

**An Assessment of the Influence of Ambient Advertising on Patronage of
Goods and Services in Benue State**

By

Saa-Aondo, Stephen Asombu

Department of Mass Communication
Benue State University, Makurdi
e-mail: saasteven@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study “An Assessment of the Influence of Ambient Advertising on Patronage of Goods and Services in Benue State” is a survey research carried out with the general objective of determining the implications of ambient advertising on marketing of goods and services in Benue State. Three major towns (Adikpo, Makurdi, and Otukpo) were selected across the state as population of study using a multi-stage sampling procedure involving stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques. The study used questionnaire to gather data from a sample size of 400 respondents, determined statistically using Taro Yamane formula, and in-depth interview with nine organizations. Questionnaire was analysed using tables and simple percentages while in-depth interview was analysed using inductive thematic analysis. Chi-Square was used for the test of hypothesis. Findings revealed (inter alia), that ambient advertising has significantly influenced consumers in patronising goods and services in Benue State. Findings also revealed that vehicle wraps, street furniture, ambient lights, clothes/ hand-held materials, walkway messages, and pictorial slabs are some of the appeals/ techniques used in ambient advertising in Benue State. The study concludes that ambient advertising is an effective and affordable tool for marketing goods and services, and its strategies are being fast adopted in Benue State with significant influence on patronage of goods and services. The study recommended amongst other things, that organisations that have adopted ambient advertising in Benue State should promote research into it in order to harness its full potentials and economic relevance; and that advertising practitioners in the State should raise sectorial bodies in ambient advertising just like we have Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria, in order to encourage professionalism in the subsector.

Key Words: Ambient Advertising, Patronage, goods and Services, Benue State

Introduction

Advertising industry is undergoing thought-provoking innovations due to the influence of the new unusual, unexpected, awe-inspiring form of advertising branded as “ambient advertising.” This new advertising strategy transmits messages through environmental channels that might seem impossible to use for communication, such as animal and human parts of the body, vehicles (wrap messages), textile displays (ambikraft), use of light (ambient lights), perfume/ odour (ambient odour/ perfume), walk ways, digital out-of-home screens, etc. The once static advertising messages have now evolved into a dynamic, interactive, and consumer-involving content; and this according to Snipes (2012) has made consumers more actively engaged in the creation of brands.

Ambient advertising has introduced tremendous innovations in marketing communication, which have imposed significant influence on marketing of goods and services in many parts of the world. Rotfeld (2006) writes that ambient advertising strategies are fast becoming ubiquitous, with scholarly literatures indicating a dramatic shift in advertising budgets from the conventional mass media to ambient media. Research findings such as those of Tukel (2009), and Cottet, Plichon, and Lichtle, (2010) have confirmed a shift in advertising strategy from conventional to ambient as a means of creating permanent impression of brands on consumers thereby boosting sales, as well as ensuring gratifying services for customers. Relatedly, Sharma and Sharma (2015, p.150) write:

Consumers today got (sic) bombarded with several advertisements and get overwhelmed and exhausted This cause low attention rate towards ads placed by companies and billions of rupees getting waste (sic) every day. Marketers now turned towards other aspects and tools of promotion which can grab the attention of target consumers. One such way is ambient advertising, which is unconventional in nature, works on surprise effect, cool to look and remembered for long time and of course a low cost strategy.

Studies have further confirmed the influence of ambient advertising on patronage of goods and services in most parts of the world. In Canada, for instance, Chebat and Michon (2003)

studied the impact of ambient odours on small shoppers' emotions, cognition and spending; they report that many businesses have adopted environmental conditioning fragrances to increase patronage... bakeries for example have been releasing synthetic aromas to increase sales of bakery products. In Zimbabwe, Basera, Mutsikiwa, and Dhliwayo (2013) report that ambient scent, colour, and music have meaningful contributions towards patronage of fast foods retail brands.

In Nigeria, ambient advertising has apparently taken central position in the marketing strategies of many firms albeit known with different nomenclatures. Some researchers simply label them as promotional strategies, for example Banabo and Koroye (2011); while others such as Asemah & Edego (2012) regard them as part of the *new media* innovations. Examples abound of ambient Advertising strategies in Nigeria. Vehicle wraps for example, are common sight on streets in Nigerian cities where transport vehicles, business buses / cabs and even private cars are wrapped with company logos, products and services, including political parties and party candidates. The use of ambient light is also common in commercial banks in Nigeria. Rather than advertise their exchange rates and other transactions on television or papers, commercial banks have adopted ambient lighting boards that permanently display these messages within their premises creatively fused with appreciation messages that capture customers' attention, giving them sense of importance amongst other things.

