THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study examines the meaning of advertising as used by scholars and practitioners. The highlight of the discussion is that advertising is paid for by an identified sponsor and also that the message of advertising is persuasive. The paper also traces the history of advertising in Nigeria. It also surveys the elements of the Tripod of Advertising; which are: the Advertiser, the Ad. Agency and the Media. The interrelationship of these three elements is emphasized. The study goes further to discuss the role of advertising in national development. Some of the roles include its contributions to economic development, its help to consumers in making choices, its enhancement of socio-economic and socio-political development, etc. The study concludes that despite the criticisms of advertising, it remains crucial to national development. It is suggested that to douse the criticisms on advertising, regulatory agencies should be set up where it is not existing, where it exists, the regulatory bodies should live up to expectations.

Introduction

There have been a lot of disparaging criticisms against advertising. Some critics say that advertising deceives people to buy products they are not willing to purchase; others say that advertising is deceptive, that it gives wrong information about the product it advertises. Despite this barrage of criticisms, advertising is an essential tool for national development. It plays a lot of roles in economic development.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, development means "the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc". Taking this as a working definition of development, it is right to suggest that advertising plays a major role in National development.

The major thrust of this paper is to look at the role of advertising in national development. The paper will survey the meaning of advertising and its brief history in Nigeria. It will also evaluate the-Tripod-& Advertising as-propounded-by-Josef Bel-Molokwu.

Finally, the paper will posit some roles of advertising in national development and conclusions and suggestions will be made based on that.

What Is Advertising?

Advertising has been described in different ways by different scholars and practitioners. Let us take a critical look at some of the definitions of advertising.

According to Arens (1999:7), advertising is:

The structured and composed nonpersonal communicat

ion of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods, services and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media.

Also, Osunbiyi (1999:8), opines that: Advertising is a controlled persuasive communication, paid for by identified sponsor (s), about products, services or ideas and disseminated through the mass media to a target group..

Furthermore, according to the Encyclopaedia Americana, advertising is: The technique and practices used to bring products, services, opinions, or causes to public notice for the purpose of persuading the public to respond in a certain way toward what is advertised. (1997. VOL.1:113).

Considering a more indigenous definition, the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) in their Code of Advertising Practice (1998:2), defines advertising as: a form of communication through the media about products, services or ideas paid for by an identified sponsor.

Taking a critical look at the above definitions, the points to note are that advertisement must be paid for by an identified sponsor, and that the aim of advertising is to disseminate information, ideas, etc. about goods or services and to persuade the audience to take action by patronising the goods and services advertised. Also the definitions espouse that advertising messages must be disseminated through the mass media.
History of Advertising In Nigeria

According to Bel-Molokwu in APCON (2000:9), Advertising is as old as man. The word comes from the Latin "advertere" (to draw attention to"). He further opines that in Nigeria, the earliest recorded activities that could be described as advertising in its crude form include the town criers early morning 'gong' signals that alerted the village dweller of an impending announcement, (p.9).

Also in the early nineteenth century, footmen were hired to actually howl about the quality and availability of specific goods or services. Some of the footmen performed double functions of advertising and selling. They shouted announcing their goods and services and inviting buyers to patronise them.

The advent of the printing press in 1450 affected advertising a great deal. In Nigeria, the first printing press was established in mid-nineteenth century. The advent of the first Nigerian newspaper in September, 1879 changed the face of advertising in Nigeria. The newspaper was published by Reverend Townsend and it was titled: "Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba", meaning "Newspaper for the Egba speaking people and Yorubas". It was published in Abeokuta. Furthermore, Bel-Molokwu posits that:

The first formal media advertisement ever carried in Nigeria was in "Iwe Irohin" and was in the form of information on shipping movement and cargo. It was a classified category ad. From then on, other sorts of advertisements began to appear in the newspapers, while growth of printing saw the emergence of well printed black-and white posters which led to the birth of organised outdoor advertising as we Know it today. (APCON 2000: 11).

Consequently, other advertisements like obituary, social activities, like christenings and ballroom dances began to appear in the newspapers. The development of modern photography also added depth to newspaper and outdoor advertising.

The early part of the twentieth century saw an upsurge in business activities in Nigeria. The Royal Niger Company came into existence. It later metamorphosed into (he conglomerate called UAC (United Africa Company). According to Bel-Molokwu, one of the businesses the UAC ventured into was advertising. They established the West African Publicity Ltd., the first ever advertising agency in Nigeria. The company was incorporated in London in August 13, 1928. Bel-Molokwu states as follows:

WAP was primarily formed to provide marketing support for the UAC's fast growing line of products and services. But providence seemed to have had a hand in the birth of this company - for it not only went beyond servicing publicity needs of the UAC, it grew into an octopus of its own as the father of organised advertising in Nigeria. (APCON, 2000: 12),

West African Publicity Ltd. later changed its name to Lintas West Africa Ltd. in 1965. Lintas West Africa was part of Lintas International until 1974 when the UAC sold off its interest to Nigerians as a result of the Indigenisation Decree. Lintas stands for "Lever International Advertising Service," a brainchild of the Unilever group. As a result of the expansion of advertising businesses in the country, there was the need to establish an outdoor arm. This led to the establishment of "Afromedia" in 1959.

The advent of radio and television broadcasting added flair to advertising. Radio was developed in 1932, but radio advert started in Nigeria in 1955, with the birth of Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service (WNBS). Television broadcasting started in Nigeria in 1959, with Western Nigerian Television (WNTV). The first Television advert in Nigeria was for Star Beer and Krola Soft Drink.

With the oil boom of the early 1970s, there was an upsurge in business activities and turnover. This led to the need for more advertisement by these companies. This led to the formation of more advertising agencies. Such agencies include: Rosabel, Goldmark, PAL, Insight Communications etc.

