

## **PERCEPTION OF BRANDS AND OUTDOOR ADVERTISING OF SMARTPHONES BY RESIDENTS OF BENIN AND OWERRI IN NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

The study investigated the Perception of brands and outdoor advertising of smart phones by residents of Benin and Owerri in Nigeria. The objectives were to find out the extent of exposure to outdoor messages, the comprehensibility of messages and to find out the appeals that draw immediate purchase of products by customers. Two theories of customer loyalty and the primary/recency effect theories were applied. The population was 2,786,000 residents of Benin and Owerri with a sample of 400 from the two towns. Findings showed that the outdoor messages are not multifaceted or multipart but simple for the understanding of potential customers, It was also found out that outdoor advertising of smart phones have elements of credibility but fail to cause immediate purchase by customers. It is recommended that smart phone brand managers should ensure the sustaining of brevity, candidness and informative nature of smart phone outdoor advertising.

**Key Words:** Brand, Customers, Communication, Outdoor advertising, Media

### **Background to the Study**

From intra personal thoughts, signs, symbols, speeches and the art of writing, communication has grown in leaps and bounds with multiple effects. Obviously, there has been the introduction of varied forms of communication especially with technological breakthroughs. These advancements have affected the mode and styles of all other aspects of business and social activities. One sector that has witnessed rapid transformation has been the process of advertising in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Media technology applications enable manufacturer and distributors, wholesalers and retail agents to connect with product users. Sakshi (2018) posits that technological channels of advertising create long term or short term, single or multiple intensive, selective or exclusive sales and distribution of goods and service. Most of the up-to-date forms of media technologies have continued to shape economic and social interactions. These platforms of communication cut across to networking sites and have made business institutions easily accessible to anyone. Communication in all ramifications has opened doors for organizations to increase brand awareness and facilitate contact with customers. Kaplan (2015) asserts that the age long radio sets, television sets and newspapers have been supported by the Web 2.0, which facilitates the exchange of user-generated contents on social media. Thus, the internet has digitally supported communication to build not just social relations but business connections, shared information and collaboration online (Nyekwere, Kur, & Nyekwere, 2013). Radio, television and the internet all provide information in transient forms against what the print media of newspapers, leaflets, brochures and magazines do provide. At the same time, the mentioned channels of communication mostly provide service to individuals indoors rather than persons on transit from one place to another.

The market for sales of products and services has come to be competitive that manufacturers and distributors have the challenge of reaching out to as many potential buyers as possible (Fairlie, 2022). It becomes challenging taking advertising back to back with buyers or risk falling short of the expected profit margin and targets. Often times, it is not the product contents that ordinarily cause buyers to patronise the goods, rather it could also be the communication branding techniques of the

companies. This is the situation especially in the smart phone industry where state of the art technologies evolve on daily basis. Some of the existing smart phone dealers with aggressive outdoor advertising for brand awareness existing in Nigeria are many and the trend of new ones are dynamic. Igyuve, Akilla, Oluwakemi, & Agbele (2018) state that the operating system has allowed brands such as Samsung, HTC, Motorola, Alcatel, LG, Sony, Infinix, Tecno, Gionee, itel and so on, to produce smart phones that availed exiting features. The authors mention that smart phones have turned out to be a major part of the lives of Nigerians owing to its unique capacity to combine communication and computing on mobile devices. Its evolution has made it an indispensable item in the possession of Nigerians, especially youths and elites of the older generation, as it allows for social interaction, business communication, safe storage of personal files and mobile learning among other things.

Marion (2022) notes that the impression an organization creates in the mind of a customer or the public represents its brand. Brand awareness refers to the ability of a potential customer to recall a category of products or services offered by a particular organization. Brand awareness and brand promotional campaigns on outdoor media usually centre on efforts to attract attention and encourage users to share same with other users. With an ever increasing number of smart phone users, many corporate and business organizations have discovered that outdoor media can be a breeding ground or business hub to create awareness for product brands by launching brand promotional activities.

