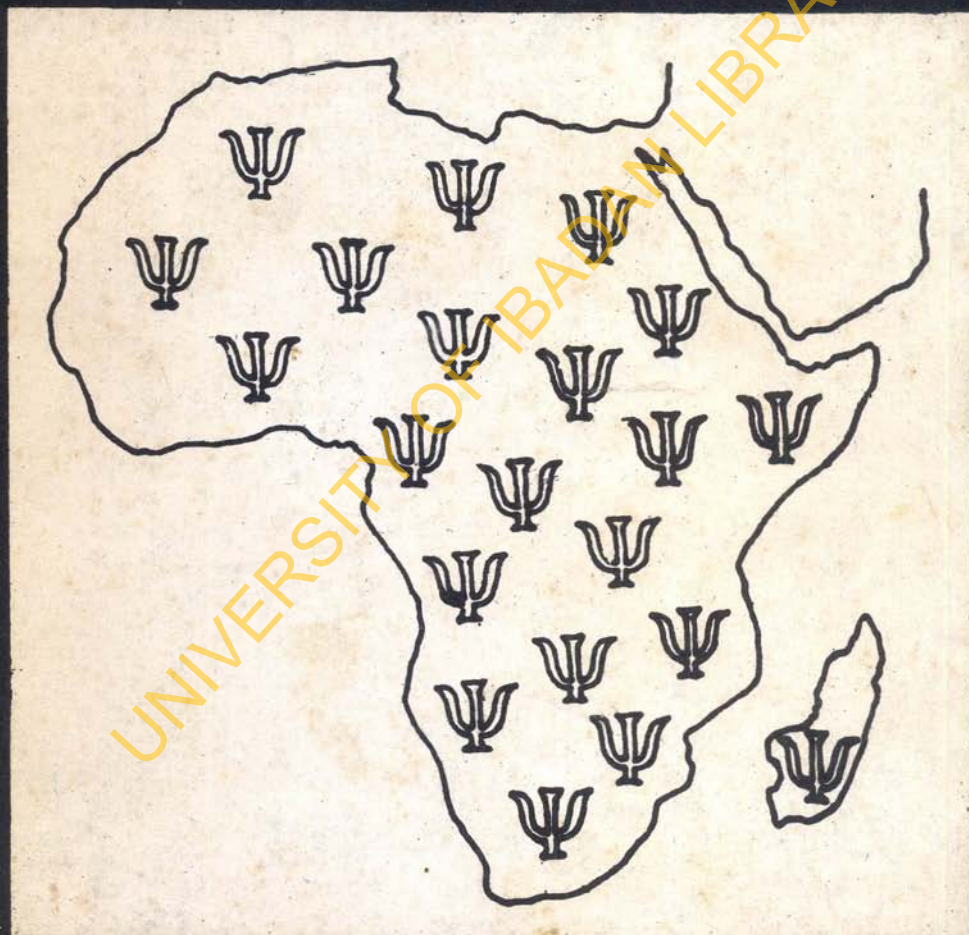


IFE PSYCHOLOGIA

An International Journal. Volume 9 No 1, 2001



Published by: Ife Centre for Psychological Studies

DR. N. A. SHENGE
SIGN _____ DATE _____

IFE

PSYCHOLOGIA

An International Journal, Volume 9 No.1, 2001

Published by:

Ife Psychologia (RC 011934)
Ife Center for Psychological Studies
P.O. Box 1548, Ile-Ife,
Osun State, Nigeria.

&

PSYCHOLOGIA LTD (RC 83,305)
P.O. Box UC146
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast
Ghana



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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES IN MANAGING TELEVISION COMMERCIAL EFFICACY

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Abstract

This paper examined advertisement presentation frequency (repetitive versus non-repetitive), type of stimulus (familiar versus novel), and information source (credible versus non-credible) as psychological strategies of managing television commercial efficacy. Subject's total score on recall of advert information, attitude to an advert, and intention to buy an advertised product was used as a measure of advertisement efficacy. By employing 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design, eight advert pieces were designed to reflect the levels of the independent variables. Standardized psychological instruments were used to measure the dependent variable. The result of the 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) computed showed significant main effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Except the interaction effect between presentation frequency and information source, all others were significant. It was finally suggested for advertisement practitioners to repeat advert messages, use familiar stimulus background information and perceived credible persons in disseminating advert messages. A total of 80 (40 males, 40 females) randomly selected secondary school students were used for the study.

