

Advertising Ethics and Professionalism of ZNBC TV2 and Muvi TV in Zambia—A Content Analysis Study

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to examine the advertising content of two Zambian Television stations: Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation ZNBC TV2 and Muvi Television, for evidence of Ethics and Professionalism, or lack thereof. The research purposively sampled one channel on the quasi-government/public station (ZNBC TV2), and the privately-owned broadcaster, Muvi TV. A mixed methods approach centered on a quantitative content analysis of the monitored data was used in order to permit a flexible, yet rich-enough analysis of the content, and its interpretation. The study found that, in general, there was a mixture of both “ethical” and “unethical”, characteristics, as well as “professional” and “unprofessional” content. Of special concern, however, was the evident lack of adherence to high standards of professionalism, fairness and respectfulness in gender portrayal, particularly with respect to the female sex who tended to be shown mainly in disadvantaged roles and portrayals, and vice-versa, the preponderance of males in authority and leadership roles. No controversial appeals were used in the adverts.

Keywords

Professionalism, Ethics, Gender Portrayal, Manifest Content, Advertising Practitioners Association (APA)

1. Introduction

Once a British-ruled capitalist territory named Northern Rhodesia before independence in 1964, Zambia has experimented with two main socio-economic systems. After the Mulungushi Economic Reforms, which resulted in 51 per cent

stake of biggest companies being taken over by the state in January 1970, the country developed a mixed economy with considerable socialist features particularly in the major companies. However, unexpected change came with the 1989-1990s “Winds of Change” inspired by then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) Leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s push for Glasnost (Transparency) and Perestroika (Restructuring) in his own country. Soon rapid change came across Europe and the rest of the world, and this also affected Zambia politically, socially, and economically, and brought massive political, economic and social changes. Within a short period spanning several months, the socialist economic and political monolith of Zambia’s Second Republic gave way to capitalist democracy, spurred on by the “winds of change” as well as protests in 1989 and 1990 over food shortages, high unemployment, and other economic hardships. Unable to resist the cascading pressures, in 1990, Kenneth Kaunda’s government agreed to political reforms, and allowed a return of multi-party politics to the country.

Thus, the study is set against this background of the pivotal return of democracy, respect for human rights, economic choice and free competition in the market place. Among the other notable changes, is the fact that the economic sphere, once again, came to be characterized by struggles of philosophies and practices in advertising. One assumption of this study is that Zambia’s advertising is adjusting to the same socio-economic and political pressures and influences which led to the growth of self-regulation Advertising Practitioners Associations (APAs) in the world, even if the country had yet to create a fully-fledged APA at the time of writing. The fact that the country has witnessed some calls for higher levels of ethics and professionalism in news reporting, advertising practices, consumer care, and more diversity in media ownership, seems to confirm this assumption. The resistance and delays in implementing changes, where these occur, are contrary to transparency, and a throw-back to the dictatorial tendencies of the socialist republics.

The main research question in the study was: **“To what extent does unethical and/or unprofessional advertising appear in television broadcast advertising of the two stations?”** The main alternate hypothesis being tested was: There was more false advertising content in the private station than in the quasi-government/public TV station. The Null hypothesis tested stated that there was no difference in the quantity of false advertising in the two types of station. It was also felt necessary to test other hypotheses on the following specific ethical and professional criteria or indicators of ethical conduct or professionalism discussed earlier:

- 1) The presence, or not of false advertising,
- 2) The presence or not of negative adverts,
- 3) Difficulty in substantiating claims made in adverts,
- 4) Use of disclaimers in adverts,
- 5) Use of wrong illustrations,

- 6) Gender balance in main characters as Narrator/Singer/Announcer,
- 7) Sex of Main character(s) in shots or images,
- 8) Representation of Social classes,
- 9) Age representation in Advertisements,
- 10) Gender balance in advert “Voice of authority”, and,
- 11) Explicit reference to sex.

To effectively deal with the question and hypothesis and arrive at useful conclusions, some sub-hypotheses were also tested using contingency table analysis. A mix of analytical, exploratory, and descriptive research designs were employed in the study, while the quantitative content analysis method was used in which 230 TV advertisements were monitored, and analyzed for frequency of possible violations of professionalism and ethics in the advertisements aired by the stations. In order to be as objective as possible, the *manifest* rather than latent content was the subject of the monitoring and subsequent analysis. This was also done to avoid disagreements which arise in interpretations of latent-content. Chi-square tests and Fisher’s exact tests of significance were employed by the study.

2. Statement of the Problem

There are a number of vexing issues in the growing advertising industry in Zambia, not least of which is the occurrence of some poor advertising practices which, for example, in 2001, led to public protests and banning of the offending condom adverts aired on national TV. This was after these were deemed too explicit and culturally insensitive (*The Humanitarian*, 2001; *Genderlinks*, 2011). Further, related to this is the continuing absence in the country of an advertising Ethics body such as a fully-fledged Advertising Practitioners Association (APA), to enhance levels of Professionalism in the industry. The closest to that was the loose APA Zambia had without an ethics code for advertising, or means for enforcement. Then came the Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM) in 2003 with a provision to deal with advertising matters as well. Unfortunately, even though the ZIM Act was amended in 2022, it still appears to be too broad in membership, interest groups, objectives and scope, to effectively deal with advertising issues. Despite fertile ground existing for the formation of a fully-fledged Advertising Practitioners Association after economic liberalization in 1991, this has not happened, and it seems, at the time of writing, that there is no positive movement in that direction.

