



## **Product Categorization in a Marxian–Capitalist Market Structure: Addressing Food Fraud and Ethical Reinforcement in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

While it may well be said that the categorization of product-naming in a capitalist dominated market has its own role, it is also not out of place, from Marxist perspectives, that producers can also deploy the instrument of categorization to rip consumers hard. Against the objectivist view of meaning that categorization as a reference thing directs the interest of the consumers on product content and quality, this study from the capitalist dominated perspectives, avows that categorization of product naming in Nigeria is often times used by producers to corrupt the market desk. Hence the paper, using content analysis of secondary resources, argues that categorization of product is a neuro linguistic activity that many consumers are not at home with. Hence, food fraud has continued to thrive with its subtle usage by producers. To check this, there is need to grow public awareness about it and further more through the means of ethical reinforcement by the state. Thus, the study concludes that the need to amass more wealth can affect producers' use of certain words as against business ethics.

**Keywords:** Food, Fraud, Categorization, Marxist-capitalism, Ethical reinforcement

### **Introduction**

Categorization is a neurolinguistic mapping which helps account for society and individuals understand their world. Largely about the one of perception, categorization in the market place, and beyond the need to supply human wants, leaves the individual buyer between two walls of decision. A way from this, it further enriches the capital accumulation of the producers; for one human being tend to think alongside with words. Inherent in our word structure therefore is our cognition. Let's assume the products were manufactured without labels and other instrumental guides, the individual buyers can as well walk in, shop for their wants and dash out. However, the moment there is a label on the products, the mind begins to sunder on the best option to make. By so doing categorization of the products by the manufacturer has put the fellow in a tight corner with an unending gaze.

But categorization, notwithstanding its usage as a means of food fraud, is good on its own right; however not when it is intentionally deployed by the producers to cajole or sway consumers. Central then to the use of categorization in the market place is capital accumulation. It is possible, the study avows, that categorization in the industrial desk is there to aid human wants, but it is not also out of place that it can be deployed by producers to milk the masses dry or corrupt business moral. This study, content-wise, intends to show what producers do with categorization in a capitalist dominated market.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is still the natural inclination of human beings to corrupt the business environment with language. In a capitalist dominated market like Nigeria, the central market behaviour among producers is the one of survival (food fraud) and excessive capital accumulation of with absence of labour profitability. To achieve this, they devise the most subtle use

of media to rip the masses hard. One of such media, this study argues, is the deliberate use of categorization in product naming and categorization. The idea soled to the masses is that categorization provides them with product function, content and customer needs. While this may be true, the study however argues that the inherent nature of producers for capital accumulation can derive them to the extreme in terms of deliberate use of categorization to defraud the masses. The study therefore, a kind of behaviourist linguistics, is intended to show how, by secondary resources, language behaves in the market place on the grounds that the average consumer does not think. This study then stems from a Marxist linguistic perspective with the intent to address the issue of food fraud and absence of labour profitability disregard for ethics as core issues perpetuated by producers through the medium of categorization.

## Objectives

The following objectives below are as arising from the study

1. Account for the dependency of human cognition on product categorization as a means of food fraud in a capitalist dominated market
2. Point out, content wise, the danger of non-reinforcement of ethical standard among producers
3. Examine, the effect of ethical reinforcement in checking food fraud in Nigeria

## On the Issue of Marxist capitalism

The emergence of Marxism, especially in terms of its capitalist orientation was to respond to the work place behaviour of producers during the industrial age. Business ethics in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century bothered so much on the nature of capitalist production, abuse of consumer rights and its accumulation of wealth. Marx in his historical materialism argues that human beings are governed by the natural appetite for excess gain. This quest for the mundane can go as far as engineering the capitalist to go all out in search of means to defraud the masses for more accumulation of wealth. In other words, spiritual dimensions, for Marx, really does not determine human activities nor why human beings act the way they do, rather, he thinks, the phenomenological tendencies are largely at work (Marx, 1942 in Jorgenson & Stinoh, 2000)

What this therefore, implies Marx maintains is that the production desk is controlled by certain ideologies, intended to govern the behaviour of producers and the consumers. Marx introduces three key elements in his material economic theory. In any society, he says, we tend to find first; the forces of production. Under this category comes anything that can create or produce the material needs of man. These include: tools for labour, man, machine, money, and the natural resources of the host community. However, for these forces of production to be used and put into work, they require certain ideological and economic laws, many a time arising from the state. As Canegregati (2006) puts it, where there are no such abundant natural resources, there can be no law. In other words, the state is where and what it is, because of the available forces of production. The need for the state to continually foster her powers, therefore is to enable her determine the mode and nature of production (King, 2008; Kaplan & Norton, 2004)

It then follows as Lester (2016) points out, that when we seek to understand a society or a period of history, we do that by first asking who owns the means of production and controls the labour forces as well. The combination of these two forces leaves us thinking that the individuals are essentially capitalists in orientation, and one way to distinct a capitalist is through his use of ideology in manipulating the society for his own gain. Thus, then we look at the issue of categorization as the capitalist ideology and in whole as a means of food fraud done by labelling of products in Nigeria.

