

## INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION MESSAGES IN THE GIANT OF AFRICA: BRAND PROMOTION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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### ABSTRACT

Independence is celebrated in grand style in Africa, Nigeria and the rest of the world as different activities are executed to commemorate the annual occasion. Individuals, organisations and groups plan and take part in exciting independence events. Product and /or service brands who seek opportunities to promote their unique offerings jump on the independence celebration platform. On the flip side, there is the expectation that brands have to be socially responsible to the country they belong by showing loyalty during national events. To balance these, brands adopt creative strategies in their activities and message. Exploring diverse advertising appeal strategies, this study examines Nigerian brands' use of advertising appeals in independence celebration newspaper messages over a decade. Adopting the mixed method of content analysis, the study finds out that brand/endorsement and practical/problem-solving appeals were most used by brands in the decade to promote their brands and be socially responsible during independence.

**Keywords:** Independence Celebration, Nigeria, Advertising Appeals, Social Responsibility

### INTRODUCTION

Various national events are remembered and celebrated annually and one of such is the independence celebration. Independence celebrations are times of reflection where leaders and citizens look over the past years since their freedom and look forward to independent years ahead. Annually, this important milestone in a country's history is celebrated across the world as days and seasons of freedom and liberation where they

remember when and how they were relieved of their burdens of being under superior authorities.

All year round, different countries celebrate independence as the Guinness Book of Records reports that Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in 1939 were the first countries within the Commonwealth to be given independence from the British Empire and since then, other countries have pushed for and gained their independence (Guinness Book of Records, n.d.). In Africa, different countries gained their independence in different years by wars, fights and for a few countries (like Nigeria), the independence was gained peacefully. Controversies abound in scholarship on the first African country to gain independence because of continuous interference of the colonial masters after independence declaration. However, Ghana is recorded to be the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain complete independence from colonial rule in 1957 and interestingly, in quick succession, about two-thirds of African countries including Cameroon, Togo, Madagascar Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria among others gained their freedom in 1960 (France 24, 2020). Other countries like South Africa became independent after 1960 and Namibia, which is the most recent African country to gain independence gained hers in 1990 (Ryan, 2021).

During Algeria's celebration of independence (which was gained from France on July 5, 1962), the country's green and white flag is flown as a symbol of freedom as Algerians attend official annual parades, cultural events and concerts (Office Holiday, 2022). As an annual ritual, the president gives an independence speech which citizens look forward to as he highlights the state of the nation and things to expect. In recent years, Algerians have taken to the streets on Independence Day to protest dictatorship (Aljazeera, 2019). In Morocco, independence from France and Spain is celebrated annually on November 18 where traditional food vendors take to the streets, a grand reception is held at the imperial palace, colourful parades own the day (Morocco, n.d.) and citizens enjoy the public holiday as they pay tribute to the father of the nation and express their

unwavering commitment to the 'epics initiated to defend the integrity of the Kingdom's territory' (Maroc, 2014). Zimbabwe is not an exception, as her annual celebration of freedom on April 18, 1980 from the United Kingdom is matched with the waving of the national flag, citizens wearing the national colours and the president celebrating the occasion (Scriber, 2016). In Cameroon, her independence is celebrated annually on May 20 as citizens express pride in their freedom, soldiers and citizens take part in her festive parade and they celebrate. This celebration was especially enormous in 2010 when the country celebrated her 50th anniversary and recounted all the things the country had been through (Harsch, 2010). Namibia, whose independence was gained from South Africa on March 21, 1990 celebrates her freedom as skydivers, military men and musicians creatively perform the Namibian and African Union anthems. Her citizens engage in boxing and soccer conquests and attend week-long concerts to commemorate the occasion (Prosperity Life, 2021; Scriber, 2016).

Nigeria, the giant of Africa is not left out as her independence is celebrated annually on October 1. Regardless of religion and ethnicity, the day is celebrated as citizens remember their freedom from the British colonial masters. As an annual ritual, the president delivers an Independence Day speech to commence the celebration activities. Next, the country's flag of green and white is unfolded, accompanied with the national anthem and a host of parades by the country's armed forces, student groups and different cultural groups (Oluwole, 2020). The national cake decorated in green and white is cut annually and citizens take to the streets in green and white as they display fireworks and other beautiful activities. Organisations, political groups, brands and individuals are not left out of the celebration as state governors do special things on that day, restaurants/shopping malls host games and activities for people, music concerts and comedy show take place and brands give discounts as they celebrate the day with their customers (Oluwole, 2020).

