

THE USE CONDOM CAMPAIGN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on 'The Use Condom' campaign and its implications for graphic communication in support of development programmes in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, a triangulation of in-depth interviews and content analysis were employed to assess the roles/activities of the media team in the media production process and the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials used for the campaign respectively. The paper introduces the reader to the use of graphic language/communication for development purposes and the use condom campaign. Also, it examines the role/activities of the media team in the media production process of the graphic communication campaign with particular emphasis on the Topic-study, Pre-testing, Evaluation, Function, Modality and Targets that are crucial to achieving success. Moreover, the IEC materials were analysed on the basis of aesthetic, pragmatic, semantic, syntactic and technical resolution of uncertainties introduced during the graphic encoding process. Furthermore, the implications of the outcome of the campaign for graphic communication in Nigeria are considered. The paper ends with the need to adopt communication practices that would involve the graphic encoder at all levels of the media production process, which is indispensable to producing effective graphic messages that facilitate the rapid adoption and utilization of development ideas.

Introduction

Nigeria, like every other nation across the world embarks upon development programmes in order to grow and develop. For these programmes to succeed, communication campaigns are launched. These campaigns often use media to inform, persuade and mobilize target audience for support. The media use graphic language on a wide-scale to communicate the prime messages and supporting information of a given campaign about development. This is important to overcome challenges in a developing society such as Nigeria, where ignorance, superstition and illiteracy are prevalent (Obionu, 2001). So, the importance of effective graphic communication for the success of development programmes cannot be over-emphasized.

A key factor that militates against the production of effective graphic communication in Nigeria is the prevalence ignorance of where the graphic encoder could intervene and collaborate with other members of the media team during the media production process in order to produce veritable graphic messages on IEC materials. This often leads to communication gaps between the graphic encoder and other members of the media team, intrusions upon prescribed roles of communication actors particularly the graphic encoder and production of ineffective graphic messages. These usually lead to communication breakdown, failure and rejection with grave consequences for development (Ebigbagha, 2010).

The media is the message (Baran, 2002 quoting McLuhan, 1964), so, the success or failure of a communication campaign is to large extent hinged on the role and activities of the communication actors in the media production process. When prescribed roles and activities are thoroughly organised and properly integrated, they usually produce salutary effect.

The 'Use Condom Campaign' was one of the nation-wide campaigns on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. It focused on the sensitization and advocacy of the use of condom as a preventive measure to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS. This was carried out by the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa-Nigeria (SWAAN), a non-governmental organisation. The media team of the organisation produced a number of IEC materials for the campaign, which include posters, pamphlets and stickers to mention a few.

The graphic encoding choices of the IEC materials produced for the campaign, to a great extent, are filled with aesthetic, pragmatic, semantic, syntactic and technical uncertainties that created a high level of

noise-to-signal ratio. This greatly hindered effective communication and success of the campaign. The implication of the production of ineffective communication media for communication which is the prevalent situation in Nigeria is enormous. Therefore, we would examine the role/activities of the media team during the media production process of the campaign, IEC materials utilized in the campaign and the implications for graphic communication.

Methodology

The survey research design is employed for this study. Wimmer and Dominck (2004), state that it is an important and useful method of data collection for the purpose of describing/analysing relationship between variables. Apart from its flexibility and popularity among media researchers, it is the most appropriate for the purpose of this study.

The sample for this study is the media team of SWAAN because they are responsible for the performance of the task to produce and fine-tune the development messages into graphic forms and formats. The non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed and the sample was selected on the basis of national coverage (nation-wide campaign on HIV/AIDS), on the list of credible partner (National Policy on HIV/AIDS, 2003) and vulnerability (National Gender Policy, 2007).

The in-depth interviews guide, which was content, construct and consensual validated and with reliability ascertained through test-retest that did not yield numeric indices, was the instrument used to collect primary data. It was employed because it is a Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tool suitable to be applied to one person or group of persons who are very knowledgeable in the area of interest. It seeks detail information until the substance is obtained. Particularly, when setting/people are not easily accessible as in past event, when only those present are asked to explain certain acts or why and how an event occurred (Araoye, 2003; and National Manual for PMTCT Operations Research, 2003).