As a new form of marketing communication, ambient advertising has huge implications on patronage of goods and services. Gambetti, (2010, p. 35) for instance writes that "ambient communication is of special interest to marketers who need to make decisions about the most effective communication mix..." In the words of Seminescu, Martinsson, and Gustafsson (2012, p. 14),

although out-of-home advertising makes up a smaller part of the advertising budget, it is increasingly becoming an important strategy targeting consumers who are mobile and less exposed to traditional forms of media. Ambient is now one of the fastest growing sectors of advertising.

Ambient advertising has obviously ushered in a new approach to marketing communication, which is revolutionising the entire industry; however, little research documentation has been found on the influence of this new advertising approach on the patronage of goods and services particularly in Nigeria. Malhotra (2015) also writes that ambient advertising shockingly has little research consideration among scholars even though it is the quickest developing marketing strategy based on physical multiplication and promoting spending.

A preliminary review of literature for this study revealed that, irrespective of the varied nomenclatures identifying ambient advertising strategies, research efforts on them are grossly insufficient in Nigeria. There are few newspaper articles on outdoor or out-of-home advertising in Nigeria, for example, Akingbolu (2012), Craig (2014), and Mogaji (2014). These have not provided any scholarly data of the concepts in relation to marketing of goods and services. What then, is the influence of ambient advertising strategies on the patronage of goods and services in Nigeria? This study is a step towards closing that gap by investigating ambient advertising in Benue State with a view to determine the extent to which it has influenced the patronage of goods and services in the state. Specific objectives of the study are: to ascertain the special appeals/ strategies used in ambient advertising messages in Benue State; to determine the advertisers' perception of ambient advertising as it affects their marketing efforts; to establish the extent to which ambient advertising has influenced patronage of goods and services in Benue State; and, to ascertain the particular brands whose patronage is mostly influenced by ambient advertising in Benue State.

The Concept Ambient Advertising

Ambient advertising, also called ambient communication, is an unconventional form of marketing communication that depends on environmental facilities and surfaces to communicate messages. Pogorelc, Vatavu, Lugmayr, Stockleben, Rise, Kaarior, Lomonaco and Gams, (2012)

write that the term appeared in media jargon as ambient communication about two decades ago and later became a standard term in advertising called ambient advertising.

Ambient advertising could also be described as advertising through ambient media. Ambient media refers to any facilities within an environment that can serve communication purpose. Wierzbicki, Sommerschuh, and Bernstein (2010) write that ambient media is tied to a specific environment and can serve or function as communication channels only in that environment. They can be interactively manipulated (intelligent media) or static; and can transform the environment into a space of interaction, integrating it as part of the whole multimedia system.

Lugmayr (2010) describes ambient advertising as a product of ubiquitous computing embedded throughout the natural environment of the consumer; in his home, his car, his restaurant, and mobile devices, etc. With ubiquitous computing, any device from clothing to cars, mobile phones, home appliances such as liquid crystal display (LCD) screens, human and animal body, etc is a potential computer and can be imbedded with chips to connect them to an infinite network of other devices. Whichever way one may choose to describe it, the basic philosophy of ambient advertising, as Turkel (2009) also states, is to create marketing impact through unusual, unexpected, awe-inspiring approaches.

Generally, intelligent ambient media come in forms of 4-D motion-based interactive promotional initiatives, which typically end up in cyberspace as viral content on social networks such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or Flickr. They include Bluetooth posters, touchscreen panels, or take-away posters, people-animated panels (e.g., the Nestle ambient campaign of “Kit Kat” *have a break chairs*” in Snipes (2012, p. 4); and event-actions that are unconventional promotional initiatives that involve people and employ guerrilla techniques such as the Bacardi Martini’s Fijian Canoes and Gigantic Sand Sculptures ambient strategy in Gambetti (2010, p. 46).

The static ambient media come in various creative tactics. Some of these, as provided by Gambetti, (2010, p. 36) include, innovative print and pictorial media such as digital billboards and displays, luminous panels.... Street furniture such as bus shelters (static and multisensory), decoration on unusual surfaces like floors, fuel pumps, flower vases.... transit messages (brand buses and trucks, interiors and backs of buses, trains, taxis, and boats; graffiti, kegs of beer falling from the sky, etc. They also include 3-D Artefact-Based Media, that is, objects positioned in unusual, out-of-place contexts and used as advertising tools, such as shopping bags, plastic cups, shoulder and hand bags, chairs, footwear, bottles, pens, key rings, bicycles, cars, balloons, garments, and tailor's dummies.