Brands and advertisers target independence celebration and other national events to

place their advertisements, promote their brands and disseminate their brand messages (Samarina and Kalugina in Frolova, 2014). In addition to placing independence messages and brand promotion, brands sponsor national events, offer discounts, use independence themes in television and radio messages/advertisements as well as creatively project their brands as loyal Nigerians before, during and after independence celebration (Jaafar et al., 2016; Benson, 2018; Disu, 2017). Specific Nigerian brands like Infinix, Wakanow, Konga, Jumia and Techno, in 2017 and 2018 among other years, offered high discounts on their products and services to commemorate Nigeria's independence celebration (Benson, 2018; Disu, 2017), while other brands coined creative messages and disseminated via different mass media channels. To attract the attention of the citizens on these occasions, brands adopt different advertising and marketing strategies in their messages. These strategies range from advertising appeals to competitive advantage strategy, generic strategy, puffery and brand-image strategy among others (Gaid, 2020; Indeed Editorial Team, 2021; Shah, 2016).

Asides brand promotion at any given opportunity, consumers and customers want to feel and believe their brands are responsible to the communities they belong as "there is a growing pressure for advertising campaigns to be socially, culturally and morally ethical" (UKEssays, 2018). Thus, different social responsibility campaigns have been in place to ensure organisations do not just concentrate on profit-making but are also concerned with societal issues when placing their advertisements. One of the many ways' brands and advertisers have been getting involved is by participating in national events as a social responsibility function. These brands organise activities around national events to keep the people aware of the happenings and show their cooperation, as well as, inform/sensitize people on what should be done during national events to efficiently balance the social responsibility role of brands and brand promotion, brand messages on national occasions are creatively crafted and disseminated via various mass media channels including electronic, print, digital and below-the-line mass media channels.

This study therefore examines Nigerian brands whose independence celebration messages have been placed in Nigerian newspapers (as a medium) over ten years and the appeal strategies used in the independence messages. The study also identifies how brands balanced promotion and social responsibility.

### **Brand Promotion and Advertising Appeal Strategy**

The goal of every brand is to achieve different things in different seasons, depending on their specific objectives. These objectives may be to increase sales, increase profit/revenue, create/reinforce the existence of their product/service in the market, increase market share or retain loyal customers. Irrespective of the objective to be achieved, brand owners and advertisers sit with agencies to brainstorm and decide on the best strategy and medium to use to disseminate the message. The messages are creatively coined and every opportunity is seized to put their brands in the faces of the customers and achieve the desired objective. Brands thus, leverage on national celebrations when citizens will be in the celebration mood to grab the attention of readers, listeners or viewers, depending on the medium that best suits them.

To efficiently capture and convince the targeted audience in disseminated messages and particularly on independence celebration, advertisers make use of unique strategies that will aid them in achieving their desired goal as well as place them ahead of the competition. One of the major strategies often employed is the use of advertising appeals in advertising messages to grab the attention of their current and potential customers (Bangen, 2018). Advertising appeals are one of the best strategies to connect and selecting the most appropriate one for each audience and each season will make the messages effective (Rajnerowicz, n.d.). They (advertising appeals) are creative strategies, driving power and advertising theme employed by advertisers and marketers to grab the attention of consumers and/or customers to purchase, act or sign up while communicating a message (Klein, 2019; Sadeghi et al., 2015).

Generally, irrespective of the mass media, the two broad advertising appeal categories

are rational and emotional appeals. On the one hand, rational appeals are aimed at attracting and influencing rational decisions as they emphasize the performance, function and durability of a brand (Dix and Marchegiani, 2013). This appeal is often employed when the features and benefits of a product are projected in a bid to convince the viewer to purchase (Bangen, 2018). On the other hand, emotional appeals attract human feelings and connects with the audience on a psychological level by using messages, music or imagery and this makes the consumer 'feel something'. This strategy is effective and efficient as many purchasing decisions are made based on 'feelings' and 'emotions'. The appeals in this category stir some emotions in the minds of the consumers and convince them to act. The emotions can range from anger, fear, sorrow or nostalgia to joy, love, loyalty, trust, excitement, achievements and so on (Saurav, 2020). In the print media, these advertising appeals are sub-categorised under the two main groups. The appeals in the emotional appeals group include humour, fear, bandwagon, sensuality, brand/endorsement, masculine/feminine, value/ethics, scarcity, potential and personal/empathy. In the rational appeals group, the appeals include pain, figures/facts/statistics, snob/social, testimonial, durability and competitive advantage appeal among others (Klein, 2019).

In a discursive analysis on appeals by Iriwieri in 2014, the significance of appeals in advertisements irrespective of the medium and the determinants for selecting appeals for products and services are outlined. From the research, advertising appeals should awaken and arouse an individuals' desire to take a specific action and this should come after answering the necessary questions for designing an advertisement (Iriwieri, 2014). Whatever appeal is selected for an advertisement should be placed in the right location and combined with the most appropriate medium. The end results should be to make people stop and pay attention having appealed to their reason/emotion. (Red Crow Marketing, 2013). All of these appeals in the long term, are strategies adopted by brands who intend to promote their products and/or services for different reasons and to achieve set objectives.