Furthermore, there is a paucity of literature on advertising ethics and professionalism. There hasn’t been a scientific content analysis study of evidence of ethics and professionalism in the industry in the country, apart from a few like the one done for radio in 2020 by these same authors. Hence this study of television advertising content should help fill this gap in the existing researched literature, as well as the knowledge, attitudes and practices of TV advertising in Zambia.

3. Professionalism in Advertising

In a study of ethics in advertising, it is incumbent for one to, not only look at the public interest (Pigou, 1932), but also treat the subject of professionalism, because these are intertwined. Indeed, professionalism places stress on ethics of advertising. Among other authors, Wright (1959), APM (2020) argued that professionals are expected to abide by, or uphold the following **pillars of professionalism**:

- 1) Ongoing learning;
- 2) Advanced studies in professional field;
- 3) Membership of independent body committed to best knowledge, attitudes, and practices in the field;
- 4) Commitment to representing, upholding **standards** of the profession;
- 5) Commitment to the development of knowledge, capability and good practice within field;
- 6) Commitment to working under supervision with openness, integrity and transparency;
- 7) Alignment (fit or supportive relations among the goals, processes, and other various key components);
- 8) Delivery (of output by the professional);
- 9) Ethics (having good ideas about what is right, or desirable so that the organization has a moral campus); and
- 10) Breadth of knowledge, attitudes, and practices needed to competently perform a job as reflected in:
 - a) High standards or norms in the profession,
 - b) Depth,
 - c) Achievement,
 - d) Commitment to work and professional development through reading, etc., and
 - e) Accountability.

All of the above apply to advertising. Unfortunately, as stated earlier, apart from the rather loose Association of Advertising Practitioners created in 2003, and the Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM) also of the same year, there hasn't been a serious concerted efforts in the country to develop a professional body to deal with ethics and professionalism in the industry. The ZIM Act was updated in 2022, and more advertising responsibilities added to the work of the institute. However, more can still be done to build up and professionalize the industry, and the observance of ethics by members.

4. Professional Ethics in Advertising

Out of all the above-mentioned pillars of professionalism, however, **standards or ethics** are the most tangible in that they are manifested through the advertising content, and, therefore, examinable in a study. This is why the decision was taken to look at evidence of observance, or non-observance, of quality standards

or ethics in adverts, and whether the occurrence of specific forms of unethical advertising is significant or not.

There have been studies of unprofessional and unethical tendencies including dishonesty, e.g. through the use of unrelated psycho-social themes to attract and hook the audience to sell more products have been studied. Similar problems have sometimes also arisen from adherence to Teleological or Friedman ethics by some practitioners, which allow the holders leeway to justify their actions on the basis of serving some “greater good”. The extreme is seen in Friedman ethics, which, for example, prioritizes the needs of proprietors of industry, over those of all other stakeholders (Friedman, 1970). Indeed, Codes of ethics have also sometimes been seen as mere window-dressing or camouflage, or at best manifestations of hypocrisy (Nordenstreng, 1999), and some hold that it is impossible to uphold ethics (Reilly, 2013). The lack of professional training among some practitioners also compounds the issue, and the creation of the Zambia Institute of Marketing was partly aimed at addressing such problems by introducing training for interested members.

However, the creation of ZIM should not be seen as the all in all, and deter those wishing to create a more advertising-oriented professional APA to enhance professionalism and the upholding of ethics. As seen in the past, failure to uphold morality and standards leads to the likes of protests over offensive adverts, and government interventions, e.g. through outright bans, as well as prioritization of Government legislative controls over self-regulation. Such a scenario could have serious dysfunctions, including harming democracy, some people profiting from ill-gotten gains, and harming of more gullible younger members of society through adverts. The process of cultural development also suffers in such situations where the role of government in the lives of people is always paramount.

Globally, Codes of ethics have been discussed in business related professions since 1900 or so, when advertising practitioners in the USA’s Midwest formed the first Associated Advertising Associations, then called Associated Advertising Clubs of America (UK Essays in Marketing, 2018). In South Africa, the Advertising Standards Association (ASA) established in 1968, developed, before changing its name to the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASASA). However, South Africa also developed the Advertising and Communications Practitioners Association (ACA) to handle matters relating to the industry. Kenya started in 1986 with the Association of Advertising Practitioners, and Nigeria now has Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON, 1988-2019) set up under the Advertising Practitioners Registration Act Cap A7 of 2004. The seriousness with which the matter is looked at, it may, for example, be seen in the fact that it is a criminal offense for anyone to practice advertising without registration with the council, and to register, one needs a degree or diploma in advertising, mass communication, or other relevant field (ibid.). However, an examination is available for people without the requisite qualifications who still wish to practice.