## The dependency of human cognition on categorization

Besides the industrial demands on the part of producers to meet the needs of consumers, there is also the place of capitalist interest to defraud through possible means of linguistic coinage. For many of the manufacturers, especially in Nigerian context and in cases where there are no strict legal sanctions to check producers, the usual industrial behaviour is the one of food fraud principally determined by the unhealthy need for capital accumulation.

In many ways, the unhealthy human inclination and the tendency to make more wealth at the expense of the consumers' wellbeing drives many producers into an unethical business behaviour (food fraud). While it is important to make profit as some do claim, it is also worthy of remarks that the health and well-being of consumers must be protected by statutory agencies concerned.

On the production of drinks for instance, producers like the Coca Cola company as we will like to question, tend to devise a linguistic medium known as categorization and product labelling to persuasively cajole consumers into patronage. The idea behind this, the Marxist school would claim, is that categorization in its own right is capable of enriching producers through the subtle use of labelling. When products are labelled, due to the belief that words reposition human thinking, consumers never escape buying any of the goods so displayed. Unlike in cases where there are single product labels, these may not likely go well with the consumer. Intently then, the subtle and deliberate use of categorization tends to play on the phyche of the consumer as it is natural with human beings to be given to choices. Where there are multiple choices to make over a product among the brands displayed, there will always be a catch. By so doing, producers enrich themselves at the expense of the moral role of industrial practice (King, 2008). No doubt, categorization is not bad in itself, but not when the products so named do not add so much in functional or nutritional benefits they present to the consumers. This is usually a case of psychographics; marketing psychology rather than the statutory mandate on the producers to see to the consumers' needs (Chiswick, 2008; Yuming, 2016; Akanni, 1996)

It is then important to remark that the Marxist view of consumer alienation is true with most producers. Therefore, consumers and statutory agencies governing producers must license ways to check the activities of producers as much of the health of the people is in their consumption.

In many ways, categorization, a neuro-linguistic behaviour of humans, reveals so much about their ethical, spiritual and moral condition. Coming from the domain of market production, it falls within the economic system for capital accumulation. Lester (2016) sees it as a labelling system where products are tagged by manufacturers with the intention to defraud, direct or redirect the interest of the consumer about his or her product needs, nutritional contents or compositions of certain items as labelled on the product. While this view seems true, it however leaves the reader with the statutory usage of categorization as a useful means of guiding the consumer into the heart of the market and his product needs.

There is however a psychological underpinning about the harmful use of categorization by producers. For the most part, Kaplan and Norton (2004) opine that marketers who promote categorization in the labelling of a product do hypothetically engage on a conscious therapeutic deception of the mind. As relayed in Yueqing (2021) language choice as he puts it, is related to people's economic behaviour. Thus, human beings use language to carry out and convey a certain innate behaviour. Hence, the issue of categorization from Marxist perspective can be referred to as commercialized language choice or typology for food fraud.

In many ways, having underscored society, categorization for capitalists, is a means of accounting for society's self-orientation and understanding, and without which they may never survive the market behaviour of consumers. Hence, Preston (2009) argues that the use of categorization among producers seeks to maintain, if not convey, a certain type of food fraud activities.

### On the issue of food fraud and ethical reinforcement in Nigeria

Product- naming in Nigeria, in too many ways, has underlying agenda, often times hidden from the consumers. These products must, through the effort of statutory agencies, be made to carry what they advertise. Producers being apt with this sort of consumer behaviour most times use it to steal from the masses. The truth, the study argues, is that consumers must be protected from market forces, especially from the despoliation of producers. In other words, food fraud in Nigeria is largely perpetuated through the medium of categorization. While many Nigerians can readily relate to food fraud, not many know it as categorization at work. Food fraud then is the intentional and deliberate use of spurious devices to misrepresent foods for capital accumulation. As said, it is largely wrought through linguistic medium which cajoles consumers about food quality, identity and contents. In other words, at the centre of food fraud penetration in the market is linguistic activities. Accidentally not many consumers, within the Nigerian environment are aware of this technique. The consequence of this is that food fraud can harm the immediate consumer, the general health of the public and as well pose a challenge to legitimate businesses. As said, behind the activities of food is the economic motivation for gain, hence such production activities as: counterfeiting, substitution (replacing quality products with low value), adulteration (reducing quality) and finally using the medium of categorization to carry them out.