Ambient advertising belongs to the out-of-home advertising subsector. The concept has caused restructuring of what used to be known as outdoor advertising and/ or outdoor media. Saa-Aondo (2016), supported by N2 Holdings (2009, p. 4-5), Rabiou (2011), Harmon (2012, p.2 &4), Williams, Petrosky, Hernandez and Page (2012), and OAAA (2012, p. 2-4) provides that Out-Of-Home (OOH) is now the umbrella term comprising the subcategories of street art (or street furniture), transit media, alternative media, and outdoor media. The first three put together form the ambient subsector.

Ambient advertising uses several tactics to achieve desired results. These include, but not limited to, incongruity, pervasiveness or ubiquity, surprise effect, humour, semiotics, audience involvement, and relevance. Svahn (2010) captures some of these characteristics of ambient advertising when he writes that intelligent media empowers ambient advertising to blend blurs and pervades itself into the user's everyday life in ways that breaks the constraints of classic (conventional) advertising. This is the characteristic that gives ambient advertising the ability to engage the audience members making them active participants in the (advertising) communication process. This is also the characteristic that makes semiotics a relevant tactic in ambient advertising. Since messages are embedded in the local culture and environment,

semiology of the local culture is significantly taken into consideration to enable the audience effectively decode the messages.

Ambient advertising also relies heavily on creativity rather than heavy budget. Gorbet, Jones, Kachur, Peter, and Saunders (2010) in their description of ambient advertising write that it relies heavily on creativity instead of huge advertising budgets. Sharma and Sharma (2015) again state that creativity makes ambient marketing stand out in a world filled with passive messages.

Again, Ambient Plus (2011) captures some of the characteristics of ambient advertising. She writes that ambient advertising media is capable of collaborating personal mobile devices and shared facility devices such as mobile phones and public display screens by integrating information from the personal devices, obtained through escrow with the mobile service providers. This is called “device symbiosis,” and it enables specific targeting of advertising messages to the particular persons thereby addressing the problem of wrong target and wrong timing of advertising messages.

Ambient advertising is now the buzz in marketing communication and will remain innovative because of its quest for unusual perspective. What is unusual today will not be unusual tomorrow as people get familiarised with old ambient tactics. Sharma and Sharma (2015) write that in the nearest future, we will start experiencing ambient advertisements that react to viewers - to our movement and to our voices.

Influence of Ambient Advertising on patronage of goods and services

Ambient advertising has ushered in a new paradigm of advertising which is revolutionising the entire marketing communication industry with significant influence on consumers of goods and services in many parts of the world. Marketing firms, small, medium and large are fast adopting ambient advertising strategy to communicate with their target markets at the lowest cost per thousand. Malhotra (2015) writes that ambient advertising is the quickest developing marketing strategy based on physical multiplication and promotion spending. Sharma

and Sharma (2015) also state that ambient advertising has become an important need rather than a simple choice because of the clutter of classical (conventional) advertising.

Wierzbicki, Sommerschuh, and Bernstein (2010) studied influence of digital housepaint (an ambient ad tactic using urban screens) and reports that with the loss of interest in conventional advertising, ambient screens, utilising moving images have come to arouse interest in the “commute – and – wait” advertising audience.

Certain characteristics of ambient advertising make it highly influential on consumers. For example, surprise effect, semiotics of local culture, and audience involvement with the message and the brand being advertised. Bennett, Kottasz, and Koudelova (2000, p. 33) in their study to determine the degree of audience reaction to ambient advertising messages found out that “surprise effect” is a significant characteristic that makes ambient advertising highly effective:

The more the audience was surprised by an ambient advertisement, the more positive the audience’s reaction was... and the more involved a person is with a brand, the more positive their (sic) response towards that ambient advertisement.

Also, the semiotic characteristic of ambient advertising makes it interesting to all cultures. Sinem (2015) in his study of Germany and Turkey found out that ambient ad campaign is of interest to both cultures. This finding can be justifiably generalised across all cultures since it has already been established that ambient advertising technology uses the semiology of local cultures to embed the messages in environmental facilities.

Ambient advertising is also challenging the conventional advertising in terms of influence of patronage. Tukul (2009) writes that ambient advertisements are obviously becoming more effective than TV commercials, affecting consumers positively with the needed response to brands.

This unusual presentation of advertisements creates big impacts on viewers.... Ambient advertising is one of the most popular ways of advertising. It has a permanent impact on consumers, (Tukul, 2009, p.6).

