

**Global Media Journal**  
**African Edition**  
**2013 Vol 7(2):116-139**

**A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR POLITICAL ADVERTISING IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE**

*Albert Chibuwe*

**ABSTRACT**

*Post-2000 Zimbabwe has been characterised by massive political contestations mainly between the President Robert Mugabe-led Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai. This battle has been fought on many fronts including the media and international forums with ZANU PF accusing the MDC of being 'puppets' of the British and Americans. On the other hand, the MDC accuses ZANU PF of 'dictatorship'. This contestation has largely been more pronounced during election periods where it takes place through political advertisements in the media, music and election rallies among others. Whereas there have been many studies of the elections, media coverage of elections, alleged use of violence as an instrument of control, ZANU PF discourses through the media, official speeches and music among others, there has been little study of political advertising in Zimbabwe. This is despite the centrality of political advertising in political contestation in a democracy (Kaid, 2012). This paper, through a review and analysis of existing Zimbabwean literature on media coverage of elections, music nationalism, political journalism, cultural journalism among other political communication related studies, proposes a new theory of post-colonial African political communication and/or political advertising. It argues that existing scholarship tends to rely too much on Western theory and post-colonial essentialism to interpret ZANU PF discourses without acknowledging the peculiarities of the post-colonial African state which makes it different from the Western liberal democratic state and thus makes Western theory alone is inadequate as an analytical tool to understand post-colonial African phenomenon. The paper argues that the practice of political advertising in Zimbabwe can best be understood through political communication theory and through acknowledging that the African post-colonial state is an 'artefact' of colonialism that has no link to any pre-colonial reality (Shaw, 1986).*

**Keywords:** *Zimbabwe, political communication, political advertising, post-colonial state, discourse, ZANU PF, MDC*

## **I. Introduction**

The paper proposes a new way of looking at political communication in post-2000 Zimbabwe, a period that was characterised by massive political contestations around issues of land reform, democracy, good governance, human rights, economic indigenization, patriotism and national identity among others (Ranger, 2004, & 2005; Mazango, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003, & 2009). It was a period whose intensity of contestation lends credibility to Anderson (1991)'s claim that a nation is an imagined community and nation, nationality and nationalism are difficult to define concepts. This is because these together with 'national identity' concepts are imagined and constructed and therefore subject to contestations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 2). As Shaw (1986) notes, "Zimbabwe is an artefact, and hence its continued existence as an enduring nation...is not guaranteed by mere international recognition of juridical statehood" (p.380). It is an artefact that was created by colonialism. The paper argues that understanding Zimbabwean political advertising entails understanding the context and culture. As Kaid (2012) notes, "...the study of political advertising outside the United States must confront a plethora of contextual and cultural concerns [such as] differences in governmental structures, political party organizations, media systems, regulatory constraints and above all, language and culture." (p. 37) Western theory or post-colonial theory is not enough to understand political advertising in Zimbabwe and Africa. The paper proposes a new theory of post-colonial political communication using Zimbabwe as a case study. This theory presents political advertising as a key promotional tool in a democracy, as a way through which political contestants communicate with voters, largely through the mass media (Kaid, 2012, p.29). The theory also takes into account the context and cultural specifics of Zimbabwe and Africa.

By carefully analysing existing secondary literature, the paper argues that studies that have focused on political communication practices in Zimbabwe (Chitando, 2005; Kriger, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003a & 2003b; Ranger, 2004, & 2005) have tended to focus more on the perceived anti-

democratic tendencies of ZANU PF. For example, ZANU PF's attack advertising and its use of fear appeal were dismissed as undemocratic (Chitando, 2005; Kriger, 2005) whilst its anti-imperialism discourse was dismissed as bankrupt (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003a). This post-colonial essentialism has also characterised studies of Zimbabwean media's role in political communication (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999; Chuma, 2008; Moyo, 2004 & 2005; Ranger, 2004, & 2005; Waldahl, 2004, & 2005; Mazango, 2005). Whereas these studies made use of Habermas' public sphere theory among others, they were not situated in political advertising theory. The peculiarities of the post-colonial African state that make it different from Western neo-liberal democratic states; peculiarities that make Western theory alone insufficient as an analytical tool of ZANU PF discourses, were not sufficiently acknowledged. As Shaw (1986) observes, "...like most black African nations, the boundaries of Zimbabwe-indeed its very existence as a state-correspond to no pre-colonial reality" (p.380). In other words, trying to understand the ZANU PF's political communication discourses entails acknowledging this fact.

This paper calls for an approach that situates all political communication acts within political advertising theory while also taking cognisance of the peculiarities of the post-colony that makes it different from the typical western neo-liberal democracy. In political advertising attack advertising, comparative advertising and advocacy advertising are all legitimate (Lilleker, 2006; Jaspersen and Fan, 2002; Pinkleton, Um, & Austin, 2002; Kaid, 2012; Meirick, 2002). Furthermore, fear appeal is the ultimate mobilisation tool for the status quo even in democracies (Zizek, 2007, p. xxvi). Apart from the above, studies of the ZANU PF's post-2000 discourses have also largely treated Zimbabwe as a mirror image of the colonial state (Kriger, 2005; Thram, 2006; Chitando, 2005; Dorman, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, & Willems, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003a & 2003b, & 2009). The political discourses have largely been dismissed as evidence of a bankrupt nationalism or as the last refuge of a scoundrel (Ranger, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). It is argued that the ZANU PF's discourse is divisive and undemocratic but no effort is made to ground the party's communicative activities within political communication. This theoretical paper is a call to a re-thinking of the study of

