
ADVERTISING DESIGN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING ADVERTISING FUNCTIONS AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

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Abstract

Advertising design like many other institutions is a communication tool that has developed in Nigeria through the footsteps of British colonial rule. In the course of its evolution, advertising design has increasingly shifted from mere creativity to a social scientific and strategic management enterprise, drawing more and more from the discoveries and theories of psychology, sociology and social statistics. Being an integral aspect of the advertising process, it has become a vital arm of the advertising industry thereby facilitating its development in a more visible and profitable dimension. Therefore, this paper, seeks to examine the nature and the development of advertising design within the Nigeria society. It also seeks to explore advertising design functions and its psychological effects on the society.

Advertising has a very long history. It existed in ancient times in the form of signs that advertised wares in markets. It became especially important in the second half of the nineteenth century as retailers began to advertise products and prices that would bring customers to their stores. The word “advertise” originates from the Latin *advertere*, which means to turn toward or to take note of. Certainly, the visual and verbal commercial messages that are a part of advertising are intended to attract attention and produce some response by the viewer. Advertising design refers to the creation and organization of visual artwork used in advertisements(ads) for products and services. The designs used in advertising are created by graphic designers. Such design could be advertising brochures, web advertisement with the use of elements like illustrations, cartoons, animation and photographs. Advertising design is made to reach and compel the target audience to purchase products and services. Advertising design has the power to create awareness, inform, and persuade. It is a communication tool of enormous complexity, however much advertising does not have its intended effect. The reasons for this failure lie in the variety and complexity of the effects of advertising. Like all successful communication, effective advertising is guided by a thorough

understanding of its intended audience and how that audience will receive the intended message.

Advertising design is considered the primary tool for communicating information to the public, as advertising is understood to be a means to create and sell brands by adding value to products (De Mooij, 1998). As a consequence of increasing competition companies need to communicate their products and services competently and distinctively to satisfy customer needs (Haigh and Knowles, 2004). Nonetheless, a product offering certain functional attributes is just advertising, not advertising design. To build advertising design, a company has to offer an added level of meaning and feeling (Mitchell, 2003). An advertising design represents itself to the people in many ways: through the product itself, through its packaging, its name, where it is sold. The people on the other hand, interpret advertising design through experience and perceptions, misconceptions to the value systems of the individual (Plummer, 2000). Hence, it is crucial for a company to develop and maintain advertising design so as to survive and succeed. To develop advertising design, companies seek the support of marketing activities like advertising industries. This paper therefore, views how the public interpret advertising design within the Nigeria society, thereby exploring advertising design functions and its psychological effects on the society.

Advertising design is by far one of the most important factors influencing a product or service's success or failure in the marketplace, and can have a dramatic impact on how the 'company behind the brand' is perceived by the consumers. Thus, a brand is not just a representation of a company's product but it is a symbol of the company itself. Thus advertising is used to portray the brand image to the consumers. The consumers relate to a brand depending on their perceived image of the brand and if it matches their personality image. Thus, advertising is used in order to stimulate a response from the target audience. The response maybe perceptual in nature, for example, the consumer develops specific views or opinions about the product or brand that are altered by the advertisement (Kotler et al, 2005).

Advertising messages are apparent in everyday life in various media. However, not every message has an effect on every consumer. What messages get through to the consumer and what makes the advertising message effective are questions that are necessary to be answered to be able to explore the underlying consumer behaviour (Arens, 1999). This will help the advertisers to understand the target consumers and be able to relate with them. With the increasing importance of advertising, companies today encounter problems of how to attract customer attention to their brands and help in forming a positive image about them. The perception of an individual has been influenced by various factors such as personal influences, social influences and psychological influences, which will be studied in this research (Pickton and Broderick,

2001). A company's success depends on the way the consumer's perceive the brand. Advertising works in a sequential process thereby moving consumers from a state of unawareness to the final action (Colley, 1961; Yeshin, 1999).

