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False Advertising Promises: Implications on Product Perception and Patronage

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ABSTRACT

In the face of contemporary carriage of blatant lies, false, misleading, fraudulent and deceptive promises in advert messages, this survey research examines the implication of false advertising promises on product perception and patronage. This work adopts the explanatory mixed method design. The undergraduate student population of 28,689 in Abia State University Uturu in the 2017/2018 academic session across the ten Faculties of the Institution were studied. At 0.05 error margin, the Taro Yamane's statistical formula was used to take a manageable and representative sample size of 393. Structured Questionnaire was designed and used to source primary research data. The simple percentage and statistical table (descriptive statistics) served as basic tools of research data presentation and SPSS was used to test the lone hypothesis. This study finds evidence in the fact that deceptive advertising promises does affect the patronage behavior of users negatively, thereby preventing a repeat trial. This is because, users with failed experience of the false advertising promises, will usually not make a repeat purchase of such products. The findings also revealed that false or failed advertising promises have made major brands to lose their corporate image. On the basis of the findings and evidences in academic literature, it was concluded that in Nigeria, current system of legal protection to the consumers from deceptive advertisement is inadequate. To avoid deception which produces misunderstanding that can lead to product rejection, it was suggested that advertisers should endeavour to tell the truth at all time. This, the researcher believes, is a good way to create integrity, establish high sense of confidence and mutual trust between the advertiser and the product users.

Key words: Implications, Product Perception, Mass Media, Patronage, Advertising Promises

INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental pillars on which stands the modern ethical advertising is truthfulness. The requirement is that advertising should be truthful and not misleading. By implication, truth is crucial for the promotion of advertising, but circumventing truth in advertising campaigns have become a reoccurring

decimal in modern day advertising strategies and tactics.

Advertising, according to [1] is the non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products, services, or ideas by identified sponsors through various media. However, [2] cited in [3] contends

that advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor.

Over the years, manufacturers, service providers and advertisers have continued to understand the centrality of advertising in staying afloat in business. Accordingly, they conceive various objectives which can best be achieved through advert campaigns. Such objectives, according to [3] could be informative (used to inform consumers about a new product or feature and to build primary demand), persuasive (used to build selective demand for a brand by persuading consumers that it offers, the best quality for their money), comparison (the ones that compare one brand directly or indirectly to one or more other brands), and reminder (the ones used to keep consumers thinking about a product).

To do all that, the advert messages are strategically put forward through posters, signs, notices, show cards, circulars, catalogues, labels, price tags, tickets, footballers' shirts, and many other devices. Others include slogans, jingles, street cries, loudspeaker messages, and the range of auditory effects heard in radio and watched on television advertising. Importantly, advertising also takes place in newspaper and magazines. The intendment of every advertisement is the customer. Potential customers could

be a group of young girls enjoying fashion, youths, men, women, aged, children who desire one product or service or the other.

Advertising as a phenomenon of modern times deliberately influences our perception, shapes the perception of the world we live in. It's an integral part of all media, including television, radio, print and internet advertising. Advertising has a tremendous hidden strength, a power of control. This force has become part of our lives, whether we realize it or not. Advertising attacks us from all sides; we are constantly influenced by it. It is forcing us to buy products, services, and models of the right life style. It seems that advertising cannot be avoided; it attacks us from TV, radio, billboards, newspapers. It affects our lives and virtually it is almost impossible to avoid or fight off.

Closely linked with psychology, advertising affects customer behaviour. There are many emotional appeals which are usually and smartly incorporated into television commercials so as to influence the customer in a desirable way, i.e. eventually making him/her buy the product.

To create a demand for company's products in the market, advertising has become a very important tool for today's modern conventional marketing systems. To lead in the market share, manufacturers (advertisers) sometimes

resort to the use of misleading, false or deceptive advertising to sell their products which has effects on consumer behaviors. Advertising is created for people; and its purpose is to sell a product, a service, image or an idea. But if the advertisement lies or is dishonest, it loses its strength. Today, advertisers use deceptive advertising aimed at misleading the consumer and their perceptive frameworks. 'Deception' through the advertisement is a common phenomenon today.

Although the rule of truthful advertising crosses borders of nations, very unfortunately, some advertisers still resort to the publishing of misleading, fraudulent and deceptive advertisement through mass media.

Statement of Problem

Although the rule of truthful advertising crosses borders of nations, very unfortunately, some advertisers still resort to the publishing of misleading, fraudulent and deceptive advertisement promises through mass media.

