

Lies for Sale: Analysis of Credibility Narrative in Broadcast Media Advertisement

Nnamdi George Nzekwe
&
Chukwuemeka Ndolo

Abstract

The competition for increased market share by various brands has led to a proliferation of advertisements on the airwaves of radio and television. However, a heavy dose of commercials does not necessarily guarantee a positive perception and acceptance of such messages by the audience; therefore it is imperative for advertisers to understand consumer needs and channel their messages towards satisfying these needs if a positive response is to be expected from the target audience. This study adopted survey research method to examine the audience perception of radio and television advertisement and its influence on purchasing habits. The data generated by distributing three hundred and eighty four copies of questionnaires were analyzed using tables and simple percentages. The findings indicate that radio and television commercials provided useful information, audiences do not believe the commercials are always true, and interpersonal interactions and other factors influenced purchase decisions more than radio and television advertisements. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that radio and television advertisements are not taken as seriously as the advertiser intends and this is as a result of poor perception and mistrust of advertisement by the public.

Keywords: *.Advertisement .Audience perception .Broadcast media .Credibility*

Introduction

Information dissemination has been a major role in media business and a good number of these disseminated messages are sponsored by individuals or organizations for specific purposes and target audiences. In today's world of complex communication technologies, messages are sent en masse to specific audiences through a wide variety of channels, they can be disseminated through telephone, mainstream media, online channels, and so on. This form of communication in the media, paid for by an identified sponsor and directed at a target audience with the aim of imparting favorable information about a product, service, idea or opinion is referred to as advertising (APCON, 2010).

Bovee and Arens (1986) cited in Ozoh (2013), define advertising as a non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by an identified sponsor through various media. Advertising Association of United Kingdom defines it as messages paid for by those who send them and are intended to inform or influence people who receive them. Cambridge University defines it as a picture, short film, song etc. that tries to persuade people to buy a product or service. Advertising is any non-personal message of commercial significance about an idea, product or service usually paid for by an identified sponsor.

From these definitions, it is clear that advert is a form of persuasive communication with an objective to incite patronage of the advertised item. It is no surprise Ogilvy (1983), cited in Villafane (2015), said "when I write an advertisement, I don't want you to tell me

that you find it creative, I want you to find it so interesting that you buy the product". Without patronage advertisements efforts are futile.

Advertisements in the traditional mass media is seemingly losing its viewers, listeners and readers to a highly flexible digital media (or new media) that allows the audience to be more actively engaged in the communication process and make sense of the messages they receive within their own personal and social contexts. "Studies have shown that audiences are not passive, rather they reach out to media of their choice for contents that interests them most"; "social media facilitate two-way communication and content sharing thereby enhancing a company's online visibility, strengthen relationships with clients and expand word of mouth advertising; which is the best type"; Okunna & Omenugha (2012); Zimmerman & Ng (2013). New technologies like SEO- Search Engine Optimization, a technology that makes it easy for internet users to find content they have interest in, and internet based applications have made it much easier for marketers to reach specific audiences with specific media contents. The implication of these is that traditional media advertisements may no longer be the voice of conviction rather it is becoming the loud dog howls in your backyard you have gotten used to at night when you want to sleep. And you sleep. Ries and Ries (2002), elucidates; "when it comes to painting, its death is not the death of painting itself, but the death of its function as a representation of reality... in the same sense, advertising (in traditional media) has lost its function as a brand-building tool and lives on as art" (p. xii). The advertising media landscape is aglitter with new possibilities viz websites, social media and mobile gadgets, the outcome is a massive shift of media revenue away from traditional media (radio, television, print) to the new digital media that is everywhere (Thomas, 2016).

Unlike the new media, advertising in the traditional media does not permit a two-way relationship because it operates on a one-to-many paradigm. According to Okunna & Omenugha (2012) messages originate from the traditional mass communicators and reach the audience with little direct interaction between sources and the receivers; the implication of this modus operandi is that the advertiser can only make an impression or get attention without proffering solutions to satisfying consumer needs. Stanislaw (2014) opines that consumers cannot be heard (and their needs are not properly addressed), that is why traditional media advertising is dying.

Statement of Problem

Traditional mass media is bombarded with jingles, short films, printed posts of different sizes and colors, carrying all manner of captions and we are exposed to these messages on a daily basis. The average adult is exposed to about 360 commercials per day, of which only about 150-155 are noted and even fewer are recalled (Johnson, 2014). Perhaps this ample exposure may be inimical to the impact of advertisements on its target audience simply because people may get tired of repeated exposure and this may cause a distaste for advertisements generally. In essence, a commercial on a television show with few commercials will generally be noticed by more people than a commercial on a TV show with many commercials (Ries & Ries, 2002).

To examine the relationship between radio and television advertisement and audience purchasing habits, the audience perception of advert messages is the utmost concern of this study, however, the extent to which the clutter of advertisement the average person is exposed to in the traditional media and how these messages motivate purchase is what necessitated this research.

Research Questions

1. Do radio and television advertisements provide useful information that satisfies consumer needs?
2. To what extent does the audience believe advertisements aired on radio and television?
3. What is the influence of radio and television advertisements on purchasing habits?

