

EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY: BUSINESS GROWTH AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Advertising has been criticised for promoting materialism. It appeals mostly to emotions. At least some critics admitted that persuasive advertising, however, poses a real problem, since some of the persuasive techniques used are intended to by-pass the intellect and rationality, and if successful, lead to improvident actions. Therefore the checklist for judging the ethical level of advertising should be; what does the advertiser intend to do? What are the actual effects of his advertising on the individuals and on society as a whole especially in depressed economy such as ours. Economics is a practical science of production and distribution of wealth. Hinged on the Planned Action Theory this study examined and provided a contextual appraisal of the issues in advertising from the critic point of view and the advertisers. This study employed the qualitative research design with significant reliance on library, and internet in review of the literature and theories / arguments presented alongside the analyses of advertising as it affects economic and social issues in growing business in society. The study highlighted the crucial roles advertising plays in society and product marketing. The work concludes that advertising both mirrors and shapes values in the society. It shows that through effective advertising strategies consumers purchase those brands from which they are exposed to and to which they are emotionally attached. This study then recommends that advertising in a cashless and depressed economy in a country like Nigeria should encourage living the kind of life that reflects our values.

KEY WORDS: Effective Advertising Depressed Economy Business Growth Society.

Introduction

What is the role of advertising in the context of economic development and nation building? A landmark definition of advertising was developed for the Association of National Advertisers of the USA in 1964 by Colley. His definition brought a greater degree of clarity to business management thinking on advertising decisions and its impact on economy and society. It emphasised that advertising pulls a consumer towards purchasing action through changes in his or her knowledge and attitude responses. It laid foundations for a practical and widely used business model - DAGMAR (defining advertising goals for measured advertising results). Advertising is a mass paid communication; the ultimate purpose of which is to impact information, develop attitude and induce action beneficial to the advertiser,

which generally leads to the sale of a product or service in effort to grow the economy and create employment. It is in this light that this study entitled *Effective Advertising in a Depressed Economy: Business Growth and Society* is anchored. It tried to review the impact of advertising in business and society at large and other viewpoints relating to advertising.

From the viewpoint of advertising experts and entrepreneurs, advertising is planned and designed to influence exchange to achieve organisational objectives. Typically an advertising strategy is intended to increase the probability or frequency of consumer behaviour, such as frequenting particular store or purchasing a particular product. Economics emphasises the problems that arise from the fact that there is never anything that is enough to please everyone's wants at a particular time. Advertising delves into conflict resolution in relation to economic matters (scarcity, opportunity cost and alternative choices available) and other such economic activities that come to bear on the survival of people in their environment. In other words, advertising is concerned with human behaviour in relation to our perceived needs. Thus to understand consumer's goal oriented behaviour, we must understand them and their perception of the environment and all the complex force, barriers, conflicts, among others; which influence them as they strive to satisfy the drive which initiated the goal seeking process. Advertisers must provide buyers with socially acceptable rationalisations for their purchasing.

The word advertising is from the Latin word "advertere" which means to bring the mind towards or to draw attention. In this sense, to advertise simply connotes to bring something to one's attention or to put an idea in one's mind. Thousands of years ago, ancient civilisations had only unsophisticated hand tools as means for the production of goods with quantity and variety enough for immediate consumption. People lived in small isolated villages or communities and the distribution of goods and services was limited. There was no stimulation for mass purchases, no mass media channels and there was little or no need for advertising.

However, it is believed by many historians that advertising started with the Greeks and Roman Merchants who benefited from expanded contact with other societies and a high level of production due to the use of more, sophisticated tools that encourage mass production, and enhanced communication. Bakare (2008) stated that increased demand for goods created greater need to advertise their availability to consumers.

The practice of advertising is as old as man. The beginning of early advertising is difficult to be traced to any one group of people in particular. Signs carried in clay, wood, or stone were hung in front of shops so that passers-by could see what products the merchants have to offer. In whatever form it is presented the purpose of advertising has always been to promote goods, services and ideas

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, studies have revealed that business success in depressed economy measured in terms of gaining customer patronage, increasing market share profit, customer retention and high purchases have been hindered as a result of lack or inefficient implementation of marketing communication strategies. Aluko (2018) stated that proliferation of cheaper products that do not have economic value has reduced the level of patronage and success of new entrants into goods industry and these have resulted into negative perception, low sales, and little chances of business success

Marketing mix has four subsets of Product, Price, Place and Promotion and advertising plays important role in all. There is a need for contextual appraisal of the views and practices of advertising as means of growing business in Nigeria depressed and cashless economy. What marketing and advertising strategies will best grow the economy and make it competitive? This is the focus of this study. It would look into the role of advertising in the economy. The study of consumer's behaviour is concerned with the question 'why do consumers behave as they do? How do consumers learn about new products?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. This study explores the views of critics and practitioners of advertising as it affects economic and social issues in growing business in society through advertising.
2. The study highlights the crucial roles advertising plays in society and product marketing.
3. The study evaluates issues and analyses of how advertising works and the views of critics and practitioners.
4. The study tries to ascertain the impacts of advertising on business especially in the depressed economy.

