



Film and the Construction of Ethnic Identity and National Difference: A Comparative Analysis of *Hotel Rwanda*, *Shooting Dogs* and *Sometimes in April*

Florence Nyarenchi, George Obara Nyandoro & Evans Mecha

*Department of Linguistics, Languages and Literature
Kisii University, Kenya*

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Abstract

This paper explains the construction of ethnic and national difference using physical traits and the national identity card in selected films. It argues that identity is a fluid construct that is manipulated for different ends. This study was guided by tenets of the theory of nationalism: primordialism; instrumentalism and constructivism by Ernest Gellner (1964) and structuralist film theory by Leo Kuleshov (1920). The study arrived at the following findings: Through primordialism, the study found out that the Hutu construct their nation using physical traits and the national identity card. Nevertheless, the study concluded that identity is a fluid construct that keeps refashioning in different contexts as seen in the border crossings in the films where Hutu characters cross their ethnic borders and protect the Tutsi during the genocide.



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Introduction

This paper examines the construction of difference in *Hotel Rwanda*, *Shooting Dogs* and *Sometimes in April*. Hutu and Tutsi lived as fluid identities in Rwanda because the terms Hutu and Tutsi were just titles that denoted wealth or poverty. The title Tutsi was given to those Rwandese that owned a large herd of cattle and large chunks of land while the title Hutu was given to those who owned small pieces of land. Even so, the titles were flexible and allowed for ascension and dissent in hierarchy. This form of stratification did not cause disquiet among the Hutu and Tutsi but became a motivation for those with the Hutu title to work hard and earn the title Tutsi while the Tutsi also guarded against falling from grace.

The arrival of Colonialists in Rwanda saw them inherit the pre-colonial structure. However, they exacerbated it by introducing rigid ethnic distinctions between the Tutsi and Hutu titles based on the hermitic hypothesis. The hermitic Hypothesis was propounded by early missionaries and anthropologists to justify European imperialism. The ethno genesis myth named after Noah's son in the Old Testament argues that man is divided into three racial divisions: the Caucasians, the mongoloids and the inferior Negroid or black race. It also states that the Hamites are responsible for anything good that comes to Africa. Colonialists therefore, constructed the Tutsi as Caucasians because according to them, Tutsi features were closer to the Europeans. They presupposed that the Tutsi were lighter in complexion, had longer and thinner noses, softer hair and a taller and slim physique, while the Hutu were constructed as the inferior Negroid race with a darker complexion, kinky hair and a shorter and stout physique. This colonial construction permanently endowed those deemed as Tutsi with leadership roles, while those constructed as Hutu took up the subject position (Prunier 1997; Uvin 1999; Haperen, 2013).

Colonialists also inherited the pre-colonial social hierarchy which had two classes, the Tutsi (the rich) and the Hutu (the poor) and modified it. They constructed themselves as a third identity category and placed themselves at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the Tutsi (Batutsi), then the Hutu (Bahutu) at the bottom, while the Twa (Batwa) were at the periphery (White, 2009). Colonialists made the social classes rigid and put an end to the precolonial class mobility that previously existed. The shift from a more flexible system based on one's economic power, to a rigid ethnic system based on physical traits caused a disruption in the lives of both the 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu'. Those who had already ascended to Tutsi and had features that were supposedly Hutu were brought down to Hutu and those who bore supposedly Hutu features and had risen to Tutsi were relegated.

The colonialists (Bazungu) manipulated the social classes for their own gain because they wanted to avoid confrontation with the Rwandese who initially seemed reluctant to welcome them to their country, especially their king. They used both

diplomacy and coercion to essentially delegate an important albeit subservient political role to the king and the Tutsi rulers in return for their cooperation (Uvin, 1997).

Moreover, they institutionalized ethnicity through the church, mission schools, and army which in turn became a divisive social construction between the Tutsi and Hutu. The schools, for instance, played a great role in drifting the two ethnicities apart. They structured the education system in such a way that only those classified as Tutsi got educated in the mission schools and landed jobs in the colonial administration and the army while those with features that were supposedly Hutu got none of those privileges. The school history curriculum was also manipulated to match the racial classes presupposed by the hermitic hypothesis.

Colonialists introduced the identity card to make ethnicity a divisive social construction. Consequently, it made it easier for them to extend their patronage resources such as education, wealth and jobs (Totten 1997) to the Tutsi while the Hutu were segregated. This system made the Hutu develop a bitter resentment towards the Tutsi.

In essence, the colonial social, political and economic reconstruction of pre-colonial Rwanda intensified ethnicity to the point that the Tutsi and Hutu were seen in exclusively ethnic terms with a rigid caste system. Racism manifested itself in the form of ethnic divisions replete with discriminatory practices, racial myths, fears and hatreds (White, 2009). In the end, the racialized colonial constructions set the precedence for subsequent ethnic constructions in the post-colonial epoch, culminating in the 1994 genocide.