In different human society sectors like agriculture, politics, fashion, household equipment, social work and education, advertising appeals have been seen to be a very effective strategy to communicate and disseminate messages for brand promotion, on national events or social responsibility (Ademilokun and Taiwo, 2013; Costello, 2015; Gayatri, 2008; Yilmaz and Ozturk, 2013). These scholars further note that brands should not just pick any appeal to disseminate their message but should put into consideration the desired objective, medium to be used and the product/service class (Kalu & Enyia, 2017; Nwankwo et al., 2013).

The rational and emotional appeals are adopted by brands across the above-named sectors, irrespective of their objective. They are used creatively to coin messages and disseminated via various mass media channels. During independence, the objective of celebrating with the country as well as leveraging on the privilege to promote brands, propel brand owners and advertisers to adopt one or more appeals in their messages. As the appeals are creatively designed and woven to form independence messages that will attract customers and promote the brands, brand owners and agencies go a step further to decide the most suitable medium to place their messages. Depending on the target audience, the message can be placed in newspapers, magazines, television, outdoor media channels, radio, blogs, vlogs, websites or social media.

### **Brands, Independence and Social Responsibility**

As brands strive to be the best in their industry and promote their products/services at any given opportunity, there is a part of them and their activities that should not be ignored-corporate social responsibility. This aspect is what consumers look out for to ensure their brands are not solely profit-oriented but are also loyal and responsible citizens. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is a term that incorporates all activities and programmes an organisation undertakes to make positive contributions to the government, society, communities, groups and individuals. More often than not,

corporations approach CSR with the idea of volunteerism and philanthropy which does not fully capture all of the areas of CSR. Corporate philanthropy is making a direct contribution to communities, organisations and individuals in need which can include educational grants and environmentally sustainable development initiatives while volunteerism extends through the corporate hierarchy as employees volunteer for different CSR activities (Burch, 2018).

Different categories of social responsibility have been in existence and identified by different scholars over the years. As an aspect of social responsibility, the four-dimensional social responsibility framework by Carroll in 1979 and 1999 include the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic/discretionary responsibilities of a business and can be applied to brands (Asumah, 2015). 'Business organizations have always been wired to provide goods and services to the society' (Asumah, 2015) thus, a business economic responsibility focuses on her financial transactions which includes everything about money- employees' wages, investor activities, investments etc while the legal responsibility comprises being obedient to tax, environment, consumer safety and marketing practice laws/regulations of the nation and immediate environment the organisation operates (Kendrick et al., 2013). Ethical responsibility of businesses includes making efforts to reduce any harm or negative issues that can arise from the operations of such organisation (Kendrick et al., 2013) but not codified into law as performing these ethical responsibilities or not does not come with any legal consequence. This category of social responsibility reflects an organisations' concern for that is regarded as fair/just among community members, employees, consumers and shareholders (Asumah, 2015). Philanthropic/discretionary responsibility is a business' initiative to act beyond public expectation for a business (Kendrick et al., 2013) as businesses act like good corporate citizens which include active participation in human welfare programmes (Asumah, 2015).

The social responsibility of organisations and brands is a step beyond advertising profit-oriented products and services alone to non-profit advertisements. This comprises

messages that promote an idea beyond company operations like creating awareness on national issues, events and programmes (Brachmann, n.d.). They can be in form of image advertisements or public service announcements (usually paid for by the government and charity organisations). Contributor (2020) avers that ethically socially responsible advertisers will do what they can to improve their society and this includes responsible messaging which is being alert and sensitive to issues in the society that can lead to progress or damage and tailoring advertising messages to those situations. In his opinion, advertising messages should be consistent with current issues and should not manipulate people towards the wrong cause. Independence celebration messages disseminated via different media and other messages that relate to society's activities and important dates can be classified as an ethical aspect of an organisations' social responsibility.

As a form of social responsibility, Tewari (2019), among other scholars studied how advertisers creatively use advertising appeals in their advertising messages to celebrate national events like independence celebration and how these advertisements promote national unity and indirectly, put the brand in the face of the consumers. In India, Sony Television kept up with social responsibility, national unity and patriotism by promoting advertisements on the theme of unity before and during their independence celebration (Raghavan, 2015). Also, to commemorate India's 50th independence celebration, an Indian music composer, A. R. Rahman composed a musical album 'Vande Mataram' which although is not a product advertisement was reproduced by other musicians, folk and playback singers. These clips were aired during news hour as advertisements during the independence celebration (Raghavan, 2015).

In Malaysia, Halili et al., (2016) opines that brands in the country disseminated television commercials around independence that encouraged positivity and behavioural change that will influence the belief systems, emotions, attitudes and values of the citizens. These messages did not just promote the concerned brands but showed their sense of social responsibility, patriotism and reverence for the country's events.