SOCIAL ROLES OF ADVERTISING

Advertising takes place in a public forum in which business interests, creativity, consumer needs, and government regulations meet. Sometimes advertisements can be controversial. And sometimes they are just bad, as the Ad week illustrates. But some criticisms of advertising go deeper and take us to the core of advertising's visible social role.

According to Wells et al. (2007), the excessive, misleading and false claims made by patent medicine dealers in the early twentieth century generated the first regulation of advertising through the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. They also went ahead to say that advertising's economic role also has been criticised in the way it created demand. This means people want or feel a need to buy and use a product. Demand creation presupposes using an external message to drive people to feel a need or want, is an economic force that drives progress and search for

better products and services. Advertising plays an important role in creating and sustaining that force.

They noted that the second half of the twentieth century is notable for the rise of a materialistic consumer culture. But the question here is did advertising create this culture, or did it simply reflect it? At what point does advertising cross the line between reflecting social values and creating them? Critics argued that advertising has repeatedly crossed this line, influencing vulnerable groups, such as children and young teenagers, too strongly with its commercial programmes.

It is true advertising pays for commercial television, pays for commercial radio, and advertising pays for approximately 80% (per cent) of the costs of the print media in Nigeria according to recent research. What this means is that a subscription payment to Guardian, The Sun, Punch, or This Day Newspapers is not enough to pay for their publications. This is corroborated by Shaikh (2014, p. 21) when he said, "a truism of the media industry is that newspapers face increasingly complex and competitive markets for advertising." The advertisers who address readers through the pages pay for the space they use and that forms a huge source of revenue to newspapers and other media houses especially the privately owned.

According to Duyile (2006), the advertiser wants to present the message he wants to present the way he wants to present it. The presented –through (radio, television, magazines, and newspapers) do not want to offend the advertiser who buys time or space to make the presentation. The presented – upon (the rest of us) have at least continuous views on what should constitute acceptability in an advertising message. The organisations that speak for "presented- upon" such as APCON (Advertising Practitioner's Council of Nigeria) ACT (Action for Children's Television) invariably have a protectionist cast. They want to protect us from harmful advertising rather than protect us from a narrowing of advertising message possibilities brought about by stifling legislative controls. Critics of advertising went on to say that individuals may be credulous or reasonable. What this means is that the credulous person is a believing one, who accepts what he or she is told' the reasonable person is sceptical. He or she listens, evaluates conflicting messages and makes a considered choice.

CAN ADVERTISING MANIPULATE PEOPLE?

Ukaegbu (2019) and Wells et al. (2007) agreed that advertising has the power to shape social trends and how the people think and act. Some other groups of critics argued that advertising has the power to dictate how people behave. They believe that even if an individual advertisement cannot control our behavior, the cumulative effects of nonstop radio, television, print, internet and outdoor advertisements can be overwhelming. On the other hand advertising professionals according to Wells et al. tend to believe that the best they can do is spot trends and

then develop advertising messages that connect with them. For instance, if people are interested in saving money, then advertisements that use frugality (especially in pension and retirement) advertisements in Nigeria will surface. This is an advertising strategy. Advertisers believe advertising mirrors values rather than set them.

ADVERTISING AND COMMUNICATION MIX

The process through which a business uses to satisfy consumer needs and wants by providing goods and services is called marketing communication mix. The marketing manager or department is responsible for, selling a company's product which can be goods, detergent, automobile, drinks. A service company such as banks, network providers, courier or an idea to support a political candidate, believe and practice a particular faith. Products are also identified according to product categories. By category simply means the classification to which the product is identified or is assigned – that is for instance “Sunlight” detergent is in the detergent category, Toyota is in the automobile. The particular group of consumers considered to be potential customers for the goods and the services makes up the target audience or market

Okuwa & Campbell (2018) see advertising as a form of mass communication. According to them, ad transmits different types of market communication mix to connect buyers and sellers in the market place. What it means is that advertising both informs and transforms the product by creating an image that goes beyond straight-forward facts. The term marketing communication mix includes advertising which is the primary concern of this study. But it also includes a number related response, event and sponsorship, packaging and personal selling

Ukaegbu (2019) states that advertisers often portray their target customers in advertisements, with the hope that individuals will relate to the ads to their message. In such situations advertising managers has to the right balance. This can be a quite a thorny dilemma at the creative room, especially when working under deadline

CHILDREN AND ADVERTISING

Ever since James Mensal recognized as a distinct consumer market, advertisers have been interested in developing strategies to reach the child consumer. The growing interest in children as consumers has been paralleled by increased concerns about the consequences of advertising aimed at children. These concerns have been fueled by empirical evidence that children's exposure to television advertising may indeed lead to materialistic attitudes, increased purchase requests and parent – child conflict.

