

The Impact of Nigerian Cultural Elements on the Design of Print Media Ads

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of Nigerian cultural elements on the design of print advertisements and the effectiveness of those elements in inducing product patronage. Culture plays an important role in any communication setting, including advertising. It is in recognition of this important fact, that this study was undertaken. The content analysis and survey research methods were used as design, while data were gathered using the questionnaire and observation as tools. The purposive sampling method was adopted to select twenty-five (25) advertisements and two hundred and fifty-nine (259) respondents from the population of Port Harcourt urban. Simple percentages were used to analyse the data from the survey. Two hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order and the Chi-square test. Findings show that Nigerian cultural elements were used in the design of the advertisements. These cultural elements were informative and persuasive enough to enhance product patronage as people believed them to be original and indigenous. The study concludes that communication of information about products, services or ideas, could be improved if the advertisers applied these cultural elements in the design of their advertisements. Thus for better advertisement copies, Nigerian advertisers and advertising agencies must understand the communicative values of cultural elements and endeavour to use them in the designing of advertisements.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is one activity we experience every day. As a phenomenon, advertising cannot be ignored nor can we overlook its realities and the force it exerts on the society. With the primary function of introducing, creating and intensifying awareness about a wide range of services, ideas and goods, advertising uses symbols and signs that are within our reach to communicate meaning to the society. "Once it captures ... attention, it (advertising) tends to hold it long enough to induce patronage of the advertised product" (Nwagbara 2002). Although, advertising directly or indirectly makes an attempt to manipulate social values and attitudes, which has exposed it to several criticisms, it is no doubt a veritable tool for expanding the customer base of organisations

Anyacho (2007) notes that advertising is a form of communication which attempts to interpret the qualities of products, services and ideas in terms of consumers' needs/wants. It is a communication channel through which facts about products, services or ideas; paid for by an identified sponsor are presented to the society. Advertising generally aims at promoting and selling goods, services, and ideas. These include tangible items such as beauty products, drinks,

toiletries, etc and intangible services like banking, medical care, interior decoration, repair work, fashion and designing. Ideas such as political, economic, religious and cultural, among others are placed in the media to inform, educate and call for patronage (Nwagbara 2010). But for this persuasive communication strategy to achieve its goal, the packaging of the message is paramount. That is, a basic consideration in the conceptualization of the advertising message is how acceptable the final 'copy' will be. To the advertiser and the mass media saddled with the responsibility of relaying the message to the audience, it is not just the creation of the message with the best concepts that is important, but that the message is capable of selling the product, idea, or service, and that it is acceptable to the consumer or potential consumer. To achieve this, advertisers must recognise the fact that advertising should take place within a specific cultural context. Cultural norms and values provide direction and guidance to all members of society in all aspects of their lives, including their consumption patterns. Understanding how this influence works is necessary in designing meaning advertising copies (Nwagbara 2010).

Similarly, Mboho (1991) argues that when an advertiser, the producer, or even the mass

communicator shows concern about the content of his message, he is in fact recognizing that information has potential persuasive powers on any audience, and he knows also that the audience's reaction to information is not only dependent on content, but also on factors that are psychological, social or environmental. The media are entrusted with the role of informing, educating and entertaining the society. Advertising messages are tailored towards mass communication and as such are directed at large, heterogeneous, and scattered audiences. The mass media audience is made up of a variety of persons who differ in social class, educational attainment, values, norms, economic stand and cultural beliefs. Individuals' level of exposure to technology and their acceptance of media messages present a segregation that calls for attention by virtue of the goal of advertising. The effectiveness of advertising can be enhanced if advertisers ensure that messages are created to reflect the cultural symbols associated with their target audience using any chosen media of mass communication or any other media so decided. This is because "...the influence culture has on individuals' consumption pattern is strong enough to affect their choice of goods and services and by extension their response to advertisements" (Nwagbara 2002).

What is Culture?