African political communication, using a case study of ZANU PF and the Mugabe regime's political communication strategies, specifically focusing on political advertising. The paper focuses on ZANU PF discourses in relation to Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) and does not concern itself with the other political parties that always mushroom at election times. ZANU PF hardly pays attention to the small, sometimes one-man parties that emerge at election times instead choosing to focus mainly on the party that poses the real threat to its stranglehold on power in any election. Consistent with that tactic, ZANU PF has rarely paid any attention to the smaller MDC-N and MDC-99 factions because they do not pose any threat to it. Post-2000, the party that has posed a serious threat to ZANU PF's stranglehold on power has been the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).<sup>1</sup>

## **II. Post-2000 Zimbabwean Political Context**

ZANU PF has been in power since independence on 18 April 1980. However, the credibility of elections since then has been contested (Makumbe, 1991; Makumbe, & Compagnon, 1996; Makumbe, & Sithole, 1997; Compagnon, 2000; Kriger, 2005; Dorman, 2005). The emergence of MDC in 1999 caused massive changes in the nature of political party contestations in Zimbabwe (ZESN, 2008, p.5) that saw an escalation in election disputes. It was the first opposition in post-independence Zimbabwe to pose a real threat to ZANU PF's grip on power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003a; Mazango, 2005; Moyo, 2005; Waldahl, 2005).

In response to this challenge, the ZANU PF regime enacted a barrage of media and security laws such as Public Order Security Act (POSA), Interceptions of Communications Act, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act among others. These laws were dismissed by critics as designed to make it difficult for the MDC to win elections. Furthermore, since its formation MDC has been castigated by ZANU PF as agents of

---

<sup>1</sup> The MDC split into two in 2005 and on the eve of the 2008 elections. The bigger faction, led by Tsvangirai, adopted the prefix 'T' for Tsvangirai becoming MDC-T. This was in a bid to distinguish itself from the other MDC, which people popularly referred to as MDC-M after Mutambare and later as MDC-N after Welshman Ncube. Ncube who took over the party's leadership from Mutambara Job Sikhala, a founding member of MDC, later broke away from MDC-N to launch his own MDC-99.

regime change and Western imperialists' puppets (Meredith, 2011; Ranger, 2004, & 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003, & 2009; Kriger, 2005). The ZANU PF also resorted to nationalistic discourses of, among other things, equitable land redistribution and anti-imperialism in order to whip up anti-white and anti-British sentiments by raising the spectre of British re-colonisation (Mazango, 2005); Chuma, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). Furthermore, ZANU PF, in typical post-colonial African style, elevated their party leader to the position of a demigod who is to be worshipped for his role in the liberation struggle and in the defence of 'the values of the liberation struggle' and the country's sovereignty (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). These discourses were circulated through the state controlled media in the form of news, current affairs programmes and documentaries on radio and television, opinion pieces and editorials in newspapers and political advertisements especially, at election time (Ranger, 2004, & 2005; Mazango, 2005; Kriger, 2005). For example, the *Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation* (ZBC) news and ZANU PF adverts continuously showed images of MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai receiving cash from white commercial farmers to support the former's claim that Tsvangirai was an 'imperialist stooge', a 'teaboy', and *The Sunday Mail* and *The Herald* cartooned him serving tea to Tony Blair and George Bush. Furthermore, Tsvangirai was portrayed as a coward who: had fled from the liberation war in Mozambique; was opposed to the land reform programme and had advocated for the imposition of economic sanctions on Zimbabwe by the USA and the EU. ZANU PF was presented as the revolutionary party that has the interests of Zimbabweans at heart; a party dedicated to economically empowering the indigenous Zimbabweans, defending the sovereignty of the country and prepared to 'fight until the last drop of blood' to defend Zimbabwe's national sovereignty and integrity.

The ZBC and the state-controlled national daily *The Herald* also sometimes reject opposition political parties' paid-for-advertisements (Chuma, 2008; Mazango, 2005). However, in other democracies such as the USA, broadcasters may not place restrictions on political advertising content as long as they have a sponsor identification notice (Kaid, 2012, p.37). The opposition for their part accuse ZANU PF of being dictatorial whilst critics such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003a)

among others, dismiss the regime's version of nationalism as narrow and exclusionary and therefore bankrupt. It is apparent that the state media were used as ZANU PF propaganda tools, a development that is contrary to critics' claims that the media should be a public platform and a watchdog of those in power (Dorman, 2006; Moyo, 2005; Mazango, 2005; Lilleker, 2006). On the other hand, the privately owned media were pro-MDC and were not even critical of their policies (Chuma, 2008; Moyo, 2005) such that in the end the media in Zimbabwe became an anti-democratic force (Mano, 2005). They became sites of ideological struggles between ZANU PF and the MDC, and ZANU PF and its alleged Western detractors.

The struggle for power, at times nasty and brutal, culminated in the controversial June 27 2008 election run-off from which MDC's Tsvangirai withdrew citing violence against his supporters perpetrated by ZANU PF and the government security forces (CCJP, 2009; Masunungure, 2009; Moysé, 2009; Meredith, 2011). The presidential run-off election was called after Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe in the March 29 2008 presidential election but failed to garner 50 plus one percent of the vote to ascend to the presidency (Meredith, 2011; Masunungure, 2009; CCJP, 2009). The rejection of the presidential run-off election result by the international community led to a SADC brokered power-sharing deal signed in September 2008 by MDC-T, MDC and ZANU PF. The Government of National Unity (GNU) was sworn-in in February 2009 but it was characterised by disagreements over issues such as the drafting of a new constitution, media, security sector, and electoral reforms that were to pave the way for democracy and the holding of free and fair elections.