According to Okoye (2013), mass media are guilty of purveying a calculated and consistent mediocrity that degrades rather than uplifts mass tastes. He went ahead to affirm that one of the major premise of the 1960 students revolt was that a materialistic society produces cultural blandness, at best and an ignoble populace, at worst. Some critics tended to blame what they referred to as "the establishment press" for that blandness and that ignobility. John-kamen (2006, p.64) states that "advertising is a business of talking to people whether it is a newspaper or a magazine advertising, or radio or television, commercial, or outdoor poster or transportation advertising; its objective is to talk to a specific group of target audience and make them want the product or service advertised." The issue in contention here is what the critics refers to as "the tastelessness" of what he or she reads in magazines, and newspapers and sees and hears on and television .

The few studies that have investigated parental advertising mediation are centred on the effects of mediation on children's understanding of advertising, their scepticism towards advertising and their preferences or requests for advertised products. Shaikh observed that thus far, no study has investigated mediation effects on the undesired effects of advertising, such as materialism or parent - child conflict.

Two studies that compared the effectiveness of active versus restrictive mediation on children's understanding and scepticism arrived at opposite conclusion. One concluded that active mediation was the most effective mediation style, whereas the other maintained that restrictive mediation was the most effective way to mediate advertising effects. The findings on how active and restrictive mediation influence advertising effects are indecisive, and in the case of the undesired advertising effects, they are non-existent.

ISSUES IN ADVERTISING

The issues in advertising according to Ukaegbu (2019) can be expressed in six ways. Misleading and false comparison: - This according to critics is an advertising form of deceit that compares a product or its effects or benefits with unrealistic analogies and comparisons. Perhaps, a real life case history can illustrate this as well as spot-light, some of societal and business issues in advertising.

Nearly everyone in advertising remembers the commercials suggesting that "Wonder Bread" built strong bodies; 12 ways Girls and boys on television grow miraculously from pre-school to high school size in 20 seconds. Worries and concerns of authorities in "Wonder Bread" campaign gave rise to these considerations: (i) Children as a special advertising audience (ii) Fantasy video, with the depiction of that zooming rate of growth (iii) The unique or preemptive claim, which implies, that an attribute claimed for a product is unique to that product though it is shared by all similar products (iv) Incomplete explanation of the nutritional value of a food. This is heavily being applied by advertisers' of

noodles in Nigeria (v) The “halo effect” of advertising, which favourably influences consumers not so much by direct statements as by the overall psychological impact of the advertisement (vi) Exploitations of emotional concerns of children and of parents for healthy physical and mental growth.

False claims and promise -This in the eyes of critics simply means that advertisements make claims and promises that a product advertised cannot deliver. For instance a product which is said to cure tooth ache within one week may take months or may not heal or cure the tooth ache at all. Incomplete Description - This is where an ad tells only the good part of a product and deliberately omits the consequences or negative side effects of a product. Bait and switch offer - This is very common among consumer goods advertisers. This is an advertising method where a product is advertised at a low price offer to motivate people’s interest but when they go to buy the product, they realise that the price slash does not exist.

-False Testimonial- This is the deceit of using celebrity to show how effective the product works. The celebrity in question may never have used the product advertised. A typical example is the use of a famous footballer J J Okocha as an ambassador for 33 Lager Beer. The question is does J. J. Okocha really relax drinking 33 Lager beer? Abbas (2015) as cited in Awan et al. (2016) opines that informational advertisement provide awareness to the consumers in order to make them prefer to buy the goods they need. Small print notifications - Small print notifications comes in the form of warnings concerning some side effect of products advertised. It is printed in small illegible fonts making it difficult either to read or understanding

ADVERTISING IN AN INFLATIONARY AND DEPRESSED ECONOMY

Udo and Idogen (2017, p. 45.) note that ‘exchange volatility is not only predominant issue in industrialized nations but it is also an issue of serious concern in emerging nations like ours. Thus based on the recent fall in oil prices, the dominant means of foreign exchange rate, the nation was exposed to economic crisis resulting in exchange rate insatiability.’ Advertising in an inflationary and depressed economy as described above requires a lot from the advertising agency and the brand managers. The manager for a brand positioned at the lower end of the price quality spectrum is constantly tempted to upgrade the image of his brand. Heather (2023) notes that the pressure mounts when the price of his brand goes up -due to cost increase but without change in quality, the brand manager passes the pressure on to the advertising agency.