The guide was developed on the basis of the interface of the Action Research Model of the Media production process (Bowers, 1973) and the shuttle models of the graphic communication campaign process (Ejembi, 1989). The interface produced six variables (Topic-study, Pre-testing, Evaluation, Function, Modality and Targets) on the basis of which questions were structured. It probes the roles/activities of the media team in the development process in order to examine the level of collaboration at these points (Topic-study, Pre-testing and Evaluation). And the function of communication actors, the modality employed on development messages at the preparatory and advance stages of the campaign and whether or not the specific and general targets were achieved. The responses obtained and the IEC materials produced were subjected to analytic examination using qualitative procedure that was not passed through any numeric analysis, which was not required in order to achieve the objective of this study.

Analysis of Data from In-depth Interviews

The data analysis of the in-depth interviews with the key members of staff in charge of the production of Information, Education and Communication materials used for the nation-wide campaigns are examined as follows:

Topic-Study of the Campaign

The interview results show that there is a positive and firmly established awareness of the need for every stakeholder to be involved and participate in development conferences, whereby development ideas are formulated and solutions to problems proffered. But these conferences often exclude the target audience because only experts in areas of concern by the source are invited. This does not allow for sustainable development because expert views of target audiences' problems are often not based on research. They are usually superficial and mere assumptions that lack credibility, which the firsthand knowledge and experiences of the receivers possess.

The making of graphic language on the basis of concepts formulated exclusively by experts without the involvement of the target audience often impact negatively on the quality of the graphic language produced. A response that every stakeholder, including graphic encoders who are experts in graphic media production, participated in concept formation during development conferences is highly questionable and should be taken with a pinch of salt. The reason for this is anchored on the very low quality of the IEC materials produced, which we would examine later.

Pre-Testing of the Media Draft

The results of the interviews showed that media draft were often submitted to the funding agency or constituted committee for improvement, approval and final reproduction without pre-test involving the target audience. One respondent said that the media draft for the Female Condom Campaign was pre-tested, while another said it was not. But a triangulation suggests that it was not pre-tested with target audience.

The media draft is a key element in the process of transforming development ideas, concepts or knowledge into product that meet user-needs. Therefore, making IEC materials for development communication campaign demands thoroughness and orientation of draft to user-needs. This suggests that strategies to develop draft for effective IEC material production should be based on results of liaison between the target audience, graphic encoder and the source. An established strategy for the development of draft to be effective with intended target audience is the pre-test. To neglect this element of pre-test implies lack of consideration for the effectiveness of the IEC materials with the target audience and invariably the achievement of the overall desired communication goal.

Evaluation of the Total Communication Campaign

The result of the interviews showed that the overall assessment of the development process, the impact of the IEC materials on target audience was not done. So there was no way to ascertain whether or not media production activities were proper and whether or not the IEC materials generated the desired response. In fact the neglect of this important activity shows that the effect of communication on target audience makes no much meaning to the organisation.

Function of the Communication Actors

The interview result showed that there was no interaction with the target audience, so the function of the decoder and interpreter during the media production process of the development messages were non-existent. Also, the graphic encoder did not play a mediating role between the source aims and target audience information needs, since there was no room for that as the source leads the entire development process. The roles of encoding, consulting, reviewing and recoding were done by the source instead of the graphic encoder. This was shown by the example given by one of the respondents-the case of the 'Human Trafficking' whereby modifications of the media draft was done by the funding agency or experts in the country of the funding agency.

The above is not the prescribed way roles/activities should be played by communication actors in the media production or graphic communication campaign process. This kind of neglect of roles of the graphic encoder and the target audience is counter-productive to the encoding of effective graphic language.

Modality of the Message

The results of the interviews showed that distribution of finally produced IEC materials were made through the twenty-nine state branches in the country. This presupposes that publicity, advertising and information were carried out this way; so, target audience could only come in contact with the IEC materials through staff of the state branches that are not experts in distribution. It is obvious that this restricted approach to distribution only limits target audience access to the IEC materials and result in low level of awareness. A distribution strategy based on collaboration with experts could help to reach a significantly higher number of the target audience to create the desired awareness/response.

Targets of the Campaign

Since there was no feedback loop by which target audience response could be assessed, and no evaluation made by the organisation on the campaigns, one can only infer from the response that the targets of the campaigns especially on the female condom was not achieved. According to a respondent, target audience experienced difficulties in identifying and understanding the images

Examination of IEC Materials used for the Campaign

The results of the in-depth interviews showed that the source leads the entire communication process; there was low level of collaboration with the graphic encoder and almost no collaboration with the target audience. This resulted in ineffective graphic communication hinged on the production of inert graphic language, which constituted the IEC materials used for the campaigns on the use of condom as a preventive measure against HIV/AIDS.