Literature Review

Todorov (1986) defines racism as the act of showing contempt and aggressiveness towards other people because of their physical differences (except those of sex). He contests that as much as racism is a well attested phenomenon, 'race' itself either does not exist or involves a high number of physical differences among human groups which cannot be superimposed because they have completely divergent subdivisions upon which the descriptions of 'races' are based. According to him, these subdivisions include an analysis of anatomy, blood types, genetic heritages or bone structures. He further argues that the concept of 'race' cannot justify the contempt or aggression displayed by racists given that they don't invoke scientific analysis. They instead consider the artificial physical characteristics such as skin colour, hair type, and body structure to differentiate. According to Todorov, racism is latent and only becomes influential in democratic societies because the less democratic traditional hierarchical societies acknowledged social differences by the common ideology and physical differences which then played the role of distinguishing a slave from their master rather than determining whose skin was light and whose was dark.

Appiah (1986), in resonance with Todorov, argues that race is an abstract entity that only exists in that term itself. He states that the belief that race is a signifier of difference is apart from the physical features of hair, skin colour, among other attributes by which people are assigned racial categories such as white, black, yellow, and so forth. He adds that features used to mark difference in daily discourse such as language; attitude and political ideology, have also nothing to do with biology. He asserts that people only confuse the question of whether biological differences account for our differences with the question of whether biological similarities account for our differences. Appiah's confusing statement regarding difference, replicates the confusion created by those who try to force difference using physical attributes.

Lewis (1986) analyses othering through skin colour. He explains that early Arab poets were branded "Ravens; crows of the Arabs or Hajin" because of 'their dark skin inherited from their slave mothers' who had been impregnated by free Arab fathers. He explains that the children who were born out of such unions were also referred to as hybrids, half – breeds or 'mongrels' by the English. They also shared those names with animals to insinuate that failing to be Arab translated to being animal. According to Lewis, the term 'Hajin' was used for social, not racial purposes because the most affected 'Hajins who were also rated lowest in social status, were the dark skinned ones 'whom blackness had passed from their mothers to them'. In addition, 'free fathers' were endowed with the power to liberate a 'Hajin' son and confer to him membership of the tribe. However, fathers refused to promote their black sons to Arab because they 'despised black skin as much as they loved white skin'. According to them white symbolised beautiful while black symbolised ugly. The fact that one would be liberated from being a Hajin highlights the arbitrariness of difference because in this case Arab and Hajin were titles and not races. This study shares Lewis' view that using physical traits to mark difference is arbitrary because boundaries that mark difference are porous and one is able to change their status from inferior to superior and vice versa as seen in the border crossings in the films. Our point of departure is that Lewis analyses the construction of difference in poetry while this study focuses on film.

Methodology

Being qualitative in nature, this study used exploratory research design in its analysis. Exploratory research design as defined by Saunders & Thornhill (2012) is a study that explores a research area without giving conclusive solutions to an existing problem, because its aim is to study a problem that has not been clearly defined in order to make the problem to be better understood. Such is the case with this study because identity politics is an emerging issue that has been explained by many theorists, yet it still remains ambiguous because it keeps refashioning with new identities

Data analysis and presentation was done qualitatively and presented in narrative structure. The analysis of the cinematic texts was done through an eclectic theoretical frame. Tenets of the theory of Nationalism; primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism guided the analysis of the construction of difference in the films. Primordialism was used to explain the construction of fixed identities while Instrumentalism facilitated the analysis of constructing ethnic alliances based on mutual gain. Constructivism guided the analysis of the ethnic ambivalences in the primary texts. Structuralist Film theory by Lev Kuleshov complemented the analysis of the cinematic texts. The researcher used cinematographic techniques such as combination of shots, shot sizes, repetition of shots, framing, camera movement, juxtaposition, sound, colour and music among other techniques to highlight the identity politics playing out in the films.

Analysis of findings

Physical Traits as Markers of Difference

Sometimes in April uses montage to present the colonial construction of Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities in Rwanda. A close up shot of a White man checking the shape of the head, nose and eyes of an African, to ascertain their ethnicity is highlighted. The use of montage underscores the colonial politicisation of the Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities for political gain because the Hutu and the Tutsi were similar in appearance due to the intermarriages that had taken place, which made it exceedingly difficult to tell a Hutu and Tutsi apart.



Fig 1: Montage shots of a White man ascertaining the ethnicity of a black man using his physical traits (Source: Sometimes in April, 2005).

Colonialists used physical traits to endow the Tutsi with more privileges than the Hutu to highlight their superiority. The new identification criteria led to confusion and disgruntlement among the Rwandese because some of those who were previously Tutsi through their ancestry suddenly became Hutu and some of those who were Hutu became Tutsi. The Rwandese were also aggrieved by the sudden shift from the fluid social identities that existed in precolonial Rwanda to fixed ones which disallowed ascension or dissension in hierarchy. Those categorised as Hutu began to push for

liberation from their condemned status and when they finally gained power at independence, they used the same physical traits to other the Tutsi during genocide.

Physical traits are used to mark identity during the genocide. The Rwandese military and Interahamwe stop cars and pedestrians to carry out an identity check before apprehending the Tutsi for execution. In one of the scenes in *Sometimes in April*, one Interahamwe member is highlighted at the roadblock, cross examining the features of one of the girls, who looks Tutsi according to Hutu standards, vis a vis her identity card. The process takes a while before the girl is shoved aside to await execution.



