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Influence of online advertisements of retail shops' products on the buying behavior of consumers in South – East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of online advertisements of retail shops' products on the buying behavior of consumers in South-East Nigeria. The focus of this study was to find out how online advertising has enhanced the patronage of online retail shops' products. The survey method was employed to elicit the opinions of the respondents. The population of study was 21,602,533. A sample size of four hundred and twenty-seven (427) was drawn from the population. After the analysis, the result indicated that the exposure level of the respondents to online retail shops' product ads was quite high and that the respondents were influenced to patronize the online shops due to the online ads. Having discussed the findings of the study and based on the results obtained, the researcher therefore, concludes that consumers in South-east Nigeria were exposed to the online retail shops' product advertisement. However, the exposure does not culminate to high knowledge level of the online retail shops' product advertisement. The study therefore, recommends that the online retailers should continuously enlighten the consumers so as to strengthen brand promotion for online products.

Keywords: 1 Online advertising, 2 Consumers Buying Behaviour, 3 Online Retail Shops, 4 Internet, 5WorldWide Web.

Introduction

The Internet has become a popular means of people to communicate, share ideas, content and participate in several other social activities in recent times. Besides providing an opportunity for consumers to interact with one another, the Internet also displays a great deal of potential for online product advertisers to easily reach their target audiences through advertising.

The growing dependency on Internet as the ultimate source of information and communication has made it a leading advertisement platform (Deshwal, 2016, p.200). Most online shops have created various ways of advertising in this new medium. These ranges from the traditional form of search engine advertising that was started by Google to newer forms such as the creation of product groups where consumers can join on social media like Facebook, YouTube, Blogs and Twitter. According to Daugherty and Hoffman (2014) consumers are increasingly using these platforms to communicate with each other about brands and exchange information and opinions about different products and services. Some scholars like Vollmer & Precourt, 2008; Chu & Kim, 2011; See-To & Ho, 2014 have observed that the Internet has become an ideal tool for electronic Word-of-Mouth and trust in that it enables consumers to create and disseminate brand-related information through established social networks within the sites.

The internet and social networks have also changed the way individuals communicate such that advertisements do not inherently have to be paid – a good review from one consumer to a group of others can be all the advertisement that a company would need (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2013). The speedy development in technology and the increase in the new communication media have no doubt transformed the advertisement landscape and advertisers are now constantly looking for the best means of reaching out to their consumers.

In 1994, back in the days of Netscape, American Online (AOL), and dial-up connections, a seemingly innocuous image appeared on Hotwire. This static image was actually an advertisement, the first of its kind, which allowed users who clicked on it to be taken directly to the advertiser's site. Though initially slow, cumbersome and one-dimensional, this new media held huge promise for brands. The banner ad (as digital display advertising was called a decade ago) captured the interactivity of the Web in ways that more traditional, "one-way" advertising like TV, radio, print and out-of-home advertising couldn't (Said, 2014, p.1). In line with Said's assertion, Garner (2015, p.1) asserts that:

Improved advertising formats make Internet display more interactive and effective, with consumers more likely to view, remember, and interact with them than the older formats like TV, radio, and print media. Also, technological advancements in media buying space are helping advertisers to reach the target audience at the right time with the right message at an efficient price.

Since the appearance of the first pop-up advertisement on the Internet in 1994, there has been a great deal of potential to advertise more aggressively to consumers using this platform. Nwosu and Nkamnebe (2006) note that the Internet or website advertising became possible with the advent of important software called the World Wide Web (WWW). In their explanation, the World Wide Web is not by itself the Internet but it remains a designed electronic software

programme such as the Internet networking system and its basic function is the facilitation of multi-media view of graphics, audio, video animation, pictures, photographic, artworks, and other graphics in the Internet services.

In a study conducted by Rudloff & Fray (2010), O'Toole (2000) they found that the traditional mass media audiences are increasingly and to a great extent turning towards the new media for information and gratification of certain communication needs. Recently, the Internet World Stats (2019) reported that Internet users in Nigeria were more than 123 million with the population of over 200 million people and an Internet penetration rate of over 61% as at the 2nd quarter of 2019 has been ranked as the sixth in the world and number one in Africa country with the highest number of Internet users. With these latest reports put forward by the World Stats, it may be proper to say that Internet trading has caught on in Nigeria. Consumers are now able to use the Internet for different purposes such as online shopping, online banking and online advertising.