Interestingly, businesses are currently leveraging the power of outdoor media immediacy and creative visual properties to create brand awareness and to promote goods and services. In Nigeria, most of the smart phone distributing companies have used of outdoor media for brand awareness, brand promotion and marketing initiatives to bolster brand popularity, increase sales, foster customer relationship and enhance overall leadership control of mobile phone marketing.

Within the dynamics of a competitive marketing environment and the phenomenon of outdoor media use for brand communication activities by firms in Nigeria many businesses prioritize budgets and spending on communication and advertising campaigns. When considering advertising as communication, companies need to balance the cost of advertising—both of producing the advertising pieces and buying placement—against the total

budget. The selection and scheduling of media have a huge impact on budget: advertising that targets a mass audience is generally more expensive than advertising that targets a local or niche audience (Nacach, 2018). Perhaps with huge budgets and the competition in mind, firms seem to be rolling out campaign for brand awareness and brand promotion using outdoor techniques without the consideration of the societal ethics. The primary objective of some firms lie in maximizing profit by the undue invasion of customer attraction without satisfaction while ignoring the basic ingredients of outdoor advertising. Khadka and Maharjan (2017) assert that the interests of customers are central to the successes of businesses. A side from making profit, a business organization has obligation of focusing on communication strategies for customers satisfaction and loyalty by ensuring that ethical issues are integrated in the long term goals for the survival and sustenance of service. This study therefore examines the outstanding nature of outdoor media advertising strategies adopted by select smart phone distrusting companies, the perception about brand awareness and preferred outdoor brand promotions by the public.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Obviously, firms in Nigeria are adopting the use of multifarious platforms for brand awareness and brand promotional campaigns. The premise stems from the need for effective brand awareness and brand promotional campaigns. Advertising can offer a competitive advantage for a business organization in the competition to secure brand awareness and marketing opportunities. This tactics of brand promotions are with aims of influencing the perceptions and purchase decisions of customers. Incidentally, there are possibilities of impacts on marketing returns and operational performance of companies particularly those dealing with smart phones. Some of the noticeable smart phone companies existing in Nigeria are: *Samsung*, South Korean company that is one of the world's largest producers of electronic devices, *itel*, an Indian leading and popular electronics brand for latest smart phones; *the Infinix*, - Hong Kong-based smart phone makers, *Techno*, a global smart phone brand that creates elegantly designed smart phones with the latest technologies for progressive individuals in over 60 countries from Germany, *Nokia Corporation*, a Finnish multinational telecommunications, information technology, and consumer electronics corporation, established in 1865, *Apple Inc.* is an American multinational technology company and second World largest in the manufacturing of smart phones. One of the trending advertising platforms by these smart phone distributors has been the outdoor form of advertising.

This is perhaps due to the advantages that abound in outdoor advertising campaigns. However, the use of outdoor advertising platforms in brand awareness is not without the negativities that also abound in other advertising space which can negatively affect the perceptions of consumers. For instance, outdoor advertising platforms in brand awareness can result in information overload, fake trademarks, counterfeit packages, hate catch-phrases, false mission statements and adoption of forged emblem of companies. Consequently, firms intending to make use of outdoor platforms for advertising are expected to be conscious of the returns in the positive and the negatives. The companies are expected to consider not only its expected profits but also exhibiting ethical practices and take the interest of consumers as paramount. Therefore, this research is to take an assessment of outdoor advertising messages from smart phone distributing companies to determine the elements of credibility and whether the messages are customer-centric to cause without delay brand awareness and purchase of products.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed at assessing the perception of outdoor advertising messages of select smart-phone by residents of Benin and Owerri.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. To find out the extent of exposure to the smart phone outdoor advertising messages by the residents of Benin and Owerri.
- ii. To evaluate the comprehensibility of outdoor advertising messages of smart phones distributors by residents of Benin and Owerri
- iii. To determine the appeals that outdoor advertising brand messages of smart phones have on the buying habits of the residents of Benin and Owerri.

### **Research Questions of the study**

The research questions are;

1. What is the extent of exposure to the smart phones outdoor advertising by the residents of Benin and Owerri.
2. What is the comprehensibility level of outdoor advertising messages of smart phones to the residents of Benin and Owerri
3. What appeals do outdoor advertising messages of smart phones have on the buying habits of the residents of Benin and Owerri.