Fig 2: A close up shot of an Interamwe scrutinising the features of a Tutsi girl (Source:Sometimes in April 2005)

The use of physical traits to otherise is deconstructed in some of the scenes due to the similarity in the features of the Hutu and Tutsi. One of the reasons why the Interahamwe are unable to tell the Hutu and Tutsi apart is because of the Inter-marriages that had taken place in Rwanda. In addition, the Hutu and Tutsi are similar because they shared titles.

The film director of *Hotel Rwanda* uses a Rwandese journalist to explain the paradox of marking identity using physical traits. The journalist helps Daglish to understand how the Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities came about because according to him, they are similar in every respect. The Rwandese journalist unravels the colonial construction of the Tutsi as a superior race and the Hutu as subalterns. He explains that the colonialists introduced the races in order to succeed in their indirect rule. The film presents yet another puzzle of using physical traits to otherise in the same scene when Daglish is unable to tell apart two girls, one Hutu and the other Tutsi because their features are so similar that they 'could be twins'. He is only able to learn that one of them is Hutu and the other Tutsi, when they unveil their identity. It is ironic that colonialists are able to construct difference using physical traits, yet Daglish, a fellow white, is unable to use the same traits in order to distinguish a Hutu from a Tutsi without inquiring.

Hotel Rwanda further highlights the ambivalence of constructing difference in the scene where Captain Oliver is evacuating Tatiana and other refugees from the Mille Collines hotel during the genocide. They are waylaid by the Interahamwe who are armed with crude weapons to execute the Tutsi. It is ironic that the execution plan is botched because the Interahamwe are unable to tell the Hutu and Tutsi apart using their physical traits. The camera highlights an Interahamwe member threatening Tatiana with a machete. He wants her to tell him her name so that he can tell if she is Hutu or Tutsi, because he is unable to tell her ethnicity by looking at her. Tatiana takes advantage of his inability to tell her ethnicity and refuses to tell him her name. She is finally rescued by the military officers sent by general Bizimungu.

Sometimes in April further narrates the artificiality of using appearance to mark difference in one of the scenes at St Marie School. The Interahamwe are unable to kill Tutsi girls because they cannot distinguish the Tutsi from the Hutu. To solve that, one of the Interahamwe leaders demands that the girls identify themselves first. When they decline, he orders all Hutu girls to line up behind him while the Tutsi girls move to the side but the girls still refuse because they don't want to be separated, The Interahamwe ends up killing both Tutsi and Hutu girls because they cannot establish the ethnicity of the girls by looking at them. It is ironic that the Hutu claim that the Tutsi have different features, yet they are unable to point them out.

Another instance when physical traits fail to effectively mark difference is in public spaces such as churches and the Mille Collines hotel. When the Interahamwe invade those spaces to conduct Tutsi execution, they are unable to identify the Tutsi and are forced to seek the help of Catholic fathers and other Hutu who know the ethnicities of the characters in question. For instance, a military member in *Sometimes in April* asks a priest about the ethnicity of a man with a bandaged head because he cannot tell where he belongs. The priest identifies the man as Hutu because he knows him personally. This situation replicates in *Hotel Rwanda* when the military officers come to exterminate the refugees at the Mille Collines hotel but are curtailed because they cannot differentiate the Hutu from the Tutsi. They demand for a list of names of all the refugees at the hotel in order to identify them.

The National Identity Card as a Marker of Difference

The national identity card, introduced by colonialists to permanently seal the fluid Hutu and Tutsi pre-colonial titles, becomes a major mark of differentiation between the Hutu and Tutsi given their similar features. During the genocide, the identity card plays a significant role in identifying the Tutsi for execution because without it, the Hutu find it difficult to tell the Hutu and Tutsi apart.

Hotel Rwanda highlights Paul's identity card in extreme close up shot. Some features are strategically placed to help the users take the least time to identify their victims. The most prominent features are one's ethnicity and passport size photo for

salience. One's ethnicity is stamped in bold print at the top left side of the card while the pass port size photo is visibly placed at the top right side beside the ethnicity to make sure that the holder of the card is the real owner. Other details are hand written in almost invisible print because they are not as crucial as one's ethnicity and image.

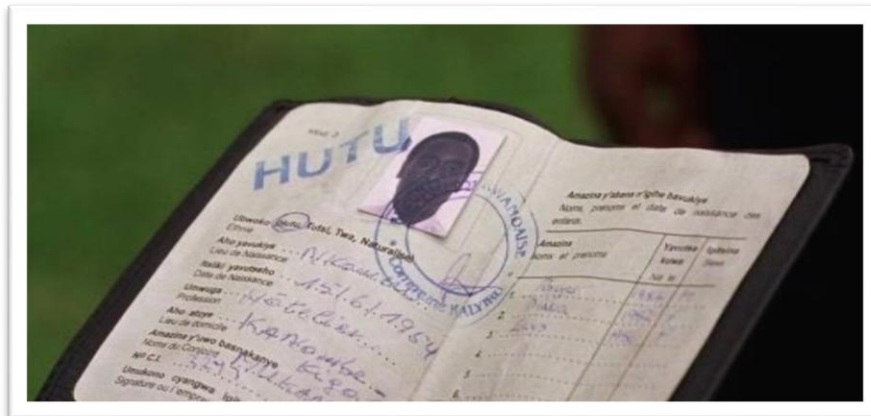


Fig 3: Paul's identity card (Source: Hotel Rwanda, 2004).