We would now examine some of these IEC materials that were produced in order to relate how the roles/activities carried out during the media production process impact on the quality of the graphic media produced. The IEC materials examined include the following:

(i) *Posters:* Posters were produced. Example includes

(a) *Use Condom...* (Plate I). The main aim of this poster was to warn against unprotected sex as a measure to stem the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The emphasis is on the use of condom. It depicts a man approaching three ladies in front of a building (brothel). The man is in attire commonly worn by Western and Northern Nigerians. The three ladies, every one of which is in front of a door to a room wore seductive attires and seem to communicate with the man. The illustration in the poster is fair but contains elements that could destroy the essence of the campaign because of semantic uncertainty. Some of the interpretations that could be inferred from it include:

- (i) Only those who go to brothel are at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and need use condom.
- (ii) Only those who patronize prostitutes are at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and need to use condom.
- (iii) Only those who are from the Western and Northern parts of Nigeria are at risk to contract HIV/AIDS and need to use condom; and
- (iv) Only those who want to prevent HIV/AIDS need use condom.



Plate I: A poster on the “NO CONDOM, NO SEX”

A consideration of these interpretations would have been made at the draft stage and proper decisions taken had there been no communication gaps between the graphic encoder and other members of the media team in the media production process. If the IEC materials had been properly pre-tested with target audience, the attire of the man would have been revised because of the socio-cultural implication. Also the attention to brothels and prostitutes would have been revised. This is because the most liable group to HIV/AIDS, who are in the age group of fifteen to twenty-five years (SFH Corporate Presentation, 2006) are more in the schools and out-of-school and not in the brothel. Besides, prostitution along the street is now common and fashionable than the brothels.

(ii) *Pamphlets:* Pamphlets were also produced. Examples include:

(a) *HIV/AIDS and Pregnancy* (Plate II); the cover of this pamphlet shows a White lady standing by and holding a red board with the inscription ‘HIV/AIDS and Pregnancy’ which is the title. The

choice of a White lady on communication materials meant for Black people shows a high level of cultural insensitivity. Surely, there is natural attraction to one's own culture and people.

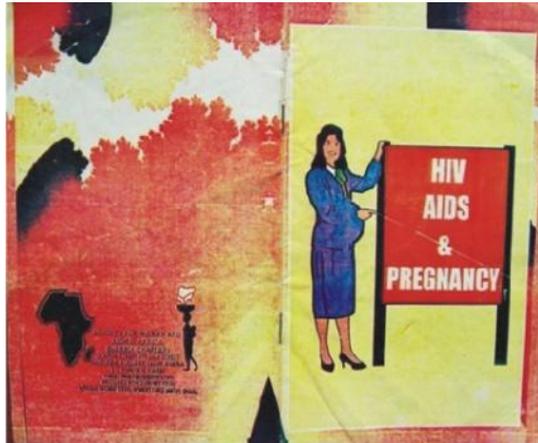


Plate II: A pamphlet on HIV/AIDS and Pregnancy

(b) *Let Us Join Hands To... (Plate III)*: Its cover and back page are loaded with many weak illustrations, which create confusion and reduce the impact of the prime message: Let Us All Join Hands To Fight AIDS. Also, the use of red letterings on a green background creates a visual cacophony—a discord that further diminishes the impact of the prime message; and



Plate III: A pamphlet on Let Us Join Hands to Fight AIDS

(c) *Muhado Kammu Domin let us all join hands to fight aids (Plate IV)*: This is the Hausa

version of the pamphlet above. Like it, the illustrations are weak and reduce the impact of the prime message “Muhada Kammu Domini Kanjamau Cutar!” Although written in Hausa language, none of the many illustrations depicted the Hausa people. Also the word “cutar” is wrongly spelt the last letter “r” ought not to be included. This lack of cultural sensitivity is counter-productive to effective graphic communication.

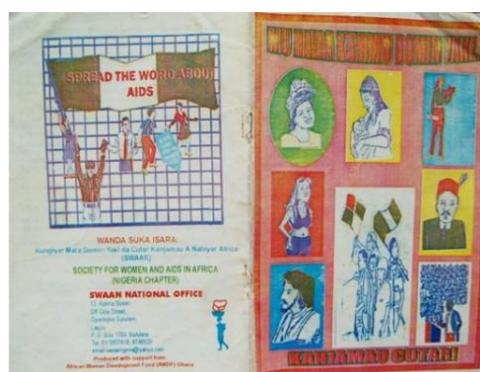


Plate IV: A pamphlet of Muhado Kammu.(Let Us All join Hands to Fight AIDS)