Many companies now spend much of their advertising budgets on ambient strategies due to their recorded influence on sales. Chen (2011) has given several examples of multinational companies who are using ambient advertising. Among them, Sony Ericson has engaged ambient campaigns since 2002 to promote her first mobile device installed with digital camera; Pepsi-Cola also has engaged ambient strategies since 2002 to promote her bottled water brand “Aqua Fina Pure Luck” in the US. Tukul (2009) also writes that the use of ambient strategy by Adidas” in the company’s 2004 campaign in Japan has made the company unforgettable for the world.

In the more recent studies, Hermon (2012) provides a list of the percentage share voice of many multinationals who have aggressively adopted ambient advertising strategies in their marketing communication efforts. According to the list, Vodafone has 6.13%, Heineken 5.68%, Nestle 4.35%) Reckitt Benckiser – producers of Dettol products..., 1.52%, etc.

From the foregoing, it cannot be overemphasised that ambient advertising is increasingly a solution to the challenges of patronage of goods and services in more affordable ways through its creative innovations. Suffice it therefore, to say that as the classical or conventional mass media get more cluttered and ineffective, and as advertisers continue to attempt to out-do each other in the market, ambient advertising will remain prevalent, sophisticated and influential.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher uses Schema congruity theory to provide a clear understanding of the working of ambient advertising and how it influences the audience. Ferris (2004, p.8) says the theory is “a hybrid of schema and congruity theories.” It was developed by George Mandler, an American Psychologist in 1982, and made prominent with the publication of his book “Mind and Body: Psychology of emotion and stress” in 1984.

Schema-congruity theory assumes that cognitive processing is guided by schemas or schemata. That is, an organised structure of prior knowledge, or accumulated knowledge that is stored in human memory about the world. When people encounter new information that is

congruent with prior knowledge structures (schemata), the schema becomes an aid to fast evaluate the new situation and respond instantly because we don't need to re-evaluate information that has already been processed and stored in the schemata. In this case, they will easily assimilate the new information. For example, when you place messages in the conventional mass media, people easily evaluate, interpret, and classify such messages as news, advertisements, announcements, etc based on their accumulated knowledge of day-to-day encounter with mass media messages. This explains why mass media audience would immediately ignore any advertisement through what Jurca (2014) calls flipping, zipping and zapping of advertisements.

If however, the new information is incongruent with existing schemata, it will challenge prior knowledge structures, thereby causing extra cognitive processing. For example, when you send an advertising message using an ambient strategy, the audience members cannot easily classify such message because it is incongruous with their advertising schemata. Therefore, they take time to evaluate such message, thereby becoming involved through a deeper cognitive processing.

According to Heckler and Childers (1992) schema-congruity in advertising is best conceptualised using a bi-dimensional framework called expectancy and relevancy. Three categories of advertisements are identified within this framework: expected – relevant, unexpected – relevant, and unexpected – irrelevant. Jurca (2014) explains that the **expected – relevant** advertisements are those that provide relevant information that match the consumers' schemata. These are also known as “congruent” ads. **Unexpected-relevant** advertisements are those that come in unexpected strategies, depicting novel ideas that challenge the existing schemata but provide relevant information to the needs and expectations of the audience (consumers/ prospects), which could be reconciled with it at the end of the cognitive processing. These are also known as “moderately incongruent” advertisements. The **unexpected-irrelevant** advertisements are those that challenge existing schemata but do not produce any relevant

information after the cognitive process. These are also known as “extremely incongruent” advertisements. This study hereby situates ambient advertising in the “moderately incongruent (unexpected – relevant)” category.

Relevance of the theory to this study

The Schema congruity theory is relevant in understanding the influence of ambient advertising on consumers because literatures have confirmed advertising schemas among consumers in Nigeria, which they use in sifting relevant information from the clutter of advertising media. For example Friestad and Wright, 1994; Friestad and Wright, 1995; Dahlen and Edenius, 2007; and Warlaumont, 1997 cited by Jurca (2014, p.1767) state that there is evidence supporting the assumption that “individuals have developed an advertising schema and therefore, their processing behaviour can be evaluated based on the schema theory....” Jurca (2014, p.1766) again states that:

...Individuals are becoming savvier as their understanding of marketers’ persuasion techniques is improving every day. As a way to cope with the increasing clutter, consumers have developed schemas that act as protective shields against the massive amounts of promotional messages. The advertising schemas help individuals identify advertising and trigger an instinctive response of avoidance that is materialised in zapping, flipping the page or simply ignoring the ad.

In this context, ambient advertising has appeared, developed on schema-congruity based approach to penetrate the advertising phobia faced by conventional media advertising.

Methodology

This study employed survey and in-depth interview research designs. Survey was adopted because the study sought to gather and analyse people’s orientations, perceptions and attitudes concerning ambient advertising and how it influences consumers’ behaviours of buying or patronage of goods and services. In-depth interview was used as a complimentary tool to provide much more detailed information than what was obtained through surveys.