The identity card is a key marker of difference, especially during the genocide. This is exemplified in *Hotel Rwanda* when soldiers come to Paul's house to carry out an identity check at the break of the genocide. It is ironic that Paul uses only one identity card to save his neighbours and yet they are Tutsi. He hoodwinks the military leader into believing that the refugees are Hutu because his identity card is inscribed with the Hutu ethnicity. The military leader, who at first seems determined to check the identity cards of all occupants of the house, softens his stance when he sees Paul's identity card. The identity card works on his psychology and makes him believe that Paul's neighbours are indeed his family because he trusts that all Hutu have joined the band wagon. Paul's identity card puts him and his Tutsi neighbours at an advantage and the military officers accept to escort them to the Mille Collines hotel because they are 'Hutu'.

The ambivalence of constructing difference is foregrounded when Paul is only able to ride on his ethnicity for a short while because soon, the military leader soon discovers the ethnicity of Paul's 'family' using the same identity card that favoured him. The new discovery gives the military officer new authority over Paul and his neighbours because he manipulates the identity card to his own advantage and makes demands that he knows must be met because Paul and his 'family' are ready to do anything to stay alive.

Paul rescues himself and his neighbours using his money and influence as Hotel manager. His situation forces him to invoke his sense of self-preservation and he offers the military officer money so that he can spare their lives. The military officer, who is overcome by his sense of greed, abandons his mission of killing the Tutsis and instead provides security for them to the Milles Collines hotel. It is ironic that the military

leader facilitates the safety of the Tutsi to the Milles collines Hotel, yet he is supposed to kill them. He crosses his identity borders because his greed for materialism supersedes his sense of ethnic belonging. The ability of both Paul and the military leader to manipulate the identity card for their own gain questions the fixity of identity borders. Although the identity card is the most powerful tool in facilitating Tutsi massacres, its porous borders leave room for manipulation to meet various ends.

The identity card becomes a major source of psychological trauma to the Tutsi and moderate Hutu during the genocide. For example, when the military leader discovers the ethnicity of most of Paul's family at the Diplomat Hotel, his rage throws them into panic. The camera foregrounds Paul's terrified expression as he stares helplessly at his equally helpless 'relatives' huddled together on the ground, screaming in terror. Paul and his 'family' are delegitimised as Rwandese because they have the 'wrong' identity inscribed on their identity cards. They undergo a traumatising experience in the hands of the military officers who is given new authority over them because of his identity card. He takes advantage of the situation to make personal demands because he knows the lives of Paul and his neighbours are now in his hands.

Paul's terrified 'family' symbolises the vulnerability of the Tutsi when the identity card is used against them. They are stripped of all power and influence and are ready to comply with the military leader's demands for self-preservation. The military leader uses the absence of the 'right' identity card to deprive Paul of all his power and influence. He also uses this chance to stamp his authority as both a military leader and Hutu. He manhandles Paul physically and verbally because he knows that Paul is at his mercy. He slaps Paul and calls him traitor because he is protecting their supposed enemies. He then throws the identity cards at his face and calls the Tutsi 'cockroaches', before handing Paul a gun and ordering him to either shoot them or die first.

Paul's situation highlights the power of the identity card in constructing difference. Although Paul had earlier triumphed using his identity card, he is delegitimised immediately the military leader discovers that he is protecting the Tutsi. Even with his identity card, he is stripped of his ethnicity and social class and is treated as a traitor. His current state leaves him voiceless and at the mercy of the military leader, who now manipulates the identity card and makes new demands on him. The military officer's material greed is highlighted when he takes advantage of the situation to demand a huge sum of money which Paul is unable to raise.

Paul's psychological torture is further highlighted by a *mise en scene* shot of the military leader pointing a gun to his head and threatening to shoot him together with his 'relatives'. The traumatic experience Paul and his 'family' undergo represents the general trauma the Tutsi and moderate Hutu experience when the identity card is used against them. Nevertheless, the situation also highlights the arbitrariness of the identity card as an identity marker because without it, the Hutu are unable to separate the Hutu from the Tutsi, as seen when the military officer accepts to escort Paul's

neighbours to the Mille Collines Hotel thinking they are Hutu. It is ironic that the identity card, which is supposed to help the Hutu identify the Tutsi, is also used to victimise them; Paul loses his Hutuness for trying to protect the Tutsi and suffers the same trauma as theirs.



Fig 4: A mise en scene shot of the Rwandese military leader pointing a gun at Paul. (Source:Hotel Rwanda, 2004)

In another scene in *Sometimes in April*, the power of the identity card in constructing difference is seen when Augustine calls his brother Honore to help take his family to the Mille Collines Hotel for safety because he is extremist Hutu. Although Honore is a long serving journalist with HTLM Hutu power radio and is well known by most military officials, he manages to get through only a few roadblocks without the identity cards of Jean and Felicity (Xavier's Tutsi fiancée).

On one of the roadblocks, the Interahamwe insist that Jean and Felicity produce their identity cards to confirm that they are indeed Hutu because they are not ready to take any chances. Honore tries to use his influence to convince the Interahamwe that they are Hutu in vain. It is ironic that Honore, a well-known ardent Hutu supporter, is subjected to the same treatment as that of the Tutsi by the Interahamwe. He suffers the same psychological distress with the Tutsi and tries to come up with excuses to cover up for the ladies' inability to identify themselves. Honore's desperation is highlighted when at some point, he is forced to lie that they are going to the supermarket, to try and convince the Interahamwe that they are indeed Hutu but left their identity cards at home.