(iii) *Stickers*: Stickers were also produced for the campaign on the use of condom. Example includes:

Female Condom (Plate V): In the IEC material 'Female Condom Does Not Promote Promiscuity Use It' the word 'Promiscuity' is emphasized with red colour and boldly written in capital letters. The prime message 'Female Condom' is deemphasized with green colour though boldly written in capital and low letters. The supporting information 'Does not promote' and 'use it' are written in slim italics and further deemphasized with black hue. The iconic image of the condom and the container are placed on both sides separately and further deemphasized with green hue in half tone. Each set of words are expressed in a different typeface and in all, there are four typefaces. On the whole, the haphazard placement of both the graphic and typographic elements defies any existing described/prescribed layout for the production of graphic language. At a distance, one is confronted with these three words 'Female Condom Promiscuity'. The IEC materials seem to encourage promiscuity, which is against its real communication goal. Besides, it is unattractive, uninteresting and loaded with uncertainties. The iconic image was so pale to the point that it was insignificant and target audience asked for real representation for the purpose of clarity because they could neither understand it nor identify what it was. It lacks all the qualities of been handled by experts who are specialist in graphic design, which could have been improved upon had it been pre-tested with target audience. It failed to elicit the desired response from the target audience.

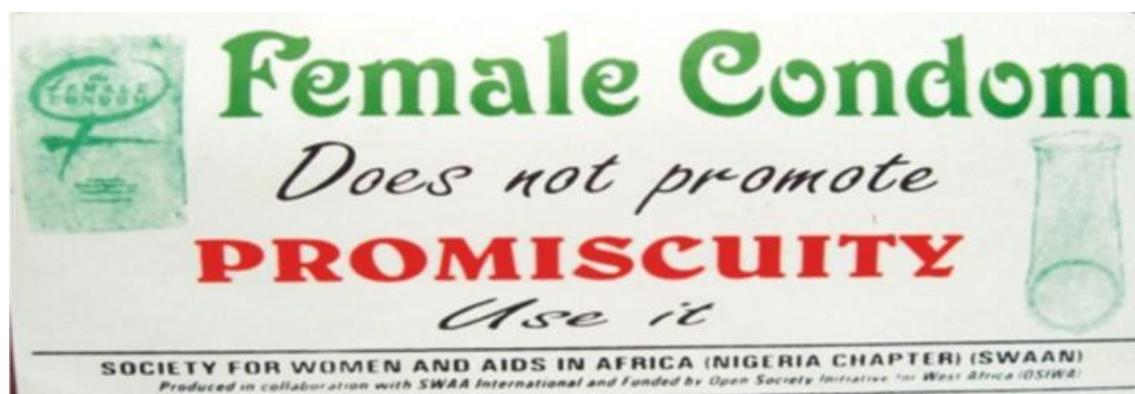


Plate V: A sticker on "Female Condom Does Not Promote Promiscuity"

So far, our examination of the results yielded by the in-depth interviews and the IEC materials produced by the media production team of the organization for the nation-wide campaigns on HIV/AIDS show that roles/activities in the media production process were based on minimal collaboration dominated by the source. This resulted in the production of ineffective graphic language/communication.

The above shows that ineffective graphic language/communication is a product of inadequate collaboration which is dominated by the source at the expense of other stakeholders particularly the target audience. This is as a result of improper decision making at all levels of the media production process. Examples include the decision not to involve target audience in the process of developing the subject matter of the campaign, pre-test media draft, evaluate the outcome of the entire development process of the communication campaign and insensitive to the culture of the target audience is improper.

In conclusion, the results of the interviews show that communication gaps between the source, graphic encoder and target audience in the media production process leads to rash decision-making and the production of ineffective graphic language. Particularly in the areas concerning the production of knowledge about the subject matter of the campaign, development of the graphic media, and assessment of the overall development process.

Implications for Graphic Communication in Nigeria

The result of the interviews conducted on the 'Use Condom Campaign' is very instructive and has enormous implications for graphic communication in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

Firstly, it implies that the level of collaboration existing between the source, graphic encoder and the target audience is low. This immensely impact (albeit- negatively) on the outcome of the graphic messages. The level of collaboration that does not involve stakeholders in the development process creates gaps

between communication actors, which often results in the production of media with lack of potency to generate the desired impact as exemplified by the campaign on the female condom. Therefore, a high level of collaboration that involves all stakeholders including the graphic encoder and the target audience is a panacea for the production of ineffective graphic communication, which often characterizes development communication campaigns. So, the prevalent top-down or hierarchical one-way communication practice, whereby the source leads the entire communication development process need be adapted - an adaptation that would accommodate the intervention of other stakeholders. Better still is the adoption of the participatory approach, a two-way or circular communication practice, which is characterized by the involvement of all stakeholders in the communication development process. Garland (2005), expresses the necessity of this change in communication practice for development on the basis of the limitations in the Top-down approach.