According to Carey,(1996), advertising design is to influence consumers in many different ways, but the primary goal of advertising is to increase the probability that consumers exposed to an advertisement will behave or believe as the advertiser wishes. Thus, the ultimate objective of advertising is to sell things persuasively and creatively. Advertising design is used by commercial firms trying to sell products and services; by politicians and political interest groups to sell ideas or persuade voters; by not-for-profit organizations to raise funds, solicit volunteers, or influence the actions of viewers; and by governments seeking to encourage or discourage particular activities, such a wearing seatbelts, participating in the census, or ceasing to smoke. The forms that advertising takes and the media in which advertisements appear are as varied as the advertisers themselves and the messages that they wish to deliver. The pervasiveness of advertising and its creative elements are designed to cause viewers to take note. Today, in Nigeria, we have existence various new outdoor advertising formats beside the traditional products. Some of these products borrowed ideas and concept from America, Europe and South Africa among others. These new products include unipole, spectacular, backlit, ultra-vision/waves, corex and vinyl materials e.t.c. Consequent upon these developments, an expository study is embarked to find and identify the trends and innovations in Outdoor advertising in Nigeria. The advancement in the world has brought about a lot of changed in the methods of outdoor advertising. The trend in Nigeria has been on the slow side as the local or traditional methods are still been used in some states and market places. The use of modern and advanced technology can only be found in the commercial nerve centers of Nigeria, such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Aba, Abuja and Kaduna. There are spectacular billboards in all nook and cranny of these cities. Among others are the rooftops, ultra wave's vision, wall space, transit posters e.t.c.

Advertising designers are competent professionals with deep understanding of the market demands and the wherewithal of promoting products and services through visual communication. Advertising designers are expected to constantly generate original advertising designs to meet campaign deadlines. They develop web banners, newspaper and magazine advertisement as well as inspire consumers to develop brand recognition by creating logos and corporate symbols like the ones created for Tantalizers, May and Baker and BMW logo among others. The illustrations and typeface used in food packaging are considered to be part of Advertising design initiatives.

Bel-Molokwu (1999) posits that advertising design has become so pervasive in modern society that it cannot be ignored. It is so much with us and affects our lives in various ways. Wherever one turns, even in one's privacies he is very likely to encounter advertisements. This position is corroborated by Hawkins, et al (1983) who submits that advertising has become one of the most potent socializing influences in the modern world. People's attitudes, values, aspirations, choices and ideas are shaped to a very large extent by the advertising to which they are frequently exposed.

Indeed, advertising design is the purveyor of a global culture whereby people of different nationalities share common lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours as a result of the common exposure to global advertising. Advertising design over time, have raised the bar as a veritable medium of education and socialization. Apart from creating awareness about goods and services advertised, it also provides education on proper etiquette, individual and social well-being. It is also a source of entertainment and comic relief.

Nzeribe (2003) see advertising design as a catalyst for economic growth by facilitating widespread and continuous distribution and consumption of goods and services. This implies that advertising promotes commerce by facilitating the exchange of goods and services. Consumers of goods and services are enabled to identify and obtain a wide variety of goods and services to satisfy their unique requirements. Like most business sectors of the economy, advertising industry had its humble beginning rooted in colonial history. Advertising development could be traced to around 1928 when the West African Publicity Limited was founded as an offshoot of UAC, a company of the colonial masters in Nigeria and the rest of West Africa. This company, later transformed to a full-fledged advertising firm in 1929 known as Lintas with two other subsidiaries namely Afromedia, the outdoor medium and pearl/Dean, the cinema arm. These companies, then, were headed by expatriates. By the 70's, Rosabel Advertising and Insight communications, sprang up. (Onyeniyi – Orurah, 2010).

Prior to this period, history had it that advertising practice in Nigeria could be dated to have taken off formally with Rev. Henry Townsend's Newspaper called Iwe Iroyin in 1859. This newspaper featured among other things, adverts of births and other social events. The arrival of Radio and television also added to the impetus of growth witnessed by the advertising industry over the years. (Oresanya, 2010).

The arrival of indigenous advertising agencies had blossomed tremendously between the 70's and now. The proliferation of advertising agencies compelled the government to establish the Advertising practitioners council of Nigeria (APCON) to regulate the practice in 1990 having been established by decree 55 of 1988 as the apex regulatory body in the industry. Dr. Charles Okigbo was the pioneer registrar of

APCON. The era of economic reconstruction and liberalization gradually began to open up the Nigerian business to global economy.