Introduction

Organizations are established with the sole aim of producing goods or rendering services to the consuming population. Ehigie and Babalola (1995) explain that it is the purchase and use of these goods and services that determine the sustainability of the organisations. For such goods and services to reach targeted consumers therefore, they must be marketed. Among other things, Stanton (1981) opined that the marketing phenomenon or process include determining the best way to price, promote and distribute product or service.

Advertising is an aspect of marketing which is described in psychological terms as any form of visual, oral or audio-visual communication about goods or services, in which the sender attempts to motivate the receiver into purchase action, as favourable response or feedback (Ehigie and Babalola, 1995). In a competitive market system where goods and services are produced and also imported in surplus and where others are scarce, it is needful to create awareness about goods and services to consumers. Advertising can invariably achieve this, as well as modify or change attitudes and behaviour of the recipients of the message. How advertisements are managed is therefore of prime importance to advertisers. It demands that the advertiser plans and executes his programme with all carefulness and craftiness in creativity.

Some psychological techniques of advertising have increasingly been in use, with the aim of improving the quality of commercials. These have been commonly referred to as persuasive mechanisms, which include repetition, source credibility, emotional/rational appeals, stimulus familiarity/novelty, humour, identification. The unresolved question has always been the extent to which these techniques can be said to be effective or workable.

The evaluation of every advertisement is on its effectiveness as measured by the rate of recall of advertised product information, the attitude change of target audience and the

willingness of target audience to buy the advertised product. The advertiser or advert producer encounters some problems of determining which persuasive mechanism he has to employ for his audience that will be capable of effecting changes in both the attitudes and behaviour.

This forms the basis for considering repeat presentation of commercials versus single presentation, pairing of novel stimulus with a television commercial versus pairing of a familiar stimulus, and credibility versus non credibility of information as psychological techniques in managing television commercial in this study.

The pressure-response theories of advertising explain the pressure or weight of advertising as responsible for its effects. In this view, Nelson (1974) observed that the more messages about a product or brand a customer perceives, the more likely the consumer is to be affected by that advert. Zajonc (1965) argued that exposure leads to liking. In a classical conditioning explanation, however, Krugman (1971) opined that the person is not choosing an object because it has been seen before, but if the product (conditioned stimulus) is paired with a negative unconditioned stimulus (for example, disliked model) it would be avoided, despite repeated exposure.

Proposing the active learning theories, Weibacher (1984) believed that advertising conveys information that may be sufficiently meaningful to consumer's attitude toward the advertised product. The credibility of the personality of the advertising model would therefore be of importance in determining the advert effectiveness. Okigbo's (1987) conceptualization of the theories is that advert information are processed by consumers which guides in decision making, leading to learning, then attitude change and behaviour change. On the other hand, proponents of behavioural learning (low involvement) theories of advertising believe that many consumer-advertising interactions involve low consumer involvement. That is to say that there is lack of active information seeking. According to low involvement theory proponents, a great deal of advertising information is absorbed by the consumers without conscious search, evaluation or resistance. It is the repeated storage of the same message that tends to cause a change in the awareness of the brand and subsequently possible purchase behaviour even with no overt change in the consumer attitude. This argument leads to the behaviour learning (low involvement) theories (Gaidis and Rothschild, 1981) which advances a sequence of learning, leading to behaviour change and then attitude change.

Some few empirical works have actually been carried out, addressing the variables of interest in this paper. In using television advertisement, for instance, McCulloch and Ostrom (1974) found that repetition of advert information had a positive effect on cognitive response activity, as message recipients generated more positive thoughts and few negative thoughts to very similar advertisements for the same product. Sawyer (1973), however, found no differences in purchase intentions in repetition of refutational advertisement in comparison with the supportive appeal. Sawyer tested appeals for five products with exposure ranging from one to six times. This again reveals inconsistencies in literature on the effects of repeating advertisement on advertisement outcome. Thus, the question on whether repeated advertisement would be more efficacious than single advert exposure remains unanswered.

Gorn (1982) interpreted the impact of product information in a commercial on beliefs and attitudes within an information-processing framework. In a classical conditioning approach, Gorn exposed subjects to a neutral product (conditioned stimulus) in the context of a background feature (unconditioned stimulus), often found in commercials. Using liked and disliked music (determined after a pilot study) as unconditioned stimuli, Gorn found that 74 out of 94 subjects (79%) picked the colour of pen associated with the liked music while 30 out of 101 subjects (30%) picked the colour of associated with the disliked music. The results of Gorn's study supported the notion that the simple association between a product (conditioned

stimulus) and liked/disliked music unconditioned stimulus) can affect product preferences, as measured by product choice. This suggests also that the pairing of a product with a novel or familiar stimulus, and a credible or non-credible presenter in advertising would have some implication for advertising outcomes? Gorn's (1982) findings suggest that the background features of commercials can influence product choice.