Secondly, it shows the need for a guide that pin points the areas where collaborative efforts of the source, graphic encoder and target audience are critical to success in the media production process. The awareness of the importance of collaboration in the production process of the graphic message already exists as the interviews revealed, but the problem is where to get this done in a proper way. Knowledge and understanding of the areas where the graphic encoder should intervene and collaborate with other stakeholders to produce effective communication media would to a large extent stem the prevalent abuse of target audience with ineffective graphic encoding choices that assault the senses and negatively impact on target audience (National Gender Policy, 2007).

Thirdly, it implies that the transgression of these areas: the clarification of source aims and target audience with the graphic encoder, the topic study whereby production of knowledge about the subject matter of a given development campaign is undertaken, the pre-testing whereby the development of the communication media at its formative stage ensures the participation of the target audience and the assessment of the overall development process during evaluation, result in the production of ineffective graphic communication. Therefore, these are the minimum areas where the graphic encoder need intervene and collaborate with other members of the media team in order to produce effective communication media (Ebigbagha, 2010).

Fourthly, the development and assessment of graphic messages are not often target audience based. The continual neglect of target audience involvement and participation in the development process often result in the encoding and use of poor quality and ineffective graphic message that amounts to costly waste of invaluable resources. The realization and implementation of target audience based research as the fulcrum on which effective graphic communication rest is a major reason for the outstanding success of The Delayed Sexual Debut Campaign by the Society for Family Planning in Nigeria. Also, the importance of target audience based research is exemplified by the ORT Campaign in Egypt whereby test with target audience improved a long term design graphic communication. And the experience so impressed the first Executive Director of the ORT project that he often recount the story to emphasize the need to pre-test media draft with target audience for successful communication in development programme (Ebigbagha, 2010:18 quoting World Health Organization, 1987).

Fifthly, there is prevalent use of non-specialist in graphic design to encode graphic messages for development purposes. Ejembi (1989), states that the use of non-specialist in graphic design in Nigeria, where anybody is assigned to perform the task of transforming information about development into graphic messages is an important reason for the poor graphics that characterize campaigns in agriculture. Nelson (1994) prescribes the use of specialist in the field of graphic design to encode graphic messages meant to specifically change behaviour. So, the need to use specialist in graphic design for graphic communication in development is of paramount importance.

Finally, there is a significant level of cultural insensitivity that adversely impact on effective graphic communication in Nigeria. The poster 'No Condom No Sex' and the pamphlets 'HIV/AIDS and Pregnancy' and 'Mohado Kammu' are glaring examples. The need to always consider the socio-cultural environment is epitomized by the IEC materials used for The Delayed Sexual Debut Campaign in Nigeria. Cultural sensitivity makes it possible to generate graphic encoding choices that possess the stimulus conditions, which evoke desired responses from target audience because the target audience conditions essential for appropriate responses has been necessarily and sufficiently taken into consideration.

Conclusion

The participation of the graphic encoder in the media production process is indispensable in order to produce effective graphic communication for development purposes. This is made possible when the graphic encoder properly mediates between the source ideas about development and the target audience information needs. As a prerequisite for well informed choices and decision-making about graphic variables needed in the media production process, the graphic encoder should have sound knowledge, through research - of the source goals and target audience knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP). The target audience KAP affects their response in a stimulus-response condition where they may be uncertain about how to decode or interpret a campaign message. In addition, the graphic encoder must be conversant with the communication skills (perception, comprehension and so on) of a given target audience.

In order to achieve the above, there is the need to adopt the participatory communication practice that uses the two-way or circular communication system. This allows the graphic encoder to intervene and collaborate with all stakeholders (source, media team and target audience) in all the stages of the media production process or at least in four: the stage of the clarification with the media requesting agency and the stages where operation research is needed (topic-study of the campaign, pre-testing of the media draft and evaluation of the overall campaign). In this mode, the graphic encoder is exposed to all the facts, issues and themes of a given campaign and he/she is able to grasp and internalize all the critical issues addressed by the campaign. Against this background, the graphic encoder is able to launch a Strategic Design Initiative (SDI), which translates into effective graphic communication that facilitates the rapid adoption and utilization of development ideas.

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