Since every inhabitant of the State is a consumer, the entire Benue State population was studied. The population figure of the state in 2006, as contained in the Official Website of the National Population Council (Jan., 2015) is 4,223,641. Using a multi-staged sampling procedure involving stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques, the researcher selected three major towns across the state to form the population of study. The towns are: Adikpo, Makurdi, and Otukpo.

Using in-depth interview, the researcher purposively studied nine advertisers comprising owners, managers, and workers of business establishments; four from Makurdi, (that is, Nigeria Breweries, MIKAP Nig. Ltd, Max Woody Technologies, and Ostrich Bakery); three from Otukpo (that is, Extra Delite Fast Foods, Goodies Burger Fast Food, and Zico Electronic Enterprise Ltd); and two from Adikpo (that is, UKU Agro-Chemicals, and STAMA Agro-Chemicals). Using questionnaire, the researcher studied four hundred (400) respondents; one hundred and forty (140) in Makurdi, and one hundred and thirty (130) each from Adikpo and Otukpo. Distribution of respondents was based on the judgement of the size, and concentration of advertisers in each of the sample areas. Sample size was determined statistically using the simplified Taro Yamane's formula as presented by (Glenn, 2013, p.4).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size sought; N is the population size; e is precision or error level (0.05) and I is a constant.

The interviewer – assisted method of data collection was used since ambient advertising is a new concept that is not easily recognised by many people in Nigeria. In-depth interview was conducted face-to-face with the respondents in the premises of their companies/ organisations. This method instilled confidence in the respondents about the identity of the researcher, thereby increasing response rate. It also enabled the researcher observed the company/ organisation's atmosphere to make comparison with the data given by the respondents.

Validation of the instruments was done using content validity approach. Content validity under this approach, according to Ofo (2001) is determined by experts' judgment. Copies of the questionnaire and the interview guide for the study were submitted to PhD holders in Mass Communication at the Benue State University, Makurdi who ensured the validity of the instruments.

Results

(a) Questionnaire

The data obtained through questionnaire was presented in tables expressing simple percentage scores. Eleven (11) of the questionnaire distributed were damaged; some not fully completed while some had cancellations that made them difficult to be interpreted. Three hundred and eighty-nine (389) were appropriately completed, representing 97.3% response rate. Out of this number, 369 respondents, (94.9%) were aware of ambient advertising, at least after explanation of the concept by the researcher. Only 20 respondents (5.1%) were not aware of it. It therefore means respondents can give meaningful information about ambient advertising since the largest percentage of them knows what it is.

Results of data analysis also show that 349 (94.6%) of those aware of ambient advertising have seen its strategies in their localities. An insignificant percent of 5.4 (20 respondents) have not seen the ambient advertising messages in their localities. This implies that advertisers in Benue State have adopted ambient advertising in marketing their products and services. Therefore, the data analysis has justified the relevance of the problem of this study and/ or its objective. Since the concept has been adopted by marketers in Benue State, assessment of its influence on patronage of goods and services is justified.

TABLE 1: Ambient advertising Strategies/ Appeals seen or noticed in Benue State

Ambient Strategies/ Appeals	Frequency	Percentage
Body of vehicles (vehicle wraps)	125	32.1
Body of humans/ animals	0	0.0
Light displays (ambient lights)	34	8.7
Colour displays	3	0.8
Wearable technological devices	2	0.5
Roadside structures/ paintings (street furniture)	38	9.8
Textile displays (ambikraf)	0	0
Clothes & hand-held materials	74	19.0
Scent and odour/ aroma	4	1.0
Walkway messages	66	17.0
Sky advertisements	3	0.8
Total	349	100

SOURCE: Field study by the researcher, 2015

Table one represents the various ambient advertising strategies/ appeals used in Benue State. The data shows that 125 respondents (32.1%) have seen vehicle wraps (vehicle branding); 74 respondents (19%) have seen ambient advertising strategies/ appeals in the forms of clothes/ hand-held materials; 66 respondents (17%) have seen ambient advertisements on walkways; 38 respondents (9.8%) have seen roadside structures/ paintings and 34 respondents (8.7%) have seen ambient lights. An insignificant number of respondents (1%) have noticed ambient advertising strategies in scent/ aromas; colour displays (0.8%), sky messages (0.8%), and wearable technological devices (0.5%) respectively. The table implies that these are the ambient advertising strategies / appeals that are used in Benue State arranged in that order of prominence.

