

Advertising and Buying Decision of Laundry Detergents among Users in Owerri Metropolis of Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This work analyses the effect of advertising and product quality on consumers' buying decision with a particular reference to laundry detergent brands. The researcher adopted the survey approach and collected data through questionnaire distributed to respondents in Owerri metropolis. A critical analysis of the research data shows that though advertising actually influences consumers' buying decision; product quality has a greater influence on consumers' choice of product brands. The study further shows that apart from advertising and product quality, some other factors such as price and popularity of a product also influence buyers' choice of product brands. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends, among other things that, since advertising is the most effective way of creating awareness about a product, producers should make optimal use of this important aspect of marketing communication.

INTRODUCTION

There is a widely held belief that advertising influences consumers' buying decision on a particular product brand. Many writers on advertising and marketing also agree that advertising influences consumers' buying decision. However, the findings of Engel et. al (1973) and Lambin (1975) show that consumers are more strongly influenced by product quality and performance than by advertising. The purpose of this work, therefore, is to find out whether advertising actually influences consumers' buying decision. This work will also identify other factors, if any, that can influence consumers to buy a particular brand of product. The detergent industry is used as a case study.

Research Questions

This work will seek to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Does advertising influence consumers' preferences for their detergent brands?
2. Does the quality of a detergent influence consumers' buying decision?
3. What other factors influence consumers' preferences for a particular brand of detergent?

Advertising and Consumer Behaviour

Successful advertising begins with understanding why and how consumers behave as they do. According to Ijioma (1997), consumer behavior entails the actions a person takes in purchasing and using products and services, including mental and social processes that precede and follow these actions. It tells us why people choose one product or brand over another, and how companies use this knowledge to market effectively to consumers. He explained that there are five stages a consumer passes through in making choices about which products or services to buy. The five stages of the consumer purchase decision process are:

1. Problem recognition
2. Information search

3. Alternative Evaluation
4. Purchase decision
5. Post purchase behavior

1. Problem Recognition

This is the initial step in Purchase decision and it entails the feeling of inadequacy between a person's actual and desired situations. It must be strong enough to trigger off a decision. It can be as simple as discovering that the detergent you use for laundry does not effectively remove dirt or stain from your clothes. Advertisements can activate a consumer's decision process by showing the shortcomings or inadequacy of competing or currently owned products.

2. Information Search

After recognizing a problem, a consumer begins to search for information. He may first scan his memory for previous experiences with products or brands. This action is called internal search and may be enough for frequently purchased product such as detergent. A consumer may however undertake an external search for information when past experience or knowledge is insufficient. The primary sources of external information are:

- a) Personal sources such as relatives and friends
- b) Public sources such as journals

3. Alternative Evaluation

This stage clarifies the problem for the consumer by suggesting criteria to use for the purpose, and supplying the brand name that might meet the criteria. The criteria might represent both the objective attributes of the brand (technical features) and the subjective ones (prestige factors). Companies strive to identify and capitalize on both types of criteria.

4. Purchase Decision

This is the action of buying a particular brand of product after alternative evaluation.

5. Post Purchase Behaviour

This involves comparing what you have bought with your expectation. It refers to your feeling or level of satisfaction after you have made a purchase.

The Nature of Advertising

In a broad sense, advertising covers all the ways that individuals or organizations publicize the goods or services that they have to offer, and promote a positive image of themselves. The British Institute of Practitioners in Advertising in 1973 defined advertising as "the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost". The American Marketing Association (1960) defines advertising as "any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor".

Wright et al. (1977:9) defines advertising as "Controlled, identifiable information and persuasion by means of mass communication media." According to Nwosu and Nkamnebe (2006:4), advertising is a persuasively crafted marketing communication transmitted through the media.

In the above definitions of advertising, there are salient points that indicate the nature of advertising. Some of the salient points that show the nature of advertising are as follows:

- It is a paid form of communication, meaning that every commercial communication must be paid for before it is transmitted to the target audience.
- Advertising is done through the mass media such as radio, television, newspaper, magazine, bill boards etc
- The sponsor of the advertisement must be identified, for instance, for possible patronage or for clarification of claims.
- Advertising must be targeted to pre-determined audience to make it purposeful and result oriented.
- Advertising involves persuasive communication. Advertising messages must influence the audience to the desired action.