While investigating the influence of a novel stimulus paired with television commercial, Kegan (1984) established high positive relation between a novel stimulus and television commercial recall on one hand, and a novel stimulus and positive attitude on the other. He however, could not establish any significant relationship between novel stimulus and purchase intentions or actual purchase behaviour.

With these, in managing television commercial efficacy, it becomes worthy to investigate the following:

1. whether repetition of advertisement information would enhance efficacy better than single exposure.
2. Whether the use of a perceived credible presenter of advertisement information would improve efficacy better than the use of a perceived non-credible presenter.
3. Would a familiar stimulus, paired with a product during advertisement be more efficacious than a novel stimulus?

Methodology

Design

The design for this study is a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design with independent variables as repetition versus non-repetition, stimulus familiarity versus stimulus novelty, and source credibility. The dependent variable is advert efficacy measured by recall of advert information, attitude of viewers to the advert, and intention to buy the advertised brand of a product.

Subjects

Eighty (40 males and 40 females) randomly selected secondary school students were used as subjects for his study. This is justified because most people of this population use candles, which is the advertised product in this study. Subjects' age mean was 16.6 years while the standard deviation (S.D.) was 1.14.

Instruments

Five brands of candles were used, fictitiously named as Nandril, Temple of Heavens, Tiger, Light fine and Buffalo. However, only the Nandril brand was advertised on the television screen.

An extract of a reggae music track from an English Video movie titled "Hammer" and another reggae tract from Lucky Dube's "Slave" was respectively used as familiar and novel stimulus. An advert presenter presented himself differently as a Medical Doctor and a Ph.D. graduate of Philosophy, to represent the credible and non-credible source of information respectively. The two forms of music and advert presenter were combined adequately to produce four pieces of advert. Each of these pieces was either presented once (single presentation) or twice (repeated presentation) to meet the conditions for a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design, thus making eight pieces of advertisement. The pieces of advert were the same in product information, differing only in the combinations of the persuasive mechanisms employed.

The advertisements were distinctly dubbed in one videocassette. A National Video player and television set were used for the display of the various pieces of advertisement.

For the measurement of the dependent variable, an aided recall test and two scales were used. The recall test requested subjects to produce the following: brand name, colour, name of manufacturer, product advantage, length, what product is made of, how long it takes to burn, number in a pack, price, and suggested point of purchase. All these constituted the advert information. Each fully recalled product information was scored "2", a semi or part recall was scored "1", while a wrong or absence of recall was scored "0", making a maximum of 20 points and a minimum of zero point. A test-retest reliability of the recall test showed a coefficient of stability as $r = 0.79$; $df = 38$; $p < .01$.

The measurement of attitude toward using the advertised candle was made using four bipolar evaluative factor adjectives used by Belch (1981) in his semantic differential scale. The four bi-polar adjectives were good-bad, wise-foolish, favourable-unfavourable, and beneficial-harmful. Using a 7-point scaling method, a test-retest reliability on this scale yielded $r = 0.63$; $df = 38$; $p < .01$.

The measure of intention to try the advertised product was based on three bi-polar adjectives, expressed as likely unlikely, probable-improbable and, possible-impossible. A 7-point-scaling technique was adopted. A test-retest reliability on this scale showed significant results with $r = 0.66$; $df = 38$; $p < .01$.

Procedure

The study started by requesting 40 secondary school students, randomly drawn from the population of interest, to listen to six indigenous and foreign reggae music tracts and evaluate each on familiarity-novelty continuum. It was based on this that the two reggae music used in the study were chosen as having face validity for familiar and novel music respectively. A presentation was also made of six individuals of different professions to be rated on a continuum of credible-non credible sources of information in advertising candle. Based on their responses a medical doctor and a Ph.D. degree holder in Philosophy were chosen as credible and non-credible sources, respectively. These forty students were also used to establish the test-retest reliability of the recall test and scales.

For the main study, the eighty subjects were randomly divided into eight groups of 10 subjects (males and 5 females). Each group was randomly assigned to receive each of the eight pieces of advertisements, collectively. On arrival for the experiment, subjects were asked to watch a television advertisement for a supposedly new brand of candle. All the pieces of advert (manipulated to suit the considered persuasive mechanisms) had a standard time length of forty-five (45) seconds, except for those involving repetition which were presented three times with a one minute movie shown in-between presentations. The content of the advert information goes thus:

Hi, I am dr. Lamby Veremo, a medical doctor. Irrational supply of electricity in the country has led Gasol Lights Limited into serious research over the years. The outcome? NANDRIL CANDLES. Nandrill candles, eight inches long, white in colour, have been clinically tested. The result? Not dangerous to eyes unlike others, These candles, made of Wax and burning for 240 minutes, are twelve in a pack. A stick costs seventy kobo and a pack just eight naira. Nandrill candles are available nationwide at your favourable Drakes stores. Nandrill candles, friendly to your eyes.