Furthermore, on the influence of ambient advertising on patronage, data analysis shows that 320 respondents representing 91.7% said ambient advertising has influenced them in patronising goods and services, while twenty-nine (29) respondents representing 8.3% said ambient advertising does not influence them. Respondents were influenced by ambient advertising messages in four different ways. These are: the surprise effect (43.8%), audience involvement (28.4%), atmospheric comfort (22.2%), and atmospheric aroma / or scent (5.6%).

TABLE 2: The Extent of influence of Ambient Advertising on Patronage of Goods and Services in Benue State

Extent of influence	Frequency	Percentage
Significant	284	88.8
Insignificant	36	11.2
Total	320	100

SOURCE: Field study by the researcher, 2015

Table two shows the extent to which ambient advertising has influenced respondents in patronising goods and services. It shows that 284 respondents representing 88.8% are influenced to a significant extent while 36 (11.2%) are influenced to an insignificant extent.

The implication of this table is that ambient advertising has significantly influenced patronage of goods and services in Benue State.

TABLE 3: Products/ Services which Patronage is most influenced by ambient Advertising in Benue State

Product/ Service influenced	Frequency	Percentage
Fast food/ Bakery products	72	22.5
Clothes/ clothing	68	21.3
Electronics	51	16.0
Furniture	33	10.3
Vehicles	12	3.8
Agro-chemicals	61	19.1
Banking/ financial services	12	3.8
Educational services	11	3.4
Hospital equipment/ services	0	0.0
Disease prevention services	0	0.0
Others	0	0.0
Total	320	100

SOURCE: Field study by the researcher, 2015

Table three represents the various products/ services whose patronage has been influenced by ambient advertising in Benue State. The data shows that ambient advertising has influenced 22.6% (72 respondents) in patronising fast foods/ bakery products; 21.3% (68 respondents) are influenced by ambient advertising in patronising Clothes/ clothing products; while 51 respondents representing 16% are influenced by ambient advertisements of electronics. Patronage of furniture is influenced by 33 respondents (10.3%); that of vehicles is 3.8% (12 respondents); and agro-chemicals by 19.1% representing 61 respondents. Twelve respondents (12) representing 3.8% are influenced by ambient advertisements that promote banking/ financial services while 11 (3.4%) are influenced by ambient advertisements on educational services.

No influence of ambient advertising has been recorded for patronage of hospital equipment/ services and disease prevention services. Also, there is no other category of products and services other than those provided here which patronage has been influenced by ambient advertising messages in Benue State.

(b) In-depth Interview

The data from in-depth interview was analysed using inductive thematic analysis. Major concerns during the in-depth interview include, organisation's knowledge and adoption of ambient advertising strategies, ambient advertising appeals/ techniques being used, extent of influence on sales, and advertisers' perception of ambient advertising in relation to influence on business.

Table 4: Advertisers knowledge, adoption, influence and perception of ambient advertising in Benue State.

<p>ORGANISATION: Extra Delite Fast Foods, Otukpo</p> <p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: The General Manager, identified as <i>John</i>, heard the concept for the first time but knows it after explanation.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Decorated slabs (inside & outside premises and along some streets); ambient light (seen only at night and at distance), and ambient music.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Significantly.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: Very effective way of promoting business. Several advantages over mass media ads in terms of cost, durability, availability, and accessibility.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION: Goodies Burger Fast Foods, Otukpo</p> <p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: General Manager, Anita Baker, knows ambient advertising and adopted its techniques.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Decorated slabs in the premises of the company.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Insignificantly.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: Ambient techniques are good, but prefers mass media advertising.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION: ZICO Electronic Enterprise, Otukpo</p> <p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: Managing Director refused disclosing his name; he heard the concept for the first time; said ZICO does not advertise at all.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Observation shows that ZICO is using an ambient static board from Thermocool Company, whose products ZICO also markets.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: ZICO does not advertise but relies of quality products as promotion.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: Not sure whether the presence of the ambient board has any influence on the sales.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION: Nigeria Breweries, Plc. Makurdi</p> <p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: The Human Resource Documentation (HRD) Clerk knows the concept ambient advertising; says Company heavily engages its strategies.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Vehicle wraps, in-bar advertising, ambient light boards, outdoor televisions (in some big cities like Lagos), “Gulder Ultimate Search,” and “Maltina Dance All”</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Significantly.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: Very effective promotional strategy in meeting up with local markets.</p>