Zambia has the Institute of Marketing (ZIM) established by Act of Parliament 14, 2003 to promote professional conduct among members, including advertisers, “through codes of conduct or professional ethics” (Times of Zambia, 2014), and this was later replaced by the ZIM Marketing Act of 2022. The ZIM Act outlaws unqualified, and unregistered people from engaging in the Marketing professions in Zambia. Creating the Institute was a progressive step especially for its provision of training services for its members to gain knowledge, attitudes, and skills upgrading. The Institute also managed to develop a networking relationship with training institutions and introduced a certificate course, and two diplomas one of them at postgraduate level, in marketing. However, despite the existence of ZIM, there continued to be unqualified people in industry doing marketing jobs, as well as marketing practitioners who preferred not to register themselves with the organization, apparently so as to avoid being held accountable, e.g., for malpractices. The 2022 Act sought to seal the loopholes by introducing a code of ethics for marketers (including advertisers), as well as possible sanctions against offenders which are: 1) counselling, mentorship or censure of the marketer; 2) cautioning the marketer; 3) payment of an administrative penalty not exceeding fifty thousand penalty units to the Institute; 4) that the offender pays to the Institute or any other party to the hearing any costs of, or incidental to, the proceedings; 5) retraining or rehabilitation of the offender; or 6) suspension of the marketer (ZIM Act No 2 of 2022).

The new Act also has a Part IV dealing exclusively with Advertising in marketing, and provides for an Advertising Standards Board to deal with professional and ethical advertising matters. Unfortunately, the Zambian situation is still compounded by two critical factors: 1) The ZIM is a mix of members from different specialized marketing professions including non-advertisers, and 2) the part of the Act on advertising is short, and with insufficient detail or depth of coverage for the complex subject that advertising is. Further, the marketing codes of ethics in the act are, likewise, also general and too sketchy to effectively cater for the needs of Advertising ethics and professionalism. So the ZIM Act isn't enough for advertising, or the need for advertising codes of ethics in Zambia.

There are a number of advertising codes of ethics Zambia could draw from, once she forms a fully-fledged APA to provide a full complement the other marketing professions in the Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM). Professionalism demands that there be ethical behavior in industry for its products or outputs to be of a predictable standard, and this has yet to be fully realized. In this study, the researchers settled for a number of **indicators** of ethics and professionalism, and these applied to a study of the two Zambian TV stations. The indicators were gathered from codes of advertising ethics at international and regional levels. These criteria are **frequency** or incidence of:

- 1) Difficulty in substantiating claims made in adverts,
- 2) False advertising,
- 3) Gender balance in creative personnel used in adverts,

- 4) Gender-sensitivity in theme and stereotype portrayal,
- 5) Use of disclaimers in Adverts,
- 6) Use of wrong illustrations,
- 7) Explicit reference to sex,
- 8) Gender balance in advert “Voice of authority”.

5. Sampling for the TV Advertising

In 2023, there were 52 TV stations in Zambia and the number was still growing (see **Table 1** below). For the study, Muvi TV and ZNBC TV2 were purposively chosen for the sample. The two chosen stations have national, or near nation-wide reach (see **Table 2** below). Lusaka’s big population and affluence gives the city its special significance for advertising.

Lusaka was purposively chosen because it is the biggest and most affluent (2020 population: 2,731,696,) city, and the one with the greatest density of TV stations in the country (see **Table 3** below). The two chosen stations have national, or near nation-wide reach. Lusaka’s big population and affluence gives the city its special significance for advertising.

Further, ZNBC TV2 broadcasts everyday around the clock, and also airs the main national TV newscast at 19:00 hrs., and this was targeted for the advertisements because it happens during peak advertising time.

Muvi TV was also sampled due its wide viewership among common people, mainly because of its *tabloid* nature which appeals to them, and its tendency to have credible political news (Mbatha, 2011). The station gives attention to the media needs of the previously marginalized “working class,” and prominence to

Table 1. Zambia’s broadcast stations & other Telecommunications.

Medium	Number
Radio Stations	190
TV stations	52
Microwave Communication towers to improve access in rural areas	776
Internet penetration	9.9 million = (52 per cent, compared to 35.9 per cent for the average for Africa)

Source: **Independent Broadcasting Authority (2023)**, President’s speech in parliament 6th March, 2020.

Table 2. Broadcast Time & Peak Slots for ZNBC Radio & TV.

CHANNEL	BROADCAST HOURS	PEAK TIME SLOTS	COVERAGE
TV1	24 Hours	18.00-22.00 Hrs.	National
TV2	24 Hours	12.00-22.00 Hrs.	National
TV3	24 Hours	17.30-24.00 Hrs.	National
Muvi TV	24 Hours	17:30-22:00 Hrs.	Wide spread (available via satellite)

Source: ZNBC 2020 and Muvi TV.

Table 3. Zambia's major advertising markets (2010 & 2020).

