

**AN ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL APPEALS IN CHILDREN
COMMERCIALS IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Children commercials are strategic communication through which advertiser influence the attitude of children. Much of the discourses in the scientific sphere are works that focus on the effects of commercials on children as well as the general importance of advertising. This study focuses on the psychological appeals in children commercials in Nigeria. Using the Indomie Noodle brand as a case, this study investigates the psychological appeals contained in the Indomie advert and how these appeals influence children. Opinions of 186 children between the ages of 5-12 in Keffi local government of Nasarawa State were sampled and it was discovered that Drama, celebrity endorsement, music and humour are the prominent appeals embedded in the Indomie television commercial and the study concludes that these appeals collectively generate an amazing effect on children. The study recommends that the Indomie Noodle brand explores more appeals so as to further strengthen the market base of their brand. Also, it is suggested that competing should brands to revamp their brands and respective adverts, even as children should be educated on how to identify quality product and that advertisers ensure that the promised gratifications contained in adverts are met. Key Terms: Advertising, Children, Commercials, Indomie Noodles, Television

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1950s, broadcast media has become a part of the Nigerian culture and advertisers are taking full advantage of it. The radio and television are the two protagonists of the broadcast media but the television, owing to its audio-video capacities, appears to be the frontline media for advertisers who intend to actively engage the audience for profitability. There are great numbers of product marketed daily on the television and many of these products are directed at children. Bigda (2005) to this end attests that kids now watch an average of 40,000 television commercials yearly. Also, due to the exposure of children to these commercials, kids as young as eighteen months in Nigeria recognise products when they see them. They recognize product logos, product package, and price. They can sing along when some particular product commercials are aired (Dirisu and Iyiola, 2014).

Commercials are the technical name for television advertising and like the popular advertising itself is a form of communication intended to persuade a target audience to take positive actions about products being promoted. Consumer products, especially children products, especially food, supplements and the likes, happen to be the type of products mostly projected by advertisers in Nigeria on the television. According to Gbadeyan (2009), the advertisers' point of view is that the television offers unique possibilities for young audiences as they love moving pictures and sounds. This helps advertisers eliminate their greatest challenge in reaching the target audience, consumer perception and psychological challenge.

Consequently, television commercials can be described as an extremely powerful medium for getting commercial messages across to children, without barriers. Children's exposure to commercials kindles their imagination, thereby influencing their perceptions better than still adverts and radio jingles. On the long run, they have positive ideas about products and explore all means to get their parents to get them these advertised products. In Nigeria, noodles get a lot of airtime, particularly the Indomie Noodle.

Indeed, children commercials become a very interesting area in academic research in recent times and different scholars have commendably studied the phenomena, albeit from angles such as its development, effects on family purchase behaviour in different climes, analysis of commercial content, children perception of commercials, and so on. However, using the Indomie brand of noodles, the most popular noodle brand children in Nigeria as a case, this study shall analyse the psychological appeals in children commercials in Nigeria.

2.0 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Research works on children commercials have focused on the end product of the advertising process, i.e. the actions that are taken by children after their exposure to commercials. There has been a neglect of what provokes these desired actions. This study, therefore, sets to analyse the psychological appeals contained in children commercials which ultimately provokes them to take the desired actions envisaged by the advertisers.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study has two objectives and they are to;

1. Investigate the psychological appeals contained in the Indomie advert
2. Analyse the influence of such appeals on children

4.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions guiding this study

1. What are the psychological appeals contained in Indomie advertising?
2. In what ways do psychological appeals in commercials influence children?

5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising entails the promotion and awareness about a product by gaining the attention of the specific market. Kurtz (2008) on his part defined advertising as a paid, non-personal communication through various media about a business firm, non-profit oriented organization, product, or idea by a sponsor identified in a message that is intended to inform or persuade members of a particular audience. The idea of Kurtz looks very much ideal, except that he viewed advertising as a 'non-personal communication' i.e. it is not designed for people individually. This is not totally true as advertising messages are now very personal in nature, especially in the era of social media and instant messaging applications like Facebook and WhatsApp respectively. However, for the purpose of this study, advertising is defined as marketing communication messages by advertisers, targeted at a particular audience; using any or a combination of media of mass communication. This definition explains that advertising is messages that communicate carefully developed marketing intentions of advertisers (organisations, brands or personalities) using one or a combination of media channels e.g. prints, broadcast or the new media.