It is in this context that the July 31 2013 elections (where voters simultaneously selected the president, members of parliament, senators and councillors) were held. Furthermore, it is this context characterised by disagreements between ZANU PF and the MDC and its alleged Western backers especially the United States of America and Britain who imposed sanctions on the Zimbabwe, that lots of books and research articles on the Zimbabwe crisis were authored (Scholz, 2004; Kriger, 2005; Ranger, 2004, & 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Masunungure, 2009). It is these writings that have been largely characterised by post-colonial essentialism. The aftermath of

the March 29 2008 harmonised elections, the June 27 2008 and the July 31 2013 elections provides a glaring example of how advertising is a neglected area of study not only in Zimbabwe but also in Africa. The major talking points for critics and academia were largely centred on media freedom; vote buying, vote rigging, constituency gerrymandering and torture and intimidation among other things while political advertising was only mentioned in relation to the rejection of MDC adverts by the state broadcaster the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) (Meredith, 2011; Moyses, 2009; Masunungure, 2009; CCJP, 2009; Magaisa, 2008; MMPZ, 2002; MISA, 2002). The same is also true of the aftermath of the 2013 elections which has been characterised by allegations of vote rigging against the ZANU PF by the opposition parties, especially the Morgan Tsvangirai-led MDC-T. Again nobody seems to be interested in the political parties' political advertising tactics and messages. Rather than focusing on the political communication of the key contestants in African elections, emphasis (even in scholarship) has largely been on the free and fairness of the electoral process. This can be viewed as a result of the inherent suspicions amongst opposition political parties, donor agencies and Western that elections in Africa are almost always not free and fair as shown by their demands to observe the elections. As a result, political communication particularly political advertising has not been widely researched despite its centrality in democracy. As Kaid (2012) notes, "democracy and electoral politics...have [always] provided a need for political promotion" (p.30) or political communication. This paper calls for more focus on political advertising in Africa rather than focusing solely on the free and fairness of elections on the continent and how they are allegedly rigged by the sitting governments. The paper proposes a multi-modal approach to interpreting African political advertising, an approach that takes into account political advertising theory and the specific context in which political advertising takes place.

### **III. Study of Zimbabwean Political Advertising**

Political advertising in Zimbabwe is under-researched. Several scholars have studied ZANU PF's election strategies such as alleged use of violence, conflation of the party and state (Dorman,

2003; Kriger, 2005; Rotberg, 2000; Masunungure, 2004; Tafara, 2004; CCJP, 2009; Bratton, & Masunungure, 2008; Meredith, 2011; Sklar, 1985), use of the land reform and food to buy votes, and constituency gerrymandering, that is, drawing up constituencies in a manner designed to favour one political party at the expense of the other(s) (Compagnon, 2000; Meredith, 2011; Lindgren, 2003; Kriger, 2005; Dorman, 2005; Magaisa, 2008; Tarisayi, 2009; Masunugure, 2009). Others have studied the media's coverage of elections and ZANU PF's cultural and music nationalism, patriotic history, and Mugabeism among other discourses (Ranger, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003, & 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, & Willems, 2009; Chitando, 2005; Waldahl, 2005; Chuma, 2005, & 2008; Kriger, 2005; Thram, 2006; Moyse, 2009). Of these works, only a few focused on political advertising but the scholarship is yet to be situated within political advertising theory (Kriger, 2005; Chitando, 2005; Willems, 2004). This paper proposes a study that situates Zimbabwean, specifically ZANU PF's political advertisements, within political advertising theory. This theory presents political advertising as a key promotional tool in a democracy, as a way through which political contestants communicate with voters, largely through the mass media (Kaid, 2012, p. 29). Here communication may be regarded as involving the interaction of parties in a process of exchange, or as increasing 'commonality or sharing' of information where all act as encoders, interpreters and decoders (Severin, & Tankard, 1997, p.59; McQuail, 2010, p.552). Political communication then appears as primarily concerned with the production and transmission of politically relevant message(s) from the creator(s) to the target audience (Graber, 2005).

The advertisements are part of the 'system of signs' of post-colonial Zimbabwe designed to maintain or to challenge the hegemony of the ZANU PF elite. The proposed new analysis should focus on, the signs, vocabulary, and narratives produced (Mbembe, 2001, p. 103), understanding that ZANU-PF's or its opponents' (such as the MDCs) advertisements are arguably part of what Chipkin (2007) calls the vulgar reproduction of sovereignty in the 'absence of state power'. In doing this, the paper holds that election advertisements should be regarded as tools of political communication. As a result, any study of African political advertising should grapple with the view



that attack advertising is as important as building up one's credibility (Waldahl, 2005) contrary to scholars' criticism of ZANU-PF's name-calling of the MDC or its use of the fear appeal (Chitando, 2005; Kriger, 2005). Failure to take note of the above fact results in the researchers simply dismissing African political systems as mere reproductions of the violently repressive colonial state. This paper proposes the abandonment of post-colonial essentialism of post-colonial scholars who looked at the political discourses of ruling governments as evidence of their oppressive nature without grounding them in political advertising theory. It further proposes the adoption of a new multi-modal approach that makes use of, among other theories, political advertising theory and that takes into account the peculiarities of African political systems. In other words the paper proposes that researchers should combine both Western political advertising theory and Southern theory when attempting to interpret the post-colonial sign system. This is made more pertinent by the fact that the post-colonial state is an 'artefact' (Shaw, 1986) or a creation of colonialism that has no link whatsoever with any pre-colonial reality. It is what Baudrillard (1994) calls a copy without an original.