Similarly, Said (2014, p.5) writes that:

With both consumers and companies flocking to the Internet for all forms of information and entertainment, the Web became hugely complex. What had once been a simple transaction between advertiser and publisher was filled in with other options to bring marketers even closer to their consumers. Ad servers, ad exchanges, retargeting companies, ad networks, data suppliers and other tools made online advertising more efficient, but also much, much more difficult to track and attribute. With literally trillions of opportunities available for advertising, tracking ad campaigns manually was not only time consuming and inefficient, it was impossible.

Salehi (2012, p. 21) agrees with the above view when he notes that "Internet technology advancement allows for the expansion of online shopping options beyond traditional methods, which may be more time wasting." According to Park and Kim (2002), considerable amount of transactions that used to exist in traditional transactions have disappeared in virtual space. Internet has inculcated various new and exciting dimensions to advertising providing advertisers with tools to capture attention of target audiences with greater accuracy and efficacy.

The advertising industry has followed consumers online, even developing new forms of advertising to relate to consumers in their virtual world. In this regard, Maksy (2015, p.2) writes that:

Over time, advertising has grown and developed as trends and consumer preferences have changed. The way that advertising was in the past is not as it is today. Much of this is due to technology and the creation of the Internet, but marketers have constantly been seeking new opportunities to promote their information to the markets.

Generally, it is accepted that greater relevance of online behavioural advertising often generates higher click-through than other types of online advertising such as email advertising or banner advertising (Yoo, 2011) since it is tailored to the behaviour and interest of the user (Advertising Internet Bureau). This is because it generates higher click-through and appeals directly to the users' interest by determining the users' actions (Slegg, 2006), transaction rates of these types of targeted advertisements are higher than the other online advertising types (Yoo, 2011).

However, in recent times, the online product consumers appear to be more knowledgeable, sophisticated, inquisitive and more skeptical about the authenticity of products advertised online. These entire scenarios no doubt call for more research into consumer buying behaviour and make the online advertising increasingly attractive so as to win the desired confidence of the consumers. Jun et al. (2004) observe that the online consumers apparently want to receive the right quality and right quantity of items that they have ordered within the time frame, promised by the retailers, and they expect to be billed accurately. Hence, Okoro (2013, p.18) explains that "the challenge of advertising in the modern marketing sense is to match promise with fulfillment by ensuring that product claim equals product quality."

Much of the existing literature has mainly focused on identifying the factors that affect the willingness of consumers to engage in Internet shopping, such as concerns over privacy and credit card security problems that could result from Internet transactions (Hoffmam, Novak and Peralta, 2006; Jacobs, 1997), with a major gap on the perception of the credibility of the ads themselves and if they push the consumers to purchase the products from these online shops.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the frequency at which consumers in South-East Nigeria were exposed to online retail shops' product advertisements.
2. Ascertain the awareness level of consumers in South-East Nigeria on online retail shops' product advertisements.
3. Find out the extent to which online retail shops' product advertisements influence consumers' buying behaviour.

Literature Review

Solomon and Bamossey (2006) explain that consumer behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. It is the behaviour that customers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of goods and services they expect will satisfy them (Schiffman and Kanuk,2007,p.3).

People can connect globally by just clicking the browser; they can seek whatever they want from the Internet by being seated at their comfortable places whenever and wherever they like. Studies show that one in three consumers may rely heavily on the Internet to seek for information before making decisions such as buying cars or houses, finding a job or school, make investment and online shopping (Ayub, 2009; Yusoff, 2009; Halim, 2009). This trend has created a huge opportunity for businessmen to expose their businesses through online advertisements. Online retailers on items such as clothing, cosmetic, books, software and other goods and services are possible to get numerous customers from all over the world. Because of the widespread of online businesses in the marketplace, it is hard for a company to compete in the market and this has led to the creation of many online advertisement techniques to attract attention from the online buyers.

The consumers' buying behaviour has always been a popular marketing topic, extensively studied and debated over the last decades while no contemporary marketing textbook is complete without a chapter dedicated to this subject. The predominant approach, explaining the fundamentals of consumer behaviour, describes the consumer buying process as learning, information-processing and decision-making activity divided in several consequential steps:

- (1) Problem identification.
- (2) Information search.
- (3) Alternatives evaluation.
- (4) Purchasing decision.
- (5) Post-purchase behaviour

(Bettman, 1979; Dibb et al., 2001; Jobber, 2001; Boyd et al., 2002; Kotler, 2003; Brassington and Pettitt, 2003).