There is then an understanding consumer do not know about the market forces. These forces are capable of affecting their psyche towards the product needs. Naturally most consumers are indecisive in their choice of products. Mostly due to functional aid, the need to label the products in their various types soon arises. In other words, in the categorization of stocked items, producers tend to believe that this helps them win patronage from undecided buyers. The impression of this belief, on the second run, is that ideologies in the market are psychological expressions, representing the reality about human nature and the overall behaviour of a society. Hence the study claims that categorization, besides its importance for consumer direction, tends to reveal something about market behaviour; in one way it reveals that the human mind of consumers thinks around words. Considering that this is a vital science of marketing, producers speedily adopt it to rip the masses hard.

### **The need for ethical control**

McShane and Von Glinow (2003) capture ethics as “the study of moral principles or values that determine whether actions are right or wrong and outcomes are good or bad”. Most literatures conceptualize ethics as the discipline that deals with what is right or ill, and with moral duty and obligation binding on the individual. In a wider perspective, ethics is known as the code of conduct or behaviour governing an individual or a group, in the context of our research, members of production market with respect to what is right or wrong. Obioma and Clement (2014) views ethics as the study of how one’s decisions affect others.

It has to do with rights and duties, moral rules applied in decision making. In many ways, standards as to what is right or wrong in behaviour and decision making are based on ethical values that make up the company’s culture. While values are stable, long-lasting beliefs about what is important in a variety of context, McShane and Von Glinow (2003) then include respect for individuals, integrity, and fairness, teamwork, provision of quality, customer service, employee development and innovation etc.

Ethical standards and behaviour, our study must point out, are often applied in issues that are not covered by laws. Some moral judgments are enshrined into law while others are not. There is then an overlap between legal demands and ethical standards, for instance what is ethically wrong (e.g. stealing) may also be legally wrong. Every individual producer of food has personal rules by which he or she lives and which are referred to as personal ethics. Groups as well have ethics, which governs their practices, and this is referred to as professional ethics. Businesses also have ethics that governs their different activities. Managerial ethics refers to the principles that govern managers in their service, behaviour and decision making towards the various organization’s stake holders which include the government, shareholders, customers, employees, public, host communities and suppliers (Wehrich, et al., 2008).

### **Ethics in the modern workplace**

Producers or managers are usually expected to make decisions that are morally and socially responsible. But again, it requires ethical values for producers to make the needed decisions. In other words, ethics has to do with right or wrong actions in all human activities. It provides the glue that holds relationships and even society together (Stoner et al 1998). Among producers it is at the heart of the firm as values such as excellence, which propels workers to greater performance.

In what follows, every producer faces ethical consideration when he encounters situations where a decision can favour a particular stakeholder and deny the other of his rights. For what it is, ethics enables producers make decisions based on individual’s belief that can also lead to the extinction of the firm. While, a healthy ethical stance may be expensive at the short run, it is highly beneficial at the long run. For example, a producer that orders the withdrawal of defective products from the market based on his ethical belief and convictions, can cause the firm lose some money at the short run but will gain the reputation of having customer’s interest at heart. This could lead to his firm being the industry leader in later time.

Thus then, producers could interpret their duties to customers and their firms in different ways, for as pointed out earlier ethics in the industrial workplace is about how producers view their responsibilities to customers and groups that are affected by their actions, Hence, ethics tends to affect producers’ decision on issues affecting stakeholders, which are the major stay of the organizations. Ethical behaviour thus, protects the company’s resources for the benefit

of all stakeholders. As well, ethical behaviour ensures that resources are shared among stakeholders in such a way that the organization can continue. It brings good reputation for the individual and the company. The survival of any company depends on its reputation, how it carries on business on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

In many ways, every producer has reputation to protect. Unethical behaviour attracts negative consequences ranging from firing of the individual for employees, loss of business, general hostility and loss of investment as the shares of such companies will be low. All stakeholders then need to stand against unethical behaviour because of its far-reaching consequences while inclusively maintaining ethical standards as rules in companies and countries that are into public production such as food making.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that societal well-being depends on strong moral reinforcement among producers in Nigeria. While capital accumulation drives many firms into business, public health must however, by all means, be protected. Our study therefore advocates for two key issues: one, the issue of categorization of products and the issue of ethical reinforcement by the state. Through the medium of categorization, producers have continually soled unhealthy, adulterated and counterfeiting products to consumers. Unaware of this subtle means of neurolinguistic mapping, consumers continue to fall prey. There is then need on ethical reinforcement against the spurious use of linguistic categorization in swaying consumers against their wish. Product content, identity and quality must be in line with label provided by the producer. Insisting on this sort of ethical standard can go a long way in shaping the Nigerian market

### Suggestions

This study therefore recommends

1. Introduction of Strong ethical learning and practical examination in our Nigerian schools and institutions.
2. Employment of workers and license to float food companies should be strictly on practical moral text

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