#### **IV. Political Communication Studies**

The paper proposes that a look at political advertising in post-colonial Zimbabwe where 'a specific system of signs' is at play, "a particular way of fabricating simulacra or re-forming stereotypes" is at stake (Mbembe, 2001, p.102) may shed light on the need for a new Africa-specific theory of political communication. Simulacra/simulacrum is a sign/image without an original/referent outside of itself, a hyperreal (Baudrillard, 1994, p.21). It is a result of simulation where the 'liquidated referentials are resurrected artificially in the system of signs' (Baudrillard, 1994, pp.1-2). The study of the signs, vocabulary, and narratives produced in the complex system of signs or official discourses which rulers create, institutionalise, make real, commonsensical -- the system which they seek to embed and integrate into the consciousness of the period to hoodwink voters (Mbembe, 2001) should be holistic and it should be context-specific.

The post-colonial 'system of signs' is characterised by an anti-imperialism (anti-Western domination) discourse. This system is founded on the fact that nationalists at independence were positioned as people who wanted to address the colonial wrongs of exclusion and alien rule through "de-racialization internally and anti-imperialism externally" (Mamdani, 1996). Thus, for example, in the post-colony, national leaders may also demand black empowerment and transfer of foreign-owned companies into the hands of the indigenous elite (Fanon, 1963, p.122). In Zimbabwe, ZANU PF adopted economic indigenization policies epitomised by the transfer of land and foreign owned companies into the hands of the indigenous people. This drive was captured by their election slogan in 2000: "land is the economy-economy is the land" (Mazango, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003a). However, scholars' rejection of the ZANU PF's 'system of signs' such as the anti-imperialism discourse (Kriger, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, & Willems, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003, & 2009; Chitando, 2005; Ranger, 2004b, & 2005) shows that the system of signs is contested. These symbolic and political contestations in Zimbabwe intensified, post-2000, largely due to the emergence of a strong opposition party, the MDC, in September 1999 (Mazango, 2005; Moyo, 2005; Waldahl, 2005). This paper proposes a case study of specific aspects of specific ZANU-PF electronic, billboard or print media campaign in any post-2000 election where questions concerning political advertising tactics and discourses used in a given context are asked. Grounded in political advertising theory, while also taking note of the complexity of the post-colony, the study of ZANU PF political advertisements may shed new insights into African political communication practices.

Political marketing, the general method of political communication, is used for image building, branding and election campaigns (Maarek, 1995, p.28; Menon, 2008). It involves the expansion of marketing concepts into politics in ways that can enable people to make sense of modern democratic practices (Henneberg, 2004, p.11). Political advertisements are a key tool of political communication in a democracy used by the contestants in an election to inform and educate the electorate on their offers. This is because democracy and electoral politics, require political promotion or the engineering/manufacturing of consent (Herman, & Chomsky, 1988; Kaid, 2012,

p.30; Lilleker, 2006; Bernays, 1947, p.114, pp.118-119). Democracy is people participating in governing themselves by freely choosing their leaders through free and fair elections (Eribo, & Jong-Ebot, 1997, p. xiii; Ake, 2000, p.7; Hague, & Harrop, 2004, p. 35; Chipkin, 2007, p. 52). It guarantees freedom of expression, information and association. Furthermore, all citizens of a legal age have a right to vote and to oppose the government or to run for elections (Chipkin, 2007, p. 52). The citizens can only choose their leaders if information about the election contestants and their offers is freely made available. Political advertising should provide useful information to allow citizens to debate and deliberate their choices. Furthermore, in such a democratic scenario, no restriction on content must be placed on political advertising that has been purchased by the sponsoring person or party as long as it has the sponsor identification notice (Kaid, 2012, p.37). The public sphere, the arena of public debate, should be free from both political and commercial constraints and should be characterised by rational debate (Habermas, 1989; Curran, 2000; Gripsrud, 2002; McChesney, 1999). Whereas study of the role of the media in elections in Zimbabwe has shown that the state media are ZANU PF propaganda tools (they even reject paid-for MDC advertisements) while the private media are pro-opposition (Makumbe, & Compagnon, 1996; MISA, 2002; Ranger, 2005; Mazango, 2005; Waldahl, 2004, & 2005; Chuma, 2008; Moyse, 2009) not much has been written about political advertising in particular in the country. Much of the writings have been on national identity, music and/or cultural nationalism, patriotic history, patriotic journalism and political journalism in post-2000 Zimbabwe (Thram, 2006; Chitando, 2005; Ranger, 2004b & 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003, & 2009). However, these have tended to rely more on Western theory and their work suffered from post-colonial essentialism. This paper proposes that the study of post-colonial political advertising in Zimbabwe and Africa needs to be carried out using an Africa-specific theory.