	POPULATION IN 2010	POPULATION IN 2020	2020 Projected B/down by Sex
Zambia	13,092,666	17,885,422	8,852,174 (M) 9,033,248 (F)
Lusaka	1,327,000	2,731,696	1,343,733 (M) 1,387,963 (F)
Kitwe	506,045	762,950	378,855(M) 384,095(F)
Ndola	443,346	585,974	289,945(M) 296,029(F)
Livingstone	133,881	190,419	94,402(M) 96,017(F)

Source: CSO (2010 Census of Population and Housing, Volume 11). F = Female; M = Male.

“micro-politics of everyday life”, alongside “serious” stories albeit in a more lurid, sensationalized and personalized manner (ibid.). Adverts from its main 18:00 hrs. newscast were sampled.

For both stations, every TV advertisement aired at the times before, during, and after the 18:00 hrs. (Muvi TV) and 19:00 hrs. (ZNBC TV2) main news casts was recorded for subsequent analysis. This was during the approximately one week period of April 20-1st May 2012. The choice of month of April was purposive, and connected to the fact that the researchers were available to undertake the study. Further, the researchers did not see any indications that the matters of concern in the study followed a cyclical pattern which could be affected by the choice of the study period.

6. Profile of Advertising Products

Below follows a profile of the advertising products which were found from the monitoring of the television adverts, before the inferential data analysis and conclusions.

Overall, as indicated in **Table 4** below showing a partial list, the most frequently occurring group of advertisements (by generic product) featured internet, cellular telephony services and providers with a total of 58/230 or just over a quarter (25.2) percent of all the adverts, followed by Health services, at 28/230 or 12.2 percent. Zambia's economy has seen rapid growth in the internet sector where the penetration rate was at 28.5 percent in 2022 (Kemp, 2022) of the population having access to cell phones and the internet (ibid.). That was followed by toothpaste, soap, detergents & toilet rolls at 24/230 (10.4 percent), food products including meat, fish, fruits & vegetables at 17/230 (8 percent), and transport & energy industries at 16/230 (7 percent).

Table 4. Generic products advertised.

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	RANK
Internet & cellular telephony services & providers	58	25.2	1
Health Services	28	12.2	2
Toothpaste, soap, detergents & toiletries	24	10.4	3
Food products including meat, fish, fruits & vegetables.	17	8	4
Transport & energy industries	16	7	5
Soft drinks, other beverages & bottled water	15	6.5	
Retail & wholesales	9	3.9	7
Worship/spiritual services	9	3.9	7
Entertainment	8	3.5	9
Betting, betting tipsters, raffles & lotteries	7	3	10
Construction products	7	3	10

This was followed by soft drinks, other beverages & bottled water at 15/230 or 6.5 percent, retail & wholesales at 9/230 (3.8 percent), worship/spiritual services at 9/230 or (3.9 percent), and entertainment at 8/230 or (3.5 percent). Next product in ranking by frequency was betting, betting tipsters, raffles & lotteries at 7/230 (3 percent), and construction products also at 7/230 (3 percent).

There were 230 TV adverts in all, with two frequency peaks marked by the “Immunization mini-drama for measles” and the Airtel musical & dance mini-drama “Be bold, be great, be famous”, ...be “Zambitious” advert, with shots of graduates, & celebrities at 15/230 (6.5 percent) each (see **Table 5**). The latter characterized the plethora of adverts which accompanied the euphoria of Zambia’s Africa Cup of Nations victory in February, 2012 (see **Table 5**). This was followed by the Airtel “Get five times what you spend” advert at 13/230 (5.7 percent), the MTN “your call” mini-drama featuring then national soccer coach Herve Renard at 10/230 (4.3 percent), the Energy Regulation Board invitation for people to comment on ZESCO’s application for tariff increase at 8/230 (3.5 percent) and Renown at 8/230 or (3.5 percent). This was followed by Lotto lottery musical advert with song in vernacular with graphics & narration at 7/230 or (3 percent), the Airtel “Club Z” promotion - VO narration with TV card & play of “Be cool. Be Zambitious” at 7/230 (3 percent), Boom detergent paste “Spirit of Zambia” advert featuring the first Republican President of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda & Emmanuel Mayuka at 5/230 (2.2 percent), and in tenth position the Grape-max with aloe vera herbal soft drink dramatization advert also at 5/230 (2.2 percent).

It appears from observation, and from the sample, that most of the adverts aired in the country feature products that are not controversial (see **Table 5** below).

Table 5. Description of top 10 TV adverts.