As a matter of fact, advertisers in their bid to persuade product users, often involves themselves in cajoling, coaxing, convincing, enticing and inducing through blatant exaggeration, falsehood, embellishment and over estimation of their products in terms of quality, durability and performance.

In the light of the above, one begins to wonder if indeed truthful advertising cannot stimulate the needed response that the advertiser desires. Empirical studies have investigated the influence of advertising on product patronage or on the buying behavior of users. However, the extent to which false claims or promises in advert messages affect the consumers' perception of such falsely advertised products, goods and services as well as the overall impact on patronage is not only a lacuna, but a motivation for this research effort.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study has the goal of examining the practices of false or deceptive advertisement and its overall impacts of on consumer buying behavior in relation to perception and patronage. However, the specific objectives of this research were designed to:

1. Find out if users have actually identified false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods in the media.
2. Examine the impact of false advertising promises or deceptive advertising on product perception and patronage
3. Identify ways of protecting consumers against deceptive advertisement.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been raised to direct the research effort:

1. To what extent have product users actually identified false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods in the media?
2. What impact does false advertising promises have on product perception and patronage?
3. In what ways can the consumers be protected against deceptive advertisement?

Hypothesis

A lone Hypothetical statement was developed to address the specific objective.

H_{o1} : Deceptive advertisements do not have a significant relationship with the buying behavior of consumers in Nigeria.

H_1 : Deceptive advertisements do have a significant relationship with the buying behavior of consumers in Nigeria.

Literature Review Deceptive Advertising

Advertisement means any public announcement intended to promote the sale, purchase or rental of a product or service, to advance a cause or idea or to bring about some other effect desired by the advertiser, for which broadcasting time has been given up to the advertiser for remuneration or similar consideration

[4] cited in [5]. As advertising has the potential to persuade people into commercial transactions that they might otherwise avoid, many governments around the world use regulations to control false, deceptive or misleading advertising (Wikipedia).

An advert is misleading if, by its words or image, it deceives or is likely to deceive and so persuades, or is likely to persuade, you to spend your money or to change how you spend your money. Misleading adverts may: contain lies; leave out or hide important facts; make a promise which will not be carried out; or create a false impression-even though everything in it may be true.

Advertising is very often insulting, misleading, in bad taste, too excessive or being misunderstood. The reason why advertisement is criticised is not just for the role it plays in selling goods, but primary for the method how they try to persuade clients [1]. Hence, [1] contend that:

Advertising is downright untruthful, and at best, it presents only positive information about products. The advertising manipulates people psychologically to buy things they can't afford by promising greater sex appeal or improved social status." [1]

A number of definitions of deceptive advertising have been offered by various regulatory agencies, associations, and legal bodies. The use of false or misleading statements in advertising is what most scholars described as deceptive advertising. Deceptive advertising, according to [6] is defined as a firm misrepresenting to the consumer the attributes of the advertised product and thus the expected utility from using the product. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines deceptive advertising as advertising intended to mislead consumers (1) by falsely making claims, (2) by failure to make full disclosure, or (3) by a combination of both. Regardless of whether a claim is express or implied, the advertiser must have sufficient evidence to support them. Types of unfair and deceptive practices in advertising, according to Boveé, Arens, 1989, 45) are:

- **False promises:** Promises using in advertising cannot be fulfilled, because they are impossible: "forever youth" or "cancer is preventable".
- **Visual distortions:** Making items bigger on pictures, completely different, than was printed advertisement in newspaper, more or less colourful, smaller than in TV commercial
- **False testimonials:** To involve famous celebrity into commercials

for gaining a bona fide user of the product.

- **Incomplete description:** To proclaim a fact that boots were made of real fur without a mention that the sole wasn't.
- **False comparisons:** Comparison of two unbalanced items - "superior" (high-cost car) and "inferior" (economical car), for purpose to show how advertising product is looking better.
- **Misleading comparisons:** The mentioned claim can't be verified. Making disproportionate comparisons, such as "as hard as a diamond is".
- **Bait-and-switch offers:** Advertising a "lower" type of product, but suddenly requested type is "out of stock", so "switching" customer to a "higher" product (more expensive)
- **Partial disclosures:** To disclose just a part of quality of a product, and the rest (worse part of it) isn't mentioned. For example, advertisement says: The new laptop has battery for 9 hours of working and it costs only #105.000. However, what this advertisement doesn't say is a need of having a special charger, which isn't included in price and cost extra money.