According to Newman (1999a), the idealised function of political advertisements which is outlined above is in contrast with the way in which so-called Western democracy today finds itself; 'the age of manufactured images' as political advertisers are 'image makers' who attempt to win

votes through manipulation of images and not through the substance of their offers (as cited in Falkowski, & Cwalina, 2012, p.11). At the same time, political advertising is becoming more like propaganda and commercial advertising which sell images only and not the product (Pratkanis, & Aronson, 2001; Newman 1999a as cited by Falkowski, & Cwalina, 2012). Part of the shift is arguably a result of the professionalization of political communication where professional marketers play a dominant role in political communication (Venu, 2008; Neveu, 2004; Norris, 2000; Novotny, 2000). Whatever the case, Baudrillard (1994) argues from a post-modernist/post-structuralist point of view, "there is no longer any difference between the economic and the political, because the same language reigns in both...a society therefore where the political economy... is finally realised" (p.88). Nevertheless, as Harris and McGrath (2012) note, "Political exchanges are certainly different from commercial exchanges ...but there are parallels" (p.5). The blurring of distinctions makes political advertising complex and contested as political products are produced as signs and signs produced as political products. It becomes even more complex in a post-colonial setting where the post-colony, as Shaw (1986) observes, is an artefact without any link to pre-colonial reality. It is an artefact that is itself characterised by contestations of a different nature from those that characterise the Western liberal state (Kaid, 2012). In light of the foregoing, this paper proposes that any study of political communication in Africa should also take into cognisance the complexities of the sign, this blurring of distinction between the political and the commercial where the political economy of the sign reigns supreme (Baudrillard, 1994, p.88).

## **V. Lessons from Zimbabwe Post-2000**

This paper suggests that it is worth studying ZANU-PF's advertisements in post-2000 Zimbabwe so as to understand how ZANU-PF uses them as tools in a complex political play of signs (Booyesen, 2003; Raftopoulos, & Phimister, 2003; Chitando, 2005; Kriger, 2005; Mano, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, & Willems, 2009). As in any study which seeks to understand the uses and meanings of signs, it is worth paying attention to the context. In this case it is worth noting, for example, that Zimbabwe, like all nations, is an imagined community whose identity is contested

(Anderson, 1991; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009) as shown by the dismissal of ZANU-PF's nationalism discourse as bankrupt or as 'the last refuge of a scoundrel' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003b, & 2009; Ranger, 2005). It is argued that the discourse is blind to the process of globalisation, is narrow and exclusionary (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003a, & 2009). In contrast, the regime claims to be patriotic and democratic as it defends 'our' sovereignty and holds 'free and fair elections' regularly (Booyesen, 2003; Mazaranye, 2012). It further; argues that democracy is a tool for Western re-colonisation and, the West cannot lecture 'us' on democracy since they were 'our' oppressors (Mazaranye, 2012). The foregoing exposes the complexity of ZANU-PF's discourses. The alterity of the signs that are being investigated calls for a synthesis of theory or explosion and implosion of theory (see Kellner, 1995; Baudrillard, 1994) to the study of ZANU-PF election advertisements. This paper suggests that the study of African political communication should adopt an approach that appreciates the peculiarities and complexity of African states which cannot be theorised in the same way as Western states.

It is important that those who study political communication in post-colonial Zimbabwe take into account the choices of signs taken up in political advertisements. They should seek to understand how these are designed to advance certain ideologies and how these ideologies function through various discourses. Understanding what discourse are and how they function entails focusing on relations of knowledge and power that emerge in a context (Foucault, 1980). In this light, such studies can focus on questions concerning the manner in which elites discursively claim the power to structure meaning in society, to define and distinguish right from wrong and how discourse is used in the service of the powerful. For example, in the case of Zimbabwe, studies of political communication should understand how ZANU PF claims that only its supporters are Zimbabweans and patriots, the rest are sell-outs and Western imperialists' puppets (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 93). Furthermore, how such discourses, are located, contested and take place through political advertising should also be identified. For, as Fairclough (1995) states, discourse is a site for both ideological and linguistic processes where selection of words or pictures in a text is

not innocent; it is ideological. Discourse also focuses "...on forms of representation in which different social categories, practices and relations are constructed from and in the interests of a particular point of view, a particular conception of social reality" (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 2007, p.151). Understanding discourses at work in political advertising in Zimbabwe may shed light on the hegemonic struggle, the struggle for rule by consent which, as Fiske (1992) argues, must be won and re-won. Discourse works through, among others, what Deacon et al (2007) call re-lexicalisation and over-lexicalisation in which something or someone is renamed and situations in which certain words are continually repeated. It also works through de-limited appropriation and/or appropriation of discourse (Tomaselli, 1992; Mbembe, 2001). Political advertising manipulates (plays around with) discourse and signs in complex ways that result in complex and constantly shifting meanings leading to what Baudrillard (1994) calls a political economy of sign theory where products are produced as signs and signs are produced as products. The paper suggests that, such a study may shed light on how political advertising is used, in the imagined community that is Zimbabwe (Anderson, 1991; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009), when the significance, meaning and centrality of so many things are shifting and changing constantly. This stands in contrast with how scholars (Scholz, 2004; Masunungure, 2004; Kaelemu, 2004; Tafara, 2004) have failed to acknowledge the complexity of Zimbabwe and have succumbed to forms of *post-colonial essentialism* which, as Chipkin (2007) understands the construct, present post-independence states as mere reproductions of the colonial state. The same approach that this paper suggests may also be used in other African contexts.