It is ironic that Honore's Hutu identity card and influence cannot help him. He tries to solicit help from one of the Interahamwe leaders, who is his close friend, through a phone call but is shocked when he instead orders the soldiers at to execute his brother's family. The Interahamwe finally kill Felicity and Augustine's sons. Honore's failure to save his brother's family using his identity speaks to the porousness of identity borders.

The killing of Augustine's sons further contradicts marking identity using the identity Card. In an earlier scene, Augustine's children question him and his wife Jean to which ethnicity they belong because they have a Hutu father and Tutsi mother. Augustine answers them that they are Hutu because the ethnicity of children in Rwanda follows their paternity. The children's earlier loss of identity foreshadows their present death in the hands of the Interahamwe. It is ironic that the Interahamwe ignore Honore's pleas that the children are their blood and shoot them in cold blood because their mother is not able to show her identity card. The killing of Hutu children because of their mother's inability to produce an identity card thus questions the fixity of identity borders. Overreliance on the identity card makes them kill their own blood.

Shooting Dogs displays various road block scenes mounted to identify the Tutsi just before the onset of the genocide. Francois, the Hutu driver and school grounds man at the Ecole Technique Officielle (E.T.O) School drives Joe for an errand outside the school. The brightly sun lit setting resonates with the jolly mood encompassing the scene. The Interahamwe ask for Francois' identity card to enable him pass through the roadblocks. It is ironical that Francois' identity card also covers for Joe and yet he is White. The film director juxtaposes the differential treatments accorded to the Tutsi, Whites and Hutu. Whereas the Tutsi are harassed and referred to as 'cockroaches' before being put aside to face their end, the Hutu are greeted in *Kinyarwanda* and allowed to pass, and the Whites, who are of no consequence to the Hutu identity because they are not the targets, go unnoticed. It is ironic that the Whites are not victimized and yet they are not Hutu. This then means that the identity card doesn't just mark difference. It is manipulated to achieve other ends. The fact that Joe is let to pass, yet he has no identity card inscribed with the term Hutu, questions the boundaries of marking difference. In this context therefore, the identity card ends up being a tool of victimization.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that identity is a fluid construct that keeps shifting in different contexts. The Hutu use physical traits and the national identity card to otherise the Tutsi but the boundaries that mark these differences are not fixed because they cannot identify the Tutsi independent of the identity card, given their similarities. As a result of that, they experience identity border crossings due to the overlapping boundaries of constructing difference.

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The Role of Soundtrack in Audio-Visual Advertisements: A Case of Coca-Cola Commercials

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Amos Mochama, George Obara Nyandoro & Christopher Okemwa

*Department of Linguistics, Languages and Literature
Kisii University, Kenya*

Abstract

Audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials are conceptualized as art that falls in the genre of film. They use soundtracks that are in congruence with advertisers' messages. The review of extant literature shows that the frame by frame presentation of images is enhanced by the use of the right melodies that are in form of customized popular music. Following the principles of semiotics, the researcher conducted a content analysis on a sample of twelve audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials, identified through convenience sampling from YouTube. The purpose of this paper was to assess how soundtracks interact with visuals in audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials to create images that are a representation of mediated reality. The findings of this study indicate that the audio-video Coca-Cola advertisements rely on a combination of visual image and sound to create signs (constellations of signifiers) that encourage audiences to identify with characters featured taking Coke drinks, as they exhibit excitement and enthusiasms. The interaction of lyrics and other visual elements enable the audience to interpret created images, assign meanings, and assume the subject positions defined by themes in commercials.

Key words: Audio-visual commercials, cinematographers, content analysis, convenience sampling, soundtrack, signs, semiotics



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Introduction

Soundtrack is one of the core features of audio-visual advertisements. Cinematographers of Coca-Cola commercials incorporate a variety of soundtracks in their quest to construct affective images that mirror the construction, management and practices of society. The use of soundtracks provides a strong platform for creating moods in Coca-Cola advertisements. They (soundtracks) also help transcend re-styled images in the semblances of cultural realities.

Music, one of the most popular soundtracks in Coca-Cola advertising, is an important element in every society. It is a powerful language that deconstructs certain cultural barriers and brings people together because songs appeal to people at different emotional levels. People relate to lyrics of songs that describe familiar images or ideologies, and emotion. For example, soundtracks used in advertisements are played in higher keys that evoke happier and positive feelings. Additionally, musical components like pitch, texture and tempo are capable of setting the mood in commercials (Bruner, 1990). Advertisers are keen to employ music in their commercials because it relates to each member of the audience's sense of identity and their everyday life (Lusensky, 2010).

An audio-visual advertisement — an area of interest in this study— uses emotional imagery in both visual and audio to catch viewers' attention and establish personal connections with them. This technique can evoke strong emotional attachment of the viewer toward a brand or ideologies passed through images in a commercial. Some of the strategies embedded in soundtracks used in commercials include congruency, context, viewer attention and involvement, and familiarity and associations (Jillson, 2014).