Consequently, as an expression of social responsibility, Nigerian brands on independence, not only disseminate messages, but engage in socially responsible activities. In 2017 for instance, Dufil Prima Foods, the makers of Indomie noodles had an initiative Indomie Independence Day Awards where the social, intellectual and physical bravery among children was celebrated as these children were rewarded with scholarship worth millions of Naira. This act towards independence, made the children aware of independence celebration and they were delighted to be a part of the national event (Disu, 2017). Also, Airtel, in partnership with Banana Island residents, hosted an independence cultural festival on independence celebration day in 2017 where a Mifi, router and smartphones were given out. Nigeria's largest telecommunication network, MTN also gave out free airtime in commemoration of the annual celebration and participatory global rendition of the national anthem (Disu, 2017). Likewise, as a show of social responsibility, Boomerang's Magic Makers in 2020 celebrated Nigeria's 60th independence by inspiring Nigerian children to creatively showcase their cultural diversity with their imaginations. This month-long activity was achieved by a video series where the children were provided with a voice and a platform to share creative ideas to mark the day (Omokhapue, 2020).

Other Nigerian brands, over the years, have, as a demonstration of social/ethical responsibility creatively coined independence celebration messages to promote their brands and keep the citizens abreast of the national event as well as inform them of things to be done to enjoy continuous independence and unity. A few examples among others compiled by Disu, (2017) include Fidelity Banks's advert that read "One Nation bound in freedom, peace and unity. Happy Independence Celebration from all of us at Fidelity Bank"; First City Monument Bank's message-

"Oh God of Creation direct our noble cause, guide our leaders right, Help our youth the truth to know in love and honesty to grow and living just and true, Great lofty heights attain, to build a nation where peace and justice reign. Happy Independence Day. From all of us at FCMB".

A few brands go beyond celebrating the country on her independence and brand promotion to stating what citizens can do during independence to ensure stability in the nation and continued independence. Lafarge in one of their independence advertisements adopted a quote from Loowa Koyenikan. They wrote:

“Your pride for your country should not come after your country becomes great. Your country becomes great because of your pride in it”.

These messages and social responsibility activities projects brands as responsible Nigerian citizens as customers and consumers interact with their messages and activities.

## METHODOLOGY

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Newspapers, a print medium is purposively selected for this study as its archives are easily accessible and preserved in hard form. To identify Nigeria brands whose independence celebration messages have been placed in Nigeria newspapers over a decade, ascertain the appeals used and establish the balance between brand promotion and social responsibility, a systematic mixed method of research is adopted. Five prominent Nigerian newspapers are purposively selected based on their circulation figure of at least 100,000 copies daily (Aliagan, 2015). They are The Punch, Nation, Guardian, Tribune and Vanguard newspapers. These newspaper publications on Nigeria's Independence Day celebration (October 1) for a decade (2011-2020) is selected to gather the data required for the study. The qualitative and quantitative content analysis approach is explored where the researcher first qualitatively identifies the appeals available to brands and advertisers in message dissemination. Next, the appeals are inserted into a manually designed coding sheet, the brands and appeals are identified on the coding sheet.

The content categories on the coding sheet consists of advertising appeals in the rational and emotional appeal categories that can be used in print advertising messages as identified by Klein, (2019) and Middleton, (2017). These categories include humour,

adventure/youth, value/ethics, fear, gender, bandwagon/popularity, snob/social, brand/endorsement, personal/empathy, sensuality/sex, potential within the emotional category and practical/problem, pain, scarcity, figure/facts, testimonial, durability, competitive advantage within the rational category. Quantitatively, the coding sheet items are manually counted and inserted into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and results are generated in frequencies and presented in tables in graphs.

### DATA/ DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the five newspapers gathered over a decade (2011 to 2020), a total of 1,131 brand messages were identified, coded and analyzed. Each of these brand messages however had one or more appeals adopted in the messages. Thus, the total number of appeals identified through the decade was 1,571 rational and emotional appeals.

**Table 1: Emotional Appeals from 2011 to 2020**

| Year(s) | Adventure/<br>Youth | Value/<br>Ethics | Bandwagon/<br>Popularity | Brand/<br>Endorsement | Personal<br>/Empathy | Potential | Humour | Snob/<br>Social |
|---------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------|-----------------|
| 2011    | 6                   | 4                | 4                        | 67                    | 4                    | 3         | 0      | 0               |
| 2012    | 16                  | 3                | 4                        | 95                    | 3                    | 2         | 5      | 6               |
| 2013    | 9                   | 16               | 9                        | 83                    | 3                    | 2         | 0      | 6               |
| 2014    | 10                  | 19               | 5                        | 83                    | 4                    | 1         | 0      | 5               |
| 2015    | 4                   | 4                | 3                        | 60                    | 18                   | 2         | 2      | 5               |
| 2016    | 4                   | 3                | 1                        | 40                    | 9                    | 3         | 0      | 10              |
| 2017    | 7                   | 3                | 3                        | 40                    | 1                    | 3         | 1      | 15              |
| 2018    | 12                  | 1                | 2                        | 64                    | 8                    | 3         | 1      | 19              |
| 2019    | 7                   | 11               | 1                        | 58                    | 12                   | 5         | 0      | 13              |
| 2020    | 8                   | 6                | 1                        | 97                    | 24                   | 10        | 0      | 10              |
| Total   | 83                  | 70               | 33                       | 687                   | 86                   | 34        | 9      | 89              |