Advertising can be done through the medium of communication such as the television, radio, magazine, outdoor signage, newspaper, direct mail, SMS, branded items (jotters, clothes, pens, mugs, wallets, key holders, drink openers, cars, buildings etc) and the new media. As posited by Rossiter (1998) cited in Iyiola and Dirisu (2014), advertising performs the following functions;

1. To get a market attention
2. To enhance the attractiveness and desirability of a product
3. To enable consumers have current, knowledgeable and positive information in consumer decisions
4. To positively change the perception of people about a product
5. To stimulate desire and purchase in order to fulfil the AIDA (Awareness – Interest – Decision – Action) model

6.0 CHILDREN COMMERCIALS

Children commercials, also called children adverts refers to any paid commercial message that is carried in or immediately adjacent children's programmes (Gbadeyan, 2009). The concept could also be explained as promotional messages about products or services directed at children. Just like the general ads, children advertising persuades the audience (in this case, the children) through the projection of the name of the product and benefits that could be derived from such. Children, as observed by Maher, Herbst, Childs and Finn (2008) represents a huge, profitable and emerging market to advertisers. This explains why

concerted efforts are made by advertisers to reach out to children for product sales and consumption. Children commercials are delivered to the children during their television programs or some other time delivered according to the direction of broadcaster during or after any other television programs (Quinn & Ruth, 2002).

The important part of children advertisement is not only thinking about its content but also focusing on the timing in which the message is conveyed to the children. Children commercials are on television - a thing shaped like a box with a screen whereon programmes are watched (Godsby, 2003). Television could also be described as a piece of electronic gadget which transmits pictures, colours and sounds that are transmitted from studios and stations licensed for broadcasting. Television is the principal actor of the broadcast media and there are over a hundred private and public active television stations in Nigeria, alongside the pay television such as DSTV, GOTV, MYTV, KWESETV and TSTV.

The type of product promoted on Nigerian television shares similitudes with global trends and as noted by Hamson and Marskel (2008), 80% of foods advertised on television for children are convenient fast food and candies. This position is what obtains in Nigeria as it is not had to find advertising of food products for children on Nigerian television stations. This goes without saying that noodles are prominent among the television commercials we have in Nigeria. Noodles are defined by the Cambridge Dictionary is a very thin, long strip of pasta or a similar flour paste, eaten with a sauce or in a soup. Noodles are very popular in Nigeria and are undoubtedly one of the most consumed staple food therein. Damilare (2017) attests that Nigeria is currently the 12th largest consumer of instant noodles in the world with estimated annual demand of 1.79 billion packets of noodles, according to the World Instant Noodle Association (WINA), a body saddled with the responsibility of improving the noodle global.

7.0 THE INDOMIE NOODLE BRAND

Indomie is the first instant noodles brand in Nigeria. It was first introduced in 1988 (as an imported product) but it finally hit the Nigerian markets in 1995 as the main product manufactured by De-United Foods (now Dufil Prima Foods). Over the years, the company has gone through various transformations, but the Indomie brand, its unique characteristics, and market dominance remain the same, if not stronger (Benson, 2018). Due to the consistency and promotional efforts of the Indomie brand, it has unofficially replaced the word 'noodle' among Nigerians and according to Wagadireja (2017), Indomie controls 74% of the Nigerian Noodle Market. As at today, there are 16 noodle brands in Nigeria, competing for the attention of consumers and striving for growing market share (Damilare, 2017). Some of them are; Mimeo, Honeywell Noodles, Chikki, Indomie and Supreme Noodles etc. Without a doubt, these brands are all trying their best to maintain market supremacy in the face of fierce competition but Indomie seems to be the step ahead as it remained the preferred.