Advertising Function

Although the primary objective of advertising is to persuade, it may achieve this objective in many different ways. Bovee et al (2000), noted that one of the important function of advertising is the identification function, that is, to identify a product and differentiate it from others; this creates an awareness of the product and provides a basis for consumers to choose the advertised product over other products. Another function of advertising is to communicate information about the product, its attributes, and its location of sale; this is the information function. The third function of advertising is to induce consumers to try new products and to suggest reuse of the product as well as new uses; this is the persuasion function. The identification function of advertising according to Bovee et al (2000) includes the ability of advertising to differentiate a product so that it has its own unique identity or personality. One famous example of this is found in the long-running advertising for Ivory Soap. In the late 1800s, a soap maker at Procter and Gamble left his machine running during his lunch period and returned to find a whipped soap that, when made into bars, floated. The company decided to capitalize on this mistake by advertising Ivory Soap with the phrase "It Floats." This characteristic of Ivory Soap served to uniquely identify it and differentiate it from other bars of soap.

The information function of advertising as noted by Carey (1996) can also be found in advertising for Ivory Soap. For more than one hundred years, advertisements for Ivory Soap have focused on such product characteristics as purity of ingredients, child care, and soft skin. These characteristics, in turn, were often related to key benefits that could be obtained from using Ivory Soap. Thus, various advertisements emphasized "That Ivory Look," which focused on the relationships between product characteristics and the benefits of obtaining a fresh and healthy appearance. The third and most important function of advertising, persuasion is also evident in the long-running Ivory Soap advertising campaigns. The advertiser, Procter and Gamble, has linked Ivory Soap with obtaining benefits that are important to customers: a fresh and healthy appearance for women, a mild, nonirritating method for bathing babies, and a novelty for children in the tub (since it floats). The benefits of the product suggest reasons to buy and use Ivory Soap and thus provide a basis for persuading consumers. Different benefits are important to different customers. Thus, to realize its full potential as a persuasive tool, advertising must often be tailored to emphasize those benefits that are important and meaningful for a particular type of customer or a particular use of the product.

Advertising and Psychology

Advertising has a very long history although, serious study of advertising and its effects on consumers did not begin until early in the twentieth century. Rikard,(2001) noted that psychologists began to recognize that advertising was an important form of communication and began to apply the theories and methods of psychology to its study. Individuals such as Harlow Gale began to conduct experiments designed to determine the power of individual advertisements to attract attention and persuade consumers to buy. Walter Dill Scott of Northwestern University wrote the book *The Theory of Advertising* (1903), which sought to build a theoretical understanding of advertising based on the principals of psychological science. Scott suggested that advertisers should develop certain fundamental principles on which to construct a “rational theory of advertising.” The work of these psychologists was noted by such advertising professionals as Stanley Resor of the J. Walter Thompson Agency, who, in 1912, commissioned a study of the demographics and purchasing patterns of consumers to understand better both what motivated consumers to buy and how to persuade better those same consumers. Since this early work, psychologists and other social scientists have played an important role in both the study and practice of advertising. The application of psychological theories to advertising provides an understanding of how consumers process advertising messages and make purchase decisions. Theories of attention, information processing, attitude formation, and decision making all have relevance to understanding how advertising affects consumers. Another important application of psychological principals is to develop an understanding of consumer needs so that products can be developed, designed, and communicated in a manner that reflects the relevant and important needs of consumers.

How Advertising Works

Advertising is a form of communication. Like all forms of communication, it has many different effects and these effects are often related to one another. The message in an advertisement, no matter how strong and persuasive, will have no effect if the consumer does not see the advertisement or pay attention to it. One useful framework for understanding these multiple effects and their interrelationships is called the hierarchy of effects model. The hierarchy of effects model identifies different stages in the communication process. Effective communication must begin by obtaining the attention of the consumer. Then, the consumer must process the information carried in the advertisement. Such processing of information may be followed by an evaluation of the information, the source of the information, and ultimately the desirability of any actions suggested by the communication. This evaluation process may, in turn, give rise to the formation of attitudes, the development of intentions for future action, and, eventually, an action. Different characteristics of an advertisement have effects at different points in this hierarchy.