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	RANK
Immunization mini-drama for measles: VO narration with shots of people	15	6.5	1
Airtel musical & dance mini-drama “Be bold, be great, be famous, ...be ‘Zambitious’ advert featuring Mampi, University graduates, & celebrities”	15	6.5	1
Airtel “Get five times what you spend” advert with VO graphics footage with narration	13	5.7	3
MTN “your call” mini-drama featuring national soccer coach Herve Renard & actor	10	4.3	4
Energy Regulation Board invitation for people to comment on ZESCO’s application for tariff increases	8	3.5	5
“Renown”	8	3.5	5
Lotto lottery musical advert with song in vernacular with graphics & narration	7	3	7
Airtel “Club Z” promotion - VO narration with TV card & play of “be cool. Be Zambitious”	7	3	7
Boom detergent paste “Spirit of Zambia” advert featuring Dr. Kenneth Kaunda & Emmanuel Mayuka	5	2.2	9
Grapemax with aloe vera soft drink dramatization advert: TV graphics & shots plus dialogue	5	2.2	9

As may be seen below, the “Be bold, be Zambitious” Airtel Cellular telephony provider advert celebrating Zambia’s 2012 Africa Cup Soccer victory, and Health drama advert on immunization against measles, topped the list at 15 times each in frequency of appearance. Another Airtel advert took third position with 13 appearances, while the fourth position, with a frequency of 10, went to the your “Your Call” advert featuring Herve Renard, then Zambian National Soccer coach in an advert by another Cellular provider, MTN.

Fifth position was shared by Zambia’s Energy Regulation Board (ERB) invitation for the public to comment on proposed tariff increases by the national electricity utility, ZESCO, and “Renown”. The other top adverts include lotteries, food and beverages as shown in the table.

With regard to more controversial adverts, the list would include liquor and cigarette adverts. In Zambia, cigarette advertising is almost non-existent on television or radio, despite the fact that there is no legal ban on the direct tobacco advertising, tobacco promotion or sponsorship (WHO, 2002). It seems that tobacco advertisers generally avoid broadcast media in preference of billboards, newspapers and magazines. Zambian law prescribes that there be placed anti-smoking messages wherever there may be tobacco adverts (ibid.), and indeed, wherever such adverts appear, each also carries a brief, mandatory disclaimer. Even though the impact of disclaimers is debatable, adverts carry such counter messages for the following reasons: 1) to tell the full story, of pros and cons and from the use of a product or service, and, 2) to limit legal liability 3) to comply

with the law where it so requires, and 4) to appear to be socially responsible. Unfortunately, disclaimers often cause confusion, or sometimes even cause behavior which is the opposite to what was intended (Kesten & Armstrong, 2012). The WHO Global Tobacco Youth Survey stated, with respect to Lusaka school students, “In 2002, 55.1 percent of students saw pro-cigarette advertising on billboards and 57.5 percent in newspapers and magazines” (ibid.). The survey didn’t state if the teenage youths saw the disclaimers, or if they thought these counter messages meant much. Besides this, the absence of tobacco adverts on radio and TV doesn’t mean that tobacco is totally absent from broadcast media. Indirectly cigarettes are still portrayed and promoted, e.g. through movie, and TV characters who smoke.

Perhaps the most conspicuous manifestation of public reaction came from an advert from the condom adverts of 2001 mentioned earlier. Faced with then burgeoning HIV infection rates in Zambia, some Health Communications change-agents threw all caution to the wind and produced the offending ads which were later withdrawn after public protests. The two adverts separately featured Congolese songbird Tshala Muana, and former Zambian Soccer Team star Kalusha Bwalya, who, while holding condoms shouted, “I am protected, are you?” Tshala was shown gyrating her hips to “Mamu wenu,” one of her hit songs before uttering the words.

Table 6. 12 Top Appeals used in selling products, by rank order.

	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Health, happiness, youth & community	18	7.8	1
Free, patriotism, smart & success	15	6.5	2
Success, happiness, community, strong, youth, & persistence	15	6.5	2
Cheap, authority, musical, humor, & success.	10	4.3	3
Daring & freedom	7	3	5
Plain advert (no appeal)	7	3	5
Reason & nurturance	7	3	5
Expertise & wisdom	5	2.2	8
Authority, patriotism & success	5	2.2	8
Delicious/tasty & variety	5	2.2	8
Healthy, exclusive, humorous & novelty	5	2.2	8
Free, leisure, & enjoyment	4	1.7	12
Convenience, efficiency, & expertise	4	1.7	12
Quality, economy, & variety	4	1.7	12
Quality, community, & sexuality	4	1.7	12

Table 6 above shows the appeals used in advertising on the stations. The most used combination of appeals were as follows, in rank order, 1) “Health, happiness, youth and community,” 2) “Free, patriotism, smart & success,” and 3) “Success, happiness, community, strong, youth, and persistence,” 4) Cheap, authority, musical, humor, & success, and 5) “Daring and freedom.”