Drawing on research on film studies, it is argued here that soundtrack is an important element and should be viewed as an integrated part of a whole. It interacts with other elements (visuals) in advertisements to create images that act as conveyors of values and reality. The purpose of this study is to assess how soundtracks with other visual elements in audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials to create images that represent mediated reality.

Theoretical Framework

Useful in this study, is the application of semiotics as the main tool for analyzing data collected. Audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials convey meaning using both visual and audio images which function as a system of signs. Guided by semiotics, soundtracks used in Coca-Cola advertisements were examined and defined into codes, which were grouped into categories to obtain results for the study.

Semiotics refers to a study of a system of signs and symbols and how they are used to represent and interpret them. [Dezeeuw \(2017\)](#) defines semiotic storytelling

as how meaning of semiotics is created through a system of signs understood by society. Semiotics helps advertising in creating images that convey layers of meaning. Charles Sanders Peirce (1977) breaks down the concept of signs into three categories — iconic, symbolic and indexical. Iconic sign according to Peirce is the literal visual representation of their meaning (a thing that is being evoked). For example, an image of a phone is a sign of a gadget used for communication but when used in Coca-Cola commercials may indicate a popular culture among the youth. Coca-Cola displays images of Coca-Cola drinks and logo in their audio-visual advertisements. These images are sometimes accompanied by slogans and soundtracks such as the clinking of glass bottles being opened or removed from a fridge or lyrics that invite the audience to have a taste of the feeling of Coke drink.

Symbolic imagery is a more abstract use of images and their visual representation communicates a concept (Dezeeuw, 2017). A symbol has no direct relation the signifier and the signified other than the fact that we have decided as a society that they should be linked. A good example is how words are used to create catchy phrases that act as call-to-action slogans. Colour and lighting fall in this category of signs.

The third category of systems is an index. Dezeeuw (2017) defines indexical images that have direct connection between the image and concept. For instance, smoke is directly related to fire. That means that fire must happen for smoke to rise. In other words there is a causal link between the presence of smoke and fire.

Semiotic resources (signs) employed in Coca-Cola commercials are tied to cultural constructions of their use to pass ideologies or messages. This study applied semiotics to: define and categorize signs in soundtracks of audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials; assess how soundtracks interact with other elements in audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials to create images in the semblances of reality; and how soundtracks convey themes to viewers.

Literature Review

Although widely and largely used as an appeal in audio-visual advertisements, soundtrack remains understudied as an aesthetic influence, conveyor of meaning, and shaper of values. Kurpiers (2009), one of a few scholars in this area, sees music as one of the elements or a medium of certain cultural constructions of a created ideal society. Kurpiers' study takes a cue from a study by Taylor (2000), who observes that music contributes to the formation of identities and constellation of values based on global practices bordering on stratified society.

Music is an important part of people's lifestyle and it plays a significant role in shaping perception of images of created reality in advertisements (Hoerberichts, 2012). She observes that music of a smoother rhythm fosters happy feelings, high pitched brings excitement in characters, and fast tempo creates a happy tone, which is in

tandem with commercials' messages. Soundtracks create emotional impact around products and enhance the structure of advertisements (Gilliland, 2018).

Allan (2006) observes that the delivery of advertising message is strong when music with lyrics rather than instrumentals is used in a commercial. Soundtrack is a vital storytelling component and it helps carry the storyline in commercials forward (Gillick & Bamman, 2018). Those that employ the use of music perform better across all key metrics like creativity, empathy, emotive power, and information power, than those without, and then, it is a great inclusion (Hecker, 1984; Park & Young, 1986; Le, 2016; Taylor, 2018).

Gorn's (1982) suggests that music enhances delivery of advertising message when its lyrics describe the activities in a commercial. Taking a cue from Gorn's findings, Kellaris, Cox, & Cox (1993) put forward a concept of music-message congruency and suggest that music enhances advertising message when there is harmony in the lyrics, visuals and the advertising copy. Music catches viewers' attention, plays a significant role in the functionality of advertisements, and helps facilitate easy transfer of advertising values (Morris & Boone, 1998; Yue, 2011).

The relevance of lyrics of music in a commercial is a vital element in achieving advertising objectives, and the use of popular music triggers excitement and favourable nostalgia in the audience (Wagner, 2008; Chou & Lien, 2010). Anisimova & Müllern (2014), on the other hand, declare that advertisers make use of popular songs as a way of connecting with the audience of mass advertising and it is of great importance to get the right melody to use in an advertisement.

Scholars like Friedrich (2002); Ahmed (2006); Brender & Vranca (2010); Bryant (2011); and Fitisova (2015) have analysed strategies and trends in Coca-Cola advertisements in regard to marketing and communication. None of the said studies, however, has attempted to analyse the role of soundtrack in audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials from a literary angle, which is the main focus in this study.

Methodology

This study adopted a case-study research design to examine the role of soundtrack in audio-visual advertisements. The researcher looked audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials which appear on visual media channels like television, and internet-enabled platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Advertisements sponsored by Coca-Cola were suitable for this study because they are made for a wider global audience. The choice of these advertisements was also made in order to provide a consistent institutional background for all commercials selected for this analysis.