Y7 Lab, a leading brand watchdog in Nigeria conducted a research in 2016 on 'The Noodles War in the Nigerian Market' and it was discovered that the Indomie Brand maintains the leadership position in the noodles market by efficiently using the following strategies;

1. Promotional Activities: periodic promotions such as scratch and win promo, visiting of schools in both primary and secondary schools to prepare Indomie for the children,

visiting and partnering with amusement parks or fun centres during children's day celebration as witnessed in the last Children's Day celebration at Rosellas Fun Centre, Igando, Lagos

2. Television commercials and radio campaign songs.
3. Affordability of price: Indomie varieties are affordable in price for average Nigerians
4. Improved brand quality: According to our research, we discovered that Indomie can stay overnight without souring or losing taste due to its improvement in brand quality.
5. Effective relationship with the distributors and consumers: Indomie management are relational in terms of communication, awareness and result oriented policies with their distributors, and customers as informed during the visit to the various distributing outlets.
6. Scholarship programmes: Indomie in a bid to remain on top of the game offers periodic scholarships to students in high schools to enable them further their education without any hitch, thereby adding value to the society as a whole.

7.1 Advertising Appeals and Children Commercials

Advertising appeals aim to influence the way consumers view themselves and signify how buying certain products can prove to be beneficial for them (Oyero&Salawu, 2014). Advertising appeals are enshrined in advertisements and they provoke an attitudinal change in the target audience. Appeals in advertising are carefully chosen and utilized by advertisers and advert creators as they are the ace cards that helps pass across the intentions of the advertisers efficiently to the audiences, thereby influences the purchasing decision of consumers, Gbadeyan (2009) is of the opinion that advertising appeals are promotional themes and they are attributes that are employed to persuade the target audience.

All forms of advertising possess certain themes which touch on the psychological domains of the consumers for the capturing of their attention, engagement of their interest, influencing of their desire and giving them a conviction to take an action. When it comes to food, children don't make a mistake for their choices; they know exactly what they want. To this end, advertising themes are utilised to touch the hearts of children while delivering the key message, which is usually brand preference and consumption.

Ambekar (2009) opines that most advertising appeals can be categorised into **Emotional** and **Rational** appeals. Emotional appeals are ideal for the younger generation as it touches on their affective domains while the rational appeals are suitable for the older generation as they concern the reasoning faculty of humans. For the purpose of this study, the following common appeals which are engaged in children commercials are highlighted and explained below.

- Humour
- Drama
- Music
- Testimonials

7.2 Humour: This is an excellent appeal that catches the viewer's attention and helps in achieving a recall which can work well for product sales (Oyero and Salawu, 2014). Humour is an appeal that is used in around 30% of advertisements (Ambekar, 2009). Humour as an

appeal helps customers to feel relaxed about products and through it, the benefit that can be derived from the product can be excellently relayed. When there is humour in an advertising message, there are probabilities of being happy to watch them again (Hollis, 2011). Also, humour can bring relief to what can otherwise be mundane and unexpected ads (Middleton, 2017).

7.3 Music: Music is another appeal in advertising and it has an intrinsic value that helps to increase the persuasiveness of the advertisement (Oyero&Salawu, 2014). As put forward by Wikipedia (2018), music in advertising affects the way viewers perceive the brand by different means and on different levels, and ‘can significantly affect the emotional response to television commercials.’ Music helps the memorability of advertising as the message in the advert comes to mind whenever the rhythm comes to mind or is being sung. Music has the ability to emphasise dramatic moments within the advertising. Music as an appeal can be used to capture a specific market and in the case of children, well-chosen music (in terms of tempo, pitch, beat, melody and content) such as the Indomie advert music has effectively helped push sales.

7.4 Drama: Drama is used to create awareness in television commercials and its effects change in people by bringing reality on screen (Ekeanyanwu, Chinamezu&Igbinoba, 2006). Through the interpretation of scripted advertising messages, the target audience gets to appreciate what a product feels like, especially in the area of taste and benefits when utilised). Most drama commercials on children food product portrays how delicious such food products are and how strong and intelligent children will be when they eat such.

7.5 Endorsement and Testimonials: The endorsement is another emotional appeal engaged in advertising to reach the audience efficiently. Popular figures such as athletes, musicians and actors are used quite often to endorse products in order to stir popularity despite having nothing (or little) to do with their creation, intention or knowledge of the industry (Middleton, 2017). In Nigeria, we are used to seeing celebrities being engaged in commercials. These celebrities endorse products and their popularity is transferred unto the products, thereby boosting sales. Most times, celebrities are engaged for sales promotion.