Even though one expected that there could be some controversial appeals, there were none in the sample. For example, Advertising using explicit sexually suggestive appeals would, therefore seem, in terms of practice, more of exceptions rather than the rule. As indicated earlier, the use of such appeals in the 2001 adverts appears to have been a rare, crisis-time decision taken by change agents as they grappled with the urgent task of how to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

7. Hypothesis Test Results

H1: There is significantly more false advertising on Private TV than you get on Quasi-government TV

Fisher’s exact test was performed to determine whether there were equal amounts of advertising on the government station as on the private one. The Null hypothesis was not rejected, and results of the **Fisher’s exact test (at alpha level = 0.05) did not indicate a significant association between false advertising and ownership** even though there was slightly more false adverts from the government station than that from the private station (on ZNBC TV2, there were only 9/159 or 3.9 percent while that from Muvi TV was 1/71 or 0.4 percent. This suggests that the often touted pressures to make profit in private media were apparently not a significant cause of false advertising for the sampled data. In fact, the reason for the existence of false adverts apparently seemed to lie elsewhere, as there was more false advertising on the quasi-government station than on the private one. This was similar to the results from the radio content analysis (Muzyamba & Lemba, 2020).

H2: There was more negative advertising on the Privately-owned station than on the quasi-government station.

On whether there were equal amounts of negative advertising on the quasi-government television as on the private television station, the results were not significant, as **there were no negative advertising in the entire sample**. This was similar to the findings for Radio in Zambia (Muzyamba & Lemba, 2020) where there was also zero negative advertising. However, caution must be exercised in the interpretation, because, 1) the period of study was short, and 2) the study was done out of election years when negative adverts often occur as those jostling for political office become aggressive and sometimes throw away all caution.

H3: There was greater potential difficulty in substantiating claims made in adverts from the private station, than the quasi-government station

Fisher’s exact test was performed to determine whether there was equal difficulty in substantiating claims made in the advertising on the government station, as on the private one. The null hypothesis wasn’t rejected and results of the

Fisher's exact test (*at alpha level* = 0.05) did not indicate a significant association between ease of substantiating claims and ownership, even though there was slightly more use of 'hard to substantiate' claims from the government station than that from the private station (on ZNBC, 7/159 (or 4 percent) of the adverts posed difficulty in substantiating claims made, compared to 2/71 (2.8 percent) from the private Muvi TV. Overall, only 9/230 (3.9 percent) of all the adverts showed such difficulty.

H4: There was more use of disclaimers on the adverts from the government station than from the private station

Fisher's exact test was performed to determine whether there was equal use of disclaimers in advertising on the government station as on the private one. The null hypothesis wasn't rejected and results of the Fisher's exact test (*at alpha level* = 0.05) did not indicate a significant association between use of disclaimers and ownership, even though was slightly more use of disclaimers from the government station than that from the private station (on ZNBC, there were only 2/159 or 0.9% disclaimers, while on Muvi TV there weren't any from the sampled data), and the results were not significant.

H5: There is more use of wrong illustrations on the private station than on the quasi-government station

On use of wrong illustrations, a chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether there was equal use of wrong illustrations on the privately-owned station as on the government one. **The null hypothesis wasn't rejected: the result wasn't significant**, showing that there was a preponderant use of correct illustrations overall, and slightly more use of wrong illustrations on the government station than on the private station: $X^2(1, N = 230) = 1.492, p < 0.235$, and this finding was similar to the study of radio, *in which*, overall, most of the time, correct illustrations were used (*ibid.*). 25/159 (15.7 percent) of the ZNBC adverts showed wrong illustrations, while 7/71 or 9.8 percent of the content from privately-owned Muvi TV showed such illustrations.

H6: Significantly more males than females were used as main Singer/Announcer/Narrator in Voice over narration, or song

A chi-square test of independence was performed to test the hypothesis that there was balance between males and females in the roles of Singer/Announcer/Narrator. **The null hypothesis was rejected; the result was significant.** This happened whether the researchers included the category of "Both Male and Female," and "No discernible indicator of Gender," or only had the numbers of "Males," and "Females" analyzed:

$(X^2(1, N = 201) = 96.124, p < 0.05)$ (analyzed only with figures of "Males" and "Female")

$(X^2(3, N = 230) = 4.74, p < 0.05)$ (analyzed only with the additional categories of "Both Male and Female" and "No discernible Gender identification")

Males dominated females in the coveted leadership roles. Aggregated data showed that, for both TV stations, over half, or 170/230 (73 percent), were males, while only 31/230 (13.5 percent) were female, and 18/230 (7.8 percent)

featured both male and female. The adverts without discernible gender of characters were 11/230 (4.8 percent). Clearly the lack of balance in allocations to different sexes reveals an insidious built in advantage for male-figures on TV, as is also appears to be the case for Radio (Muzyamba & Lemba, 2020) in Zambia. With ownership considered, ZNBC TV was slightly ahead with (81/159 or 50.9 percent) compared to Muvi TV (35/71 or 49.3 percent). ZNBC TV1 had 31/159 (19.5 percent) females, 41/159 (25.8 percent) with both male and female, and 6/159 (3.8 percent) without discernible characters in such roles. However, Muvi TV had 15/71 (21.1 percent) adverts with female characters, 12/71 (16.9 percent) with both male and female characters, and 9/71 (12.7 percent) without any visible gender in main roles. The data clearly shows what seems to be a continuing tendency towards a patriarchal society, and its encouragement through adverts, despite a Population Sex Ratio in favor of females as stated earlier (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022). This finding was similar to the study of radio in which more males than females were used in similar roles (ibid.).