If political communication in Zimbabwe is to be theorised in ways that better reflect everyday experiences and realities of Zimbabweans it is vital that theorists reject the post-colonial essentialism of existing literature that focuses on ZANU PF's power retention strategies (Lindgren, 2003; Dorman, 2005; Booysen, 2003; Masunungure, 2004; Scholz, 2004; Kaulemu, 2004; Kriger, 2005; Chitando, 2005). Furthermore, the ZANU PF's political advertisements should also be grounded in political advertising theory. The paper proposes a synthesis of theory that encompasses

democracy, nationalism, post-coloniality, political advertising, semiotics, Ubuntu, discourse and power to the study of the ZANU-PF's election advertisements. The approach may yield newer and richer data on political advertising, political communication and ZANU-PF discourses in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The same approach could also be used in other African contexts however such an approach should always take into consideration the peculiarities of each country.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This paper has argued that political communication specifically political advertising research is lagging behind in Zimbabwe. It has also argued that those scholars who studied ZANU PF, Mugabe and the government of Zimbabwe's discourse have largely adopted an essentialist approach and the few that studied political advertisements failed to situate them within political advertising theory (Chitando, 2005; Kriger, 2005). This failure by the scholars to situate their studies in political advertising theory led them to criticise ZANU PF tactics such as attack advertising, that are fairly legitimate from a political communication perspective. Apart from the above, the critics also did not give due regard to the context in which the advertisements, the jingles, the music, the history and the journalism were produced and the utterances made (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003b; Ranger, 2004). The critics also simply dismissed the ruling ZANU PF's discourses as evidence of its undemocratic nature and its failing hegemony (Chimedza, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003a & b; Ranger, 2004). However, these critics largely treated ZANU PF and the regime's discourses as evidence of, and as designed to conceal, a repressive system and consequently they viewed the discourses as propaganda (Chitando, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003; Kriger, 2005; Ranger, 2004). These studies were not situated in political advertising theory and they did not take note of the complexities of political advertising, which according to Baudrillard (1994) is now more like commercial advertising. Political advertising, just like commercial advertising, now emphasises the sign value rather than product utility value.

Political advertising in Africa is now just like what Newman says about political advertising in the West. It is now in 'the age of manufactured images' (as cited in Falkowski, & Cwalina, 2012,

p.10). Furthermore, African political advertising takes place in a post-colonial context characterised by contestations. In Zimbabwe, these contestations have been more pronounced in the post-2000 period (Mazango, 2005; Moyo, 2005). In other words, the post-colonial system of signs is characterised by contestations because it is 'an imagined community' just like any other nation (Anderson, 1991). Moreover the post-colony is what Shaw (1986) calls an artefact with and this makes it different from the western state. In addition, the continent's developmental and political challenges coupled with its problematic relationship with the West makes the 'imagined community' even more contested.

In light of the foregoing this paper argues that there is need for new ways of studying political communication in Africa. It argues that study of political communication in Zimbabwe can be a useful exercise for those interested in producing capacious new theory on the genre of political advertising and advertising in postcolonial settings, shedding new insights on the nation building project in post-colonial Africa.

## References

- Ake, C. (2000). *The feasibility of democracy in Africa*. Dakar: Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation*. Michigan: Michigan University Press.
- Bernays, E.L. (1947). The engineering of consent. *American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 250, 113-120.
- Booyesen, S. (2003). The dualities of contemporary Zimbabwean politics: constitutionalism versus the law of power and the land, 1999-2002. *African Studies Quarterly*, 7, 2-3.
- Bratton, M., & Masunungure, E. (2007). Popular reactions to state repression: Operation murambatsvina in Zimbabwe. *African Affairs*, 106/422, 21-25.



Bratton, M., & Masunungure, E., (2008). Zimbabwe's long agony. *Journal of Democracy*, 19, 41-55.

CCJP. (2009). *Graveyard governance*. Harare: CCJP.

Chimedza, T. (2008). Bulldozers always come: 'Maggots', citizens and governance in Contemporary Zimbabwe. In M.T. Vambe (Ed.), *The hidden dimensions of operation murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Chipkin, I. (2007) *Do South Africans exist? Nationalism, democracy and the identity of 'the People'*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Chitando, E. (2005). In the beginning was the land: The appropriation of religious themes in political discourses in Zimbabwe. *Africa* 75(2), 220-239.

Chuma, W. (2005a). Press freedom, professionalism and proprietorship: Behind the Zimbabwean Media Divide. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, Special Issue*, 56-70.

Chuma, W. (2005b). Zimbabwe: The media, market failure and political turbulence. *Ecquid Novi*, 26(1), 46-62.

Chuma, W. (2008). Mediating the 2000 elections in Zimbabwe: Competing journalisms in a society at the crossroads. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 29 (1), 21-41.

Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. L. (2012). *Theory from the south: Or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa*. Boulder & London: Paradigm Publishers.

Compagnon, D. (2000). Briefing: Zimbabwe: Life after ZANU-PF. *African Affairs*, 99, 449-453.

Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Curran, J. (2000). Rethinking Media and Democracy. In J. Curran, J. and M. Gurevitch, (Eds.), (2000). *Mass Media and Society*. London: Arnold.

Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (2007) *Researching communications: A practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*. London: Hodder Arnold

Dorman, S.R. (2005). 'Make sure they count nicely this time': The politics of elections and election observing in Zimbabwe. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 43 (2), 155-177.

