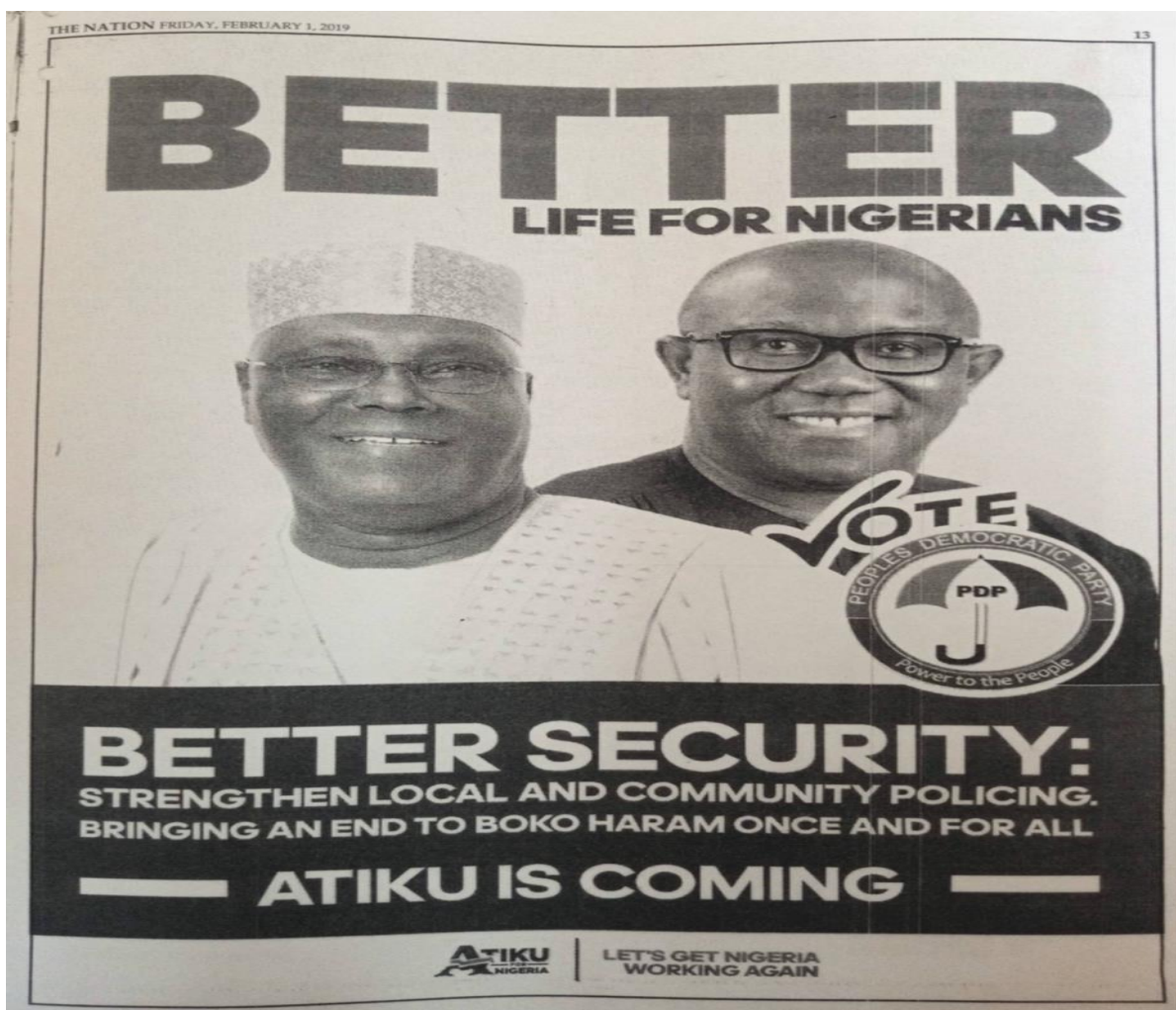


Table 6

Advert Text	Evaluative Process of Appreciation
(14). BETTER Life for Nigerians	<i>Valuation of life of Nigerians: It would be better than what was obtained under the incumbent if Atiku was voted.</i>
(16). BETTER SECURITY	<i>Valuation of the security situation: In order to secure better life for Nigeria, better Security system would be put in place if Atiku was voted for.</i>