The persuasive nature of advertising messages is of crucial importance because any advertisement that lacks persuasiveness lacks efficacy. The nature of advertising can also be understood from its functions. According to Uwalaka (1996), the following, are some of the functions or uses of advertising;

1. Advertising heralds innovation in goods and services
2. It helps in promoting luxury goods in order to create high civilization
3. It helps in the adoption of new trends, facts and styles especially in areas of cosmetics or fashion which is extremely dynamic
4. It is used extensively in the travel business to create awareness and knowledge of distant places.
5. Advertising is used to announce prices and price changes.
6. It is used to educate people on how to use new products
7. It is used to correct wrong impression about a product
8. It is used to aid sales force
9. It could be used to remind customers of existing products
10. It is used to announce distributors' locations
11. It could be used to announce company's contributions to community development.

Persuasion Process in Advertising

As indicated earlier in this paper, persuasiveness is a crucial attribute of advertising. Persuasions simply means a deliberate effort or attempt made by somebody in order to change another person's mind. Simons (1976:21) defined persuasion as human communication that is designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, or attitudes". Another school of thought defined persuasion as the process whereby an attempt is made to induce changes in attitudes and behavior through involvement of a person's cognitive and affective processes. Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) said that "Persuasion refers primarily, to the use of the Mass Media to present messages deliberately designed to elicit specific forms of action on the part of audiences." The relationship between advertising and persuasion is that advertising uses persuasive messages to sell products and services. In other word, advertising is a form of persuasive communication.

There is no consensus on the number of steps or stages involved in the persuasion process. However, in a five-step model of persuasion process, Monore (1935) highlighted the following steps.

1. **Arousing Attention:** This has to do with stimulating the attention of your audience and directing this to the subject of your persuasive communication. The persuasive communicator, like any other public communicator, is not only concerned with stimulating the attention of his audience; but is also concerned with how to sustain this attention. Osborn and Osborn (1985) identified the following as factors that arouse and sustain attention.
 - a) Intensity, which has to do with use of attractive features such as intense language, vivid images and illustrations that magnify the importance of the communicator's point, visual aids, vocal variety, stresses, and even exaggerations.

- b) Repetition of words, sounds, phrases and sentences especially those that border on the key ideas of a point.
- c) Novelty, which means something new and unusual- e.g new Terms, new phrases and other coinages, metaphors, novel events and ideas, etc.
- d) Activity, which has to do with actions or movement- e.g gestures, physical movements, variations in voices or tone etc.
- e) Contrast, which means drawing attention to opposites, to the pros and cons of a situation or point, etc.-e.g light and dark, the good and the ugly, life and death, high and low. etc.
- f) Relevance, which has to do with relationship and implications of a thing or point to the need of the audience. This can be achieved by employing examples or illustrations which relate to the lives members of the audience in some way.

2) Demonstrating a need: The persuasive communicator must let his audience know what it will gain or lose by accepting or rejecting his views or proposal. In other words, he should relate his demonstrations or points to the basic and other pressing needs of the audience ranging from material to social ones.

3) Satisfying the Need: After sensitizing the members of the audience to their needs, a suggestion or proposal on how to satisfy the needs satisfaction of the demonstrated needs.

4) Visualizing the Results: This step has to do with letting the people know what difference accepting or not accepting the communicator's ideas or proposal will make in their lives. They should be assisted to visualize the future benefits or dangers of acceptance or non-acceptance of the proposal.

5) Calling for action: This includes throwing a challenge, making an appeal or soliciting personal commitment. The audience should be told what to do begin the process of changing the lives of its member for the better. The challenge must be definite and realizable

Having reviewed the process of persuasion as conceived and described by some authorities, we shall simplify the process of propaganda by discussing it in three major stages: planning, delivery or presentation and feedback or reaction.

