

Consumers' Responses to Non-Traditional Marketing Communication Strategies for Advertising Herbal Products

Chioma Ifeoma Agbasimelo, Stephen Afam Kenechukwu

Abstract—The study examined consumers' responses to non-traditional marketing communication strategies in advertising herbal products. The study identified the following non-traditional marketing communication strategies: (a) trado-instrumental marketing strategy, (b) trado-demonstrative marketing strategy, and (c) trado-iconographic marketing strategy. Anchored on the Black Box Theory, it adopted the survey design of three metropolises (Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi) in Anambra State, Nigeria. Major findings indicated that among the identified strategies, the trado-instrumental marketing strategy is the most dominant strategy. Other strategies: (b) trado-demonstrative marketing strategy and (c) trado-iconographic marketing strategy, are sparingly used in semi-urban cities. It also found that consumers' preferences and adoption of non-traditional marketing communication were minimal. Based on the findings, there is a need to create a unified system of integration of both traditional and non-traditional marketing communication strategies due to technology interfaces.

Keywords—Advertising, consumers' responses, herbal products, non-traditional marketing communication strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN the world of marketing, staying stride with your competitors often is not enough to gain momentum and success. Many companies have clinched onto the old way of marketing. Traditional advertising is becoming extremely expensive and the effectiveness is on the decline. Although many companies have experienced expensive mailers, print catalogues, and cold calling campaigns that were so common two decades ago, many still struggle to know what to do instead. The problem with these methods is that consumers often ignore push tactics from companies and at worst; these kinds of ads might actually turn customers off [1].

Non-traditional advertising is typically seen by consumers as being more organic, real and pertinent. They are typically impervious at print, radio, and television advertisements since they stand out from the majority of advertising. Non-traditional advertising is also frequently targeted, directly addressing particular populations in their own locale. A lot less money is usually spent on non-traditional marketing communication. Print advertising campaigns can be very expensive, but a creative street marketing plan might just cost a few hundred dollars. Non-traditional advertising produces enormous returns on investment when managed properly [2].

The use of herbal products for alternative medicine has

increased significantly over the past three decades with 80% of people worldwide relying on herbal products for some areas of primary healthcare [3]. Herbal medicine is defined as plant-derived materials or preparations with therapeutic or other human health benefits, which extracted either raw or processed ingredients from one or more plants [4].

Advertising essentially consists of objective presentation or promotion of a given idea or product by identified sponsor [5]. Similarly, advertising is the non-personal, organized and usually paid communication of information about products by designated sponsors across various media channels.

Advertising of herbal products has also gained the support of regulatory bodies in Nigeria such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON). Like other marketing communication strategies, the adoption of non-traditional marketing communication in advertising herbal products forms the fulcrum on which this study examines consumer's responses to identified non-traditional marketing communication strategies.

Statement of Problem

Traditional marketing communication media uses channels directed at a mass audience such as print (newspaper and magazine), broadcast (radio and television) and digital media. However, business owners and marketers are looking inwards to explore culturally-inclusive modes of advertising and marketing of herbal products. This is due to the peculiar nature of herbal products that demands both government regulations and clinical investigation to ascertain the veracity of claims associated with herbal products. As a result, advertising herbal product within cultural backgrounds becomes necessary that new methods of advertising and marketing should be advocated and explored. The gap in the use of traditional marketing strategies to reach and connect with users in the hinterlands further supports the adoption of non-traditional marketing communication strategies in advertising herbal products. The apparent non-exposure to non-traditional marketing communication strategies affects consumers' preferences and choices. Traditional modes of advertising need to be employed as alternative ways to break the larger message down in order to reach a more targeted niche audience. Mass messages aimed at mass audiences cannot effectively address the audience's

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individual reasons to purchase in the array of traditional marketing's non-personalized way of communication. Non-traditional media is alluring to marketers and advertisers giving a unique identity that is different from other competitors in the category. This study, therefore, aims at ascertaining consumers' responses to non-traditional marketing communication strategies in advertising herbal products in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The broad objective is to examine consumers' responses to non-traditional marketing communication strategies in advertising herbal products. The specific objectives include:

- a. To find out dominant non-traditional marketing communication strategies for advertising herbal products in Anambra State, Nigeria.
- b. To ascertain the level of exposure of residents of Anambra State, Nigeria to non-traditional marketing communication strategies for advertising of herbal products.
- c. To determine whether non-traditional marketing communication strategies for advertising herbal products affect residents' preferences of herbal products in Anambra State, Nigeria.