The acclaims in advert 8.) were focused on the projected policy plans of Atiku on security, education, employment, and social welfare. The positive evaluative assessments projected better scenarios in those policy issues if the candidate was voted in as President. The expressions of praise on the projected policies assumed that the masses deserved better security than what the incumbent administration was providing, and these could be provided if Atiku was voted in as the President of Nigeria. The two acclaim themes extracted are presented in table 6 above. The acclaims, made up of modified noun phrases, were used to evaluate the living conditions in Nigeria as a result of the security situation in the country. The text then did a futuristic evaluation of the security policy plan of the 2019 Peoples Democratic Party’s presidential candidate and postulated that it would be better than what was then obtainable in the land when or if Atiku was voted in. This idea was driven home and strengthened by the fact that the country was under the siege of boko haram onslaught. The text producer proposed to adopt policy of local and community policing make the security better.

Positive Appreciation in Advert 9: “The Nation”, Thursday February 14, 2019

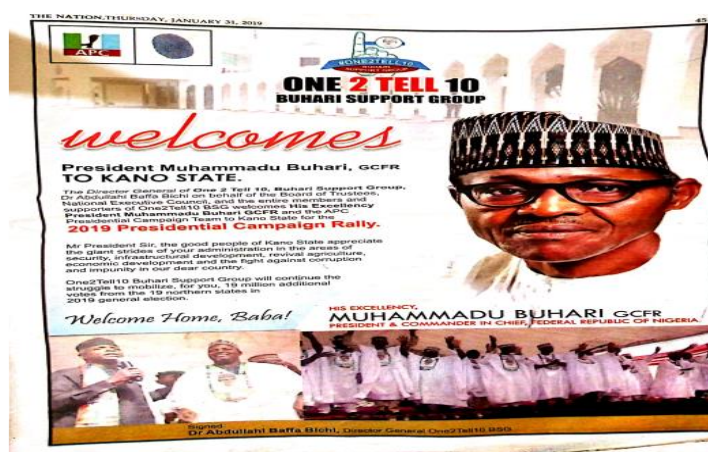


Table 7 showing attitudinal evaluative Appreciative expressions deployed to construe Acclaim discourse function in 2019 APC advertising text:

Advert Text (Acclaim)	Evaluative Process of Appreciation
<p>Next level means building a strong Nigerian economy for all -more jobs, more jobs, more jobs. -Reducing the prices of everyday goods. -Lifting millions of Nigerians out of poverty (See Advert 9)</p>	<p><i>Composition: Explanation of policy plans encapsulated in the party mantra meant to build a strong economy for all Nigerians.</i></p>

The acclaim in advert (9) above is woven around the party’s mantra (NEXT LEVEL) during the 2019 campaign exercise. Encapsulated in the campaign slogan were the policy postulations made through a nominal phrase: “BUILDING A STRONG NIGERIAN ECONOMY FOR ALL”, and this represented the positive evaluative expression that was used to project APC cum its presidential candidate’s economic policy in the next dispensation. One could ask: “How would this be carried out”? The advertisement tried to explain this with this statement, “NEXT LEVEL means: more jobs, more jobs..., reducing price of everyday goods, lifting millions of Nigerians out of poverty” These adjoining phrases were not only used to project the party’s plans but also evaluated the socio-economic features of Nigeria.

(Advert 10; “The Nation”. January 31, 2019, pg. 45).