<p>ORGANISATION: UKU Agro-Chemicals, Adikpo</p>
<p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: The General Manager, Guda Simon knows the concept only after explanation. Ambient advertising materials often accompany the products from manufacturing companies.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Customised key holders, torchlights, shirts, openers, pens, and caps. These are usually enclosed in product packages in forms of rewards for customers.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Significantly.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: Ambient advertising materials motivate their sales very much. “Many people buy our products just to get those materials; some use them to describe products of their choice when they come here to buy.”</p>
<p>ORGANISATION: MIKAP Nigeria Ltd. Makurdi</p>
<p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: The Marketing Manager gave his name simply as Simon MIKAP. He is aware of ambient advertising, and the company engages its strategies since inception (2011).</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Vehicle wraps; textile / wearable media such as t-shirts and face-caps; occasionally, fliers, calendars and seasons’ cards.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Significantly.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: "I believe it has been selling us a lot, because so many people do call us to know more about our products, those who come across our company through our branded vehicles, T-shirts and Fliers...it is an effective way of marketing goods and services.”</p>
<p>ORGANISATION: Max Woody Technologies, Makurdi</p>
<p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: The General Manager, Jacob Anum is aware of ambient advertising strategies but the company does not employ its strategies.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: No ambient advertising strategy was seen.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Max Woody believes in mass media advertising.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: Max Woody engages mass media advertising only.</p>
<p>ORGANISATION: Ostrich Bakeries, Makurdi</p>
<p>Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: Supervising Engineer identified himself as Engr Alam; knows ambient ad after explanation; said Ostrich does not engage any of its strategies.</p> <p>Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Company distributes t-shirts and caps to staff during national celebrations like Independence but not with advertising intent.</p> <p>Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Ostrich Bakeries does not advertise.</p> <p>Perception of ambient ad: “Ostrich does not advertise....We believe in quality products so our products do the marketing for us.”</p>

ORGANISATION: STAMA Agro-Chemicals, Adikpo

Knowledge & adoption of ambient ads: A female Manager could not give her name; only knew ambient ad after explanation. Ambient ad materials are usually received from partner-manufacturing companies.

Ambient appeal/ techniques using: Customised key holders, exercise books, t-shirts, pen, etc are given sometimes for free distribution to customers; some are enclosed in the product packages, so patrons see them as gifts.

Extent of influence of ambient ads on sales: Significantly.

Perception of ambient ad: These materials are creating much market for us since most of the users of these products are illiterate farmers. They like keeping those things and they use them to introduce the products to relations and neighbours, and when they come to buy, they simply show it “give me this product.”

SOURCE: Field study by the researcher, 2015

Table 4 represents the advertisers’ knowledge, adoption, influence and perception of ambient advertising in Benue State. It shows that six organisations, (66.7%) of the advertisers interviewed have adopted ambient advertising strategies while three, (33.3%) have not adopted it. Five out of the six that have adopted, (83.3%) said ambient advertising has significant influence on their sales; these also have perceived ambient advertising as an effective strategy of marketing goods and services in local markets. One advertiser, (16.7%) said ambient advertising has insignificant influence on her sales. Special ambient appeals/ techniques used by those who have adopted it include vehicle wraps (commonly known as vehicle branding), clothes and hand-held materials (such as shirts, key holders, bottle openers, pens, hand bags, etc), walkway messages (messages on busy streets), roadside structures (street furniture), light displays (ambient lights), and pictorial slabs used in decorating the store environments.

Test of Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): *Ambient advertising does not significantly influence patronage of goods and services in Benue State.*

The study involved a test in relationship between variables of ambient advertising and patronage of goods and services, therefore, Chi-Square was used as the statistical tool to test the hypothesis. The formula of the statistical tool used was:

$$X_{Cal}^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where X_{Cal}^2 = Calculated Chi-Square value; \sum = sum of the notation; O = Observed Frequency, and E = Expected Frequency. Data from table 2 (extent of influence of ambient advertising on patronage of goods and services in Benue State) was used in testing the null hypothesis. Result of tabulated chi-square value (X_{Tab}^2) at 0.05 level of significance with 12 as the degree of freedom (df) was $X_{Tab}^2 = 21.0$, while the calculated chi-square was $X_{Cal}^2 = 192.2$. Since the X_{Cal}^2 value is higher than the X_{Tab}^2 value, our null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The general objective of the study was to determine the influence of ambient advertising on patronage of goods and services in Benue State. The following major findings are made:

First, it has been found that ambient advertising has significant influence on the patronage of goods and services in Benue State. Analysis of the primary data shows in table (2) above that 88.8% of the population are influenced to a significant extent. Analysis of the in-depth interview also shows that 66.7% of the advertisers interviewed have adopted ambient advertising strategies and these are of significant influence to their sales. Relatedly, Tukel (2009) writes that ambient advertising has significant effect on consumers by eliciting the needed response to brands. Also, citing Cetron's Futurist Magazine, Snipe (2012, p.7) provides an example of a British company that achieved a capture reach of hundreds of thousand people using ambient hand dryers, which were installed in washrooms in pubs, airports, and shopping centres, containing digital screens that displayed advertisements in forms of videos and animations.

