

## **ADVERTISING PRACTICE IN NIGERIA: DEVELOPMENT, NEW TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

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### **Abstract**

*The study identifies the meaning of advertising and traced its earliest history in Nigeria. The study mentioned some of the new trends in advertising in Nigeria which include the practice of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC); which is the combination of various marketing communication techniques like advertising, public relations, publicity, sales promotions, events marketing, etc, in carrying out a promotional campaign. Other new trends include the setting of up of some independent media agencies and international affiliations by many ad agencies in Nigeria. The study identifies proliferation of advertising agencies as one of the challenges facing advertising in Nigeria. Other challenges include poor economy, poor purchasing power and lack of enough trained advertising professionals. However, advertising in Nigeria has come a long way and has achieved some developments. Despite this feat, ad practice in Nigeria still needs a lot of improvement to compete with other countries in terms of advertising. The study suggests that professionalism in advertising practice in Nigeria should be pursued with increased vigour. There should be proper monitoring of advertising in Nigeria. APCON should establish more offices nationwide to enhance their operations. There should be improved welfare packages by employers to reduce proliferation of and agencies.*

### **Introduction**

Advertising in Nigeria has grown from its earliest beginning of using the town criers to announce availability of goods and services to become a big industry in Nigeria. Advertising is now very important in the economy of the nation, considering the fact that it serves as a source of information about goods and services and also persuades consumers to patronize the advertised goods and services. The aim of this paper is to critically appraise the practice of advertising in Nigeria. The paper will discuss the development of advertising in Nigeria and the latest trend in the practice of advertising. The study will also appraise the challenges faced by advertising in Nigeria and the prospects of the industry. Suggestions will be proffered on how to improve advertising practice in Nigeria.

### **What is Advertising**

Different scholars and practitioners have variously described advertising to reflect their understanding of the concept. An attempt will be made to evaluate some of these definitions. According to Arens (1999:7):

Advertising is the structured and composed non-personal communication, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods, services and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media.

Furthermore, Encyclopedia Americana (1997:113) defines advertising as “the techniques 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”. Also, Osunbiyi (1999:8) posits 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”. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) in their The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice defines advertising as “a form of communication through the media about products, services or ideas paid for by an identified sponsor” (2005:5).

A critical assessment of the above definitions exposes the following 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 people to take action by patronizing the goods and services advertised. Daramola (2003:191) opines that the objective of advertising is to induce immediate action, to create liking and preference for a product or organization, and to create awareness about a product or service. Some advertisements also seek to build a respected corporate identity for a company, product, and brand name or make all familiar to the public.

The functions of advertising are well captured by the AIDA formula as postulated by Bel-Molokwu (2000). AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. He states that the reason for every advertisement is to create awareness about products and services; which in turn elicits the interest of potential customers. Consequently, a desire to acquire the product is aroused. This finally leads to action. Action implies acquiring the product or services by potential customers.

### **Development of Advertising in Nigeria**

According to Bel-Molokwu (2000:9), advertising is as old as man. The word comes from the Latin word “advertere”, meaning to draw attention to. He further posits 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. To buttress the above assertion, Ogbodoh (1990:10-11) posits thus: Advertising in Nigeria is said to have begun naturally with one of the earliest forms of mass communication town crying. This traditional African medium performed the universal communication function of disseminating information about available goods, services, and ideas to the people.

In the Igbo areas of Nigeria as in many other parts of the country, the most important information was disseminated in the village squares and market places through these town criers. Town crying was also frequently employed to carry out advertisements or information about inter-tribal wars, disasters of some sort, important

ceremonies including marriages, births, deaths, products, services, ideas, personalities and bargains. Ogbodoh went further to state that hawking and displays were the other known methods of advertising in Nigeria in the earliest times. Hawkers advertised their wares by calling out the wares they had, and asking people to buy them by extolling the quality and quantity of such goods (Ogbodoh, 1990:11). He further opines thus about displays:

It has also been observed that in various villages, products, especially meat and games not meant for the markets but which because of necessity must be advertised to draw attention to them, were often times fixed on sticks and raised high to the notice of passersby to inform them of the availability of such items in the location. These types of display advertising were equally used by palm wine tappers, palm oil and garri sellers as well as other sellers of various types of consumer goods. Palm wine tappers would place kegs of palm wine in front of their compounds and palm oil sellers would also display some bottles of palm oil in front of their compounds to indicate that these goods were available there (P.11).