Today in Nigeria, advertising is now a big business and we have up to two hundred or more Advertising Agencies in the country. Due to the development in the advertising world, some agencies have started diversifying by establishing subsidiaries like Media Independent firms and Public Relations Outfits.

The Tripod of Advertising
Bel-Molokwu (2000), argues that advertising is structured in three lines to create what he refers to as The Tripod of Advertising. The three lines include: (1) The Advertiser otherwise known as the client, (2) The Advertising Practitioner (Agency), and (3) The Advertising outlet (Media). Furthermore, he propounds thus:

Advertising emanates from the need of a client to promote its goods or services through advertising. Having articulated this need and identified what exactly it wants to achieve, the client approaches the advertising practitioner (creator) usually operating as an agency which analyses its needs and sets about
In this Tripod, the client is the advertiser, that is the person or a corporate body, on whose behalf advertising is carried out. The client is regarded as the customer of the advertising business. Examples of clients in Nigeria include; Guinness Nigeria Plc, Nigerian Breweries Plc, University of Benin, UNILEVER, etc.

The Ad Agency in the Tripod is a specialized, professional body whose duty is to execute advertising services for its clients. Bel-Molokwu (2000: 34-5), outline the duties of an advertising agency thus: (1) Receiving briefs from clients - (2) Planning campaigns for clients. (3) Counselling of clients. (4) Executing campaigns-on behalf of clients (5.) Placing advertisements and commercials on behalf of clients. (6) Evaluating campaign effectiveness and the overall advertising environment.

Examples of Advertising Agencies in Nigeria include Lowe Lintas, Insight Communications, Pnra Garnet, Centre Spread, SO&U, etc.

The third element in the Advertising Tripod is the Media. The media is a very important element in the Tripod. This is because without the media, there will not be outlets for advertising in the mass sense that we know it today.

The media is largely classified into the print and the electronic media. However, there is also the outdoor and transit advertising. Outdoor advertising involves the use of billboards, neon signs, etc. while transit advertising are ads, placed on moving vehicles, ship or any other moving means of transportation.

The print media include newspapers, magazines, handbills, brochures, flyers and any other printed material. The electronic media include television, radio, film, cinema, internet, etc.

The salient point to note about the Tripod of Advertising is that they are interdependent. Without the client, the agency cannot exist and without the media there will be no outlet to expose the advertising messages. Consequently, as much as possible, all the elements in the Tripod of Advertising nurtures the relationship that exists between them with care.

The Role of Advertising in National Development

Advertising plays significant roles in the development of a nation firstly, advertising contributes to the economic growth of a country. This is viewed from the angle that advertising encourages more patronage for goods and services; hence it leads to higher output by industries. When there is increase in industrial output as a result of advertising, it leads to more tax being paid to the government coffers and it also provides more employment for the masses. As such, it is right to say that advertising in Nigeria contributes to the economic growth.

Secondly, advertising helps the consumers in making choices about what products or services to patronize. It serves as a source of information to consumers about goods and services. Advertising creates an awareness about goods and services; as such it is educative in nature. It educates the masses about the qualities of the products and services they can patronize. Hence, it helps the consumers to make the right choices about products and services.

Furthermore advertising provides the platform for business organisations to reach out to the consumers. It gives businesses opportunity to create awareness about their goods and services. This effort can elicit more patronage for the business organisations.

Also advertising helps in no small measure to develop the media industry in Nigeria. It helps in improving the quality of the Nigerian media because most media houses depend heavily on the revenue accruable to them from advertising. This huge revenue from advertising helps the media in improving the welfare package of the staff and also improves (the overall quality of the output of the Nigerian media. Infact, hardly can any media survive financially in Nigeria without revenue from advertising.

Advertising can also be used to enhance the socio-economic and socio-political development of Nigeria. This can be achieved through "developmental advertising". This calls for the inclusion of important cultural values and developmental themes in product and service advertisements by both the government and the private sector. The governments of Nigeria can use advertising to create awareness about any policy they are trying to propagate. They can also use advertising to influence the decision of the populace regarding any particular programme. For instance, the Nigerian Government did a lot of advertisements to draw support for her privatisation policy. Also, advertisements have been employed by the government to create awareness about the HIV virus in Nigeria. We strongly believe that advertising remains a salient vehicle for the various tiers of government in Nigeria to use for promoting their services and for explaining national issues in other to promote national cohesion and social wellbeing of the populace. From our
perspective, the Nigerian government has not fully explored the potentials of advertising in the socio-economic and socio-political development of Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

In this study, we have been able to trace the history of advertising in Nigeria and also have discussed the meaning of advertising. We have also surveyed how advertising functions on a tripod that is made up of the Advertiser, the Ad Agency and the Media. We have looked at some of the roles of advertising in national development.

Consequently, it is concluded that despite the criticism of advertising, advertising plays significant roles in the development of a nation. Advertising encourages economic growth of a nation, and enables the consumers to make the right choice by being introduced to many goods and services to choose from. Advertising also helps in the socio-economic development of a nation.

Some critics have however said that advertising is deceptive, that it makes the consumers to purchase goods they are not interested in. Some also say that advertising has bad influence on consumers, especially children. It is also believed that advertising can have negative influence on the media.

Despite all these criticisms, advertising is still growing everyday in Nigeria and other developed countries in the world. To douse all these criticisms on advertising, governments around the world should establish bodies to regulate advertising. For instance, in Nigeria, advertising is regulated by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON). They make sure that any advertising aired or published in Nigeria is vetted. They have a Code of Advertising Practice in Nigeria which insists that any advertisement should be truthful, descent, legal, etc.

**References**


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