



## **Effect of Advertising on Sales of Company Products: A Study of Unilever Companies Products in Maiduguri Metropolis**

**Hannatu Watifa**

Department of Marketing, Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The study examined the role of advertising in the marketing of consumer goods using Unilever Nigeria Plc as a case study, 55 questionnaires were distributed to consumers and 40 were returned. The data collected were organised and presented in a tabular form and a simple statistical tool of analysis (percentage) is used in the analysis of data. The results showed that the majority of the respondents agreed that advertising played an important role in their purchase decision of Unilever Companies products. It was concluded that advertising helps in projecting product quality and value before the consumers and advertising has a major influence on consumers' preference for both companies' products and it has in no small measure contributed to their success. It was then recommended that research be continually made into quality improvement that will make consumers enjoy good value for the money paid to purchase the brands. Develop a more effective advertising campaign that will attract consumers' attention and capture their interest. At this stage, the company's advertising messages should both be persuasive and reminder-oriented. The message must be strong and appealing enough to persuade and build brand preferences and encourage switching to the company's brand by changing the perception of the consumers of rival brands and products.*

**KeyWords:** *Staff Involvement, Service Delivery, MDAs*

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### **Introduction**

Advertising includes all forms of mass media communication directed towards influencing the end consumer by marketers. It is an art used to familiarize public with the product by informing of its descriptions and uses, its superiority over other brands; sources of its availability and price criteria. Marketing is defined by the Ama (2012), as the activity, set of institution and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offering that has value for customers, clients, partners and society at large.

Advertising is not only wisely a propaganda but it is a paid form of communication. The advertisers have to pay for the space and time used to communicate the message to his customers. A basic responsibility of a marketing manager is to ensure that the company's message reaches its potential

customers. A main method by which companies deliver their message to a group of consumers and in fact, make their initial contacts with most potential customers is through advertising. Advertising is a powerful tool that individuals, businesses, and non-business organisations use to inform, persuade, and remind their target audiences. Various authors have defined advertising in the following ways: Advertising has been defined by Banerjee, (2000) as the dissemination of information concerning an idea, service, or product to compel action in accordance with the interest of advertisers". Advertising consists of all the activities involved in presenting to a group, a non-personal, oral, or visual openly sponsored message regarding a product or service, or idea (Etzel, Walter, and Stanton, 1997). While Kotler (2004) also sees it as one of the most important tools of marketing management that are effective in presenting information to potential buyers; and has a great capacity to persuade and reinforce buyers' preference for a company's product.

On the other hand, the American Marketing Association also defines it as a tool of marketing; as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, and services by an identified sponsor. Therefore, advertising, sales promotion, and public relations are mass communication tools available to marketers. As its name suggests, mass communication uses the same message for everyone in an audience. Mass communication tools trade of the advantage of personal selling, the opportunity to tailor, a message to each prospect, for the advantage of reaching many people at a lower cost per person (Etzel, *et al.* 1997). Arens (1996), Dunn *et al.* (1978) viewed advertising from its functional perspective, hence they define it as a paid, non-personal communication through various media by business firms, both profit and non-profit organization, and the individual who are in some way identified in the advertising message and who hope to inform or persuade members of a particular audience. Modern (1991) is of the opinion that advertising is used to establish a basic awareness of the product or service in the mind of the potential customer and to build up knowledge about it.

The Role of Advertising in Marketing Consumer Goods (A Study of Unilever)

Koller (2012) sees advertising as one of the four major tools companies use to direct persuasive communication to target buyers and the public nothing that it consists of non-personal forms of communication conducted through paid media under clear sponsorship.

According to him the purpose of advertising is to enhance potential buyer's responses to the organisations and its offering; emphasizing that it seeks to do this providing information, by channeling desire and by supplying reasons for preferring a particular organisation's offer while writing on advertising nature and scope. Etzel *et al.*, (1997) stress advertising as having four features:

- i. A verbal and or visual message
- ii. A sponsor who is identified
- iii. Delivery through one or more media
- iv. Payment by the sponsor to the media carrying the message

Summarising the above, they conclude that 'advertising the consists of all the activities involved in presenting to an audience, a non-personal, sponsor identified, paid for the message above product or organisation. From their presentation, it could be concluded that the purpose of advertising is to create awareness of the advertised product and provide information that will assist consumers to make purchase decisions. The relevance of advertising as a promotional strategy, therefore, depends on its ability to influence consumers not only to purchase but to continue to repurchase and eventually develop brand loyalty. Consequently, many organisation expend huge amounts of money on advertising and also to brand their Management.

The present paper's aim is to examine the role of advertising in the marketing of consumer goods using Unilever Nigeria Plc as the study area.

### **Methodology**

Unilever Nigeria Plc was incorporated as Lever Brothers (West Africa) Ltd on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1923 by Lord Leverhulme, but the Company's antecedents have to be traced back to his existing trading interest in Nigeria and West Africa generally, and to the fact that he had since the 19<sup>th</sup> century been greatly involved with the soap business in Britain. Unilever Nigeria Plc started as a soap manufacturing company and is today one of the oldest surviving manufacturing organisation in Nigeria having a record of 100 years in existence since its inception.