The expression in the table below is the Acclaim effectuated via positive evaluative Appreciation as captured in the 2019 APC presidential election advertisements (See Advert 10 above):

Figure 8 showing evaluative process of Appreciation extracted from advert 10

Advert Text (Acclaim)	Evaluative Process of Appreciation
<p>18) Kano State appreciate the giant stride of your administration in the areas of security, infrastructural development, revival agriculture, (sic!) economic development, and the fight against corruption and impunity in our dear country. (See Advert 10)</p>	<p><i>Positive reaction to performance on policy implementations that served as foundation for the new policy plans.</i></p>

The acclaim discourse function was effectuated by the positive evaluative expressions '**giant strides**'. The noun phrase is deduced to be the main positive evaluative expression that evaluated Buhari's administration. Thus, depicting the advertising text as one performing acclaim discourse role. The phrase described Buhari administration's as a successful since it had made huge progress in various socio-economic sectors - "infrastructural development" "revival (of) agriculture" (sic!), and "economic development". These nominal phrases are also evaluative statements that were deployed to expose the specific areas of assessment which eventually culminated into describing Buhari's administration policy accomplishments as "giant stride". The fact that the headwords (i.e., "development"; "revival") in those noun phrases also depict positivity shows that they were used to construe acclaim discourse function.

Conclusion

This paper aligns with the argument of Livnat and Lewin (2016) that evaluation is a persuasive linguistic instrument used in different genres of political discourse. To substantiate this claim, the study examines the nexus between positive evaluative language process and acclaim discourse function in the Nigerian print advertising texts. The findings reveal that the enthralling self-praise proclamations in the sampled texts were remotely processed via evaluative language expressions. Thus indicating that evaluative language use is the bedrock of acclaim discourse function.

Using the concept of evaluation from the perspective of Appraisal Theory, the study subclassifies character evaluation process into Propriety and Capability while the assessment of policy issues, termed Appreciation is examined from the perspective of Reaction to policy accomplishments and Valuation of proposed policies. The findings reveal that the process of effectuating Acclaim involves political advertisers fabricating linguistic and semiotic images of self that seek to connect with the aspirations of the audience. The effectuation of the enthralling image in the adverts has been analysed in terms of evaluation of Propriety (i.e, evaluation of character traits like honesty, compassion, determination) and Capability; that is, leadership ability (competence and experience in office). . In the signification of capability, there is tactic labelling which tends to suggest competence in terms of intellectual capacity ("well educated"); ability ("can provide solution", "can give Nigeria a new direction"); tenacity and vision ("indefatigable", "a strong leader with skills and vision"). All these suggest the assumed requisite qualities expected of the would-be President. Through these evaluative linguistic resources, the advertisers were inviting the public/voters to perceive the advertised candidate as the one possessing the qualities befitting the office of the president.

The second dichotomous judgemental scale used in effectuating acclaim is propriety This encapsulates judgements of good moral character. In this evaluation, the candidates' trustworthiness, honesty, respect for the law and the right of others, absence of hatred and ethnicism, honouring the constitution, and absence of criminal conviction are issues considered for assessment. Results of the analysis show that the judgement-indexing linguistic structures are nominal phrases infused with attitudinal meaning. In signifying the requisite moral standard expected of the president, the advert messages presuppose trustworthiness, loyalty, humanness, and integrity as parts of the moral and ethical standards.

These findings have projected how the advertisers presented enthralling images of political aspirants that they considered as the ideal criteria for the office of President in Nigeria. In other words, the study has exposed the socially acceptable traits and qualities expected of the one to occupy the "Aso Rock" office. This view is in tandem with Krizan's (2016) assertion that Capacity and Propriety impose values on the society. One can then conclude that Attitudinal judgement categories of Capacity and Propriety are socially motivated. This has therefore demonstrated that evaluation is a crucial tool in the effectuation of persuasion-induced discourse function.

The significance of the study lies in the attempt made to contribute to the understanding of persuasive strategies deployed in Nigerian political campaign advertising. One of the major tasks pursued in the study is to find a link between concepts that are seemingly unrelated but are integral to persuasive discourse. This paper has, in a little way, found that evaluation plays a pivotal role in persuasive discourse of the Nigerian polity. This confirms the position of Bednarek (2006), Hunston (2011), Krizan (2016), and Livnat & Lewin (2016) that evaluation is not only a regular feature in discourse, but also a pivotal tool of persuasion. The findings of this exercise could therefore be a useful

guide to rookie advert copy writers and political actors in their persuasive task. It is also being suggested that another study could examine the use of evaluative language process in attack discourse function

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