Culture has been viewed in several ways by different scholars. To some, culture has to do with the opera, art, ballad, dances, food, dressing and values; while some conceive culture as an all-encompassing phenomenon identifiable with a group of people. Porter and Samovar as cited by Nwagbara (2006) see culture as the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, meanings, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion, concepts of self, the universe and self universe, relationships, hierarchies of status, role expectations, spatial relations and time concepts acquired by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group strivings. Culture is also the manifestation of the patterns of language and thoughts which culminates into the models for the cultural group in question, in terms of behaviour, living and general conduct.

To Kartha (2010), culture is an integral part of every society. It is a learned pattern of be-

haviour and ways in which a person lives his or her life. According to English Anthropologist Edward B. Taylor as cited in Kartha (2010), culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. As Bassey (2006) observes, culture is the accumulated growth of man's power over the nature, materialized in the instruments and practice of labour and in the medium of signs, thought, knowledge and language through which is passed on from generation to generation as man's second nature.

Culture therefore is dynamic, man-created and transferable; but it does not just mean values and personality, rather, the great corpus of techniques, knowledge, models of social organizations, ideas, and aspirations specific to a society, which is handed down and learned in each generation and enables a particular form of social life to take place. Culture is necessary to establish an order and discipline in the society. It is not only a means of communication between people, but also a feeling of belonging and togetherness among people in the society (Kartha 2010). Every society has set down norms or values to guide educate and socialize people into their different roles as a measure for preserving their values. This knowledge, attitude, values, occupational skills, and many more reflect the culture of a people. Ashong as cited in Bassey (2006) rightly puts it that a people or a nation derives its unique identity chiefly from culture. It interprets the institutions, values, arts, beliefs, ideas and ethnic characteristics of any society. To Okonofua (1998), the culture of a society is encapsulated in the arts of that society. Art objects or subjects have remained very important in unveiling past civilizations and achievements. Art is therefore a means of communicating past, present and future experiences. Uyoata (2001) sees culture as an acquired behaviour that is not transmitted generally as intelligence but which comes as a product of man's intervention. Through culture, society is endowed with an attitude peculiar to a people, which unites and integrates them. Okoli as cited in Bassey (2006) gives a clearer explanation to the concept of culture saying that by uniting the people in common beliefs, actions and values; culture fills with order that portion of life, which lies beyond the pace of state intervention. It fills it in such a way as to

integrate attitudes, common values, etc. It creates the basis for the formulation of common destiny and cooperation in pursuing it....

It is obvious that most people appear to be familiar with culture but may not be able to view culture in its complex and multidimensional scope. The mental conditions our cultural experience imposes on us influence our perception and the opinions we have about people, issues and even advertisements. Culture is related to the development of one's attitude. Someone's culture plays an important role in shaping the principles of that individual's life. Culture seems the ultimate system of social control where people monitor their own standards and behaviour.

The Nigerian culture is a complex subject that involves more than music and dancing or arts in general. It encompasses the material and non-material aspects of culture. The material includes the food, clothing, etc. while the non-material includes philosophical and creative aspects. Bassey (2006) identifies elements of material culture to include costumes, musical instruments, crafts tools work and war implements that are the reflections of the people's technology. Wilson (2004) lists seven elements that are identified in each culture or sub cultural group. These include social organization, customs and traditions, language, arts and literature, religion, governmental organizations and economic systems.

Nigerian cultural heritage is propagated and preserved through cultural expressions of art such as music, songs and dance. Mode of greeting is another element in the Nigerian culture that is highly valued. Although different in the manner obtained in the various subcultures, the youths are required to greet the elderly and those in authority with non-verbal cues that convey respect. Marriage rites are also very important but they differ from one subculture to the other particularly between the north and the south.

Culture is indeed, a system of growth peculiar to a group that shares its principles or identity. In its dynamic posture, culture encourages constant and continuous growth so that the world can be transformed (Keghku 2006). In essence, it is that invisible bond, which ties the people of a community together, their art, literature, language and religion and moral values.