- Eribo, F., & Jong-Ebot, W. (1997) *Press freedom and communication in Africa*. New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Falkowski, A., & Cwalina, W. (2012). Political marketing: Structural models of advertising influence and voter behaviour. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 11, 8-26.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Fanon, F. (1993). On national culture. In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader* (pp. 36-52). New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Fiske, J. (1987). *Television culture*. London: Routledge.
- Fiske, J. (1992). British cultural studies and television. In R. C. Allen (Ed.), *Channels of discourse, reassembled*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon.
- Graber, D.A. (2005). *Teaching political communication*, Retrieved from [http://www.ou.edu/policom/1503\\_2005/graber.htm](http://www.ou.edu/policom/1503_2005/graber.htm)
- Gripsrud, J. (2002). *Understanding media and culture*. London: Arnold.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere. An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Hague, R., & Harrop, M. (2004). *Comparative government and politics: An introduction*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Harold-Barry, D. (Ed.) (2004). *Zimbabwe: The past is the future*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Harris, P., & McGrath, C. (2012). Political marketing and lobbying: A neglected perspective and research agenda. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 11, 1-2, 75-94.
- Hennenberg, S.C. (2004) *Political marketing theory: Hendiadyoin or oxymoron*, Retrieved from <http://www.bath.ac.uk/management/research/pdf/2004-01.pdf>
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass*

*media*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Jasperson, A. E., & Fan, D. P. (2002). An aggregate examination of the backlash effect in political advertising: The case of the 1996 U.S Senate Race in Minnesota. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(1), 1-12.

Kaid, L.L. (2012). Political advertising as political marketing: A retro-forward perspective. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 11:1-2, 29-53.

Kaulemu, D. (2004). The culture of party politics and the concept of state. In D. Harold-Barry (Ed.), *Zimbabwe: The past is the future*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Kellner, D. (1995). *Media and culture*. New York: Routledge.

Kolovos, I., & Harris, P. (n.d). *Political marketing and political communication: The relationship Revisited*. Retrieved from <http://otago.ourarchive.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/1053/1463/pm-pc.pdf>

Kruger, N. (2005). ZANU (PF) Strategies in general elections, 1980-2000: Discourse and coercion. *African Affairs*, 104/414, 1-34.

Lilleker, D.G. (2006). *Key concepts in political communication*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lindgren, B. (2003). The green bombers of Salisbury: Elections and political violence.

*Anthropology Today*, 19 (2), 6-10.

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. Retrieved from <http://booksiread.org>

Maarek, P.J. (1995). *Political marketing and communication*. London: John Libbey & Co.

Magaisa, A. (2008). Plight of rural Zimbabwean voter. *Zimbabwe Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.theindependent.co.zw/.../19785-plight-of-the-rural-zimbabwean-voter>

Makumbe, J. (1991). The 1990 Zimbabwe elections: Implications for democracy. In I. Mandaza & L. Sachikonye (Eds.), *One party state and democracy: The Zimbabwe debate* (pp.179-192).

Harare: Sapes Books.

Makumbe, J.M.W., & Compagnon, D. (1996). *Behind the smokescreen: The politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 general elections*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.

Makumbe, J., & Sithole, M. (1997). Elections in Zimbabwe: The ZANU (PF) hegemony and its

- incipient decline. *African Journal of Political Science*, 2(1),122-139.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late Colonialism*. Princeton: NJ: New Jersey University Press.
- Mano, W. (2005). Press freedom, professionalism and proprietorship in Zimbabwe: behind the Zimbabwean media divide. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. Special Issue, 56-70.
- Masunungure, E. (2004). Travails of opposition politics in Zimbabwe since independence. In D. Harold-Barry (Eds.), *Zimbabwe: The past is the future* (pp.147-192). Harare: Weaver.
- Masunungure, E.V. (2009). A militarized election: The 27 June presidential run-off. In E. Masunungure (Ed.), *Defying the winds of change*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Masunungure, E.V. (2009). Voting for change: The 29 March harmonized elections. In E. Masunungure (Ed.), *Defying the winds of change*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Mazango, E. M. (2005). Media games and shifting of spaces for political communication in Zimbabwe. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Special Issue, 33-55.
- Mazaranye (2012, August 17). *Democracy in Zimbabwe: A dream deferred*. *Zimbabwe Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.theindependent.co.zw/2012/08/17/democracy-in-zim-a-dream-deferred/>
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the post-colony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McChesney, R. W. (1999). *Rich media poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass communication theory: An introduction*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Meirick, P. (2002). Cognitive responses to negative and comparative advertising, *Journal of Advertising*, 31(1), 49-62.

- Menon, S. (2008). *Political marketing: A conceptual framework*. Retrieved from <http://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/12547>
- Meredith, M. (2011). *The fate of Africa: A history of the continent since independence*. New York: BBS Public Affairs.
- Mhiripiri, N.A. (2009). Blood diamonds and state repression: From the rose of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe's diamond fields. *Screening the Past* (Vol. 25).
- MISA (2002). *So this is democracy? An annual report of the media and institute of Southern Africa*. Windhoek: Media Institute of Southern Africa.
- MMPZ (2002). *Media under siege: Report on media coverage of the 2002 presidential and mayoral elections in Zimbabwe*. Harare: MMPZ.
- Moyo, D. (2004). From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: Change without change? Broadcasting reform and political control. In H. Melber (Ed), *Media, public discourse and political contestation in Zimbabwe*. Sweden: Elanders Infologistics vast.
- Moyo, D. (2005). The 'independent' press and the fight for democracy in Zimbabwe: A critical analysis of the banned Daily News. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. Special Issue, 109-128.
- Moyse, A. (2009). The media environment leading up to Zimbabwe's 2008 elections. In E. Masunungure (Ed.), *Defying the winds of change*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2003a). Dynamics of the Zimbabwe crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 03(1), 99-134.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2003b). Making sense of Mugabeism in local and global politics: 'So Blair keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe'. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(6), 1139-1158.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2009). *Do 'Zimbabweans' exist? Trajectories of nationalism, national identity formation and crisis in a postcolonial state*. Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang AG.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., & Willems, W. (2009). Making sense of cultural nationalism and the politics of commemoration under the third chimurenga in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern*

*African Studies*, 35(4), 945-965.