After a series of mergers/acquisitions, the Company diversified into manufacturing and marketing of foods, non-soapy detergents, and personal care products. These mergers /acquisitions brought in Lipton Nigeria Ltd in 1985, and Cheesebrough Ponds Industries Ltd in 1988. The Company changed its name to Unilever Nigeria Plc in 2001. Unilever Nigeria Plc and is a public utility company quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange since 1973 with Nigerians currently, having some percentage of equity holdings. The long-term success of this

business starts from the strong relationship with the consumers based on the deep roots in the local cultures and markets, creating products that help them to feel good, look good, and move out of life, and the total commitment to an exceptional standard of performance and productivity.

The company engaged in the manufacture and sale of detergent (Sunlight) and edible oil, fats, toiletries, hair products, soaps and creams.

#### **Data Source**

The data used for this study were obtained from two sources primary and secondary. However, the major data for the work were collected by means of structured questionnaire. Fifty-five (55) copies of questionnaire were administered to the members of the public but only 40 responded representing 73 percent. The secondary data that were also of great assistance were extracted from the company's annual reports internet and other in-house publication for the period under study.

#### **Analysis of Data**

Both descriptive and simple percentage statistics were used in analyzing the data collected. The response by the consumers to some items of the questionnaire was compiled into the table. According to the main variables being examined. Percentage analysis was used in examining variables such as media exposed to and factors that influence purchase, etc.

#### **Result**

1. Majority of the consumers are exposed to both TV and Radio (Table 1A)
2. Majority of the respondents listen to the radio once in a while (Table 1B)
3. Majority of the respondents watch television frequently (Table 1C)
4. Majority of the respondents are exposed to advertisements sponsored/paid by the Company (Table 1D)
5. Majority agreed that advertisement influenced their purchase decision (Table 1E)
6. Majority got their source of information through electronic media (Table F)
7. Majority of the respondents agreed that advertisement played an important role in their purchase decision.
8. Majority of the respondents stated their desire influenced their purchase decision.

Table 1

Variable	No. of respondent	Frequency
A. Media Exposed to:		
Television	18	45
Radio	18	45
Newspaper	4	10
Billboard	0	0
Total	40	10
B. How often do you listen to the radio?		
Most frequently	5	13
Frequently	15	37
Once in a while	20	50
Total	40	100
C. How often do you watch TV		
Most frequently	15	38
Frequently	22	55
Once in a while	3	7
Total	40	100
D. Are you exposed to advertisements sponsored by?		
Yes	25	63
No	15	37

Total	40	100
E. Does the advertisement influence your purchase decision?		
Yes		
No		
	25	63
	15	37
Total	40	1000
F. Source of information		
Print media	8	20
Electronic media	28	70
By word of mouth	2	5
Others	2	5
Total	40	100
G. Product advertised that has highly influence your purchase decision		
Detergent		
Soap	6	15
Body cream	14	35
All of the above	0	0
	20	50
Total	40	100
H. Factors that influence purchase		
Influence opinion leader		

Advertisement	3	8
Desire or need	14	35
	23	57
Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

### **Discussion**

The study on the role of advertising in marketing of consumer goods (A study of Unilever Nigeria Plc) was based on a survey of 40 consumers. The data obtained from the survey supported the motion that advertisement played a role in marketing consumer goods. According to the respondents, advertising is the major factor responsible for the success of the company. Considering the number of years their products have been in existence vis-a-vis the time it has been known by the respondents, the majority of the consumers claimed to have known the company's products through advertisement.

The results of the study showed that advertising of various kinds served as the respondents' major source of product awareness. A combination of different media both electronic and print is employed in advertising the firm's products. Of these, however, television is seen as the most potent and effective medium which most consumers cited. This implies that television as a medium of advertising a product has more impact on the respondents when compared with any other media being used for the same purpose.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Quite a number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the study which have policy implications for the company under study and others in the industry. Advertising helps in projecting product quality and value before the consumers. This is what is applicable to the company under studied products presently. Advertising has a major influence on consumers' preference for the company's product and it has in no small measure contributed to its success. The stage a product is in its life cycle is very important to a marketer as it helps in determining the type of marketing strategies to be embarked upon in respect of the said product.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the study, the product of the company is apparently a mature product and the company's management must ensure that it does not slip into the decline stage as this may mark the beginning of its demise in the market. Toward this end for the product to remain in the market and maintain its position, management is advised to carry out the following:

- i. Carry out research continuously on quality improvement that will make consumers enjoy good value for money paid to purchase the brand.
- ii. The firm should develop a more effective advertising campaign that attracts consumers attention and capture their interest. At this stage, the company's advertising message should both be persuasive and reminder oriented. The message must be strong and appealing enough to persuade and build brand preferences, encourage switching to the company's brand by changing the perception of the consumers on rival's brand to their brand. Comparative advertising could be useful in this regard as it seeks to establish the superiority of one brand through specific comparison with one or more other brand in their product class.
- iii. With regard to the advertising media, the study revealed that television is currently the most potent of all media used in advertising a product. As such more consideration should be given to television to advertise their product. This may be because television combines motion, sound and special visual effects. The product can be demonstrated and described on T.V. It also offers wide geographical and flexibility as to when the message can be presented. However, this is not saying that other media should not be used. We advise that the company should continue to employ integrated advertising of their products. More budget could be devoted to T.V. adverts because of consumer preference for it. Moreover, the advertising campaign should not be selective or age oriented. As it has been discovered from the study advertising does not vary when it comes to age.



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