To ascertain whether the residents of Anambra State, Nigeria predicated their choice of herbal products based on the appeals and claims in non-traditional marketing communication strategies they are exposed to by the marketers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- a. Which are the dominant non-traditional marketing communication strategies in Anambra State, Nigeria?
- b. What is level of exposure to residents of Anambra State, Nigeria to non-traditional marketing communication for advertising of herbal products?
- c. Do non-traditional communication strategies for advertising herbal products affect residents' preferences of herbal products in Anambra State, Nigeria?
- d. Do residents of Anambra State, Nigeria predicate their choice of herbal products based on the appeals and claims in non-traditional marketing communication strategies they are exposed to?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Non-Traditional Marketing Communication: An Overview

Non-traditional advertising encompasses a range of media and opportunities that use non-traditional means to engage with customers and to increase customer recognition of brand. Instead of using traditional methods, like commercials or digital ads, it reaches out to customers in ways they are more likely to remember [6].

Reference [6] posits that non-traditional marketing communication has the ability of spotlighting a product or service by making use of creative promotions and ads that can tantalize, and/or shock, leave a memorable impression that the target will hopefully share with others, increasing the reach of the brand's initial message. The message can be personalized

or designed to create opportunities for dialogue between the product or service and the target. The inclusion of any means that involves a two-way conversation between the target and the brand is an open invitation for feedback and the foundation for long-lasting, brand-loyal relationship.

Non-traditional media has continued to increase because (a) traditional media does not have the power to attract and hold viewer's attention by itself, in the same way it once did, (b) it is versatile, (c) it can be very creative and engaging, (d) it is often less expensive than traditional vehicles, (e) it is highly targetable, and (f) many options allow for personalization [6].

Non-traditional marketing communication is efficient because: it is difficult for consumers to ignore an interactive message, one that is considered interesting rather than annoying, consumers to ignore an interactive message one that is considered interesting rather than annoying, consumers often enjoy being part of the brand's message, advertising that is interactive does not seem like a blatant form of advertising interactive messages encourage buzz and excitement.

More so, [7, p.30] posits that 'while marketers for many decades recognized the value of words of mouth communication where consumers spread good reports about products and services they enjoy, (non-traditional advertising practices go) a step beyond this. Effective (alternative) marketing is authentic, not preachy and seamlessly embedded into the lives of consumers. The key is to market with them – not at them.'

Non-traditional marketing refers to anything you can put a brand on and exciting, new types of alternative media are developed daily. Examples include: Dry cleaner bags, ad balloons, golf course advertising, coffee cups/sleeves, door hangers, wild postings, pizza box ads, bar/restaurant, stunts, hot air balloons, guerrilla street teams, guerrilla marketing, event/seminar marketing, street marketing, stunt marketing, stealth marketing, membership marketing, content marketing. These modes of non-traditional marketing are driven by creative adaptability allows non-traditional vehicles to appear anywhere the target is located with unusual and captivating message capable of igniting interest in the advertised communication [2].

Non-traditional marketing communication is a creative, inexpensive and consumer-focused way to create awareness, build or maintain an on-going relationship with the target. It helps create uniqueness. By recall, a brand's identity is strengthened. Non-traditional marketing is a tactic that all companies can use. Major corporations have run many of the most well-known campaigns, but smaller businesses have had considerable success with non-traditional marketing strategies. Vision, creativity, and dedication are the only requirements for non-traditional marketing. For businesses with small marketing budgets, it is substantially less expensive than traditional types of effective tool.

B. Advertising Herbal Product through Integrated Marketing Communication

As a tool of integrated marketing communication, advertising is an instructive or convincing message carried by a non-personal medium and paid for by stakeholders of an

organization about an idea or product in a cogent way. The objectives of advertising are summarily to inform, persuade, remind and reinforce market and consumer demands [5]. Advertising and marketing of herbal product are interwoven. A good marketer of herbal products must be abreast with all marketing and advertising strategies. On the other hand, a good advertisement will engrave the product in the minds of consumers and a good marketing strategy will take the product to them. For the marketability of herbal products, a producer studies the demographics and socioeconomic status of the users. Similarly, in the area of advertising, regulations on the nature and manner of engaging in advertising of herbal products should be considered [8].

