

ADVERTISING AS A TOOL FOR MARKETING AND PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Advertising stimulates a burning desire of want in consumers after being exposed to it due to its persuasive nature. Manufacturers therefore, sell/market more as a result of advertising. As a tool for marketing and persuasive communication, advertising takes a non-personal form in reaching wide and heterogeneous audience. It is usually paid for and gets to the target audience through channels of communication like radio, television and newspapers. Persuasion is employed in the art of advertising to increase sales. This persuasion induces people to desire products they wouldn't ordinarily desire, and as a result has been negatively criticized as sometimes misleading due to the techniques employed in this persuasion. This paper however, assesses how advertisers appeal to consumers through persuasion. The article is supported by psychodynamic theory and Ranks model of persuasion.

Keywords: advertising, marketing, communication, persuasion, persuasive advertising

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is the communication of information about the price, quality and availability of a product. Generally, advertising involves a message communicated with the intention to sell by persuading consumers or intending consumers to buy. The aim of an advertiser is to influence consumers buying habit and influence their brand loyalty. However, this paper aims at looking at advertising from “communication and persuasion” point of view. Advertisers wouldn't be paying millions of naira if advertising is not persuasive enough to retain existing customers and attract prospective customers. A good advertisement must be able to persuade and sell (market) the product it advertises.

Advertising is the driving force of marketing. It is like the foundation of a marketing process. Marketing as a discipline has to do with the actions and inactions of a company or marketer to attract, draw and sustain a customer. Advertising, public relations and sales promotion can be used to market a product. Advertising therefore, assures them of the quality, good or affordable price and quality of the product, as well as assures them of the benefits of using such product.

Propaganda is another form of persuasion which uses same techniques as advertising. Persuasive communication is providing information towards consumers, prospective/existing in order to produce attitudinal change desired by the persuasive communicator or persuader. Many influential and persuasive techniques/tactics are employed in order to increase sales.

Advertising

Omeje and Oparaugo (2020) see advertising as all forms of print, electronic or online media messages written or spoken and paid for by a sponsor aimed at an audience with the objective of selling or marketing a product or service. Advertising is defined by Ngusha (2014, p.9) as “an act of making a product or service known, for use by means of persuasion through the mass media by paid sponsors or the art of giving wide publicity to goods and services through a



medium of communication intended, in its usual meaning to promote the sales of a product or service”.

“Advertising has been described as a communication process, marketing process, economic process and social process, public relations, information and persuasion process”, Nwogbunyama (2008,p.1). According to Nyong (2014, p.180) “persuasion appeals, motivates and often compels people to patronize or buy goods that they would not ordinarily have bought”. Kenekwue, Asemah, and Edegoh (2013) assert that advertising is a paid form of communication which is mediated and comes from identified sources. Advertising messages are designed to persuade the consumer to take an action. Omeje (2013, p.1) writes “in advertising, we are primarily dealing with consumers”. Our efforts are normally geared towards how to attract additional consumers to shop more frequently to our goods, influencing and persuading people to buy our products now rather than later”.

Bovee, Courtland and Arens (1986) in Nwogbunyama (2008) defined advertising as a non-personal communication of information about products, goods services and ideas, which are paid for and are persuasive in nature by identified sponsors through various media. Ozoh (2013, p.5) drew excerpts from various definitions of advertising and posted that “advertising is a form of communication...” He added that “it is a communication process involving transference of message from the advertiser to the customer, and a consequential feedback which can assume a variety of forms”.

To Nworgu (2010) advertising is a paid form of communication persuasive in nature that uses the media to attract and reach the audiences in order to connect an identified sponsor with the target audience (buyers). Advertising seeks to provide information about products (goods, services, and ideas). In most of our definitions of advertising, “communication”, and “persuasion” are always present. This shows that advertising cannot occur without communication (of information). This communication can be spoken (in television/radio) or written (in print media). An understanding of the meaning and nature of communication is therefore necessary at this stage. Agbo and Ezinwa (2006) in Anigbo (2016, p. 3) define communication as “the transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, opinions, thoughts and feelings from one person to another”. Verderber and Verderber (2005) in Ojobor (2017, p.42) define communication as “the process of creating and shearing meaning when people or individuals engage in informational conversations, group interaction, or public speaking”. Communication therefore, entails the transfer of information from a source to a receiver, and from the receiver back to the source. This process is known as feedback. Advertising also takes the communication process. The elements of communication process are: (Source, Message, Channel Receiver, and Feedback)

The source in an advertising situation is the advertiser, the message is the information, the channel is the media (radio, television, newspaper etc.) which the receiver is the audience, while the feedback is the communication from the receiver to the source. This is to say that the receiver has patronized the advertiser. However, feedback can only occur when persuasion has taken place. While explaining the key words in the definition of Bovee (1986), Nwogbunyama (2008, p.4-7) asserted that “a company or an organization usually sponsors advertising in order to convince the public that its products and services will benefit them”, (p.6). This is persuasion.