Getting Attention: In the context of advertising the first hurdle for an advertiser is to obtain the attention of the consumer. This involves two important actions. First, it is important for the advertiser to know where a communication should be placed to increase the odds of reaching a particular type of consumer; this is the media decision. Careful analysis of the consumer use of various media (e.g., what television shows they watch, what route they take to work, and what magazines they read) allows the advertisers to identify those media to which target consumers are most likely to be exposed. Placing an advertisement in a place where relevant consumers are unlikely to see it assures that the advertising will be ineffective. However, just because a consumer happens to view a television show or read a magazine in which an advertisement is placed does not guarantee that the consumer will see the advertisement. The consumer may have left the room when the television commercial aired or may not have read the particular part of the magazine in which the advertisement appeared. Advertisers solve this problem by repeating advertising in the same and in different media in order to increase the probability that a given consumer will actually be exposed to the advertising. Thus, a key task for the advertiser is to identify those media to which relevant consumers regularly attend and develop a schedule of repetition for the advertisement that maximizes the number of consumers who will be exposed to the advertising message. This is typically the responsibility of the media department in an advertising agency.

Exposure to an advertisement still does not mean that a consumer will attend to it. A consumer may simply turn the page of a magazine, look away from the television, or click on a banner advertisement on the Internet to make it go away without ever paying attention to the advertisement. Thus, obtaining the attention of consumers who are, in fact, exposed to an advertisement is a significant challenge for advertisers. Various characteristics of advertisements have been found to increase the likelihood that consumers will attend to an advertisement. Advertisements that include relevant information for the consumer, such as a product benefit that is important to the consumer, are especially likely to attract attention. Information that is new to the consumer is also likely to obtain the attention of the consumer. Various creative devices such as the use of humor, a well-known celebrity, or an especially entertaining presentation also tend to attract attention. The latter devices must be used carefully; if they are not well integrated with the primary message of the advertiser, the consumer may attend to the advertisement, but only focus on the creative device (the humor, the identity of the celebrity) rather than the intended message of the advertiser. Advertisers often refer to characteristics of advertisements that gain attention but distract the viewer from the primary message as “creative clutter.”

However, the challenging dimension of advertising revolves around balancing the repetition of an advertisement, which is intended to increase the probability of a consumer being exposed to it, with the likelihood the consumer will attend to the advertisement when exposed. Consumers are less likely to attend to advertisements they have already seen, and the more often an individual consumer has seen an advertisement previously the less likely they are to pay attention to it when exposed again. This phenomenon is referred to as “advertising wearout.” Wearout can be a particular problem when advertising in markets where the likelihood of advertising exposure varies considerably across consumers. The number of repetitions of the advertisement needed to reach some consumers may be so great that the advertisement wears out among other consumers who are more readily exposed to the advertisement. To combat such wearout, advertisers will often use multiple advertisements that vary in terms of execution or presentation but carry similar messages. Such variation tends to reduce advertising wearout by providing something new to the consumer that serves as the basis for attracting attention.

Processing Information: Consumers may attend to advertisements for a variety of reasons. Attention alone is not sufficient to make the advertising successful. Advertisements that are interesting, entertaining, and even irritating can attract attention; however, such advertisements may not result in the consumer attending to or understanding the intended message of the advertiser. Assuring that consumers attend to and understand the intended message rather than peripheral characteristics (such as a joke or song) requires careful crafting of the advertising message. Advertising research has demonstrated that the message must be clear and meaningful to the consumer; if the consumer does not comprehend the message, it will not have the desired effect. Thus, it is important when creating the advertisement to understand how consumers think about products and product benefits and to use language that the consumer will understand. It is also important that the product and the product message be the focal point of the advertisement. Most of the time or space in the advertisement should be devoted to the product and the product message should be well integrated within the advertisement. Advertising that consists primarily of creative clutter and does not focus on the product is unlikely to be effective. Longer advertisements tend to facilitate better information processing, but the benefit of a longer advertisement may not always be sufficiently large enough to justify the additional costs of a longer advertisement.

An important issue in the creation of advertising is related to understanding how much information consumers want about a given product. For some products, consumers may want a great deal of information and may wish to exert a great deal of effort in processing the information. In many cases, however, especially for products of relatively low cost, consumers do not want very much information and are unwilling to process more than a modest amount of product information. In fact, consumers may

differ with respect to the amount of information processing they are willing to do even for the same product. Thus, the advertiser must understand how much information individual consumers' desire and how much variability exists among consumers with respect to their willingness to process information. Such an understanding not only indicates how much information to put in an advertisement, it also suggests which media may be most appropriate for delivering the message. Complex messages are generally better delivered in print advertising, while simple messages can generally be delivered on television or radio.