Secondly, findings revealed that advertisers in Benue State perceived ambient advertising as an effective and affordable tool for boosting sales of goods and services. This finding relates this study with the new trend in advertising efforts of companies/ organisations in other parts of the world. For instance, Chen (2011) and Harmon (2012) have provided lists of both local and multinational companies that have aggressively adopted ambient advertising strategy on reason of its effectiveness and affordability in boosting sales. Big names in the marketing industry like Coca-Cola, Nestle, Adidas, Reckett Benckiser, etc are top on those lists.

It is also found that vehicle wraps (known locally as vehicle branding) is the major technique or appeal used in ambient advertising messages (table 1), it accounts for 32.1%; followed by the use of clothes and hand-held materials, that is the use of customised shirts, key holders, bottle openers, pens, handbags, and wrappers (19%). Next is walkway designs, (17%,) followed by Street furniture or roadside structures (9.8%) whereby firms either construct a structure of their own by the roadside, usually painted with company colours and logo, or they negotiate with owners of existing roadside structures like shopping stores, schools, kiosks, parks...to paint them with company colours and logo. Ambient light (light displays) is another strategy used in the state, accounted for (8.7%).

This finding agrees with that by Kumar, Garg, and Rahman (2010) in Indian emerging markets, which identified such ambient strategies as pictorial designs on shopping malls and other environmental structures, ambient scent, ambient light, and ambient colour as significant contributors in explaining customers' value and patronage of the shops.

Lastly, the study found out that fast foods/ bakery products, clothes/ wears, Agro-chemicals, Electronics, and Furniture are the brands whose patronage has been mostly influenced by ambient advertising in Benue State. This is arranged in ascending order as indicated from the data analysis. Fast foods/ Bakery (22.5%), clothes/ wears (21.3%), Agro-chemicals (19.1%), Electronics (16%), and furniture (10.3%). Similarly, the study by Basera, Mutsikiwa, Dhliwayo,

and Kossam (2013) found out that fast food retail shops have enjoyed heavy patronage in Zimbabwe, influenced by ambient advertising.

Conclusion

The general aim of this study was to investigate the influence of ambient advertising on patronage of goods and services in Benue State. The study has achieved its objectives through five major findings: the study found out that ambient advertising has significant influence on patronage of goods and services in Benue State. It also found out that advertisers in Benue State perceived ambient advertising as an effective and affordable tool for boosting sales of goods and services.

Special appeals/ strategies used in ambient advertising messages in Benue State, as found in the study include, vehicle wraps (commonly known as vehicle branding), clothes and hand-held materials (such as shirts, key holders, bottle openers, pens, hand bags, etc), walkway messages (messages on busy streets), roadside structures (street furniture), light displays (ambient lights), and pictorial slabs used in decorating the store environments.

Brands that have been most influenced by ambient advertising in Benue State as found in the study, presented in the ascending order are: fast foods/ bakery products, clothes/ wears; Agro-chemicals; Electronics, and Furniture.

With reference to the above findings, ambient advertising strategies are being fast adopted in Benue State with reasonable results on sales. The study therefore, concludes that ambient advertising has significantly influenced patronage of goods and services in Benue State.

Recommendations

These recommendations are drawn from the research findings.

The researcher recommends that organisations that have adopted ambient advertising strategies in Benue State should promote research into this subsector of advertising in order to harness its full potentials and economic relevance in their marketing efforts.

The researcher also recommends that organisations in the health sector that are fighting diseases and other health related challenges in Benue State should engage ambient advertising for a more effective health education/ campaigns. Ambient advertising has proved effective for many organisations. Therefore, it could be an effective advocacy tool for the health sector in galvanising support for the numerous health challenges confronting the State.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends that companies and entrepreneurs in Benue State who are largely small and medium scale entrepreneurs should take advantage of the cost effectiveness of ambient advertising to expand their markets by engaging fully the ambient strategies since these are found to be effective and affordable in meeting up with local market.

Moreover, it is recommended that advertisers in Benue State should expand their investment in ambient advertising strategies to include 3-D artefact-based media and 4-D motion-based media, which come in more unusual, out-of-place context thereby creating more surprise effect, more audience-involving and more effective in promoting patronage of goods and service as documented by empirical studies in many other parts of the world.

Finally, the researcher recommends that advertising practitioners in Benue State should raise sectorial bodies in ambient advertising just like we have Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria (OAAN) in order to encourage professionalism in the subsector.

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