## **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant in the sense that it will reveal the numerous benefits that outdoor advertising contribute to secure bigger markets in quality contents and elements of credibility. This study will assist entrepreneurs to understand how to develop service-based enterprises. It will also provide recommendations for top management of companies, on how to enhance marketing communication strategies through the use of outdoor advertising media.

## **Scope of the Study**

This research is restricted to residents of Benin City, Edo state and Owerri, Imo state capital. The reason for the choice of the two cities was informed by the status of being state capitals in the South South and the South East states of Nigeria as well as large hubs for mobile smart phone distributors and users in the country.

## **Literature Review**

### **Communication and Brand Awareness**

Institutions either for commercial or non-commercial objectives communicate. The process of communication exposes the overall image of the institution. The inside - out of an institution from products and service represent the brand of the institution. Brand communication is the process through which a company conveys messages about its product or service to existing and prospective consumers either offline or via the internet (Voorveld, 2019). Brand communication is aimed at exposing the targeted audience to a product or service to create increased awareness and encourage more customers to buy the brand (Pettis, 2020). Effective brand communication in a business organisation is based on well-defined objectives to bear the organisation's goals, mainstay mandates and undertakings.

Brands are intelligibly defined values which form the representation of an organisation to the customers. Rahman, Haque & Hussain (2012) define brand as a name, sign, symbol and logo that identifies the products and services offered by a supplier and the way it differentiates from other similar products or services offered by a competitor. Brand are intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate organizational processes. Sammut-Bonnici (2015) defines brand as a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity,

and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place and organisation. This corroborates Kapferer (2012) that brands are information that tell consumers many things about the product or service. That means that brands are messages that act on prospective buyers of products or services. Kapferer argues that brand provides cues which help prospective customers to predetermine quality of products and services to make new purchase decisions.

It is emphatic to state that brands create relationship with the customers through the process of communication. Thus, the dissemination of information about a product or service of an organisation must be communicative by exhibiting elements of being reliable, credible and inspire customers trust and loyalty. It implies that brands are either product-based or service-based. A brand is categorized as product-based if the brand is associated with physical or tangible characteristics while a service-based brand has intangible and invisible attributes (Keller & Lehmann, 2006)).

Brand awareness of a product can be a set of activities carried out on outdoor advertising media platforms to promote consumer engagement and influence sales. Through outdoor media advertising, firms build relationships, promote awareness and ultimately improve products (Alavijeh, Foorozan, & Afrasheh, 2019). The success of a brand is derived from being able to sustain the known added values peculiar to the product against those of the competitors.

### **Advertising**

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of goods and services by the identified sponsor usually involving the exchange of a fee (Christian & Sunday, 2013). Through advertising, the customer is persuaded to try the product through direct personal sells, indirect sales promotion, or enlarged publicity. This to explain that advertising is a commercial transaction, and the publicity message, which may be visual, verbal or written, can be directed to the general public rather than to an individual (Alexandrescu & Milandru, 2018). By personal selling it involves face to face interaction between the seller and the customer. In sales promotion, it means the short term incentives given to the customers in order to generate an increased sale for a given period. Sales promotion is usually in the form of discounts, coupons, payback offers, free gifts whilst publicity denotes creating mutual beneficial relations with the general public. The public comprises of the customers, employees, suppliers, distributors,

shareholders, government and the society. The publicity is one of the forms of public relations that the company may use with the intention to bring newsworthy information to the public about products or services.

Juneja (2015) states that advertising inform consumers about the existence and benefits of products and services, and persuade consumers to buy. Advertising contents play vital roles in the process of business-related communication. More specifically, it is the advertised product and brand as well as the content of the advertising that determine greater or lesser memory retention among the consumers; advertising tends to use psychological tactics which make people buy the product through images and brand consciousness, creative ideas, consumers exposure needs either indoor or outdoor messages.