8.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The persuasive theories were adopted for this study. Persuasion is defined as an attempt made to induce changes in attitude and behaviour through the involvement of a person’s cognitive and effective processes. Asemah (2012) simply defined persuasion as the use of messages to influence an audience. From the definition of persuasion, three elements are constant, these are; Conscious Intent, Message Transmission, and Behaviour Influence. Under persuasion theories, the two models underscore this study is;

1. Psychodynamic Model, and
2. Socio-Cultural Model

8.1 The Psychodynamic Model: This model holds that for a persuasion message to be considered effective, it must succeed in altering the psychological functioning of the recipient(s) in such a way that he/she/they will respond overtly with models of behaviour desired or suggested by the communicator (Folarin, 2005). The premise of psychodynamic persuasion model is that the persuader carefully employs information that can change the

orientation of an individual (Robinson, 2011). The application of theory to the study is that the psychological motivations used in Indomie Instant Noodles Advertisement as intervening variables between the message stimulus and audience response include drama, humour, music and testimonials (example being popular Nigerian hip-hop act Davido). These appeals bring about the desired response in children (the beneficiaries of the product) as there is an involvement of their cognitive (brain) and effective (mind) domains.

8.2 The Socio-Cultural Model: This model explains the exercise of social control by social institutions on others through a careful presentation of information. The ultimate idea is to shape and channel their actions in such a way that departs from their personal psychological dispositions. In relation to this study, advertisers (in this case, Indomie) present children commercials in such a way that recipients (children) believe that the brand advertised are the only socially acceptable noodle brand. The achievement of the desired social behaviour is only made possible through the skilful utilisation of advert appeals, sales promotion, price slash, the introduction of new flavour etc.

9.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was employed for this study due to its plurality and accuracy. The target populations were primary school students between the ages of five (5) and 12 (twelve) from the Keffi metropolis of Nasarawa State as a representation of the Indomie noodles audience. A sample size of 200 was strategically drawn from elementary school children and in determining the sample size where the population is known, the Taro Yamene sampling formula was adopted. The formula is as follows.

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

Where

S = Sample Size

N = Given Population

E = Margin of Error (0.05)

1 = Constant

Given the population of 400

$$S = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.05)^2}$$

$$S = \frac{400}{2}$$

$$S = 200$$

To arrive at the sample size of 200, 10 communities were selected and therein, 200 school children were carefully selected for the study. The 20 communities selected were Dadin Kowa, AngwanTanko, GRA, Korfa Hausa, AngwanLambu, Angwan Rama, Area Commander, Mokola, Pyanko and Korfa Kudu. The questionnaire was the research instrument utilized for data gathering, 200 questionnaires were administered with the assistance of parents and guardians of these children who helped to read out and interpret the question items to these children, to make them feel at ease and to facilitate clearer

understanding. Only 186 were found usable on their completion and return. To this end, only 186 questionnaires were analysed using the frequency percentage table.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Results

Table 1: Which of these appeals is Obvious in the Indomie advert?

Appeals	Frequency	Percentage
Drama	10	5.4%
Music	30	16.1%
Celebrity Endorsement	5	2.7%
Humour	19	10.2%
All the above	122	65.6%
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 1 examines the psychological appeals which children see in the Indomie commercials. 5.4% of the respondents went for Drama, 16.1% (representing 30 respondents) went for Music. Five respondents (2.7%) confirmed that they see celebrities in the Indomie Noodle advert while 19 respondents (10.2%) went for Humour. Finally, 65.6% of the respondents attest that they see a combination of Drama, Music, Celebrity Endorsement and Humour in the Indomie advert. This proves the engagement of all these appeals in the Indomie Noodle advert.

Table 2: Owing to the presence of Drama, Music, Celebrity Endorsement and Humour in the Indomie commercial, Children feel -

Feeling	Frequency	Percentage
Happy	40	21.5%
Like singing along	52	27.96%
Like Eating Indomie	94	50.54%
Sad	0	0%
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 2 above assesses the influences of the appeals in the Indomie commercials on the children. The presentation shows 40 representing 21.5% confirming that they are happy when exposed to the Indomie commercial. Another 52 respondents, representing 27.96% feel like singing along when they see the Indomie commercial. A total of 94 respondents (50.54%) feels like eating Indomie when they are exposed to the Indomie commercial. None of the respondents feels sad when they see the Indomie commercial.