The preliminary survey was conducted by searching "Coca-Cola advertisement/ad" in the YouTube video-search engine. The results from the survey indicated that Coca-Cola sponsored about six (6) advertisements per year, translating

to thirty (30) of them between the year 2014 and 2019. Using convenience sampling, the researcher selected twelve (12) commercials (or 40% of the total population of 30) for this study. A content analysis was then conducted in the selected sample, identify the soundtracks used. The soundtracks were transcribed into data for analysis.

Results and Discussion

For purposes of this study, the researcher developed a coding system for the codes obtained from the analysis of data for this objective as follows:

Category	Focus/description	Number of advertisements
Setting	Soundtrack that describes the scenery in relation to what is seen on screen	4
Emotion	Feelings or emotions exhibited by characters in relation to soundtrack and what is seen on screen	12
Focus on the characters	Activities of the characters in connection to the soundtrack and the spectacle presented on screen	10
Theme in the advertisement	The plot or storyline in the advertisement in connection to the content of the soundtrack.	12
The relationship of characters with the brand/product	The soundtrack reveals the characters' feelings towards the advertised brand or product. The soundtrack has a direct connection with the reactions of the characters in relation to what is seen on the screen.	12
Loose connection	Checking if the soundtrack does not have a connection with the storyline in the commercial.	0
No soundtrack	If there is any commercial that lacked any soundtrack in them.	0

Tabulation of codes and categories on the role of soundtrack

The Setting

When the soundtrack is used to enhance or reveal the setting of the narrative in the commercial, the lyrics describe not only the geographical location but the makeshift scenery. The description of the setting of a commercial can either be explicit or implicit. Whichever way, the soundtrack does contribute to the general mood in various scenes in a commercial.

Soundtracks in Coca-Cola advertisements that fall in this category, describe real scenes on which action is set. In the advertisement titled, “Tastier Together 2019”, the soundtrack contributes to the visual spectacle in the commercial. The lyrics begin: “I see trees of green, Red roses too...”

The lyrics describe real geographical setting of the actions in the advertisement. The description provided by the lyrics is in congruent with the visuals presented on screen. Camera moves from a long shot to medium and then variations of close-up to capture images of green trees, simultaneously with an old man and a young man roasting meat. They open glass bottles of coke, wearing broad smiles. The phrase “red roses” is used as a signifier of the main colour of the Coca-Cola branding, and green trees indicates beautiful scenes of nature.

In other examples that fall in this category, are the soundtracks of conversations of people and the glass bottles either being wheeled in a cart or the cap being opened for the characters to enjoy. In the advertisement, “Coca-Cola Ramadan 2018”, diegetic sounds in the form of conversations and footsteps of people at the street are heard. These sounds reveal the setting and enhance the delivery of advertisers’ message.

Focus on Emotions

This study finds that when emotions are used as main drivers of the main arguments in a commercial, soundtracks or lyrics reveal characters’ emotional reactions. They also set the mood and tone, as well as contributing to visual argument in the commercial.

For example, the lovely country music that forms a large part of the soundtrack in the “Brotherly Love advertisement,” creates a warm atmosphere in the commercial. The song contributes to a story of a unique relationship that exists between siblings, a narrative of love and conflict that is part of the family unit. The song offers to downplay the sibling disagreement, as the older brother stands up to defend his younger brother when he is attacked by three bullyboys. The lyrics of the song are as follows:

Hey brother there’s an endless road to re-discover
Hey brother do you still believe in one another
Oh if the sky comes falling down for you
There’s nothing in this world I wouldn’t do
What if I’m far from home
Oh brother I will hear you call
Oh if the sky comes falling down for you
There’s nothing in this world I wouldn’t do

The lyrics of the song reveal a warm mood and happy tone in the commercial. Even when he is mistreated, the younger brother does not show indication that he is

emotionally broken down. The song reveals that even though conflicts arise in families, such differences should not be allowed to overshadow the family ties as demonstrated by the younger brother in the “Brotherly Love Commercial.”

Another example is the lyrics in the advertisement, “Coca-Cola Emoticons” which reveal characters’ emotions, who are mainly a group of millennials. A lovely rhythm is played along the commercial, accompanied by a song whose lyrics start:

‘I just came to say hello
..hello..
...hello...’

The song is complimented by visibly happy youthful characters as they share coke drinks. The commercial uses codes of words such as ‘wink, hello, LOL, naughty, sexy, and love’ that are synonymous with the youth. The song sets the tone and mood in the commercial.

Focus on Characters

The focus on characters reveals that there is a connection between the characters’ activities and the soundtrack in relation to what is seen on screen. The commercials that exemplify this category contain the soundtracks that describe characters’ activities and interactions in relation to the themes conveyed through the images created in advertisements. A good example is the advertisement titled, “Coke Zero Commercial 2018” in which the main character is an old man, called Mr. Hadley who is offered a coke zero drink. He takes a sip, loves its taste and then wonders what else is out there that he has not had a chance to enjoy, probably because his advanced age limits him from doing some certain things. The coke zero rides on the message on diversity.

Incorporated by the song “I want to break free” that plays at the background, Mr. Hadley breaks free, and walks to freedom of enjoying things that come his way. He embarks on a series of adventures. First, he declares his affection for his long-lost lover, Alice. Second, he procures a tattoo on his hand, followed by his dive onto an Olympic-size pool of water. He joins a motorbike competition and then attends a pride’s parade. He looks passionate about what he does.