For the credible source, the content of information was the same with difference only in the introduction as "I am Dr. Lamby Veremo, a Ph.D. degree holder in Philosophy". To ensure that subjects in the familiar or novel music category were truly familiar or unfamiliar with the music played, they were asked to indicate whether or not they have listened to it before. Where

subjects indicated non-familiarity to a supposedly familiar music or familiarity to a supposedly novel music, such subjects were silently noted and disqualified. Disqualification of subjects called for a make up experiment that was conducted under similar experimental conditions.

After exposure to the advertisements, subjects were individually tested on the recall test and responded to the attitude and intention to use product scales.

Results

The study which examined presentation frequency, type of stimulus, and information source as psychological strategies for managing television commercial efficacy called for the use of a 2 x 2 x 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) as statistical test. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: A 2 X 2 X 2 ANOVA SHOWING THE EFFECTS OF PRESENTATION FREQUENCY, TYPE OF STIMULUS, AND INFORMATION SOURCE ON TELEVISION COMMERCIAL EFFICACY.

SOURCE	SS	df	MS	F	P
Total	1047.2	79			
A (Presentation Frequency)	105.4	1	105.4	12.68	<.001
B (Type of Stimulus)	119.4	1	119.4	14.37	<.001
C (Information source)	64.8	1	64.8	7.80	<.001
A and B	53.8	1	53.8	6.47	<.05
A and C	0.79	1	0.79	0.10	NS
B and C	71.81	1	71.81	8.64	<.01
A and B and C	33.0	1	33.0	3.97	<.05
Error	598.2	72	8.31		

The results show significant effect of presentation frequency on efficacy $F(1,72) = 12.68$; $p < .001$, with repeated advertisement ($\bar{x} = 26.2$) being more efficacious than single presentation ($X = 25.4$). There was also significant effects of type of stimulus on efficacy $F(1,72) = 14.37$; $P < .001$; familiar stimulus advertisement ($X = 26.00$) was, however, more efficacious than novel stimulus advertisement ($X = 25.4$). Information source had significant effect on efficacy $F(1,72) = 7.80$; $P < .01$ with the credible source ($X = 27.3$) being more efficacious than the non-credible source ($X = 24.2$).

The results of the interaction effects showed that presentation frequency and type of stimulus interacted significantly in their effects on efficacy, $F(1,72) = 6.47$; $P < .05$. The Least significant Difference (LSD), multiple comparison result (Table 2) showed that repetitive familiar presentation ($X = 27.3$) was significantly more efficacious than repetitive/novel presentation ($X = 25.1$) and single familiar presentation ($X = 24.8$) at $P < .05$. However, other paired comparisons were not significant.

TABLE 2: LSD MULTIPLE COMPARISON SHOWING EFFECTS OF PRESENTATION FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF STIMULUS ON TELEVISION COMMERCIAL EFFICACY.

VARIABLES	X	1	2	3	4
1. Single Presentation/Familiar Advert	24.8	-			
2. Single Presentation/Novel Advert	26.0	1.2	-		
3. Repetitive Presentation/Familiar Advert	27.3	2.5*	1.3	-	
4. Repetitive Presentation/Novel Advert	25.1	0.3	0.9	2.2*	-

*P<. 05

While there was no significant interaction effect between presentation frequency and type of stimulus on efficacy, $F(1,72) = 0.10$; $P > .05$, there was a significant interaction effect between type of stimulus and information source on efficacy $F(1,72) = 8.64$; $P < .01$. The LSD Multiple Comparison Analysis (Table 3) showed that familiar/credible presentation ($X=24.9$) at $P < .01$, familiar/non-credible presentation ($X=24.0$) at $P < .01$, and novel/credible ($X=26.1$) at $P < .05$. Other paired comparison were, however, not significant.

TABLE 3: LSD MULTIPLE COMPARISON SHOWING EFFECTS OF TYPE OF STIMULUS AND INFORMATION SOURCE ON TELEVISION COMMERCIAL EFFICACY.

VARIABLES	X	1	2	3	4
1. Familiar/Credible Presentation	28.5	-			
2. Familiar/Non-credible Presentation	24.0	4.5**	-		
3. Novel/Credible Presentation	26.1	2.4*	2.1	-	
4. Novel/Non-credible Presentation	24.9	3.6**	0.9	1.2	-

*P<. 05.