Culture and Advertising

Advertising like every other communication activity should take place within a specific cultural context. The influence of culture may be informal and yet powerful enough to affect the buyer's choice of goods and his world. Culture manifests in different ways; it could be through codes, signs, gestures, facial expressions, dressing, food, choice of words and language, and the environment projected in the setting. These elements are reflected or projected in some Nigerian advertisements analysed in this study. Examples of these advertisements include *the UBA Money Gram*, *the Uncle Palm Iodised Salt*, *the Chartered Bank –Cradle to Grey Days*, *the Peak Powdered Milk*, and *the Dr Ayeni Herbal Products*.

Arens et al. (2008) buttress the fact that advertising is one of the major forces that has encouraged increased productivity by publicizing the material, social and cultural opportunities of a free enterprise. Hence advertisers would find it much easier to work with consumers' taste than try to change it. Advertising messages created based on this understanding are usually better and tend to have more impact (Nwagbara 2006). Advertisers should be concerned with what happens within the consumers' purchase environment. Lin (1993) believes that of all business activities, marketing actions are the most prone to cultural errors.

Within Nigeria, a product's advertisement sometime has more than one version reflecting the different cultural and social segmentation within the Nigeria. Alcoholic drinks, for instance, are not advertised in the northern part of Nigeria. This is because of the culture and religion practiced there. The success of any advertising campaign is based on the advertiser's knowledge and perfect understanding of the general characteristics, behaviour, rites, ritual, values, and beliefs of the target group. Culture imposes a great deal of influence on the consumer. Because it is the underlying cause of a person's behaviour, it also determines the individual's disposition to the elements used in the design of the message hence cultural influence can be powerful. It is necessary if advertisers must penetrate the "buyer's world".

Arens et al. (2008) also agree that it would almost be impossible for marketers to penetrate

certain segments of the society particularly the international markets if they ignored the customs of such people. They argue that racial, religious and ethnic background affect people's preference for style of dressing, food, beverages, transportation, personal-care products and household furnishings among others. Understanding the importance of the target audience language and other cultural elements will enhance our knowledge of the influence of such in the designing of advertisements. A creative person must be very familiar with the use of these elements in a particular culture and the cultural context to make sense to readers/listeners.

Culture affects advertising on two levels; first, at the level of conception and creation of the advertisement, and second at the level of the consumer and his purchase of the advertised product (Nwagbara 2002). All advertisements placed in the media are designed for a segment of the population with no one person as the target. This segment or segments is/are usually a culture or subculture in the society. This guides the advertiser to design the message and select the models that will meet the value, taste and lifestyle of the target audience. The consumer on the other hand, responds to the message primarily because he belongs to that culture or subculture. The pressure to conform in group situations can have a powerful impact on social behaviour and by extension, on the success of the advertising campaign.

Objective of the Study

Advertising is basically concerned with calling attention to the existence and the benefits of a given product. Achieving this is possible when the encoder and decoder understand or share similar field of experience. The choice of words or symbols used for any communication determines the ease with which meaning can be shared. The purpose of this study was therefore to examine how advertising practitioners had explored the use of Nigerian cultural elements in designing advertisements. In addition, the study also examined how those elements used enhanced understanding of the advertisements and encouraged patronage on the part of the consumers.

The success of any advertisement campaign is judged basically by how much patronage the

product or service records at the end of the exercise. Advertising has gained a certain prominence in the society. Its practitioners must strive for excellence at all times in order to capture the attention of the ever changing market. Understanding what design elements create the most impact on consumers is very vital for advertising to work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey method, and content analysis. The advertisements of the selected products were analysed to determine the level of utilization of Nigerian cultural elements in the design of the advertisements. A survey was also conducted on consumers of products to assess the influence of the prevalent cultural elements on their purchase decision. The instrument used was for the survey was questionnaire. Survey is descriptive and analytical, describes current conditions or attitudes as well as explains the reasons for certain existing situations (behaviours) (Wimmer and Dominick 2011).