Persuasive Communication

“Persuasion occurs every time a person tries to communicate with another or group of persons for the purpose of getting the communicate to do something which he ought not to have done, Ofor and Obiorah (2014, p.193). Persuasion has to do with a communicator trying to influence or



convince his audience to act in a particular way, either to do or not to do something by presenting them the benefits of buying into his idea. Persuasive communication, according to Kenechukwu et al (2013, p.951), “employs persuasive techniques to catch consumer’s interests”. The language of persuasion is an important aspect of advertising for a successful campaign.

Persuasion usually involves attempting to influence behaviour in one of the following three ways:

By shaping responses: The receivers of the information do not have prior knowledge or experiences about the information being communicated to them.

By reinforcing responses: The receivers already have prior knowledge of the information and are therefore, encouraged to continue in that manner.

By altering response: The communicator tries to change the belief system of the audience entirely to buy his own idea.

According to Jowett and O’Donnell (2006) cited in Ofor and Obiorah (2014, p.195), “people are reluctant to change, thus, to convince them to do so, the persuader has to relate the change to something in which the persuader already believes”. In persuasive communication, the things the persuader tries to influence are: belief, value, attitude, behaviour, motive, group norms. Asemah (2012) in Kenechukwu et al (2013), says persuasion is a systematic and skillful method of creating awareness aimed at changing or strengthening opinions, attitudes, beliefs or values, for a more positive outcome.

The Concept of Marketing and Marketing Communication

Marketing is all activities undertaken by a company or a third party on behalf of a company to advertise, promote, publicise products, goods and services with the intention to sell. Marketing should not be seen narrowly as the task of finding clever ways of selling a firm’s product (Edoga, 2017). Hence, Eke and Edoga (2015) define marketing as all individual and organizational activities geared towards creating and maintain customer satisfaction and relationship by striving to provide a mutually easy and favourable exchange. Marketing includes advertising, selling, and delivering products to consumers or retailers. Some marketing is done by affiliates on behalf of a company (Twin, 2020).

Marketing does not only mean buying and selling but many other business activities involved between when a product idea is up to when it finally reaches the customer/consumer (Yanbeen, 2013). At its most fundamental level, marketing attempts to match a company's products and services to customers who want access to those products. This act ultimately ensures profitability.

The Four Ps of marketing are product, price, place, and promotion. Marketing scholars argue that these Four Ps collectively make up the “essential mix” a company needs to market a product or service. The concept of marketing mix and the Four Ps were made popular by Neil Borden in the 1950s.

Product: Product are items the business plans to offer to customers. The product should seek to fulfill consumer demand for a better product.

Price: Price is how much the company will sell the product for. Before fixing the price of a product, the company puts into consideration the unit cost price, marketing costs, and distribution expenses.

Place: Place refers to where the products are available or can be bought. It has to do with offline or online stores.



Promotion: Promotion is the integrated marketing communications campaign and includes a variety of activities like: advertising, selling, sales promotions, public relations, direct marketing, sponsorship, and guerrilla marketing.

Marketing communication is a collection of all elements in a brand's marketing mix that facilitate exchanges, by establishing shared means with the brand's customers or clients (Ogbuoshi and Abugu, 2007). Marketing communication is described by Bačík, Fedorko & Šimová (2012) as an interactive dialogue between the organization and customer in the stages: prior to sale, during sale in course, use of the product and continue to the end-use product.

Advertising as a Tool for Marketing Communication

Marketing communications is most times referred to as marketing promotions and is one of marketing mix variables used by marketers in formulating marketing strategy (Adirika, Ebue and Nnolim, 1996). Advertising is a potent tool of marketing that aims to influence the audiences through information about the existence of the product in the market and persuade them to make the buying decision. It is a component of promotional mix in the four marketing mix i.e., product, price, place and promotion. According to a theory, advertising can be considered as one of the most effective promotional tool as it can arouse interest on the audience and even influence them to buy the product which they never bought before (Khandai & Agrawal, 2012).

Advertising can only be said to be successful when a brand is accomplishes its objectives in communicating its message. It conveys the in-depth relationship between the needs of consumers and benefits of a product (Chappalwala, 2016).

According to traditional hierarchy of effects model, advertising has an impact on prospective buyers by building memory about the advertisement, brand cognitions which leads to positive attitudes such as product liking and attitudes towards purchase, which will further leads to buying behavior i.e., buying the advertised product (Mendelson and Bolls, 2002).

Persuasive Communication in Advertising

“In print advertisements, persuasion appeals to the buyers, giving them reasons and justifications why they should purchase a specific product and why they should change or imbibe certain ideas”, Nyong (2014, p.180). The foregoing was supported by Kenechukwu et al (2013) when they asserted that advertising messages are designed in a manner in which it becomes easy to induce and lure consumers to buy the particular products or services being advertised.

Newspapers use colours (usually flashy bright colours) to persuade readers when advertising a product. Advertisers on their own part, use sweet language to try to induce their own part, use sweet language to try to induce their audience into buying. Language here refers to “advertising slogans”. For example, Fidelity bank Plc use “we are fidelity... we keep our word” as a slogan. This can go a long way in communicating to their customers (existing and prospective) as well as persuading them to keep/start banking with them. The broadcast media's use of repetition in advertising is also a form of persuasive technique. The intention of the advertiser is to induce or lure the customers to buy what they ordinarily wouldn't have bought. The effort to persuade is not a problem for the target audience (consumers) if they understand the purpose of the advertisement.