**P<. 01.

The interaction effect of presentation frequency, type of stimulus, and information source on efficacy was significant $F(1,72) = 3.97$; $P < .05$. The LSD results (Table 4) showed that repetition/familiar/credible presentation ($X = 28.8$) was significantly more efficacious than repetitive/familiar/non-credible ($X = 25.7$), repetitive/novelty/credible ($X = 26.0$), single/novelty/credible ($X = 26.2$) at $P < .05$ respectively, and repetitive/novel/non-credible ($X=24.1$), single/familiar/non-credible ($X = 21.8$), single/novelty/non-credible ($X = 25.7$) at $P < .01$ respectively. However, there was no significant difference between repetitive/familiar/credible presentation and single/familiar/credible ($X=28.2$).

TABLE 4: LSD MULTIPLE COMPARISON SHOWING EFFECTS OF PRESENTATION FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF STIMULUS AND INFORMATION SOURCE ON TELEVISION COMMERCIAL EFFICACY

VARIABLES	X	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Single/Familiar/Credible Presentation	28.2	-							
2. Single/Familiar/Non-credible Presentation	21.8	6.4**	-						
3. Single/Novel/Credible Presentation	26.2	2.0	4.4**	-					
4. Single/Novel/Non-credible Presentation	25.7	2.5*	3.9**	0.5	-				
5. Repetitive/Familiar/Credible Presentation	28.8	0.6	7.0**	2.6*	3.1**	-			
6. Repetitive/Familiar/Non-credible Presentation	25.7	2.5*	3.9**	0.5	0.0	3.1**	-		
7. Repetitive/Novel/Credible Presentation	26.0	2.2*	4.2**	0.2	0.3	2.8*	0.3	-	
8. Repetitive/Novel/Non-credible Presentation	24.1	4.1**	2.3*	2.1	1.6	4.7**	1.6	1.9	-

*P<.05.

**P<.01

The results of this study showed the importance of repeating advertisement to achieve efficacious commercials in the television. This is in support of McCullough and Ostrom's (1974) findings that repetition of advertisement has significant effect on cognitive and behavioural response ability. Belch (1981) also explained that repeat presentation of advertisements or stimulus makes information or message processing much easier than single presentation. As a way of engaging persuasive mechanism in advertising, Kotler, Bowen and Morkens (1996) suggested the use of reminder advertising by repeating advertisements, that even highly satisfied customers need frequent reminders.

It was also discovered that the use of familiar stimulus materials in advertisement is more effective than the use of novel stimulus materials. Gorn (1982) had earlier explained, based on research findings, that simple association with familiar objects (stimuli) affect advertisement efficacy and product preferences. This is so because stimulus material, like the music background used in an advert, would call for the attention of the recipients of the advert messages. If the stimulus is a familiar one, the recipient would be attentive to the actual advert information after the background stimulus has drawn attention to the advert. If the stimulus material is a novel one, it may not be powerful enough to draw the attention of the intended recipient; even when it does, there may be divided attention as the individual would also want to gain something from the background stimulus. Thus, a novel stimulus may serve more as a distracter than as a cue to the actual advert message. The low-learning theory by Kassarjian (1974) recognizes the relative amount of learning that takes place when a familiar stimulus is paired with an advertisement.

The third implication from this study is that the use of a credible source in conveying advert message is more efficacious than the use of a non-credible source. With Weibacher's (1984) dissonance reduction theory, a credible source assures or reassures a customer of the decision he has made or is about to make. Kotler (1996) emphasized personality symbol as creating a character that personifies the product. Such symbol could feature a highly credible, likeable, or expert source endorsing the product; this serves as testimonial evidence. As explained by Ehigie and Babalola (1995) that in adopting the classical conditioning theory to explain consumer's behaviour, an association is formed between the credible source and the product as such the disposition held towards the credible source is now transferred to the product.

The effect of the creativity factor in an advertisement campaign can be more important than the number of dollars spent (Kotler et al., 1996), in a more creativity way, the results of the interaction effects in this study suggest the combination of repetitive advert, with familiar stimulus background, and a credible person as the advert presenter. By adopting these as psychological strategies in advertisement campaign, such advert would be more efficacious. However, the study has not been able to stimulate the average number of times an advert should be repeated to achieve optimum efficacy. Also, the study did not account for products that are non-specialty type that may not call for any expertise of advert presenter. Finally, it may be rather difficult to establish a stimulus that would be generally considered familiar for the entire consuming public.

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