H7: There were more males than female main character(s) in the shots or images from the two stations

A chi-square test of Test of Independence was performed to test the hypothesis that there was balance between males and females in the TV shots. **The result wasn't significant, even though it showed more use of males than females:** $\chi^2(3, N = 230) = 7.74, p = 0.052$ and this finding was similar to the study of radio in which more males than females were used in similar roles (ibid.). For both stations, over half of the TV shots, or 116/230 (50.4 percent), were males, while only 46 (20 percent) were female, and 53/230 (23 percent) featured both male and female, and the ads without discernible gender in characters were 15/230 (6.5 percent). Clearly the lack of balance in allocations to different genders creates a built in advantage for male-figures on TV, as is also the case for Radio (Muzyamba & Lemba, 2020).

For disaggregated data, with ownership considered, ZNBC TV was slightly ahead with the same bias towards males with (81/159 or 50.9 percent) compared to Muvi TV (35/71 or 49.3 percent). ZNBC TV1 had 31/159 (19.5 percent) females, 41/159 (25.8 percent) with both male and female, and 6/159 (3.8 percent) without discernible characters in such roles. However, Muvi TV had Muvi TV (35/71 or 49.3 percent) Males, 15/71 (21.1 percent) ads with female characters 12/71 (16.9 percent) with both male and female characters, and 9/71 (12.7 percent) without any visible gender in main roles. The data clearly reflects a tendency towards a patriarchal society, and Television adverts are not helping matters, despite the overall Sex Ratio which is in favor of females as stated earlier (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022).

H8: There were more males used as “voice of authority” at end of advertisement

A chi-square Goodness of fit test was performed to determine whether the use of males or females as “Voice of authority” in the adverts was balanced. **The result was significant, and showed a preponderant use of males in the envied**

role, and this finding was similar to the study of radio *in which more males than females* were generally used in similar roles (ibid.).

$\chi^2 (3) = 326.696, p = 0.00001$ (with all the categories including that of “Both male and female” and the group without discernible indication of gender)

$\chi^2 (1) = 129.052, p = 0.00001$ (without the last two categories)

On both stations, 174/230 (75.7 percent) were males, while only 17/230 (7.4 percent were female), and 1/230 (0.4 percent) featured both male and female, and 38/230 (16.5 percent) were without such a feature. For ZNBC, the allocation for “Voice of Authority”, we had 121/159 (76.1 percent) males, 12/159 (7.6 percent) females, and 38 /230 (16.5 percent) not applicable. For Muvi TV, the data revealed that there were 53/71 (74.6) males, 5/71 (7 percent) females, 0 with both genders, and 13/71 (18.3 percent) without a “Voice of Authority”.

Clearly the bias towards the male gender in allocations of “Voice of Authority” to the tune of nearly 76 percent reveals an insidious built in advantage for male-figures on TV, as is also the case for Radio (Muzyamba & Lemba, 2020). This tendency, despite a Sex Ratio in favor of females (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022), could be indicative of a media and societal tendency to promote male chauvinism.

H9: Is the overall dominant character(s) male or female?

A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit was performed to determine whether the use of male and female characters in dominant positions in TV advertising was balanced between the sexes. **The result was significant, $\chi^2 (3, N = 230) = 7.74, p < 0.05$, and it showed a preponderant use of males.** This finding was similar to the study of radio *in which more males than females* were used in a dominant role (ibid.). Overall, 193/230 (83.9 percent) of the dominant characters in the adverts were males, and only 22/230 (9.6 percent) were female. 5/230 (2.2 percent) had both male and female characters in dominant position, and 10/230 (4.3 percent) of the ads had no such role (Muzyamba & Lemba, 2020). This is despite a Sex Ratio in Zambia in 2021 is 98.10 males per 100 females (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2022).

The disaggregated data showed that ZNBC TV1 adverts had 140/159 (88.1 percent) having males in dominant roles in the adverts, and only 9/159 (5.7 percent) with females being dominant characters. 4/159 (2.5 percent) of the TV1 adverts had both sexes being in dominant positions, and 6/159 (3.8 percent) were without dominant characters. For Muvi TV, 53/71 (74.6 percent) had male dominant characters, 13/71 (18.3 percent) had female dominant characters, and 1 (1.4 percent) which had both sexes in that role, and 4/71 (5. percent) for which the measure was non-applicable.

H10: The majority of main actors were from the Middle class

A chi-square test of goodness-of-fit was performed to determine all social classes were equally represented in TV advertising. **The result was significant, $\chi^2 (3, N = 230) = 420.748, p = 0.00001$.** The sample data showed a **preponderant use of representatives of the Middle Class**, even though most people in the

country, around 64 percent, were poor or from the Low class ([Habitat for Humanity, 2017](#)). Overall, 192/230 (83.5 percent) were depictions of Middle class people, 12/230 (5.2 percent) of the Lower class, 7/230 (3 percent) of Mixed Classes, and 19/230 (8.3 percent) indeterminate. There were no members of the Upper Class represented in the adverts. For ZNBC there were 135/159 (84.9 percent) depictions of Middle class people, 7/159 (4.4 percent) of the Lower class, 2/159 (1.3 percent) of mixed classes, and 15/159 (9.4 percent) who couldn't be determined. For Muvi TV 57/71 (80.3 percent) were from the Middle Class, 5/71 (7 percent) Lower class, 5/71 (7 percent) mixed classes, and 4/71 (5.6 percent) not determined.