Table 1 reveals the emotional appeals that were identified in the brand messages placed in the Nigerian newspapers from 2011 to 2020. A total of 1,091 emotional appeals were identified where brand/endorsement appeal had the highest in all the years with a

number of 687. Next to brand/endorsement appeal is the snob/social with 89, personal/empathy with 86, adventure/youth appeal with 83, value/ethics with 70, potential with 34, bandwagon/popularity with 33 and humour appearing nine times. The use of the prominent appeal (brand/endorsement) however fluctuated in the decade as there was a drastic decline in its figures from 2012 to 2017. Through the decade, all of these appeals were used in varying proportion to disseminate the brand independence messages to readers through the newspapers.

**Table 2: Rational Appeals from 2011 to 2020**

| Year (s)     | Practical/Problem solving | Figures/Facts/Quotes | Testimonials | Durability | Competitive Advantage | Scarcity |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------|----------|
| 2011         | 31                        | 11                   | 3            | 1          | 1                     | 0        |
| 2012         | 46                        | 8                    | 6            | 3          | 7                     | 0        |
| 2013         | 33                        | 9                    | 7            | 4          | 3                     | 2        |
| 2014         | 35                        | 11                   | 9            | 1          | 8                     | 0        |
| 2015         | 26                        | 4                    | 8            | 0          | 3                     | 0        |
| 2016         | 22                        | 2                    | 1            | 1          | 1                     | 0        |
| 2017         | 23                        | 4                    | 2            | 0          | 0                     | 0        |
| 2018         | 29                        | 11                   | 7            | 1          | 1                     | 0        |
| 2019         | 25                        | 7                    | 7            | 2          | 2                     | 0        |
| 2020         | 37                        | 5                    | 6            | 2          | 2                     | 0        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>307</b>                | <b>72</b>            | <b>56</b>    | <b>15</b>  | <b>28</b>             | <b>2</b> |

In Table 2, the rational appeals adopted by brands through the decade were 480 in number where practical/problem-solving appeal had the highest use with a figure of 307. Very far from it, but the next in line is the figures/facts/quote appeal appearing 72 times, then the testimonials appearing 56 times, competitive advantage, 28 times, durability 15 times and scarcity just twice. The rational appeals were not adopted as much as the emotional appeals as it addresses reasoning and logic while emotional appeals speak to human's feelings and emotional senses.

Merging the roles of brand promotion and social responsibility, Independence Day celebration newspapers were full of brand messages on independence. Adopting

various advertising appeal strategies, these messages were a blend of brand promotion/felicitating with the country and a few messages which enumerated things citizens are expected to do on independence to enjoy continuous independence. The brands whose messages were placed in these newspapers across the decade cut across various industries including fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), breweries, oil and gas, government agencies, religious organisations, educational institutions/affiliations, telecommunications, financial institutions and automobiles. These brands, in their creativity adopted one or more advertising appeals in their independence messages. As a demonstration of cooperation and loyalty to Nigeria, the brand messages in the analysed newspapers contained congratulatory words, independence discounts, respect for the achievements of Nigeria's heroes, independence sales/bonus and advice to the citizens. Throughout, fifteen emotional and rational appeals were identified in the independence messages- adventure/youth, bandwagon/popularity, personal/empathy, humour, sex/sensuality, value/ethics, brand/endorsement, potential, snob/social, practical/problem-solving appeal, figures/facts/quotes appeal, testimonial appeal, durability appeal, competitive advantage appeal and scarcity appeal.

In the emotional appeals category, the following appeals by Klein, (2019) and Middleton (2017) were adopted in varying degrees in the brand independence celebration messages for brand promotion and social responsibility.

Brand/endorsement appeal, which was the most used (dominant) appeal through the decade (see Table 1) in the five newspapers analysed, projects a brand's uniqueness, its specific qualities/attributes and capitalises on what the brand has to offer such as the name, logo, unique features and in some instances, the models/celebrities used in the messages. In the independence celebration messages, brands adopted this appeal properly, particularly in 2020 and 2012 which had the highest figures (97 and 95 respectively). In the other years, the use of brand/endorsement appeal varied between 83 and 40 times. Brands whose strategy was the brand/endorsement appeal had their brand names and congratulated the country on her annual celebration. Many of them

read 'Happy Independence from all of us at XYZ (brand name)'; "XYZ brand wishes Nigeria a happy celebration..."; "XYZ brand celebrates Nigeria on her achievement of a milestone, happy celebration, etc. This appeal is used mainly for brand promotion as the message content placed as much emphasis on the brand disseminating the message as the independence message. Here, however, the loyalty to the nation and social responsibility function of brands is fairly balanced as the brand thought it wise to mention the celebration in her message and not just disseminate a random, normal brand promotion message.