To the advertising agency, it seems that the only way to reward the consumer and motivate him to pay the higher price for the old quality is through a “more pricey” image which is most readily attempted through advertising and sometimes packaging changes. The trouble, according to Abideen et al. (2011), is that the consumer may not buy this image, there may be a credibility gap. Perhaps one can argue that the image for a value brand can be pitched upward to the level where it reinforces the user’s purchase decision but not to the point where it stretches her credibility. And the only way to determine where this important balance lies is through research or market test

This is what appears to have happened with Magi Cube. “The Star woman” commercial which has been running unchanged for years, giving the brand a lively, modern woman preparing a sumptuous meal an up market image, and it is this commercial which has been associated with Magi “star” that make its penetration, volume and market share a leader in that product category. Quite – deliberately perhaps, the pack has not been changed and does not match that up market image. This plain unadorned Lyon pack distinctly conveys value for money

However, in the opinion of Ahmed et al. (2017), when a consumer is satisfied with the value – for – money brand, which she has purchased she is likely to feel reinforced in her decision. When the advertising for that brand creates an image that places above its perceived rung on the price quality ladder, two things are noticeable here, the tangible product gives the target consumer value for money and satisfies her. The added, subjective values of the brand created through advertising and packaging echo her aspirations which are usually pitched higher than quality and make her feel doubly good about her brand choice.

According to Ahned and Ashfaq (2013), in a depressed and inflationary economy of today, there no longer exists such a thing as a bad product The notion of cheapness is therefore not synonymous with poor quality, but on the contrary implies “value for money” when the average housewife is more than ever conscious of the need to buy wisely. Advertising and brand managers would be well advised to under design- rather than over design – their packages for daily consumption goods

Fashomi (2013) cited in Ukaegbu (2019) stated that the Nigerian marketing environment, is no longer in favour of sellers but buyers and consumers. This poses a challenge for both production of goods and advertising regarding the satisfaction of the needs of people. One major challenge advertising agencies face is that many products and services in Nigeria have reached maturity and saturation stages on their product cycle. So there is a stiff competition in the market of these products. It is a herculean task to build an advertising agency from the scratch these days in Nigeria. When small agencies cannot get required financial muscle to finance new jobs, the probability of the agency dying is real. This is a great challenge for smaller agencies.

Generally, a macro-marketing viewpoint examines marketing’s socio-economic role in the lubrication of the entire economic system of a given society ‘what that means is that macro- marketing functions as the activates of independent business units or organisations whose activates ensure that the right products are made available in the market, the information about the product are communicated through advertising to the target market at the time and through the media. Louis, (2014) viewed advertising management as the process of overseeing campaigns that seek to inform and attract consumers regarding a

particular good or service. Strategic thinking is based on a systems perspective that envisions the firm as a part of a complete end-to-end system of value creation

The role of each person within the larger system must be identified, as well as the effect of that role on other people and groups within the organisation and on the outcomes of the organisation. It is difficult, if not impossible to optimise an organisational system in for instance satisfying customer needs, without understanding how individuals fit into the system (Griffin, LedBetter, & Sparks, 2019, P. 2) Stated that ' the mechanic could be right. Yet it's ironic that even in the process of knocking theory, he resorts to his own theory of cognitive overload to explain what he sees as the mechanical stupidity of scholars ' what it means is that a strategic thinker observes and understands the connection between and among the various levels of a business, as well as the linkages between the business and stakeholders in external environment.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Kumar et al. (2011) conducted a study on consumer buying behaviour with special reference to Nestle limited in India. A survey method with analytical approach was employed for the study, 200 consumers in Agra City of India were selected, the study found that advertising influences consumer in their preference for a brand. The major reasons for this preference are its attractive advertising policy and rich quality. In this study, the survey showed that reference, the survey reveals that TV advertisements of Nestle influence the buying behaviour of consumers the most, This was because of TV creative presentation and the language employed well conveyed the message to the target audience.