The population for the content analysis consisted of advertisements published in Nigerian news and general interest magazines while consumers of products resident in Port Harcourt metropolis, who are also readers of print advertisements formed the population for the survey. A total of 259 residents were selected through purposive sampling for the study.

Advertisement copies in *Tell* and *NewsWatch* Magazines were chosen purposively for the study. The two magazines were selected because of their duration (in terms of their long existence) in circulation and their wide readership. Twenty-five advertisements of selected products were chosen from the banking services, telecommunication household products and others to form the sample for the study. One major criterion for the selection was based on the Nigerian cultural elements content in the advertisements. Two hundred and fifty-nine (259) consumers were used to generate data to determine the consumers' opinion on the persuasive ability of the prevalent elements in the select advertisements to influence consumers' purchase decisions.

The content of the selected advertisements were coded into two major categories to determine the use of Nigerian cultural elements in the copies and their impact on the message. The categories are:

- Nigerian cultural elements. When the advertisement presents Nigerian cultural elements in the symbols used in presenting the message on the selected print copy.
- The informative and persuasive values of the Nigerian cultural elements presented in the advertisements.

The unit of analysis for the study comprised of the following:

1. **Photograph/Illustration:** This has to do with concrete image of the product/ or model in the copy (pictures) or an artist impression of features of the advertised product (illustration).
2. **Dressing:** This has to do with the cultural elements presented as outfits covering or apparels of models in the copies. Such materials were analysed vis-à-vis their cultural contents.
3. **Setting:** This has to do with the Nigerian cultural environment depicted in the advertisements. For example, the use of local motifs and materials.
4. **Language/Words:** This involves the use of words/symbols in the advertisements, which describe the product advertised. Such description may have cultural content in syntax or semantics. For example, presenting the words in the way Nigerians use them and interpret same.
5. **Slogan:** This has to do with a short and concise memorable way of describing the product advertised.
6. **Objects/Symbols:** This involves looking at the symbols and objects used other than the photographs or illustrations and how they relate to the Nigerian culture.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Two hypotheses were formulated based on the objective of the study to help in data analysis. A number of inferences were drawn from the data gathered to meet the objective of the study and test the hypotheses. The study used the Spearman Rank Order or rho to test hypothesis 1, while the Chi square was used to test the second hypothesis.

The analysis of the advertisement was carried out based on the presence of the cultural elements described in the units of analysis. Each of the 25 advertisements was ranked on the basis of the communicative capability of the ele-

ments and how they are presented on the copy. A summary of the content analysis is presented in Table 1.

(√) is used to indicate the presence of an element in the advertisement while (-) means the element is absent. X is the total number of Nigerian cultural elements found in each advertisement and Y is the rank value assigned to each advertisement by the coders, explaining the informative and persuasive ability of the advertisement based on the placement of the Nigerian cultural elements in the selected print copy.

Table 1 portrays the Nigerian cultural elements found in advertisements. They include photographs/illustrations, Nigerian setting, Nigerian dress code, Nigerian Language and Words common to Nigeria, Nigerian Arts/Objects/Symbols and Nigerian slangs in the slogan. The Table also presents the dominant elements contained in the advertisements used for the study. The findings from the coding show that of all the Nigerian cultural elements identified, Nigerian photographs/illustrations, languages and words, as well as objects/arts/symbols dominated the selected product advertisements. These elements were found in all the advertisements.

From the coding, it was discovered that twenty- three of the advertisements' elements were informative and persuasive while two of the advertisements were ranked 'Not Sure'. This finding affirms not only the presence of Nigerian cultural elements in the advertisements but vital role such elements can play in communicating the advertising message to the consumers. This also points to the fact that advertising practitioners in the country to a large extent use Nigerian cultural elements in the design of advertisements.