Snob/social appeal persuades a reader/viewer to try out something in the message as a social being and to be associated with certain classes of people in the society. In the earlier years in the decade explored (2011 to 2015), this appeal was rarely used by brands. From 2016 however, brands began to actively use it till 2020. The messages with this appeal portrayed independence as a national and social event that citizens should be a part of and not miss out on. The brands who adopted the appeal the most also leveraged on that to promote their brands and persuade citizens not to lose out on the features the brand had to offer. Premium Pension brand message for instance in 2011 had medals with ropes of green and white that suggests to the reader that they can achieve a lot if they try out their service and they will experience many wins with their brand. In the same breath, their independence message read.

"A little more out of life... now, that's premium. At Premium, we believe an individual without worries goes on to make the most out of life. That's why we have played a prominent role in helping to motivate the workforce. So, come and experience the premium life".

Etisalat brand also in 2015 adopted this appeal in their independence message where they had a group of persons chatting about the country on a social media platform, using their telecommunication service. The messages congratulated the country and invited citizens to be a part of the social conversation on Twitter and not be left out. These and many more snob/social appeals in independence celebration messages

helped brands promote their product/service and project their social responsibility function.

Personal/empathy appeal is used by brands in their messages to connect with the reader or consumer on a personal level such that their relationships are appealed to and their sense of vulnerability. This appeal was employed more in 2020 (24 times) than other years. Next to it was in 2015 and then in other years, brands adopted the appeal less than 13 times while it was used just once in 2017. The brand messages that adopted this strategy brought to citizens' remembrance the labours of the heroes' past, the achievements and the contributions of the heroes to independence. Here, the messages appealed to the readers on a personal level and was aimed at bringing out their vulnerability/empathy as they celebrated with the country. The appeal did not just focus on the brand and what it has to offer but helped the citizens think back to the process that led up to independence. An example was Bank of Industry's independence celebration message in 2020 that combined brand/endorsement and personal/empathy appeals. The message read:

“We congratulate His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR on Nigeria's 60th Independence anniversary. To our heroes past and present, and to the diligent and hard-working citizens whose sweat and tears have brought us peace and prosperity, we say Happy Independence Day”.

The second part of the message appealed to the empathetic emotions of the reader as it reminded citizens of the sacrifice of heroes and the commitment they made to bring the freedom we enjoy today. Other messages like this adopted this appeal as a social responsibility function and brand promotion.

Adventure/youth appeal makes a reader feel younger reading a message as the appeal brings with it, nostalgic feelings and emotional energy. More FMCG and breweries brands adopted this appeal than other industries or brand categories as their independence messages blended social responsibility and brand promotion, aimed at

creating a feeling of youthfulness and agility in the reader's mind. Chevron's 2012 independence celebration message adopted this appeal effectively as its message read "it takes energy to come this far" and the image of the eagle suggested adventure, strength, youthful energy and the zeal to fly high. Below the illustration and message was Chevron's signature which promoted their brand while the message demonstrated their social responsibility. Also, Oando's 2018 independence message showed a young boy drawing significant heroes in the history of Nigeria's independence and a message that celebrated their achievement. This advertisement promoted the brand, demonstrated social responsibility as well as encouraged the desire in readers to try something adventurous.

Value/ethics includes things in culture, ways of living and/or doing things incorporated into a message. This appeal was adopted by brands 70 times through the decade but more in 2014 than other years and the least in 2012, 2016 and 2017. The appeal incorporates culture and brand's ethics into its messages. The appeal brought independence home i.e., it portrayed the Nigerian culture as well as promoted the ethics and value of the brand disseminating the message. Origin Bitters independence message in 2014 read "Happy Independence, Nigeria, we are forever proud of our roots". This message is a play of words on the name of the brand as well as recognition of citizens' background and roots. In another instance, Anambra state of Nigeria acknowledges her ethical responsibility in her 2014 message by adopting the ethics appeal in the message and demonstrating their significance as a state who acknowledges the value placed on the achievements of past leaders. The message read "Today, we come together as a nation to celebrate the labours of our heroes in the struggle for a free nation. Let us continue to build a nation where peace and justice reigns".