The behaviour of the online consumer is fundamentally different from the consumer of physical world. Consumers find it easy to shop online and this trend is gradually increasing. To enhance the online shopping, advertisers use different strategies such as its low cost to do shopping online (Ahmed and David, 2014, p. 12).

Researchers agreed on these six fundamental principles on which advertising campaigns run: to secure attention; to arouse interest; to develop and sustain that interest; to create desire; to incite action and to create good will (Aneeza and Malik, 2009). Consumer buying behaviour is affected by the consumer choice of advertisement (Shmaila and Ashfaq, 2013, p. 13). There are two purposes of online advertising: communicate factor and content factor. Communicate factor is about featuring of ads and communicating information about the product. Content factor is about the shape of online advertisement, layout and graphics that are used in ads to attract the customer (Muhammad and Dwi, 2015). High or low degree of involvement is also a question of buyer experience; products purchased for the first time, in general, require more involvement than frequently purchased products (Boyd et al., 2002).

Soonyong Bae, Taesik and Lee (2010) examined the effect of online consumer reviews on consumer's purchase intention. Specifically, they investigated whether there are gender differences in responding to online consumer reviews. The result of the study shows that the effect of online consumer reviews on purchase intention is stronger for females than males. The negativity effect, that consumers are influenced by a negative review more than by a positive review, is also found to be more evident for females. These findings have practical implications for online sellers to guide them to effectively use online consumer reviews to engage females in online shopping.

In another study conducted by Seyed, Nikhashem and Farzana in 2011 on peoples' perception of online buying tickets (e-ticketing) as well as why some people use the online facility while some who do not use it adhere to the traditional way so as to fulfill their needs. In addition, factors such as what informs peoples' eagerness and unwillingness to use Internet facilities were also examined. The outcome of this research showed a comprehensively integrated framework that can be utilized by policy makers and business enterprises to understand the dynamic relationships among dimensions of perceived risk, user trustworthiness, usefulness, familiarity and confidence.

Online advertising techniques such as banners, pop-ups, and pop-unders are quite annoying to Internet users (McElfresh, Mineiro and Rodford, 2007). This is surprising because traditional media like television commercials have been long been criticized as being intrusive and the leader in advertising annoyance. However, research indicated that online consumers are more goals oriented and judge online advertisements even more harshly than those in other media.

The negative perception that users develop towards intrusive ads leads them to not return to that website. A Jupiter Research survey showed that 69% of users consider pop-ups annoying, and further, 23% said they would not return to the site simply because of the ads (McElfresh, Mineiro and Rodford, 2007).

With users needing instant gratification not being able to complete their goals while online is starting to diminish their feelings towards advertisements, company's brands and website environments. Abernethy describes intrusive online ads to being a television viewer who cannot leave the room or change the channel during a commercial, the user are deterred and feel helpless because there is little they can do to escape these ads other than interrupt their task, scroll past ads, or close the pop-up/pop-under windows.

A research about buying behaviours of online customers: Comparison of Turkey with United Kingdom which was conducted by Seda Yoldas in 2012 revealed that customers' behaviours are influenced by different factors such as culture, social class, references group relation, family, salary level and salary independency, age, gender etc. and so they show different customer behaviours. These differences are seen more specific when it is considered between two different consumer groups from different countries. The aim of the study was to investigate the factors that affect online purchasing behaviour of two consumer groups from two different countries, United Kingdom and Turkey. A questionnaire was designed online, since the research was an online consumer behaviour study, online data collection methods were preferred. The sample consisted of individuals in Turkey and UK.

According to Yoldas, "There are millions of people online any time and they all are potential consumers in the online market. Since there are so many providers, the most important thing for organisations is to understand what are consumer wants and needs in this competitive business environment."

Similar findings were also made by Tehreem Yasmeen and Rizwan Khalid in 2016, when they conducted a study on The Effects of Online Advertisement on Consumer Buying Behavior of University Students of Pakistan. The study was conducted to see the impact of online advertisement on consumer behaviour only from the university students' perspective.

The data collection method was quantitative and close ended questionnaire that is framed in terms of number is used and deductive approach is used. The data was only collected from the university students to see the impact of online advertisement on their purchasing behaviour with a sample size of 300 respondents. The study also concluded that online advertisement has an impact on the buying behaviour of the university students of Pakistan and it is a considerable segment that should be targeted and a lot of revenue can be gained from this segment.

The study tested five variables that are typically put forward by scholars. According to Muhammad and Dwi (2015), these are;

Interactivity: Ability of mutual communication between advertisers and consumers to respond to the input they receive.