To further establish how significant the result of the analysis was, two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The hypotheses are:

1. Advertisements with more cultural elements will convey better meaning than advertisements with less of these elements.
2. Advertisements that feature informative and persuasive cultural elements will tend to induce patronage more than advertisements with no informative and persuasive elements.

The study also used the Spearman Ranks Order or Rho to test hypothesis 1.

Table 1: Presence of Nigerian cultural elements

	<i>Nigerian cultural elements in photos/ illustration</i>	<i>Nigerian dress code</i>	<i>Nigerian settings</i>	<i>Nigerian lang./ words</i>	<i>Nigerian objects/ symbols</i>	<i>Slang's in slogans</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Y</i>
Wema Bank Nig. Plc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	5	5
Multi-links Telecom	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	4
UBA Plc	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	5	5
Oceanic Bank Plc.	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	4	4
Tour Afrique	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	5	5
Uncle Palm Iodised Salt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	6
Super Card Nig. Ltd.	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	3
Maggi Cube	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	5
Clearline Int'l Ltd.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	4
Iris Medical Foundation	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	4
Chartered Bank Nig. Plc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	5	4
Peak Powered Milk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	5
Gateway Holdings Ltd.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	5	4
Yem-Kem Int'l	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	5	4
Peugeot 307	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	3	3
Etisalat	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	5	5
Stallion	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	4	4
DAAR Com. Plc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	5
Fidelity Bank Plc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	5	4
Etisalat Easy Starter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	4
Union Bank Plc.	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	4
Globacom Nig. Plc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	4
Toyota Nig. Plc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	5
MTN Nigeria	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	4
DHL Services	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	4	4
Total	25	17	22	25	25	14	128	107

The second hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square statistical measuring tool. Data for hypothesis 1 are drawn from Table 1. The rank values are as indicated in Table 2.

From Table 2, using the formula

$$\text{Rho} = \frac{1 - \sum d^2}{N^3 - N}$$

$$\text{Rho} = \frac{1 - \sum 6 \times 29}{15625 - 25}$$

$$\text{Rho} = 0.98$$

The table value for rho at 25 degrees of freedom (df) with a 0.5 level of significance is .40. The computed value for rho is 0.98. Since the computed value is higher than the table value, the alternate hypothesis is upheld and the null is rejected. Thus, advertisements with more cultural elements will convey better meaning than advertisements with less of these elements.

For hypothesis 2, the test was done with data derived from the survey answer presented in Table 3.

From the Table 3, it can be observed that majority (100) of the respondents opted to buy or identify with products with Nigerian cultural elements.

Table 2: Spearman rank order computation

<i>Advertisements</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>d²</i>
Wema Bank Nig. Plc.	5	5	0	0
Multi-links Telecom	5	4	1	1
UBA Plc	5	5	0	0
Oceanic Bank Plc.	4	4	0	0
Tour Afrique	5	5	0	0
Uncle Palm Iodised Salt	6	5	1	1
Super Card Nig. Ltd.	5	3	2	4
Maggi cube	6	5	1	1
Clearline Int'l Ltd.	6	4	2	4
Iris Medical Foundation	5	4	1	1
Chartered Bank Nig. Plc.	5	4	1	1
Peak Powered Milk	6	5	1	1
Gateway Holdings Ltd.	5	4	1	1
Yem-Kem Int'l	5	4	1	1
PAN Nig. Plc	3	3	0	0
Etisalat	5	5	0	0
Stallion	4	4	0	0
DAAR Com. Plc.	6	5	1	1
Fidelity Bank Plc.	5	4	1	1
Etisalat Easy Starter	6	4	2	4
Union Bank Plc.	5	4	1	1
Globacom Nig. Plc.	6	4	2	4
Toyota Nig. Plc.	6	5	1	1
MTN Nigeria	5	4	1	1
DHL Services	4	4	0	0
Total	128	107	21	29

Table 3: Opinion expressed

<i>Advertisements</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Total</i>
With Elements	100	31	131
Without Elements	64	45	109
Total	164	76	240

The sum of $\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$ is $1.23 + 2.60 + 1.48 + 3.20 = 8.51$

The Chi-square table value at 1df and at 0.05 level of significance is 3.841. The computed value is 8.51. Thus, the value derived is higher than the table value. To this end, advertisements with more cultural elements will tend to induce purchase better than advertisements with less cultural elements. Thus, the hypothesis 2 is upheld (Table 4).