Potential appeals use in the decade is a far cry from the other appeals above as it is used 34 times. This appeal in messages speak to the readers' sense of achievement and attaining goals. The messages project that dreams can become realities if a particular

step is taken or something unique is done. This appeal could have been better adopted by brands in fulfilling their social responsibility. The potentials ahead of, and available to Nigeria could be highlighted using this appeal and the main things citizens can do can be creatively constructed briefly, yet, effectively. The few brands who adopted this appeal (especially in 2020) pinpointed the goals that could be achieved by using their brand. Air Peace, an airline in her 2020 message potentially appealed to the reader in her message “60 years ago, our founding fathers started our independence journey. Today, our journey is taking Nigeria to practical heights”. The appeal adopted in this message uniquely intercepted the services of the brand with the desire to travel and the encouragement to take Nigeria to greater heights. Glo, one of Nigeria’s telecommunications service provider, in her 2020 independence message subtly used potential appeal as a secondary appeal. The message read “We celebrate the country that inspires us to find our first”. Finding ‘first’ is an appeal to achieve a dream, try something new or do something differently.

Bandwagon/popularity appeal in a message compels a reader/viewer to belong to a particular group or desire to be a part of a society. This appeal was used more as a complimentary and not a stand-alone appeal in the independence messages. It was adopted 33 times through the decade and all through, less than ten times each year. The appeal when used with others projected a creative brand promotion and social responsibility independence message. Jago milk’s 2017 independence message suggested every Nigerian who wins, does so with Jago. Thus, their message read “for the winner in every Nigerian, Happy Independence Day. Jago, for the winner in you”. Also, Toyota’s 2017 message read ‘what makes us Toyota, we are resilient, we are everywhere, we achieve great things... now, doesn’t this sound a lot like Nigeria! Happy Independence Day’.

Humour appeal was scarcely used in brand independence celebration messages in the decade examined. It was the least used appeal (appeared nine times in 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2018). Generally, the appeal is one that touches a consumer or readers’ sense

of playfulness, joke and fun as this appeal spices an 'ordinary, mundane message' and turns it to a funny one. Humour appeal is used in about 30% of advertising messages (Sadeghi et al., 2015) but should be handled with care so the goal of the message is not misunderstood and then, leads to resentment (Darstaru, 2020; Rajnerowicz, n.d.). As independence is a celebration of freedom and victory, the appeal can be explored more but should be carefully used so it does not lead to insensitivity on the part of the brand. Sterling bank's 57th independence message had a few things to make the reader laugh as her message comprised the things people love about Nigeria, creatively put together in the figure 57. The things included are among others: small chops, jollof rice, traffic jam, boli (roasted plantain), swallow, mama put (a local restaurant), love for titles, theatre, Saturday weddings, live life to the fullest, pricing in the market, packaging, Ankara (a type of patterned fabric), awoof (free things) and die-hard football fans among other things. Omo detergent's 2012 advert read 'celebrate true independence from stains!'. First Bank's 2012 message was a number of images of different citizens or probably their staff creatively designed into a smiling face to celebrate independence. President drink in 2012 also creatively played with their brand name, which would likely have brought smiles to peoples' faces. Their message 'when the nation celebrates, the president celebrates... President drink'. This appeal aims to bring smiles to people's faces while promoting the brand and being socially responsible.

In the rational appeals category adopted in independence celebration messages, the following appeals were identified and analysed.

Practical/problem solving appeal was the dominant one through the decade in this category. It appeared 307 times through the decade. This appeal focuses on solutions the product/service can offer to certain problems or benefits a consumer will gain from using a product and/or service. In relation to independence messages, some brands mentioned a few tips citizens could imbibe to ensure unity and progress in Nigeria, while promoting the solution-offerings of their brands. Here, the appeal aided an interesting blend of social responsibility and brand promotion. The adverts that used

this appeal the most had messages like ‘... at ABC brand, we are committed to offering this or that services that will help fulfil the Nigeria of our dreams’. Specifically, Stanbic IBTC Bank’s 2019 message read “when we work together, we can build the country of our dreams”. Zenith bank read “we can only succeed in taking our nation to her ZENITH by BANKING on each other and committing to work together for a better future. Let’s work together to build a greater Nigeria”. Premier Cool soap read ‘stay chilled Naija, together we will go far’. With this appeal, many brands were able to creatively state their brand offering, provide a solution to a problem and at the same time, felicitate with Nigeria on her independence.