- i) **Planning Stage:** Whether a message is a mildly persuasive one or an outright propaganda, it has to be planned. Planning it involves several activities which include determining or defining the effect desired and the medium or channel to be used, noting the key points in the message, understanding the audience through audience analysis, and tailoring the message to suit the prevailing circumstances and 'psycho demographic' character of the audience. It also involves sequential arrangement of the points or major ideas of the message and a decision on the appropriate illustration or examples to be used in driving home or reinforcing the message as well as on the training and duration (where necessary).
- ii) **Delivery / Presentation Stage:** After planning the message, the next thing will be the presentation or delivery. Presentation becomes relatively easy if the message is well planned. This is so because the language and other elements of the message will have been determined. However, as one delivers audience in order to determine changes in its mood and make any necessary adjustments to recapture and or sustain its interest. However, reading the audience and determining its immediate reaction to the message is not possible in the case of mass media messages. But the media houses can still send out feelers or use research to determine the people's feelings towards messages. This will enable them to make appropriate and necessary adjustments in future editions of the message.

Also, in the course of the delivery, some of the interest-arresting factors enunciated by Osborn and Osborn(1985) and other authorities should be employed. These include, among others, intensity, repetitions, novelties, activities and contrasts, in the case of outright propaganda, stereotypes, name substitutions, selective language and facts and lying, are common tools. In propaganda, the end is

believed to justify the means. In other words, success of the message is measured in terms of the desired effect and not necessarily in terms of the means by which this is realized. Perhaps, this is why many people hold the view that propaganda has little or no consideration for ethics. For the propagandist, the desired outcome is what matters most.

iii) Feedback: This is the response or reaction of the audience to the message. This may take the form of acceptance of the message, adoption of the advocated proposal or its rejection. Acceptance and adoption imply success of the message while rejection implies its failure. Adoption can take place in two major stages. Trial stage and full adoption stage. In the trial stage, the audience accepts and tries the proposal with some reservation or apprehension which, of course, disappears at the consolidation or full adoption stage.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored in the psychodynamic model which is derived from the individual differences theory. The psychodynamic model holds that, for a persuasive message to be effective, it must succeed in altering the psychological functioning of the recipient(s) in such a way that he or she or they will respond over with models of behavior desired or suggested by the communicator. The model stresses the strong influence of certain conditions and forces within the individual on human behavior. It says that the best way to effective persuasion (achieving behavioural change) is to create new learning awareness through provision of information that manipulates the internal psychological structures of individuals such as needs, fears, attitudes, drivers, interests etc. These inner psychological structures are intervening variables which help to modify, for example, arousal of fear of contracting AIDS can make people change their sexual behavior. The fear of hunger and poverty can make people vote for a certain candidate in an election. In addition, human needs such as food, sex, water, achievement, social approval, etc are motivating factors useful for persuasion.

However, Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989:276) pointed out that while emotions are useful for persuasive strategies, they are limited to certain situations. According to them “persuasion messages that attempt to manipulate the acquired or cognitive factors will produce better results because they are learned. They are prime targets for campaigns that try to promote new learning.” They added that since these acquired or cognitive factors are major influences on human behavior, any change in them will result in behavioural change.

The psychodynamic model is chosen for this work because it takes into consideration the individual psychographic differences of the consumers, and it is widely used by marketers in general and advertisers in particular.

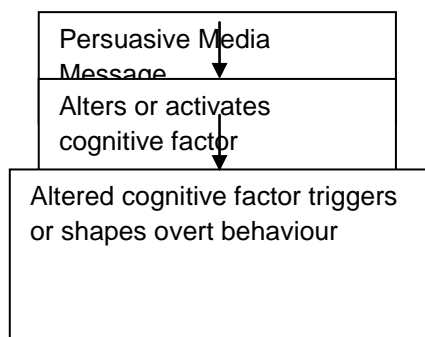


Fig. Psychodynamic Model **Source:** Defleur and Ball- Rokeach (1980)

Methodology

To get answers to the research questions outlined for this study, the researcher sought to find out why various individuals buy different brands of detergent. Based on the psychodynamic model, the following questions were included in the questionnaire administered to respondents.