### **Outdoor Advertising: Forms, Types and Importance**

Outdoor advertising is a form of corporate communication. The name “out-of-home” or “outdoor” advertising comes from the location outside home (Fill, 2009). The location of outdoor advertising needs to be in the area where targeted people are most likely to see it. The location can be buildings, public facilities, inside leisure areas, parking areas and stationary transit, which gives free hands for custom advertising. Out-door advertising is normally used as the main or support media in campaigns, because of its capability of extensive coverage. (Wilson & Till, 2011). Using outdoor media as a substitute media form is important particularly in case places where the print and broadcast media are unavailable. Bhasin (2021) says that there are top three out of eight main types of outdoor media advertising. These are the billboards, mobile and digital added to street furniture and transit outdoor advertising. Billboards are 6-,48- or 96- sheet poster sites and statistic displays, mobile can be called transits while digital are the electronics outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising in any of the first three classifications can be street furniture of statistic displays located on a street, at bus shelters and open field parks or sit outs. Such outdoor advertising posters and display locations are run by small and large size companies, which rent locations for a certain period of time. Transit or transportation outdoor advertising in other words “moving posters” are symbols and names painted on outside or inside the taxis, tricycles, walkways, lifts, airplanes, balloons, ships, railways, lorries and all vehicles.

The mission is to attract attention of everyone who sees the vehicle and announce of products and services in traffic. The advantages of outdoor

advertising are that it offers long exposing times, selectivity by a particular segment, reminds of a last-minute deal, impact on peoples' choices and allows psychological remembrance of products (Chunawalla & Sethia, 2008). However, outdoor advertising faces limitations of brief sentence to a target group and is considered expensive. The elements of outdoor advertising require different considerations of key locations, physical attributes and visibility. the height, size and illumination of the billboards (Helmer, 2016 ). Specifically, others forms of Out-of-home advertising are lamp post noticeable in street lighting. The banner style attracts people's attention to see the sign. If the placement of a lamp post is correct, the outdoor advertising form is hard to ignore; the guerrilla outdoor advertising, an unconventional way to market products. It uses a shock factor to engage people in a marketing technique. Companies simply take an item and use a public place to create something different to add in the environment and draw passersby's attention (Nguyen, 2021).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Customer loyalty theory as well as the primary and recency theory. Dick and Basu (1994) propose that customer loyalty to the brand is the result of psychological processes and has behavioral manifestations. The customer loyalty theory, based on the consideration of variable demographics, was developed over years of research studying the habits of consumers. The theory attempts to define what drives loyalty in customers and represents an effective tool for gaining and retaining hard-won patrons. Business owners who witness repeat customers know on an intuitive level that customer loyalty is an invaluable commodity. Incorporating the precepts of the customer loyalty theory into daily dealings can influence the creation of more business. Reynold (2019) asserts that customer loyalty means the intention of repurchasing products and services, a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future with repetitive same-brand. This theory is important to this study to find out if outdoor advertising define the customer loyalty in buying products especially the smart-phones by residents of Benin and Owerri.

### **Primary and Recency theory**

Dixon (2018) states that the primacy and recency effect theory came from the works of (Glanzer & Cunitz, 1966) which is a common method used to investigate memory in free recall. This is when participants are exposed to a list of words read out and they are able to remember or recall. Using this

method, researchers detected a pattern: participants can remember words better when they appear at the beginning of a list and at the end of a list. This has been dubbed the serial position effect. In other words, primacy and recency theories happen when a new product or service is released to the market. The first step in the promotion process is to contact those who may be able to feature the product in a news story, interview, or other introductory venue. Next, the product is advertised. Adverts place the most important and attention getting information at the beginning, followed by a brief explanation in the middle, and end with a memorable statement designed to persuade the potential customer to buy. The recency theory has most effect in repeated persuasion messages when there is a delay between the messages. The primacy effect means that people remember best what they see or hear first and also what they see or hear last whether such information is accurate or not. Promoters of new products, recognize this with the aim to persuade people to buy their products by using attention-getting and memorable closing comments.