Accessibility: Ability of users to avail themselves of services provided by online advertising.

Entertainment: Ability of advertising to give pleasure to consumer while inserting advertising information.

In-formativeness: Ability of the advertising to deliver information to consumer to give a true picture of product.

Irritation: It is an online disorder which means manipulation or fraudulent online ad that leads to bad experience.

Whilst considering Consumer buying behaviour as the process by which individuals search for, select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services, in satisfaction of their needs and wants

(Business dictionary, 2016, p. 17). Muhammad Khyzer, Muhammad Illyas and Chaudhary Abdul Rehman investigate the relationship between factors affecting consumer buying behaviour towards online shopping in their study of Online Shopping Trends and their Effects on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Case Study of Young Generation of Pakistani.

The focus of the research was on the influence of five major variables that were derived from the literature review i.e. trust, time, product variety, convenience and privacy, on consumer buying behaviour (dependent variable) to determine how consumer buying behaviour is reflecting online shopping trends. The statistical analysis of the data reflected that trust and convenience are greatly impactful on whether people choose to buy online or through brick and mortar stores, while privacy has a lesser influence of buying behaviour.

After conducting this research, certain results came to light. The most relevant factor(s) that seems to be affecting consumer buying behaviour towards online shopping when it came to the younger generation seemed to be 'the trust factor'. If they trusted the website, they were prone to buy more from it. Contrary to popular belief, however, the sense of privacy did not seem to affect the consumer behaviour.

They stated that people did not seem very worried about giving their personal data such as addresses online, provided that they could buy using the Cash on Delivery or CoD method for purchase. Convenience was another significant factor when it came to online shopping as people preferred to stay at home and shop as opposed to going out and browsing through stores.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). This theory was propounded by Icek Ajzen in 1985 and it is today one of the most popular social-psychological models for understanding and predicting human behaviour. In this theory, the immediate antecedent of a particular behaviour is the intention to perform a given behaviour. This intention is determined by three types of considerations: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

According to (Ajzen 1991), attitude refers to one's positive or negative evaluations of performing a behaviour. The more positive the attitude, the stronger the intention to engage in a specific behaviour. Subjective norms, or perceived social pressure, refers to an individual's perception that people who are important to him/her (important others) think he/she should perform or not perform a behaviour (Ajzen 1991). The stronger the perceived social pressure, the greater the intention to perform a certain behaviour. Perceived behavioural control refers to one's perceived ease or difficulty of performing behaviour.

This theory is applied in e-commerce to find the online purchase intension of the consumer. Shim et. al, (2001) aver that Internet surfing for fact finding perform as the refereeing variable among attitude, perceived behavioural control, past experience and behavioural intension towards online purchase. Fortin (2000) and Kang et. al., (2006) explained TPB for predicting behavioural intension into e-commerce business. An underlying premise of the current study is that beliefs about online ads inform attitudes toward Internet purchasing. From the major tenets of the theory, one could readily understand that the ability of one to purchase a product is a function of his/her attitude. If the attitude is negative, it will affect purchase. The acceptance or rejection of online advertisement is a function of the consumers' perception and attitude toward online shopping. If the risk appears acceptable to the consumer, he may progress to buy the product but if otherwise, he may decline.

For those who have negative belief towards online retail shops, the experience of others (subjective norm) may influence them positively. This may explain why young people make purchasing decisions based on what their friends said.

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted in this paper because the method has been recommended for behavioural study of this nature which has to do with the influence of online retail shops’ product ads on consumer buying behaviour. Copies of questionnaire were subsequently administered to the respondents to elicit data for the quantitative analysis.

The study was limited to the South-East Nigeria which has a population of 21,602,533 people. The sample size for this study was 427. This was determined by the use of online sample size calculator advanced by Wimmer and Dominick (2013) with confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 5.0%. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select two Local Government Areas from each of the states capitals.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the three research questions used in the study were answered using quantitative (questionnaire) research method. A total of 427 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents in South- East Nigeria. However, 421 copies were duly completed and returned by the respondents. This means that 6 copies were either misplaced or not duly filled by the respondents.

Table 1: How frequently respondents’ are exposed to online retail shops’ product advertisements

Response		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
	Always	121	28.7	28.7
	Often	200	47.5	76.2
	Rarely	32	7.6	83.8
	Can't say	16	3.8	87.6
	Have never seen	52	12.4	100.0
	Total	421	100.0	

Source: Researchers’ fieldwork 2020

This information presents the respondents’ exposure to online retail shops’ product advertisements. Twenty- eight point seven percent (121) are always exposed, 47.5 % (200) are often exposed, 7.6 % (32) are rarely exposed while 3.8% (16) are inconclusive and 12.4% (52) have never seen any. This shows that majority of the respondents are often exposed to online retail shops’ product advertisements.