C. Integrating Non-Traditional Marketing Communication Strategies

Non-traditional marketing communication involves a complex process of information gathering and dissemination, entertainment and education used in societies which have been seriously affected by western culture, and which have not been consumed through cultural and media imperialism initiated from abroad and executed by local agents of the dominating culture acting as civilizing forces [9]. Non-traditional advertising is rooted in a system of communication that involves the integration of marketing with striking attributes of traditional communication process in in marketing and advertising.

Within culturally defined societies, advertising and marketing of traditional products such as herbal products are best carried out through the use of traditional means of communication. The present infatuation with modern communication gadgets has created an industry which has largely become an elite enterprise richly touted in expensive boxes (television, radio, smart phones, computer system) and in costly news sheets newspapers, magazines, paperbacks). Reference [10] posits that there is greater cynical majority who treat these modern media messages with distrust.

Marketing and advertising using non-traditional marketing communication strategies revolve around the integration of traditional methods of communication in marketing and advertising. It is common to see a town crier announcing the availability of goods and services. Non-traditional advertising aims to produce eye-catching advertising experiences that pique curiosity with their originality and unpredictable nature. A large portion of non-traditional marketing entails placing advertisements in strange locations or presenting them in unconventional formats in an effort to catch the attention of unassuming viewers [2].

Old and unconventional marketing techniques are used in non-traditional marketing strategies. Non-traditional marketing can apply to anything that goes outside the parameters of traditional marketing; however, the phrase has traditionally been used to describe a narrower spectrum of advertising strategies. Examples of non-traditional marketing communication strategies in marketing and advertising of products in most African societies are categorized into (a) trado-instrumental marketing strategy, (b) trado-demonstrative

marketing strategy and (c) trado-iconographic marketing strategy. These categories of non-traditional method of marketing herbal products are rooted in indigenous communication. These methods of advertising and marketing are rooted in the cultural background of indigenous people. Collaborating with the communication values of the above strategies, the Ghanaian communicologist, Ansu-Kyeremeh [12] states that indigenous communication system is any form of endogenous communication system which by virtue of its origin is integrated into specific cultures and serves as a channel for messages in a way and manner that require the utilization of the values, symbols institutions and ethics of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes.

As the names imply, (a) trado-instrumental marketing strategy involves the marketing/advertising strategy in which instruments classified under idiophones, membranophones, aerophones and symbology are used in alerting potential buyers of availability of goods and services. A town crier, for instance, uses metal gong or wooden drum to alert and call for attention before announcing his advertising messages. Its strength is rooted in the culture of people who easily understand and decipher the messages as expressed in the tone, pitch and sound of instrument employed. (b) Trado-demonstrative marketing strategy is a non-traditional marketing communication that adopts the use of demonstrative signals and sound, such as music in packaging advertising messages within culturally-inclusive environments. It also serves as traditional sales promotional technique. A good example is the use of popular "Papa Lolo" that adopts the use of music/dance to sell products. (c) Trado-iconographic marketing strategy is a non-traditional marketing strategy which adopts the use of objectified messages in advertising a product or service. Iconographic communication devices are items that transmit messages to the target audience through the use of objects that suggest reality and they are culture specific [12].

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the Black Box Theory. In 1967, Kotler [13] wrote and postulated that an average human is a thinker and problem solver who responds to a range of both external and internal factors especially in marketing. He identified the place of marketing in the marketing mix and other environment factors in marketing. The 4Ps of marketing mix are a set of created and planned stimuli by an organization while the environment stimuli are the result of cultural, political or and economic factors that shape consumers' decisions, known as the "black box" [13]. The black box is the characteristics of the consumer that include their beliefs, perception, values, motivation, lifestyle and knowledge. Other factors in black box are the decision-making process which affects problem solving capability, information evaluation, search ability, alternative evaluation purchase and post purchase. The consumer's response is a result of a conscious and rational decision process. The purchase behavior of a potential consumer is his black box. The theory is used to define the type of goods and services that will appeal to the public. It helps to make good use of the appropriate marketing communication tool which can be

directed towards a particular target segment. The marketer tries to find the relationship between the stimuli and the consumer behavior. It shows that both traditional and non-traditional marketing communication tools can be used to gain customers. For example, television allows visual judgement on the part of the customers whereas the non-traditional marketing is able to go wider and farther. With better targeting, customers' reactions can be predicted. In future, marketers may be able to provide accurately for their customers wants, when and where it is required.