Table 4: Chi-square

Computing the values using the chi-square formula $\chi^2 = (O - E)^2/E$ will be E

<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O - E</i>	<i>O - E^2</i>	<i>(O - E)^2/E</i>
100	89.5	10.5	110.3	1.23
31	41.5	-10.5	110.3	2.60
64	74.5	-10.5	110.3	1.48
45	34.5	10.5	110.3	3.20
240	240			8.51

IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The study sought to ascertain how much advertising practitioners in Nigeria reflected Nigerian cultural elements in the design of print advertisements. More importantly, the study attempted to establish the relationship between the presence of cultural elements in the advertisements and consumers willingness to patronize the products so advertised. Findings show that the advertisements used for the study actually featured a high level of Nigerian cultural elements and that consumers were influenced to buy the products advertised because they could identify with the cultural content of the advertisements. This confirms Nwagbara's (2002) submission that culture has a strong influence on people's consumption pattern, their choice of goods and services and their response to advertisements. It also stands to reason that the use of relevant and message-conveying as well as identifiable elements will aid understanding and impact on the content of the advertisement copy. Such knowledge is essential for the practitioners and the advertisers.

Manufacturers of goods around the globe export them to other countries with a chunk of their (producers') cultural elements. As Orherwere (2007) notes, this practice has led to the domination and manipulation of the recipient countries, particularly the third world nations. The situation is made worse when those manufacturers produce advertisements for such products in their countries, designed with their own cultural realities, and sent to recipient countries. The people end up with advertisements they hardly understand. Because sometimes they do not have much choice, they learn to accept the situation. Cultural imperialism is definitely not good for any people. It is attracting a lot of attention given how sensitive it is. Unfortunately, some home-country media are themselves accelerating the loss of their own distinctive cultures when they present these kinds of advertisements.

Advertising as a form of communication takes place within cultural boundaries. Knowing that cultural differences exist and the possible effect – positive or negative it can have on the final outcome of what goes into the media, should propel advertising practitioners to ply their trade with caution. That same knowledge should guide them in their choice of concepts in designing advertisements. Nigerian cultural elements should form the nucleus of that choice as much as possible. This is to ensure a more firm hold on the market. The Nigerian society is one that holds in high esteem the sacredness of its cultural beliefs. Therefore, advertisements with such cultural content will tend to be more appealing and easily remembered by consumers.

CONCLUSION

Although it is evident that Nigerian cultural elements were employed in the design of the advertisements used for this study, one cannot rule out the fact that there are still advertisements in the country's media laced with foreign cultural elements. This trend may have been occasioned by the influx of digital satellite television broadcasting in the country and other foreign media. Their appeals may be capable of corrupting minors and in fact, reinforce unacceptable habits in regular patrons. Even when the settings are obviously exotic and the language tranquilizing, because the design ele-

ments are alien to the realities of the audience, such advertisements may not have the desired impact. A look at those advertisements sometimes reveals the cheap and almost mechanical emotions played by models and the unrealistic immediate pleasures they derive from advertised products or services.

The foregoing poses a responsibility on the advertisers and the advertising agencies as well as the mass media to ensure that communicative Nigerian cultural elements that will enhance meaning sharing are used in the design of their advertisements. Advertising as we have seen in this study is a communication activity that should be situated within defined cultural contexts. Consumers tend to respond to product advertisement based on the culture or sub culture they belong to. It is just appropriate to reach them through what they know and understand. Thus, if Nigerian cultural elements are properly used in advertisements, practitioners can reach a sizeable portion of their market.

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