1. Which brand of detergent do you use for laundry?
2. Why do you prefer the detergent brand you are using?
3. Which of the following factors influence you more on the choice of detergent brand? (a) Advertising (b) Quality and Performance of product
4. What other factors influence your choice of detergent brand?
5. How did you know about the existence of the particular brand you are using?

Five hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents in Owerri, the capital city of Imo State. The questionnaires were distributed to people who are more likely to make frequent use of detergents in laundry, and they include dry cleaners, house wives, and students of tertiary institution. Out of the 500 questionnaire distributed, 480 copies were returned to the researcher after completion.

Findings/Presentation of Data

The researcher's findings are presented in tables 1-5 below;

Researcher Question 1: Which brand of detergent do you use for laundry?

Table 1

Detergent Brands Being used by Respondents

Detergents	No. of Respondents	Percent
Omo	74	15.4
Hypo	140	29.2
Ariel	118	24.6
Klean	65	13.5
Jumbo	26	5.4
Zip	20	4.2
Super Eagle	2	0.4
Tempo	15	3.1
Elephant	20	4.2
Total	480	100

Research Question 2: Why do you prefer the detergent brand you are using?

Tables 2

Consumers' Reasons for Brand choice in the Detergent Industry

Reasons	No of respondents	Percentage
Colour	10	2.1
Affordable price	65	13.5
High quality and performance	280	58.3
Pleasant smell	5	1.0
Popularity of product	120	25

Research Question 3: Which of the two underlisted factors influence you more on the choice of detergent brand?

Table 3

Factors Influencing Consumers More on the Choice of Detergent

Influencing Factor	No of Respondents	Percentage
Advertising	130	27
Quality and performance of detergent brand	350	73

Research Question 4: In addition to advertising and quality, what other factors influence your choice of detergent brand?

Table 4

Other Factors Influencing Consumers' Choice of Detergent Brand

Factors	No of Respondents	Percentage
Price of the product	220	45.8
The opinions of others	180	37.5
Pleasant odour	15	3.1
Popularity of brand	45	9.4
Packaging	20	4.2

Research Question 5: How did you know about the existence of the particular brand you are using?

Table 5

How consumers' knew about the Existence of their Detergent Brands.

Source of Information	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Advertising	320	66.6
Recommendation from others	70	14.6
Through product display in the market / shops	90	18.8

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 above shows that 29.2% of the respondents use Hypo detergent for laundry. This means that hypo is the most used detergent brand among the respondents.

Table 2 above shows that 58.3% of respondents were influenced by the quality and performance of detergent in their brand preference. The implication of this is that the quality of a detergent brand influences consumers' buying decision more than any other factor.

Table 3 shows that quality and performance of detergent influences consumers' buying decision more than advertising does. This means that if a product is bad, no amount of advertising can sell it.

Table 4 shows that several other factors influence consumers' choice of detergent brands, apart from brand quality and advertising. Top on the list of such factors is price.

Table 5 shows that 66.6% of the respondents knew about the existence of their detergent brands through advertising. This means that advertising plays a major role in influencing consumers' buying decision. The implication is that when a product is of high quality, advertising effectiveness will be maximized. This means that producers of detergents should endeavour to produce high quality products to enable their advertising campaign to be very effective.

CONCLUSION

Although the majority of the respondents knew about the existence of their brands through advertising, it is the quality and performance of a brand that mostly influence consumers' buying decision on detergent brands. Apart from advertising and product quality, several other factors influence consumers' buying decision on detergent brands. Top on list of such other factors is price.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Producers should always ensure that their products are of high quality because it is when product quality is high that advertising can be effective in the marketing of such products.
2. Producers should also consider the purchasing power of consumers while pricing their products. This is because no matter how good a product is, it will be difficult to sell if the price is not affordable to the target consumers or users.
3. Since advertising is the most effective way of creating awareness about a product, producers should make optimal use of this important aspect of marketing communication

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