IV.METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey design with a population of 953,760 (2006 census) residents of Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi in Anambra State. According to [14], the suitability of the survey method was informed by the need to collect data from residents of Anambra State, Nigeria. Using Taro Yamane's sample determination technique, 400 respondents were randomly selected from the three cities under study. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection.

V.DATA PRESENTATION/ANALYSIS

Data presentation and analysis was presented in frequency and simple percentage and pie-chart based on the valid 380 copies of the questionnaire retrieved.

TABLE I
 DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Gender of Respondents			Age of Respondents		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	258	68%	18-25	80	21%
Female	122	32%	26-30	168	44%
			31-35	90	24%
			35 and above	42	11%
Total	380	100%	Total	380	100%

Table I shows the demographics of respondents. There is even representation of both sexes and the age index shows an even representation of indicated age brackets; this implies that respondents for the study are adequately represented.

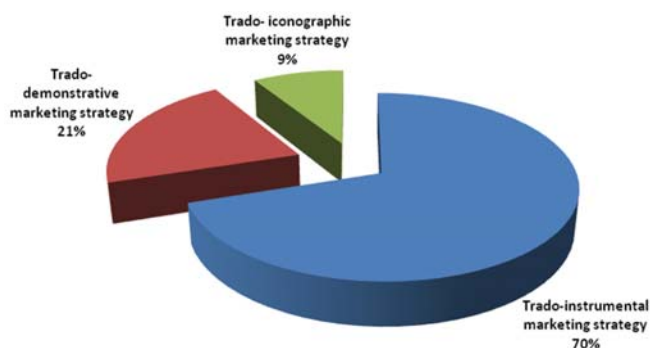


Fig. 1 Dominant non-traditional marketing communication strategies in Anambra State, Nigeria

Analysis of Fig. 1 shows that the dominant non-traditional

marketing communication is trado-instrumental marketing strategy which involves the use of traditional instruments in disseminating advertising messages. Although the reach of this medium is not wide as compared with modern mass media, its effectiveness is its ability to integrate its unique cultural characteristics in creating awareness on products and service in local settings. These instruments serve as attention-calling devices and advertising channel. Other non-traditional marketing strategies (trado-demonstrative marketing strategy and trado-iconographic marketing strategy) equally received positive responses.

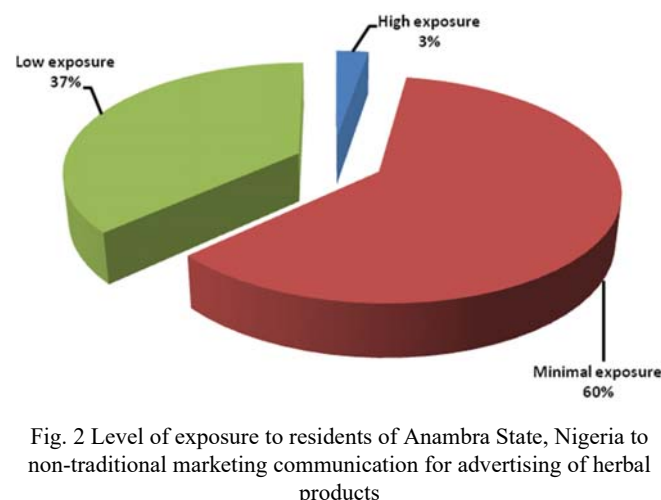


Fig. 2 Level of exposure to residents of Anambra State, Nigeria to non-traditional marketing communication for advertising of herbal products

Data show that respondents were minimally exposed to non-traditional marketing communication strategies. This may be connected with the socioeconomic status of communities (Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi) which are urban cities and commercial hubs of Anambra State. These communities however have significant areas that are classified as interior rural areas.