- **Small- print qualifications:** Making a large print statement "Any new dress - 50% off! ", but if you decided to buy one, you realise that mentioned sale is just for small sizes [3]

None of products should promise unrealistic and fake expectations created by advert that "over-promise", because the result will be dissatisfaction of a customer [7].

Advertising can push clients to buy items by tricking on their emotions. Persuasive methods are so reliable and powerful that costumers can't help to defend themselves [1].

In a study by [8] cited in [9] a computer-based measurement method was constructed in order to evaluate the misleading effects of advertisement claims. Deceptive advertisement was reviewed by comparing consumer response to the questionable claims again response to the presentation of no attribute information and true information. The authors found that expanded claims and inconspicuous claims lead to significantly higher levels of false beliefs (e.g., lack of side effects, low price, and speed of relief) than did the true or no information claims. The findings are consistent with a body research, showing that consumers constantly misconstrue some types of advertisement claims and that the implication drawn from questionable

claims are treated as factual. In addition, false beliefs often persist even following the presentation of corrective information [11]. Also certain advertisements make claims that seem to be exaggerated on the face. It therefore is not in-genuine to understand that the possibility of such claims being called deceptive is very slim.

False advertising scandals: Implications on Patronage

It doesn't pay to deceive the public. Have you ever wondered if you were getting what you paid for? In advertising, there's a big difference between pushing the truth and making false claims. Many companies have been caught out for peddling mediocre products, using wild claims like "scientifically proven" with "guaranteed results." In a situation where the companies have crossed the lines of decency, honesty and truthfulness, costs running into millions of hard and soft currencies could result, and may eventually lead to a damaged corporate reputation.

Below are some examples of false advertising scandals that have rocked big brands. Although some are still ongoing and not all companies have had to pay up, but each dealt with a fair amount of negative publicity.

Activia yogurt said it had "special bacterial ingredients."

Advert for Dannon's popular Activia brand yogurt landed the company with a class action settlement of \$45 million in

2010, according to ABC News. The yogurts were marketed as being "clinically" and "scientifically" proven to boost your immune system and able to help to regulate digestion. The Activia advert campaign, fronted by actress Jamie Lee Curtis, claimed that the yogurt had special bacterial ingredients. As a result, the yogurt was sold at 30% higher prices than other similar products. However, the Cleveland judge overseeing the case said that these claims were unproven.

The lawsuit against Dannon began in 2008, when consumer Trish Wiener lodged a complaint. On top of the fine of \$45 million, Dannon was ordered to remove "clinically" and "scientifically proven" from its labels, according to ABC. Phrases similar to "clinical studies show" were deemed permissible. Dannon denied any wrongdoing and claimed it settled the lawsuit to "avoid the cost and distraction of litigation."

Red Bull said it could "give you wings." Energy drinks company Red Bull was sued in 2014 for its slogan "Red Bull gives you wings." The company settled the class action case by agreeing to pay out a maximum of \$13 million — including \$10 to every US consumer who had bought the drink since 2002. The tagline, which the company has used for nearly two decades, went alongside marketing claims that that the caffeinated drink could improve a consumer's concentration and reaction speed.

Began in Caraethers was one of several consumers who brought the case against the Austrian drinks company. He said he was a regular consumer of Red Bull for 10 years, but that he had not developed "wings," or shown any signs of improved intellectual or physical abilities.

Following the settlement Red Bull released this statement:

Red Bull settled the lawsuit to avoid the cost and distraction of litigation. However, Red Bull maintains that its marketing and labeling have always been truthful and accurate, and denies any and all wrongdoing or liability.

Kellogg said Rice Krispies could boost your immune system.

Kellogg's popular Rice Krispies cereal had a crisis in 2010 when the brand was accused of misleading consumers about the product's immunity-boosting properties, according to CNN.

The Federal Trade Commission ordered Kellogg to halt all advertising that claimed that the cereal improved a child's immunity with "25 percent Daily Value of Antioxidants and Nutrients — Vitamins A, B, C and E," stating the claims were "dubious."

The case was settled in 2011. Kellogg agreed to pay \$2.5 million to affected consumers, as well as donating \$2.5 million worth of Kellogg products to charity, according to Law360.

Wal-Mart falsely advertised the price of Coke in New York.