Facts/figures/quotes appeal was used 72 times in the decade, which is a significant difference from the dominant appeal. This appeal presents data, numbers or excerpts from certain people or events of the past. Majorly, in the brand independence messages, this appeal contained quotes from the national anthem, heroes’ words as well facts from Nigeria’s history that led to independence. NNPC’s 51st independence message enumerated the achievements of the company over the years, presenting facts about their achievement. In 2012, UAC Foods quoted a line from the National Anthem of 1960-1978- “Though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand Nigerians all, and proud to serve, our sovereign Motherland”

Testimonial appeal is similar to word-of-mouth and it was adopted 56 times in the decade, across the newspapers. In this appeal, the message is the goodwill phrase of someone that has tried out the product or service in the past and is recommending it to others or a testimony of the product/service commitment over time. Thus, the independence messages with this appeal revealed some truth about Nigeria and some truth about the product and/or service being loyal to Nigeria. In 2014, Shell in her independence message included a testimony of how the brand has been in existence for a while and her achievements to making the oil and gas sector better. 4Point Real Estate group in 2018 mentioned that they ‘deliver homes that bring joy’ and they have below it

a testimony of how their services bring joy to Nigerians. This appeal when creatively used, makes brand promotion and social responsibility easy to achieve.

Competitive advantage appeal centres its message around what a brand has to offer above others in the competition. This could include special offers, price or certain qualities the brand possesses (Saurav, 2020). In 2014, 7up bottling company states its competitive advantage of being the refreshing drink since 1960. Their existence since Nigeria's independence makes them stand out from others in the competition and they leveraged on that to promote their brand and fulfil their social responsibility function.

Durability appeal demonstrates to a reader or viewer the strength and continuous reliability of a product/service in a message such that the viewer is convinced to try it out. This appeal was scarcely used alone in brand independence messages across the newspapers but creatively blended with others, it was used efficiently. Glo telecommunications 2020 message revealed the service's durability and reliability over the years as it read "it's been 60 years of resilience, determination and never-say-die spirit for Nigeria. For Glo, it's been 17 years of imbibing and showcasing the same spirit to the world". Techno also wrote in their 2019 message 'we grow with history, happy Independence Day Nigeria'.

Scarcity appeal triggers a sense of urgency in the minds of consumers as the perceived value of a product or service is portrayed such that the consumer will feel left out for not trying it out. Used twice in the whole decade, only in 2013, this appeal, which is not directly related to independence was not explored by brands. Lifemate furniture adopted this appeal very effectively during 2013 independence. They offered a 60% discount on their products and a showroom exhibition to customers. This offer was a one-month span and the message indicated one of urgency as anyone who didn't take the opportunity would be left out. Eco bank in the same year did a giveaway during independence and that was the highlight of the message placed in the newspaper will a call to participate in the giveaway promo before the deadline.

These appeals were creatively blended in the independence celebration messages analysed and each of them successfully promoted their brands. In one way or the other, these brands demonstrated social responsibility. With the trends in the appeals used in the decade, it can be projected that in the coming years, brands will continue to be socially responsible to Nigeria by joining in independence celebrations. Advertising appeal strategy will be used over and over again and the dominant appeals used over the years will most likely remain the pattern, if nothing changes.

## CONCLUSION

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Independence celebration brings with it nostalgic feelings of the past, remembrance of the dedication and commitment of heroes to a nation's freedom from superior authorities. In many nations of the world, including African countries and Nigeria in particular, independence is celebrated in grand style as individuals, organisations, brands and government agencies take turn to celebrate the annual commemoration of freedom and plan activities around independence. Brands from different sectors and industries leverage on independence celebration and other national events to remind citizens of the existence of their products and /or services as well as show their commitment to national events. Different activities and shows are often organised by Nigerian brands in commemoration of independence as customers see their brands as being loyal to the nation and socially responsible. Beyond the physical activities, brands disseminate independence-themed messages via diverse mass media channels to put their brands out there as citizens are glued to these channels. In a bid to effectively blend using independence as a platform to promote brands and being socially responsible, brands adopt unique creative strategies like advertising appeals among others. These appeals are rational or emotional as they target the people's sense of feelings or logical reasoning.

Nigerian brands over the decade (2011-2020) adopted these rational and emotional appeals in varying degrees in their independence celebration messages as these appeals helped in disseminating creative messages on independence, remembering the labour

of heroes past and brand promotion. Brand/endorsement appeal in the emotional appeals category and practical/problem-solving appeal in the rational appeals category were dominant through the decade, in all the newspapers as brands specifically promoted their unique offerings, suggested that their products and/or services can meet specific needs and congratulated Nigeria on her anniversary. Some other brands went a step further to disseminate socially responsible messages that will spur citizens to take a specific action towards building progress and maintaining unity in the country. From the findings of this study, brands should keep up with promoting themselves at any given opportunity as the major aim of any brand is to be known among others in their industry. Also, the brands should be consistent in disseminating independence celebration messages as they project their social responsibility and their commitment to the country. Advertising appeals should be better explored in the creative messages and not just one or two should be dominant. There should be a significant increase in the use of other appeals and strategies available to brands. Beyond this, the social responsibility function of these brands should be effectively balanced by demonstrating their loyalty to Nigeria during national events in their messages as well as incorporating tips and creating awareness on steps to enjoy continuous unity and sustained independence. Furthermore, the other identified appeals should be creatively explored in independence messages and not limited to the dominant ones as seen in the study.

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