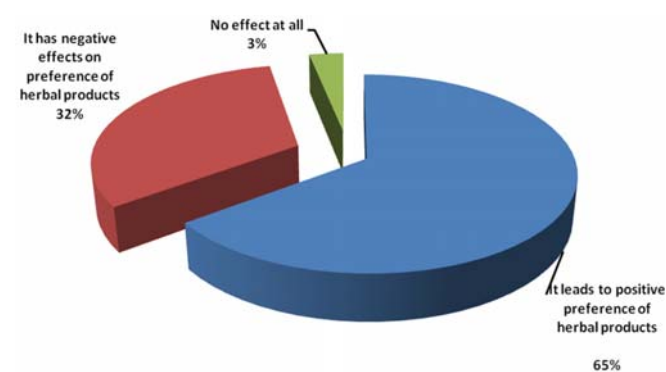


Fig. 3 Determination of whether non-traditional marketing communication strategies for advertising herbal products affect residents' preferences of herbal products in Anambra State, Nigeria

Fig. 3 shows that the adoption of non-traditional marketing communication strategies for advertising herbal products results in positive preference of herbal products among residents of Anambra State, Nigeria. Impliedly, the findings support the position of Marketing School [2] that non-

traditional marketing strategy stimulates preference through unusual and captivating messages capable of igniting interest in the advertised communication.

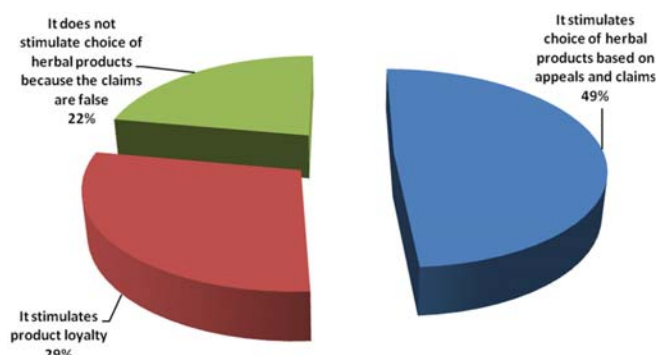


Fig. 4 Ascertaining whether residents of Anambra State, Nigeria predicate their choice of herbal products based on the appeals and claims in non-traditional marketing communication strategies they are exposed

Fig. 4 shows that non-traditional marketing communication strategies are effective at stimulating choices of herbal products based on appeals and claims. Impliedly, non-traditional method reaches out to customers in ways they are more likely to remember. Secondly, it also stimulates product loyalty.

VI. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The nature of non-traditional marketing communication is its deviation from the conventional mode of advertising and marketing. It rather explores cultural-bound means of advertising and marketing efforts.

Summarily, the following findings are inferred:

- In the application of non-traditional marketing communications, the findings identified three trado-based modes of advertising especially herbal products. The strategies include: (a) trado-instrumental marketing strategy, (b) trado-demonstrative marketing strategy and (c) trado-iconographic marketing strategy.
- Among the identified strategies, trado-instrumental marketing strategy is the most dominant strategy because its adoption cuts across many communities in Anambra State. Also, the bearer (usually, town crier) combined the use of word of mouth and instrument to announce the availability of goods and services.
- The finding also described other strategies: (b) trado-demonstrative marketing strategy and (c) trado-iconographic marketing strategy as credible strategies though they are sparingly used in semi-urban cities.
- It was also found that respondents are minimally exposed to these non-traditional marketing communication strategies under study. However, its adoption results in positive preference of herbal products due to captivating messages capable of igniting interest in the advertised communication through non-traditional marketing communication channels.
- Although the adoption of non-traditional marketing

communication strategies stimulates choices of products and services and sustains product loyalty, consumers' responses to non-traditional marketing communication strategies in advertising herbal products were of minimal effects. It is because, significant consumers see it as a primitive mode of advertising and marketing which technology has almost phased out.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- There is need to create a unified system of integration of both traditional and non-traditional marketing communication strategies. This is because technology is pervasive and affects every way of doing things including advertising and marketing.
- The emphasis on non-traditional marketing communication deserves further academic and practical enquires especially in the integration of the marketing mix in non-traditional marketing situations.
- There is need for replicative studies to widen the horizon of adoption of non-traditional marketing communication strategies in digital society.

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