- Neveu, E. (2004). Government, the state and media. In J. D. H. Downing, D. McQuail, P. Schlesinger & E. Wartella (Eds.), *The sage handbook of media studies* (pp.331-350). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Norris, P. (2000). Political communication and democratic politics. In J. Bartle, J. & D. Griffiths (Eds.), *Political communication transformed: From Morrison to Mandelson*. Basingstoke: McMillan.
- Norris, P. (2004). Political communications. *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. Harvard University. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Political%20Communications20%encyclpedia2.pdf>
- Novotny, P. (2000). From Polis to Agora: The marketing of political consultants. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. Retrieved from <http://hij.sagepub.com>
- O’Cass, A. (2002). Political advertising believability and information source value during elections. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(1), 63-74.
- Pinkleton, B.E., Um, N., & Austin, E.W. (2002). An exploration of the effects of negative political advertising on political decision making. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(1),13-25.
- Pratkanis, A., & Aronson, E. (2001). *Age of propaganda: The everyday use and abuse of persuasion*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.
- Raftopoulos, B., & Phimister, I. (2003). Zimbabwe now: The political economy of crisis and coercion. *Historical Materialism*, 12 (4), 355-382.
- Ranger, T. (2004a). Book reviews of N. Kriger. Politics of war veterans: Guerrilla veterans in post-war Zimbabwe: Symbolic and violent politics, 1980-1987 by Norma Kriger. *The Journal of African History*, 45 (1),165-166.
- Ranger, T. (2004b). Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Studies*, 30 (2), 215-234.

- Ranger, T. (2005). The rise in patriotic journalism and its possible implications. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, Special Issue*, 8-17.
- Reeler, A.P. (2004). Sticks and stones, skeletons and ghosts. In D. Harold-Barry (Ed.), *Zimbabwe: The past is the future*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Rice, P., & Waugh, P. (2001). *Modern literary theory*. London: Arnold.
- Rotberg, R.I. (2000). Africa's mess, Mugabe's mayhem. *Foreign Affairs*, 79(5), 47-61.
- Rusike, E.T. M (1990). *The Politics of the mass media: A personal experience*. Harare: Roblaw.
- Saunders, R. (1999). *Dancing out of tune: A History of the media in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Edwina Spicer Productions.
- Scholz, D. B. (2004). Robert Mugabe: Revolutionary or rebel. In D. Harold-Barry (Ed), *Zimbabwe: The past is the future* (pp.19-30). Harare: Weaver Press.
- Severin, J.W., & Tankard, J.W. Jnr. (1997). *Communication theories: Origins, methods and uses in the mass media*. New York: Longman.
- Shaw, W.H. (1986). Towards the one-party state in Zimbabwe: A Study in African Political Thought. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24 (3), 373-394.
- Sithole, M., & Makumbe, J. (1997). Elections in Zimbabwe: The ZANU (PF) hegemony and its incipient decline. *African Journal of Political Science*, 2(1), 122-139.
- Sklar, R.L. (1985). Reds and rights: Zimbabwe's experiment. In F. Toyin (2002). *African politics in post-imperial times* (pp. 21-31). Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Sklar, R.L. (1998). Ethnicity and traditionalism in the quest for democracies. In F. Toyin (Ed.), *African politics in post-imperial times* (pp.476-478). Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Tafara, D. (2004). The people's liberation struggle. In D. Harold-Barry (Ed), *Zimbabwe: The past is the future* (pp.43-46). Harare: Weaver Press.
- Tarisayi, E. (2009). Voting in despair: The economic social context. In E. Masunungure (Ed.), *Defying the winds of change*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Thram, D. (2006). Patriotic history and the politicisation of memory: Manipulation of popular

- music to reinvent the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. *Critical Arts*, 20(2), 75-88.
- Venu, S. (2008) Political Marketing: A Conceptual Framework. Retrieved from <http://mpa.ub.uni-muechen.de/12547/>
- Waldahl, R. (2004). *Politics and persuasion: Media coverage of Zimbabwe's 2000 election*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Waldahl, R. (2005a). Mediated political cleavages: Zimbabwe's 2000 elections seen through the media. *Critical Arts*, 19(1 & 2), 61-73.
- Waldahl, R. (2005b). Political journalism the Zimbabwean way: Experiences from the 2000 elections campaign. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. Special Issue, 18-32.
- Willems, W. (2004). Peasant demonstrators, Violent invaders: Representations of land in the Zimbabwean press. *World Development*, 32(10), 1767-1783.
- Willems, W. (2008). Mocking the state: Comic strips in the Zimbabwean press. *African Studies Collection*, 12,151-163.
- Willems, W. (2010). Beyond dramatic revolutions and grand rebellions: Everyday forms of resistance in the Zimbabwe crisis. *Communicare*, 29. Special Edition,1-18.
- Wring, D. (1999). The marketing colonisation of political communication. In B. Newman (Ed), *Handbook of political marketing*. London: Sage.
- Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) (2008). *Report on the zimbabwe 29 March 2008 harmonized elections and 27 June presidential run-off*. Harare: ZESN.
- Zizek, S. (2007). Robespierre, divine violence and virtue. In S. Zizek (Ed.), *Robespierre virtue and terror* (pp.vii-xxxix). London: Verso.