The tendency to have mostly middle class depictions could be explained by the fact that adverts are about mostly about selling merchandise, and the media deliberately targets the “reference group” of the audience—this is group which they use as a reference or standard for themselves. Thus even if most people are poor, they still aspire to the tastes, and standards of the middle class. However, the tendency to have depictions which do not mirror society can also cause dysfunctions among viewers such as alienation, and frustration.

H11: The Approximate age bracket of the main character (s) was youthful

The hypothesis tested was that all age brackets were equally represented in the sample. The **Null hypothesis was rejected** in favor of the alternate hypothesis and **the vast majority or 177/270 or 77 percent were “Young adults,”** followed by 26/230 or 11.3 percent for mixed ages, 23/230 or 10 percent for those who were indeterminate. Only 2/230 or 0.86 percent were children, and 1/230 or 0.4 percent were elderly adults. The inflated representation proportion for “Young adults” may be on account of their perceived earning power being targeted by advertisers since these are of economic working age. However, the apparent minimization of numbers of “Elderly Adults” and “Children” is worrying. For Zambia, the dependency ratio is high due to large numbers of children, and one expected to have children better represented in the sample. Perhaps, the number of elderly adults is low in Zambia, but even in countries like Germany with a majority of older people, they tend to be minimized in adverts. [Eisend \(2022\)](#) wrote from Germany: “Despite the increasing market size and consumption power of older consumers, older people seldom appear in advertising, and research activity in this area suggests that advertising scholars have lost interest in the topic” ([Eisend, 2022](#)).

Such marginalization of segment of the population is undesirable, as it may lead to social exclusion and affected groups being denied access to basic services and opportunities ([Civil Liberties of Europe, 2021](#); [St. John's Foundation, 2023](#)). Numerous scholars have written about this tendency to pursue youthfulness and beauty, and to have a discriminatory bias against older people. Unfortunately, it seems to somewhat feature as well in Zambian TV adverts.

H12: Is there an explicit reference to sex?

For the sample, there was only 1/159 (0.4 percent of the total for that station) explicit reference to sex on ZNBC TV1 and none on Muvi TV.

8. Conclusion

Overall, from a professionalism standpoint, among the strengths of the TV adverts was the absence of elements of false advertising in the any one of the focus areas in the content analysis of TV adverts. The absence of negative adverts from the TV sample was also a strength even though this wasn't an election year, when such ads tend to appear. Indeed, it has been established that people, especially voters, do not like negative statements about the opponent (Dean, 2015) and would rather have positive adverts only. Other positives included there being very few adverts presenting difficulty in substantiating claims made, and the absence of explicit reference to sex, except for one HIV and Aids advert. Further, there were no controversial appeals in the sample. This may be indicative of good efforts by advertisers to be ethical and professional, despite the absence of a fully-fledged professional APA in Zambia. The Advertising Standards Board under ZIM is a welcome development even though a more elaborate structure is expected to properly handle advertising ethics and professionalism. Among other "strengths" of the TV adverts was that ordinary people were well represented on TV, with position of the main character dominated by such ordinary people, and only 3 well-known Actors/actresses, musicians or celebrities. One mixed blessing was that female characters were dominant in the Children's immunization campaign adverts on TV. Who says men shouldn't be prominent in care-giving roles? The day for stereotyped casting of women in care-giving roles should be a thing of the past, and men should take up such roles in loving and nurturing scenes.

Among other weaknesses was the fact that, only 1/230 (0.4 percent) of the TV adverts was on the anti-Gender based violence campaign even though one expected more in a country where women are often mistreated by men. There was no advert on Cholera, even though Zambia has since 2002, sometimes suffered from outbreaks of the disease. The tendency to only have anti-cholera campaigns during the rainy season appears to be keeping Zambians starved of the alertness-raising messaging necessary to reach the critical threshold required to overcome the disease. There was no advert on Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of AIDS (PMTCT) even though doctors have agreed it could help bring about the elusive AIDS-free generation often spoken about. Further, only 28/230 (12.2 percent) were clearly campaign adverts, and this is far from what is needed for Zambia to fight against various development hurdles. 18 (7.8 percent) were from the anti-measles campaign, 7 from the Anti-HIV and AIDS1 campaign, 2 (0.9 percent) Clean Zambia campaign, and 1 (0.4 percent) for Anti-Gender based Violence. The researchers felt that more could be done. Overall, the study found, with respect to ethical and professional conduct, that there was a mixture of both "ethical" and "unethical" conduct, as well "professional" and "unprofessional" content.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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