Table 2: Awareness level of respondents on online product retail shops' product advertisements

Response		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
	Have not seen	98	23.3	23.3
	Low extent	61	14.5	37.8
	Can't say	41	9.7	47.5
	Moderately	89	21.1	68.6
	Some extent	101	24.0	92.6
	Large extent	31	7.4	100.0
	Total	421	100.0	

Source: Researchers' fieldwork 2020

The data above revealed that a total number of 98 (23.3%) respondents are not aware of online retail shops' product advertisements and 41 (9.7%) respondents are indecisive of their awareness level of online retail shops' product advertisements. Meanwhile, 61 (14.5%) respondents are aware of online retail shops' product advertisements to a low extent and 89 (21.1%) respondents have an average (moderate) awareness level of online retail shops' product advertisements, while a larger percentage of the respondents representing 101 (24.0%) are aware of online retail shops' product advertisements to some extent and 31 respondents representing 7.4% are aware of online retail shops' product advertisements to a large extent.

Table 3: The extent of online retail shops' product advertisements influence on the buying behaviour of respondents

Response		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
	No extent	32	7.6	7.6
	Can't say	68	16.2	23.8
	Moderately	107	25.4	49.2
	To some extent	151	35.9	85.0
	To a very large extent	63	15.0	100.0
	Total	421	100.0	

Source: Researchers' fieldwork 2020

The table above reveals the extent of online retail shops' product advertisements influence on the buying behaviour of respondents. A total number of 63 (15.0%) respondents believe to a very large extent the influence of online retail shops' product advertisements on their buying behaviour and 151 (35.9%) respondents to some extent. Meanwhile 32 (12.6%) respondents

believe it does not have any influence, and 107 (28.4%) respondents believe to a moderate extent, while 68 (16.2%) are uncertain.

Discussion of findings

The quantitative data generated showed that the majority of the respondents (353, representing 83.8 percent) have seen online retail shops' product advertisements and 76.2 percent see them often. This shows that the exposure level of the respondents is quite high. The finding made under this research question is supported by a similar finding by Ayub, (2009) and Yusoff, (2009). According to them the Internet has created a huge opportunity for businessmen to expose their businesses through online advertisements. They further state that online retailers on items such as clothing, cosmetic, books, software and other goods and services are possible to get numerous customers from all over the world. Expectedly, a large number of consumers patronize these products.

The second research question sought to find out the respondents' awareness level on online retail shops' product ads. The rating analysis was done to ascertain exactly the respondents' awareness level based on series of questions they answered which the researchers believed were enough to check their awareness level. The rating analysis showed that the majority of the respondents used in the study are aware of the online retail shops' product advertisements. This finding is supported by a similar finding in a study conducted by Boyd, H.W., Walker, O.C., Mullins, J. and Larre 'che ', J-C. in 2002 where they observed that high or low degree of involvement is also a question of buyer experience; products purchased for the first time, in general, require more involvement than frequently purchased products.

In research question three, the researchers sought to find out the extent to which online retail shops' product advertisements influence consumers' buying behavior.

On the extent to which the respondents were influenced, a total number of 63 (15.0%) respondents believe to a very large extent the influence of online retail shops' product advertisements on their buying behaviour and 151 (35.9%) respondents to some extent. Meanwhile 32 (12.6%) respondents believe it does not have any influence, and 107 (28.4%) respondents believe to a moderate extent, while 68 (16.2%) were uncertain.

From the results, the respondents were influenced by the online retail shops' product advertisements. Similar findings were also made by Tehreem Yasmeen and Rizwan Khalid in 2016, when they conducted a study on The Effects of Online Advertisement on Consumer Buying Behaviour of University Students of Pakistan. The study concluded that online advertisement has an influence on the buying behaviour of the university students of Pakistan.

Conclusion

Having discussed the findings of the study and based on the results obtained, the researchers therefore, conclude that consumers in South-east Nigeria were exposed to the online retail shops' product advertisements. However, the exposure does not culminate to high knowledge level of the online retail shops' product consumers. Also, the researchers conclude that the South-East residents believe that online retail shops' product advertisements influence their buying behaviour. With the increased adoption of the online advertising, the Internet is offering the business world advertisement that is more interactive with much global reach.

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