### **Empirical Review**

Kovačič (2012) conducted research on “How much attention does outdoor advertising attract and who profits” and states that outdoor advertising is a special media inescapable by customers. In the research measured on 9 different locations showed 15.2% of consumers standard poster advertisement attracted more than 500 ms of attention. When using a 3D lenticular poster visual attention was reported with an outstanding 25.9 %. Attracting so much attention can be a potential threat to consumers as unlike with other media the consumer has a very limited possibility to turn off the reception of the outdoor media. The paper was aimed to answer the following research questions: Have multinational advertisers in Slovenia gained power to (ab)use outdoor advertising to influence consumers and to what extent? The paper shows that despite the current economic crisis there is strong initiative to build more and more panels. The author stated that in a small country like Slovenia, advertisers do not need large outdoor advertising budgets to capture the majority of Slovenian population and thus influence purchase preferences, influence electoral results, change advertising tolerance, or change cultural values and those of children. The research reflected the inability to escape from exposure from outdoor advertising regardless of efforts to avoid them. Dangers for consumers are of quantitative and qualitative nature. As the quantity of outdoor advertising increases consumers are more and more influenced by this media to process large amount of advertising messages. The research showed that the

potential for attracting attention is enormous especially with the introduction of modern 3D technologies. Influencing emotions of the consumers without consent should be of concern for government and communities. The study recommended sufficient self-regulative nature of economy to respect consumer protection and outdoor advertising has to be put on the legislation agenda to become controllable.

Kokkonen (2017) conducted a study on the impact of outdoor advertisements on corporate brand awareness. The aim of the study was to examine the current brand awareness of the assignor company and the impact of outdoor advertising locations on corporate brand awareness. The case company was a local radio channel, Radio Kompassi from Jyväskylä. The study was conducted among different aged people from Jyväskylä. The aim of the study was to investigate the current awareness of the company among its target audience. The second aim was to investigate whether the company's outdoor advertisements locations had been seen by the target audience and whether it has impacted on corporate brand awareness. The research questions were the following: What is Radio Kompassi's current brand awareness in the Jyväskylä region? What is the outdoor advertisement locations' impact on brand awareness? The sub-question was: How it differs between age groups? In this way, it was possible to form a perspective of the whole target group. The literature review dealt with branding and advertising. A quantitative survey questionnaire was used to implement the study because of the large sampling size of 226 citizens. The data collection was done in the street and on JAMK University of Applied Sciences' campus by using a compact two-sided questionnaire with multiple choice questions. The survey combined the information gained from the literature review and research questions. The research results indicated that the company was known in the area, but that deeper awareness of it was low. The outdoor advertisements locations were not visible. The results indicated that the impact of outdoor advertising locations on corporate brand awareness was minor. However, if the locations had been more visible the impact could have been bigger. This indicated that the company's brand awareness had been achieved mainly through other marketing channels. Based on the results, further recommendations were given about the company's advertising locations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design to investigate the

outdoor advertising messages in brand awareness and brand promotional campaigns of select smart phone distributors. Survey research is the collection of data from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions (Ponto, 2015). The primary purpose of survey research is to obtain information describing characteristics or reactions of a large sample of individuals of common interest relatively quickly.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study consists of people living in Benin and Owerri at 2,786,000. The population of the city of Owerri, Nigeria is –945,000 people while that of Benin city stands at 1,841,000(World Statistical Data, 2022).

### **Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

A sample of 400 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamane statistical formula. The Taro Yamane statistical formula provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes from a relatively large population (Adam, 2020).

The Taro Yamane formula states that:  $n = N/1+N(e)^2$

$n$  = sample size =400

$N$  = population of study = 2,786,000

$e$  = margin of error = 5% = 0.05

Confidence interval = 95%

$n = 2,786,000 /1+2,786,000(0.05)^2 =$   
 $2786000/699601 = 399.9$  or 400

The convenience sampling technique was used in administering copies of the questionnaire to the respondents.

### **Description of Measuring Instrument**

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire with 12 closed-ended questions with the Likert-5 scale format options that describes the research questions of the study.