The advent of the printing press in 1450 affected advertising a great deal. In Nigeria, the first printing press was established in Calabar by the Presbyterian Church in 1846. The establishment of the first Nigerian newspaper by a Reverend Henry Townsend, a Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S.) Reverend in Abeokuta in December 1859 changed the face of advertising in Nigeria. The newspaper was titled: "Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba", meaning "Newspaper for the Egba speaking people and Yorubas". Furthermore, Bel-Molokwu propounds 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 or organized 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 advent of the "Iwe Irohin" led to the establishment of other newspapers. According to Osunbiyi (1999:20-21): The year 1863 saw yet another birth of a newspaper in the country called Anglo African. It was founded by Robert Campbell and regarded as Nigeria's first English newspaper. The latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century witnessed the establishment of many more newspapers. They included the Lagos Times, the Gold Coast Advertiser established in 1880, and the Lagos Observer with Bogan Benjamin as its publisher. In 1882, The Eagle was established followed by Owen Macaulay's Lagos Critic in 1883. Most of these early newspapers were short-lived because they did not develop the flair for attracting advertising support.

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 the 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.(WAP), the first ever advertising agency in Nigeria. The company was incorporated in London in August 13, 1928. Bel-Molokwu opines further: 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 organized 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. Lintas is currently known as Lowe Lintas. The advent of radio and television broadcasting added flair to advertising. Radio was established in 1932 in Nigeria through the advent of the British Empire Service. The first Radio Distribution Service (Rediffusion) was established in Lagos in 1936 (Osunbiyi, 1999:21). However, radio advertisement 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 advertisement 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 and others. Today in Nigeria, advertising is now a big business. There are up to two hundred or more agencies registered with the Association of Advertising Agencies in Nigeria (AAAN); while you can count up to about two hundred or more small agencies not registered with AAAN.

### **New Trends in Advertising Practice in Nigeria**

Advertising business in Nigeria has come a long way since its inception. As such, certain developments have taken place. This section will discuss some of these new trends. One of the new trends in the practice of advertising in Nigeria is the embracing of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). This development has been

foreseen by the father of modern advertising in Nigeria and the Chairman of Lowe Lintas, I. S. Moemeke. He posits thus:

The advertising agency business is probably one of the least rewarding investment areas in this country . . . In future, the situation is even likely to be poorer. The point is that the agency business calls for low investment in tangibles like plant and machinery but substantial investment in manpower. The cost of the latter increases yearly along with other costs. So much of the increase can be passed to client. After a point, the agency has to absorb the increases. At that point, revenue available to the proprietors of the agency begins to diminish sharply. That is the point now reached by agencies in Europe and America. The agencies have to find alternative sources of income, and so, they will diversify into other but usually related fields of business. That situation will be reached in Nigeria in the next decade. (Cited in Odiboh; 2005:5).

Integrated Marketing Communication is the combination of various communication techniques like advertising, public relations, publicity, sales promotions, event marketing, sponsorship etc. to achieve marketing goals. It is a holistic approach of using various marketing communication methods to achieve a set marketing goal.

Some advertising agencies in Nigeria have responded to Moemeke's prediction by setting up subsidiaries to manage the vast integrated marketing communication elements. Some of the ad agencies now have public relations outfits. Examples are Centre Spread that has FCB Redline, a PR outfit. There is also Insight Communication that has The Quadrant Company, another PR outfit.

A lot of the agencies have also diversified by setting up Media Independent agencies. These Media Independent outfits specialize in purchasing media space or time and selling same to interested agencies and advertisers to make profit. Some examples are STB McCann which owns Universal MacCann. Also, Insight Communications established Troyka and Lowe Lintas established Initiative Media. This is just to mention a few.

Another trend that is new in the advertising practice in Nigeria is the issue of international affiliation. In the past it was few ad agencies that can boast of international affiliation. Presently, almost all the big agencies have international affiliations. Some examples are Insight Communication affiliated to Grey International, Centre Spread, affiliated to FCB, Rosabel affiliated to Leo Burnett, Prima Garnet affiliated to Ogilvy. According to Doghudje (1990:127) these links offer the local agencies easy access to the training facilities available in the big international agencies. In addition, it makes it easier for the local agencies to win and keep the blue-chip accounts of multi-national manufacturing companies. Realizing these benefits, many medium and small agencies are now seeking foreign affiliations or associations. There is also the development of Creative Boutiques (Hot Shops) in

Nigeria. These are very small sized agencies that concentrate in developing creative concepts for agencies or clients. Such creative shops are run by artist and copywriters.