Theoretical Perspective

The article is supported with the “psychodynamic theory”. According to Ofor and Obiorah (2014, p.198) “this theory draws heavily on the individual difference perspective”. According to them,

this theory “holds that every persuasive communication is to be judged based on the ability of the message to succeed in altering the psychological functioning of the recipient such that he/ she begins to overtly respond or behave in the manner desired or suggested by the communicator.

The theory suggests that the communicator (advertiser) intends to make the recipient (audience) to respond to his message (advertisement). The advertiser tries to alter the psychological functioning of the audience to buy into his own idea. This he does by persuasion. Ofor and Obiorah (2014, p.198-199) further added that “ the theory is anchored on the belief that communication will be fruitless unless it is capable of influencing the attitude and behaviour of the audience.” The psychological motivations used as intervening variables between the message stimulus and the audience response include hunger, sexual urges status drive, varieties, opinions, etc, Folarin (2002) cited in Ofor and Obiorah (2014, p.198-199).

Ogbuoshi (2011, p.219-222) explained persuasive functions theoretically. He used Ranks model of persuasion. My good, others’ bad. The persuasive communicator repeats the good side of his person, associates it with the audience and composes it using the mass media. This is known as intensify. The persuasive communicator tries to intensify this image. Then, on the down play, it is my bad, others good. The persuasive communicator omits the bad side of his person, diverts the attention of the audience and confuses them by using jargons.

Techniques in Persuasive Advertising

Persuasive advertising, according to Kenechukwu et al (2013, p.956), is designed to employ different techniques to grab the attention and interest of consumers and establish credibility and trust, to motivate the consumer to act positively.

Name calling: Ukonu (2013, p.204) asserts that “the media use applications or labels to describe a person, thing, or an issue either to praise or demote it”. Advertisers use this technique to eulogise or praise the products being advertised. Also, the advertisers demote other products (without mentioning names) during advertising. This is used to make the audience accept the product being advertised and reject other (similar) products.

Testimonials: Advertisers are in the habit of using well-known personalities to endorse their products. Globacom is mostly known for using this technique. P-square, Omawumi, Basketmouth, Patience “Mama G” Ozokwor, etc., have all been used in Globacom advertisements. In using this technique, these celebrities are shown testifying about the value or quality of a product or endorsing an idea.

Card Stacking: In card stacking, expressions and illustrations whether logical or illogical are selected to make an idea trail into acceptance, Ukonu (2013, p.208). In card stocking, false contexts are deliberately used to give misleading impression about a product or service. The advertiser selects only favourable evidence that can convince consumers to buy the product being advertised.

Plain Folk: Advertisers here, show ordinary people using or supporting a product or service. Consumers have trust in the product because it is good enough or considered good enough for regular “folks”.

Glittering generalities: This technique tries to show that a cause or an issue draws the support of most people whether or not there is a substantial part of these so called supporters who object to the issue.

Outright lies: Sometimes advertisers use outright lies in their effort to persuade buyers. Some products could be said to cost #70 in advertisements, but in reality, they cost #80 or #90. This is an attempt to make the buyers believe such product is more affordable than rival products, but in reality they are same price.

Bandwagon: This technique tries to persuade buyers to start using a product because everybody is now using it. The bottom line is that consumers buy the product so as to “belong” or “fit-in”.

Fictionalizing: This technique is suitable for persuasive communications including advertising and propaganda. Ojobor (2017, p.213) posits that “if the mass media present mere fiction camouflaging it as fact, then the propaganda technique of fictionalizing has been used”. The advertiser therefore, fictionalizes to make buyers believe in the message communicated to them, whether possible or not in reality.

Humour: Advertisers sometimes use amusement in their advertisements to attract and retain the attention of the audience to the product or service being advertised especially in radio/TV advertisements. The audience can easily remember the funny lines or scenes used in the advert.

Repetition: Constantly repeating a particular advertisement on the radio or television goes a long way in persuading buyers to start using the product. The frequency over the broadcast media matters. As it is repeated, and prospective buyers are exposed to the advertisement, they start changing their opinion (for good) towards the product or service.

Biased Photographs: Photographs, even though they may not lie, can mislead. In these days of photo shopping, any kind of emotion can be stimulated on person’s face using technology. This technique works perfectly well in print media advertising.

Creating advertising appeal: This is igniting forces which stimulate want in the buyers’ mindset. Advertising appeal talks about the approach or the method employed to attract the consumer’s attention and or to influence their feelings about the product, service or cause (Ezinwa, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Advertising promotes the sales of products, ideas or services through communication of information and persuasion. Advertisers or persuasive communicators try to use different techniques in influencing their audience, thus marketing these products. Their main aim is to emotionally appeal to already existing belief of the consumers or to totally change their psychology towards the new product being advertised to them. The use of persuasion in advertising is all about enticing consumers into purchasing specific goods services and ideas which will be economically favourable to the advertiser.



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