### **Method of Data Collection**

Two research assistants were recruited to assist in the administration of questionnaires to residents off our major roads in Benin and Owerri respectively. Consequently, the 400 copies were distributed equally to the two towns at 200 each using Douglas road, Wethedral road, Okigwe road, Tetlow road of Owerri, and four roads of Benin city namely: Akpakpava road, Sapele road, New Lagos road, First East Circular road These

roads are commercial hubs with activities of smart-phones distributors and a high concentration of residential and shops, banks, offices and markets.

### Validity of the Instrument

The validity test helped to identify potential needs for modifications of some of the questions. The instrument was presented to the assistant researchers for vetting and also for necessary inputs which were incorporated into the final copy of the questionnaire.

### Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was randomly pre-tested among persons at the Abuma plaza Area, Benin City having similar characteristics of persons exposed to brand awareness campaign of smart phone distributors. On reliability, Akpan (2020) opines that the arithmetical 10th percent has remained an undisputed formula and has usually been applied as a fair and reasonable unit or amount in the calculation of consistency of social and economic transactions. Consequently, a 10% fair position was adopted to achieve 40 copies from the already prepared 400 copies of questionnaire. The results were use for modifications of the instruments to fill the gaps and lapses in the initial instruments.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data was organized data into acceptable formats by classifying for easily interpretation and analysis. Data were also subjected to presentation in frequency tables which conveyed information into numbers in rows and columns to present qualitative data. The tables became useful for summarizing and comparing quantitative information of different variables.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

From a total of 400 questionnaires that were distributed among the respondents from the two states 392 questionnaires were returned reflecting a return rate of 98%. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure respondents' assessment of advertising messages of smart phone distribution.

**Table 1:** Exposure to Outdoor advertising messages of smart phone distributors by residents of Benin and Owerri

Exposure To Adverts	Responses	Percentage
Strongly Agree	142	36

Agree	82	21
Strongly Disagree	38	10
Disagree	120	31
Undecided	10	2.
Total	392	100%

Table 1 above shows that out of 392 respondents, a total of 224 respondents or 57%, agreed that they were exposed to outdoor advertising media messages for brand awareness promotions of smart phones. On the other hand, 158 or 41% disagreed while 10 or 2% of the respondents were undecided. This therefore implies that majority of the respondents are exposed to outdoor advertising media messages of brand awareness and promotions of smart phone distribution companies..

**Table 2** There is comprehensibility in outdoor advertising messages of smart phones by residents of Benin and Owerri.

OPTIONS (Likert 5-Scale)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	210	54
Agree	113	29
Strongly Disagrees	45	11
Disagree	15	4
Undecided	9	2
Total	392	100

From Table 2, it clearly shows that 323 or 83% of respondents agreed that outdoor advertising brand messages of smart phone companies are comprehensively designed while 9 or 2% respondents were undecided. This therefore implies that majority of the outdoor advertising messages possesses comprehensibility elements as testimonials, visibility and strategic elements.

**Table 3:** Outdoor advertising brand messages appeals promptly and influence buying habits of residents of Benin and Owerri

OPTIONS (Likert 5-Scale)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	50	12
Agree	93	24
Strongly Disagree	72	19
Disagree	162	42
Undecided	7	3
Total	392	100

Table 3 clearly shows that 162 or 42% respondents disagreed, 72 or 19% strongly disagreed making 234 or 61% respondents kicking against the prompt response of residents to purchase due to outdoor advertising messages. This is against the strongly agreed at 50 or 13% and agreed at 93 or 24%. The implication is that respondents do not make immediate reactions to the messages of advertising but rather wait for other factors of price, income, age and peer group influence to detect the buying impulse.

### Discussion of Findings

#### **Question 1: What is the extent of exposure to smart phones outdoor advertising messages by residents of Benin and Owerri?**

From the results of the study carried out, majority of the respondents, which stood at 224 or 57% agreed to the construct that they had exposure to outdoor advertising messages of smart phone distribution companies. Fewer number of 10 respondents or 2% were undecided while 158 or 41% disagreed. This is an indication that outdoor advertising messages are almost all strategic places, simple and direct to interpret and understand. Therefore the availability with simplicity or non-complexity of messages becomes critical factors that determine the exposure, awareness as well as attention of the customers and show the importance of outdoor advertising for advertisers. This clearly shows that more respondents have exposure to brand messages on outdoor advertising. In other words, brand messages from smart phones distributors have been able to create the intended brand awareness for the respondents' access and confidence about the products. That is what Riccobono (2020) say that companies keep their signs sufficiently conspicuous and bright to attract customers' attention by making outdoor advertising messages available and informative enough that potential

customers get to know about the services and products.