Table 3: The Indomie Commercials Appeals Influences Children’s Choice when buying Noodles

Response	Frequency	Percentage
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Yes	163	87.64
No	08	4.3%
Indifferent	15	8.06%
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The above table reveals the influence of the appeals in the Indomie commercials on children when they are buying noodles. Majority of the children totalling 87.64% attested that owing to the appeals in the Indomie commercials, they are influenced when making noodle purchases. Another eight respondents, equalling 4.3% said the appeals in the commercials do not influence them when making noodle purchases while 15 respondents (8.06%) are indifferent about the question.

Table 4: Children Perceive Indomie Noodles to be the Best Owing its Television Commercial Appeals?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	171	91.4%
Disagree	13	6.99%
Undecided	4	2.15%
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 4 investigated the perception of children about the Indomie Noodle brand owing to the appeals in its television appeals. To the proposition given, 171 respondents (equalling 91.4%) agree that Indomie Noodle is the best Noodle there is owing to the appeals embedded in the commercials they are exposed to. 13 respondents, amounting to 6.99% of the sampled population disagreed while 4 respondents were undecided. This analysis obviously proofs the effect of the appeals utilised in the Indomie Noodle television commercials as children now perceive the brand as the best of all noodle brands in Nigeria.

Generally, from the results of the field studies, there is an agreement that the combination of the appeals in Indomie television commercials (Humour, Music, Celebrity Endorsement and Drama) have a great persuasive psychological influence on the children, the target audience of the commercials. This shows conformity with the persuasion strategy which says that the careful employment of information from the persuader can change the psychological orientation of an individual (Robinson, 2011). Consumer behaviour is positive when the advertiser reflects the socio-cultural and psychodynamic appeals through such appeals embedded in the ad. Also as observed during the field studies, children have no negative feeling when they are exposed to television commercials of the Indomie brand. They are happy, feel like singing the commercial theme song and eating Indomie noodles. Though

from the analysis, the majority of the children (with 50.54%) said they feel like eating Indomie Noodles when they are exposed to the commercials. This finding is in tandem with the discovery of Rana (2015) in the study 'Effects of Advertising on Children with Special References to Confectionary Products in India' where it was found out that children between ages 5-12 want to always food which they see in advertisements.

More also, the sampled children were found to be influenced by the appeals in the Indomie advert whenever they go to local stores to buy to Noodles. This consolidates the effect of Indomie Noodle television commercials on them as they can't seem to get the Noodle brand off their mind. Abideen and Salaria (2009) corroborate this when they submitted that television advertising influences the purchasing behaviour of children and by extension their parents. The study also reveals that children think highly of the Indomie brand and they perceive it to be the best among all the brand of noodles we have in Nigeria. This positive attitude can only be a ripple effect of the unique psychological appeals of the Indomie brand to Children and the general Indomie over the years, appeals such as humour, music, celebrity endorsement and drama which Ambedkar (2009) considers as important elements in advertising. This works in favour of Indomie as children are able to recall the commercial easily and ultimately, preference for the Indomie brand.

10.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is obvious that every brand has its own unique psychological appeal in its advertisement and Indomie instant noodles is no exception as children cannot do without the brand owing to the psychological appeals embedded in its ads. That being said however, this study recommends the following based on the findings of the study;

1. Indomie Noodle brand should carry occasional surveys so as to get real-time feedback on how well they can assist their market to get premium value for every purchase.
2. The Indomie brand should endeavour to explore more appeals that can be of interest to children in their commercials.
3. Competing for noodle brand in Nigeria should revamp their commercials and product package so as to endear themselves the more to children and the general populace.
4. Parents should be encouraged to discuss with their children and personally analyse contents of all commercials they are exposed to so as to help them distinguish between erroneous and false messages and those that make subjective claims about their brands.
5. Children should also be educated on how to check the production and expiry dates on products, especially food products to avoid health hazards.
6. Parents should do well by educating and exposing their children to other types of food (especially fruits), other than noodles so as sustain their diet and ensure the provision of nutrients needed for their development
7. Advertisers should endeavour that advertised products meet gratifications contained in advertisements.

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