Review of Relevant Literature

It is an undisputable fact that the goal of every form of advertisement is to get the attention of likely users of the advertised product or service, and give the advertiser a good return on his investment. To achieve this basic goal, audience are targeted and messages are designed for them via various media channels; radio, television, magazines, newspapers, billboards, flyers, and so on. To cause change in attitude means an advertisement must speak personally to the person(s) the message is designed for. However, the average consumer feels that the information presented in advertisements are one-sided, does not tell the whole story, does not present alternatives and is often misleading (Ries & Ries, 2002 p.11). Apparently common advert objectives such as delivery of creative message and the zeal to capture attention overshadows a very basic but important *raison d'être* of advertising which is making sales by earning the consumers trust.

Ojenike (2012) in his study revealed that advertisements are effective when the marketing mix is applied in satisfying consumer. His study found that advertisements and availability of the product influenced preference for MTN more than other telecom brands. Ampofo (2014) agrees with this finding in his study which revealed that although advertising influences purchase on the average, other factors such as affordable price pushed consumers to purchase. The study also indicated that income and others' recommendations play a strong role in purchase. It recommended that firms should place their products at affordable prices because consumers patronize at discounted prizes.

Gebrehananna (2014) conducted a study that reveals that consumers are disconnected from advertisements when such advertisements are not done professionally. The study further found that advertisements produced by Oromia Television did not pay attention to advertisement ethics and the consumers, rather it focused on revenue generation. This resulted in a negative perception of these messages by the audience. The television commercials were perceived as exaggerations, unreliable and deceptive information.

Ezeah, Asogwa, Onwukaeme (2013) conducted a study that revealed that illustrations in print media advertisements did not propel purchase tendencies for home appliances. In its findings, the research revealed that illustrations in print media adverts were not simple enough for consumers to grasp easily and this hampered an effective delivery of intended advert message. It also indicated that the audience psyches are not well played on through the use of illustrations and though it may catch their attention and correlate with the message, it did not propel purchase tendencies.

Fatima and Lodhi (2015) through their study reveal that advertisements are very useful in creating awareness among the people but does not build strong perception in the mind of consumers. According to the study, perception mainly drives the use of product. It also revealed that other factors that can cause product use are recommendations from friends, peers and colleagues and because cosmetic users are generally brand loyalists, it is difficult to change their perceptions through advertisements. Rishante, (2014) conducted a study that revealed that television advertisements on mobile telecommunication networks have no significant effect on viewers' preference of young people. However, the study revealed that television advertisements establishes basic awareness of products and services in the minds of its viewers. The research recommends that advertisers should carry out more research on consumer behavior, market segmentation with regards to age distribution and also package persuasive and reminder-oriented messages.

Research Methodology

The focus of this study is to ascertain the audience perception of radio and television advertisement with regards to purchasing habits, therefore, the researchers deems survey the most apt method for gathering data.

The population of the study is Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu state, Nigeria. The researcher chose this area because of it is high urbanization thus a good chance that the population will be exposed to radio and television advertisements.

The size of the population as made available by National Population Census Commission based on the organization's 2011 projection is two hundred and eighty one thousand, three hundred and thirty (281, 330). In order to obtain a feasible proportion for this study, a sample size was drawn using the Roger D. Wimmer calculator which gave the researcher a sample size of three hundred and eighty four (384). An error margin of 5% was used.

Due to the nature of this research and the emphasis on the exposure to traditional media advertisement, the researcher adopted the stratified sampling technique. Six sub groups were selected from Ogui urban; New haven, Independence layout, Asata, Iva valley and G.R.A. These samples were selected because of its high degree of urbanization and consequently a high possibility that a greater part of the populace will be well exposed to traditional media adverts. Three hundred and eighty four copies of questionnaires were distributed to these sub groups.

The researcher used simple percentages and tables to present and analyze data generated from the use of questionnaires. These were used for the sake of clarity.

Discussion of findings

This study set out to examine audience perception of radio and television advertisements and how they influence purchase. In so doing, it inquired if radio and television advertisements provide useful information that satisfy consumer needs, the extent the audience believe advertisements aired on radio and television, and the link between radio and television advertisements and consumer purchasing habits.

Without necessarily reiterating the findings already mentioned, it is pertinent to discuss the following:

1. A significant portion of the audience are exposed to radio and television advertisements, and although 63.68% of them do not like radio and television advertisements, 56.06% admit that the commercials provide useful information. However, only 32.36% use information from the commercials when making purchase decisions.
2. Inquiring on audience believability of radio and television advertisements, the researcher discovered that 63.15% did not believe radio and television advertisements are always true.
3. The researcher also discovered that interpersonal interactions among other factors influence purchase decision more than radio and television advertisement.

Conclusion

There is a severed relationship between radio and television advertisements and satisfaction of consumers' need. This is because radio and television advertisements are not taken as seriously as the adviser intends and this is as a result of poor perception and mistrust of advertisement by the public.

Interpersonal relationship influences purchase because audiences find it easier to accept messages and products and services from persons they trust and word of mouth advertising has a great degree of personalized approach, a quality that is in dire need in radio and television approach.

Recommendations

Advertising personnel and agencies should endeavor to go to the field and conduct proper audience oriented research that will help them identify consumer needs before designing advertisements for them. People are likely to respond quicker to messages that

address their issues of interest than a persuasive blanket message. Advertisers should pay a closer attention to consumer needs and tag product feature to the identified needs.

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NZEKWE, NNAMDI GEORGE is a Lecturer with Department of Mass Communication, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. mailnnamdi@yahoo.com

ZIDOLO, CHUKWUEMEKA is with Bowie State University, USA