### **Challenges and Prospects of Advertising Practice in Nigeria**

Despite the tremendous growth of advertising in Nigeria, it is important to buttress that it is also faced with some challenges. One of the greatest challenges facing the advertising practice in Nigeria is the proliferation of advertising agencies. New agencies keep springing up in Nigeria, and this is not too healthy for the industry. This is due to the fact that some of these new agencies do not have the required expertise to function at a top level; hence the standard of advertisements produced is affected. Some critics have described the reason for the proliferation of ad agencies as greed both on the part of agency owners and their staff who decide to pull out and establish a new outfit. Some say that the big agencies do not pay good salaries and that the staff is not well motivated; hence their top staff decides to set up their own outfit. This can be true to a large extent, but it is also debatable based on the fact that some staff is well paid and motivated, yet they feel like establishing their outfits.

Another challenge faced by the advertising industry in Nigeria is poor economy; especially poor purchasing power by the majority of Nigerian masses. This is because if companies do not sell their products, they are very likely to cut down on advertising spend, which will in turn affect the ad agencies. Furthermore, there is the problem of lack of adequate professional practitioners. Some of the staff of these agencies are not trained professionals, they are just journeymen. However, the establishment of the Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (APCON) as a regulatory body can tackle this problem headlong. Practitioners should be made to register with APCON and those who refused to register should be shown the way out of the profession if there is going to be enough sanity in the industry.

Another problem faced by advertising agencies in Nigeria is the unavailability of accurate media data in Nigeria. Though, we have very few media monitoring agencies in Nigeria, they are yet to have what it takes to publish acceptable media data that will cover the entire Nigeria. Doghudje (1990:128) has this to say about the problem. Consequently, advertising practitioners see the performance of the media function by agencies as no more than a hit-or-miss affair. There is yet no certainty about it. There is therefore the general belief that perhaps more than half the media budget is wasted or spent in a way that cannot be described as cost-effective. This is tragic and needs to be corrected by the combined efforts of agencies and media owners.

Agencies should behave like the true professionals they are and invest on media research. Media owners on their part should endeavour to be more competitive in their behaviour by finding out through research wherein their strengths lie and make the findings available to agencies . . .

Talking about the prospects of advertising in Nigeria, it is very salient to note that the future of advertising in Nigeria is very bright. With a very large population and ever ready to consume new products, more goods and services are coming into the Nigeria and they need to intimate the masses about what they have to offer, hence

the need for advertisement. However, there is the need to tackle some of the challenges facing the ad industry in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In this study, we have been able to discuss the meaning of advertising and its development in Nigeria. We have also surveyed some of the new trends in advertising practice in Nigeria. The challenges and prospects of the advertising industry in Nigeria were also discussed. This study concludes that advertising practice in Nigeria has grown to a great height and it is still growing. Despite the achievement recorded by advertising practice in Nigeria, it can still not be compared with advertising practice in the developed world. As such, advertising practitioners in Nigeria should strive to improve their skills in order to achieve a world class advertising environment in Nigeria.

Professionalism should be encouraged in the advertising industry in Nigeria. Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) has a great role to play in this regard. They should endeavour to establish more offices nationwide to monitor the practice of advertising in Nigeria. When you live outside the states where APCON has offices, you will easily notice that some of the locally produced advertisements were not vetted by APCON. They violate some of the ethics of the profession, and there is no way such practice can be arrested apart from going to the grassroots. APCON should also monitor quacks that are practicing in the industry. They should be stopped from practicing if they are not registered with the regulatory body. Furthermore, advertising agencies in Nigeria should eschew from unethical practices. They should stick to the ethics guiding the profession, and try as much as possible to produce first class advertisements that can compete anywhere in the world and at the same time promote the sales of the products or services they are advertising. We also believe that the issue of proliferation can be tackled in the advertising industry with improved welfare packages and motivation by employers. The employees should be made to feel satisfied by engaging them in decision making; this will make them to have a sense of belonging and it can as well improve loyalty to employers. It is also suggested that to improve productivity, better creativity and economic survival, some of the small and medium sized agencies can come together in a merger agreement to form a big agency.

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