Many companies and businesses clamour for high foot traffic areas, spaces and spots for outdoor advertising. It is because outdoor or out-of-home (OOH) advertising helps to get and build brand recognition. Dayton (2020) also says that 71% of people consciously look at billboards ads daily or weekly and mentioned that outdoor ads influence their buying decisions. Hence, outdoor advertising has to be innovative, expressive, and inspiring for people to pay attention to it, in comparison to the other advertisements. More so, this work agrees with Borisova & Martynova (2017) that “Outdoor advertising shows the credibility of the marketer and the firm that produces the goods and services offered. Its contents are also still meaningful that the potential customers could stare at them for as long as he/she wants, thus increasing the chances of conforming to the advert (p.22).

**Question 2: What is the comprehensibility of outdoor advertising media messages of smart phone by residents of Benin and Owerri**

In the course of the study, a large number of 323 or 83% respondents agreed to the construct of high comprehensibility of brand messages posted by smart phone distribution companies due to elements of credibility. This work agrees with Taylor and Franke (2003) that outdoor advertising of smart phones by customers are comprehensively unique since the other media of television, radio, newspapers magazines, internet and flyers do not give the same effect. In addition, Rosewarne (2007) when referring to outdoor advertising, developed the idea that in the public space outdoor advertising need not exist for the enjoyments, but a comprehensive portrayal of the medium to make the messages visible to all consumers at all the time, in as much as it cannot be placed anywhere and is made largely inescapable to be so valuable to the advertising industry and it has to be censored

**Question 3: Do outdoor advertising messages appeals influence buying habit of smart phone by residents of Benin and Owerri**

From the results of the study carried out, 234 or 61% disagreed and strongly disagreed that outdoor advertising messages appeals of colour, pictures, lighting can cause immediate attraction and action to buy the product. It is an indication that no matter the colouring of advertising, where information about affordable price of products appears cloudy or not tagged, it is difficult to cause immediate buying decisions. This means that outdoor advertising does not provide immediate attraction, but repeated exposure leads to attention, brand awareness and later cause purchase and brand loyalty

whereas 143 respondents or 36% disagreed and seven or 3% undecided with this position. Therefore, informative, entertaining and brief brand messages of smart phone distributors shared on outdoor advertising platforms fail to prompt the instantaneous attraction and pull to buy by consumers. Kovačič (2012) confirms that a minimal 15.2% of consumers are attracted to standard posters advertising appeal in 500 minutes or 8 hours per day. The findings that outdoor advertising does not bring immediate action of purchase supports Kotler, Wong, Saunders and Armstrong(2005) posit that the immediate reaction to any advertising campaign appeals does not always lead to purchase, it can only be used to shape the customers' perceptions about a product.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the way outdoor advertising can help shape the efficacy of messages intended for brand awareness in profit-oriented organizations. In other words, business institutions particularly about smart phones create brand awareness and promotions through outdoor advertising to bring about a favourable perception of products and enhance operational capacity and productivity. It has been brought to the fore that most of the outdoor advertising messages of smart phones are not complex to draw brand awareness and promotions. In addition, outdoor messages were believed to have high elements of credibility about the smart phones while the level of attraction to buyer has not been prompt. It is critical for business organization to ensure that outdoor advertising messages are truthful, reliable and not misleading.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the following of this study:

1. Brand managers should carry out outdoor advertising messages with the right appeals to strengthen credibility among prospects.
2. Firms should ensure that outdoor advertising messages on smart phones are comprehensible, carrying simple message or scripting or design in candid, informative and entertaining style.
3. Smartphone business organizations should ensure that slice of life innovations in appeals coded with appropriate pricing tags are deployed to cause timely responses of buyers to products.

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