The song in this commercial enhances the plot and contributes to what is seen on the screen. The lyrics of the song have a firm connection to the actions or activities that the main character indulges in.

Thematic Development

This study reveals that when the soundtrack in a commercial enhances the thematic development in a commercial, the lyrics reflect the energies exhibited by the characters, the activities carried out, and the pathos that drive the main argument in

the advertisement. Other soundtracks made by the elements in a commercial relate directly to the message passed by the advertiser.

The soundtracks used in the Coca-Cola advertisements have a direct connection with the main arguments advanced by the advertiser. The soundtracks are both in form of songs that are popular with the characters and the sounds made by other elements in commercials. The lyrics of one of the most popular songs used by a number of the coded Coca-Cola advertisements are as follows:

It feels good, in my heart, in my soul,
When you're right here beside me
I don't ever want this day to end
No one can stop me when I taste that feeling,
Nothing could ever bring me down
No one can stop me when I taste that feeling
Nothing could ever bring me down

The song is used by the Coca-Cola to celebrate moments that have been inspired and made special by the Coca-Cola brands. The song excites the characters as some are shown singing along the advertisement as the song plays.

It also inspires happiness as people are shown to be more generous, and readily share their happiness through the coke drinks. Other soundtracks include the clinking of the glass bottles when characters touch a bottle of coke drinks. The soundtrack helps the viewer to become more aware of the availability of the Coca-Cola branded glass bottles. The glass bottles are portrayed as being more appealing to the eye and thus their clinking sounds brings to the fore the beauty and simplicity that is associated with the coke drink.

Relationships of Characters with Coca-Cola drinks

When characters depict good feelings after the use of Coca-Cola products in an advertisement, the soundtrack is used to reveal their reactions upon using them. The soundtrack includes the emotional exclamations of characters after sipping coke drinks to signify a good taste in it, the clinking of glass bottles to create awareness of the availability of coke drinks in Coca-Cola branded glass bottles and song that reveals the emotional reactions of the characters towards the drink.

The Coca-Cola commercials that exemplify this category contain soundtracks that enhance the emotional attachments the characters have for the Coca-Cola brands or products. Mr. Hadley, the main character in the “coke zero commercial (2018)”, reacts positively after the first sip of the coke zero drink. He then wonders what else he has not had a chance to enjoy because of advanced age. The advertisement seeks

to tell the viewers that Coca-Cola listens to the needs of people in society and they can enjoy in life, despite their advanced age.

The song that plays at the background, 'I want to break free' reveals that the taste of the Coca-Cola drink that is sugar free, has given a senior citizen another lease of life. Mr. Hadley is clearly in love with the coke zero drink. The advertisement demonstrates that Coca-Cola cares for diversity in the production of their products. The characters in the advertisement titled, "Taste the feeling of summer with Coca-Cola" sing the song that plays at the background:

No one can stop me when I taste that feeling,
Nothing could ever bring me down
No one can stop me when I taste that feeling
Nothing could ever bring me down

This song indicates how excited the characters are after creating special moments with Coca-Cola. Through the song, the characters state that no one can stop the Coca-Cola feeling because it's uplifting.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this article was to examine how lyrics or soundtracks used in audio-visual Coca-Cola commercials interact with other visuals such as shots of characters, costumes, props, colour, lighting and logo to create images that convey values of created culture to viewers. Soundtracks play in Coca-Cola commercials describing images on screen as captured in cinematic shots that shift in quick succession from establishing shot that reveals setting of narratives, to a close-up of the flagship product. The songs shape how people identify themselves as spectacles of families in get-together meetings enjoy meals with drinks of Coke. These spectacles are enhanced by soundtracks that create warm moods throughout Coca-Cola commercials.

Audio-video Coca-Cola advertisements rely on a combination of visual image and sound to create signs (constellations of signifiers) that encourage audiences to identify with happy and excited characters taking Coke drinks. The interaction of lyrics and other visual elements trigger accurate interpretation of created images, assigning of meanings, and assuming subject positions defined by themes in commercials. The sounds used are associated with enjoying drinking Coke drinks as way inspiring thirst in the audience. Soundtracks like pop sound as Coke bottle-top is opened, and the ice clinking in the glass being filled with Coke drink play as commercials begin, and increase in intensity as shots sequentially shift from a close-up to extreme close-up to capture the flagship product that acts as a sensory moment in a commercial. Soundtracks are therefore a necessary inclusion in Coca-Cola commercials because they invite viewers

into constructions of cultural identities, as advertising has the power to shape social discourse, and audiences participate in meaning-making as they read media texts (Fiske 1987).

Soundtracks used in Coca-Cola commercials enhance capitalist ideologies on cultural constructions — media representation of reality that Jameson (1991) calls a reality through images or sounds that might be familiar to audience members, but isn't based in any reality. In fact, constructions in advertisements are a result of re-creation or repackaging of imagery based on no original referents. They are highly stylized based on non-existent images of original reality in order to appeal to the audience. Through soundtracks in their commercials, Coca-Cola seeks to endear their products to people as a lifestyle as their use solves needs like thirst, act as sources of energy during various activities, and a companion during meals.

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