Information Evaluation: After a consumer has processed information; there is a need to evaluate it. The consumers will need to determine how believable the information is and how relevant it is to their individual situation in life and to their behavior as consumers. This evaluation phase poses significant problems for advertisers. Most consumers tend to discount the information in advertising because they understand that the purpose of the advertising is to persuade. Making an advertising message believable is not easy; though often it is sufficient to make the consumer curious enough to try the product. Such curiosity is often referred to as interested disbelief. Advertisers use a variety of devices to increase the believability of their advertising: celebrities or experts who are the spokespersons for the product, user testimonials, product demonstrations, research results, and endorsements.

Attitude Formation: In some cases, the objective of the advertiser is immediate action by the consumer; this is typical of direct-response advertising where the goal is to have the consumer do something immediately (buy a product, make a pledge, and so on). In most cases, however, there is a lag between advertising exposure and any action on the part of the consumer. In such cases, an important communication goal of an advertiser is to create a positive attitude toward their product. Attitudes are predispositions or tendencies to behave or react in a consistent way over time. There is an affect, or feeling, dimension associated with attitudes, and there are generally various beliefs that provide justification for the feeling and predisposition. The goal of advertising is to have a positive impact on attitudes; these attitudes, in turn, influence future behavior. When the consumer next goes to the store to buy a particular type of product, these attitudes influence the choice of the product.

In some cases, the goal of advertising may be to create negative attitudes. For example, in various antidrug and antismoking public-service announcements, the objective of the communication is to reduce the likelihood that the viewer will use drugs or smoke. Attitudes and attitude formation are among the most widely researched phenomenon in communication research. Various theories have been offered to explain how attitudes are formed and how they may be reinforced or modified. Advertising plays a role in attitude formation, but it is important to recognize that the advertised

product itself is the most important determinant of attitude in the long term. A bad experience with a product will create a negative attitude that no advertising is likely to overcome. On the other hand, advertising can play an especially important role in inducing consumers to try a product for the first time, and if the product is satisfactory, a positive attitude will result. In addition, advertising can reinforce positive attitudes by reminding consumers of product benefits, desirable product characteristics, and positive product experiences.

Intentions and Behavior: Ultimately, the success of advertising rests on whether it influences behavior. Product advertisers want consumers to buy their product; political advertisers want voters to vote for their candidate; and sponsors of public-service announcements related to the harmful effects of smoking want the incidence of smoking to decline. While such effects are of primary interest for understanding the influence of advertising, advertising is only one of many factors that influence such behaviors. A consumer might want to buy an advertiser's product, but may not find it in the store, or another less-desirable product is so much less-expensive that the consumer chooses it instead. It is possible, in some cases, to identify the direct effects of advertising on behavior, but in most cases, there are simply too many other factors that can influence behavior to isolate the effects of advertising. It is for this reason that most advertising research focuses on other effects in the hierarchy of effects. When measuring the direct effect of advertising on behavior is of interest, it is necessary to design carefully controlled experiments to control for all factors other than advertising.

What Advertising Does Not Do

Some writers have argued that advertising can create needs and stimulate unconscious and deep-seated motives. This view has led some critics of advertising to argue that advertising is a persuasive tool with the dangerous potential to create consumer needs. John Kenneth Galbraith, in *The New Industrial State* (1985), suggests that the central function of advertising is to create desires—to bring into being wants that previously did not exist. It is certainly true that people frequently want things when they become aware that they exist and advertising does contribute to such awareness. It is also the case that people sometimes do not realize that they have a need until they become aware of a solution that meets this need. Advertising is not able to create needs that did not already exist, however. Indeed, advertising is a relatively weak persuasive tool. The evidence of this weakness is abundant and unambiguous. First, the failure rate for new products is very high (approximately 90%). This fact is not consistent with the claim that advertisers can actually mold people's needs. If advertisers could create needs, they should then be able to compel consumers to buy their products. Second, experts argue that advertising works best when it is working with, rather than counter to, the existing interests of the consumers. For example, for many years, low-calorie beer had not been able to find a consumer need to address and the product had limited

sales. When the Miller Brewing Company introduced its Lite brand of beer and positioned it as the beer with fewer calories (which “makes it less filling”), it became an instant success.

Conclusion

From the forgoing, one can observe that, the roles of advertising design in socio-economic development of Nigeria over the years cannot be overemphasized, even with its different proliferations. However, it is very pertinent and necessary that advertising and design in Nigeria should be well guided and be preserved from non professionals in the country. APCON should endeavour to sternly stand up to face these challenges and ensure that, the body is well professionalized.

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