Ejima and Ogbuji, (2021) conducted a research on Green Marketing Orientation and Business Success of Beverage Firms in Port Harcourt. The study showed a relationship between green advertising and marketing orientation concepts and business success of beverage firms in Port Harcourt. It showed adopting a new orientation or advertising concepts and strategy by the firm such as green marketing will enable companies and service providers to use different quality products to enter a new market and influence their success or failure. The study employed survey research design with a population of 40 (forty) registered beverage manufactures/ suppliers in Port Harcourt as enlisted in Rivers State Yellow page. A total of 108 copies of questionnaire were administered to only customers of the sampled organisations and data collected was analysed using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient with the aid of SPSS version 21.0. Results show that each of the dimensions of the green marketing and advertising concept green packaging and green pricing has significant relationship with each of the business method success based on perceived trust and repeat purchase.

The research finding concludes that green as marketing and advertising concept is positively related with business success of beverage firms in Port

Harcourt. It recommended among other things that green marketing as a concept should be incorporated into the operational and strategic advertising plans of beverage firms which includes ensuring better employees deeper understanding of green packaging, green pricing and green campaign.

Ojeaga and Ibrahim (2022) carried out a study on Business Financing Access and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development in Nigeria (A Study of Some Selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Odeda Local Government Area in Abeokuta, Ogun State). The study capitalising on business access as it affects Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development in emerging economy like Nigeria was carried out in Odeda Local Government Area, of Ogun State. Survey research design was employed for the study using 127 respondents as sample size from the selected total estimated population of 185 SMEs for the study area was gathered through the use of structured questionnaire. Their responses were tested using appropriate statistical tools of SPSS package using the ANOVA, the correlation and the regression too. The study centered on business financing access as it affects small and medium enterprises development in a emerging economy : Nigeria perspectives positively which has allowed youths to be self-employed and create economic growth and regional development.

The study recommended that solving the performance of SME development can be single handedly done by the use of business financing access, which will enable SMEs to access some social network plate forms to expose their product and service. It also recommended that since SMEs are catalyst for economic development, investors and business philanthropists should be willing to fund small businesses for the achievements of goals and objectives.

THE THEORITICAL FRAME WORK

The study was anchored on the two theories of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Social Contract Theory (SCT). The Theory of planned Behaviour (TPB) was developed by Social Psychologist Icek Ajzen. It has been widely employed as a tool to help human understanding of why people behave differently (Ajzen, 1991, Godin &Kok, 1996). Ajzen (1985) stated that behaviours vary from individual to individual and thus individual behaviour is influenced by the person's decision to act in certain ways. Ajzen (1985) proposed the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) specifically to further help explain the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). TPB is therefore, an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Both models are based on the premise that individuals make logical reasoned decisions to engage in specific behaviours by evaluating the information provided the individual behave a particular way which is in line with direction provided by the assessment of the available information. By implication, the behaviour displayed by a person is determined by the person's intention to behave that way (i e attitudes which are an individual's overall assessment of the behaviour or subjective norms). Social

Contract Theory explains that as the society purchases from the firm, the firm also gives to the society by engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes. Companies host their operations within a community and community co-habits and patronises the firm it is only normal for the business organisation to show some responsibility for their activities.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed qualitative research method. It relied on desktop and library literature review of related and relevant materials and theories or views presented alongside the analysis and critics of issues in advertising. According to Chloe, (2023), methodology refers to the overall strategy choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Advertising agencies and product owners should abide by the laws and regulations governing advertisement in Nigeria despite the economic situation. Advertisers should not provide any samples of product, leaflets and any other materials or channels carrying information that encourages the use of products for other purposes for which such product is not meant for. Advertisers should stop making unfounded claims and unnecessary exaggeration of product quality. The critics of advertising should understand that advertisement plays a very important role in the nation's economy and society at large. The larger the advertisement activates, the larger the economy and the quality of products and services available. In advertising consumer behaviour is related to that of psychoanalytic theory by Freud, that advertisers realised they must provide consumers with socially acceptable rationalisations for their purchasing. Yet it can also appeal subconsciously to their dreams, hopes, and fears. Julie and Sunny (2023) in their studies uniformly report a very close relationship between consumers' attitudes and their buying decisions, as it concerns both the type of product and brand selections. Therefore it is in the advertiser's best interests to understand how attitudes are formed, measured and changed. Research has shown that people are more motivated, creative, and productive when their psychological and material needs are met. Advertising should be more strategic in response to the needs of the people.

CONCLUSION

In fact advertising and society's values are probably interactive. So this study agrees that the answer to the issues in advertising may simply be that advertising both mirrors and shapes values that advertising professionals spend huge amount of money and time trying to research into and identify people's motivations before they develop advertising messages that can make deeper impact on the target audience.

Therefore what matters most in advertising in a depressed economy is encouraging the people to a life that reflects our core values. Entrepreneurs can only survive by guiding business leaders to do well.

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