The supermarket chain had advertised a nationwide sale on the soft drink in 2014,

where 12-packs would cost just \$3.00. However, customers in New York State were charged \$3.50. Wal-Mart staff allegedly lied about the reasons for the price-hike, telling customers that New York has a "sugar tax," according to Corporate Crime Reporter.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who conducted the investigation, concluded the price violated New York State's General Business Law 349 and 350. Wal-Mart agreed to pay more than \$66,000 in fines, after over-charging customers from 117 stores in New York for Coca-Cola.

Extenze claimed it could extend penis length.

Extenze had claimed its pills were "scientifically proven to increase the size of a certain part of the male body" in notorious late night TV commercials.

Extenze agreed to pay \$6 million to settle a false advertising class action lawsuit. CBS noted that its website was also updated to say: "These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. Extenze is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."

Misleading advertisement: The reality Consumers Face

There is no gainsaying that advertisements play a major role in influencing the taste and preference of consumers' choice for products and services. Though consumers' choices for products and services are highly influenced by other factors like the

quality, brand, price, and others recommendation, business organizations, knowing the importance of advertising, have over the years, engaged advertisements in a rather aggressive way (to increase market share against competitors), deploring humongous resources to it, highlighting the best part and elements of their products and services, including quality and prices amongst other concerns that they hope would appeal to their target customers' satisfaction [12]. Without advertisement, it will be safe to consider any business as not existing especially in the minds of its target customers and clients.

Consumers are known to be rational when it comes to patronizing (purchasing) goods and services as they tend to go for the products and services that guarantee maximum satisfaction of their taste vis-à-vis at the price they are willing to pay. They may consequently not patronize any commodity whose price is above the additional satisfaction that they can derive from the commodity.

So for companies, apparently focusing on appealing to the satisfaction "bud" of their customers, try to outsmart each other, engaging advertising agencies who employ creative techniques to design persuasive communication in mass media that promote "ideas" and/or "assurances" of products and services satisfaction delivery to consumers, to attract their attention and by extension, patronage.

However, most times these advertisements run short of what the businesses promise to deliver, in reality. The brand's promise is usually at variance with the brand's engagement with the consumers.

One can only imagine the disappointment that therefore comes after a consumer gets product and/or service and find out that it isn't what the advertisers said it will deliver. This is misleading Advertisement! [13].

Some "victims" of False Advertising Promises: Failure of APCON

Aisha Experience: Aisha, a fresh university graduate who has been very conservative about changing her phone, saw a smart phone's advertisement that swept her off her feet that she decided to "change". She took her National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) savings and went for the phone. Behold, the satisfaction the advertisement promised was not what she got. According to her, "adverts are deceptive". She nevertheless had to wake up to her reality. This reality seems to be the order of the day for an average Nigeria consumer [14].

Tunde Experience: A typical situation played out recently at Ikeja area of Lagos; a male university undergraduate, named Tunde sought to buy a carbonated drink with a popular brand. Ostensibly influenced amongst other things by the stimulating advertisement of the brand on billboards, newspapers, television and even on the different social media

platforms, Tunde approached a nearby mart close to his house and requested for his "beloved" drink. Upon getting hold of the drink, he noticed that that the content was not the same quantity measurement with what he sees on the different medium of the drink's advertisement, especially on billboards, fliers and newspapers. Suspecting some 'rip-off", he demanded for a replacement. The seller, obviously familiar with such suspicion from previous customers, brought out so many more bottles for Tunde to choose from. On seeing all the bottles with the same content-quantity like that of the first bottle he has, Tunde felt bad, but had only two choices- to leave it or to go ahead to buy it.

However, it is instructive to note that Nigerians are faced with similar choices like Tunde's above everyday as they patronize their "adverts influenced" products and services. It is only a few that may opt out, as a good number would follow Tunde's choice, perhaps because the way the society has made them vulnerable to accepting anything as the best available option. Where there is even alternative, most minds have been conditioned not to trust the other alternative.

Seemingly understanding this, businesses have concerned themselves more with increasing their market shares than offering products and services that are exactly related with the adverts that they

are putting out to their consumers. They spend billions on adverts without putting relative amount in product and service development that would be at apiece with customers' satisfaction.

"Tunde's carbonated drink company" isn't the only company guilty of this; this misleading advertisement tendencies cut across all the industries (Banking, Telecom, Aviation, Eatery, Oil and Gas etc.) as their Brand's Promises do not add up to their Brand's Engagements.

Francesca Omenye Experience: Another respondent who gave her name as Francesca Omenye said "I once traveled to Abuja and checked into a hotel because of the way they advertise its facilities and services on fliers and newspapers...but when I got there, what was on ground was a sharp contrast from what they advertised. That was fraud and misleading" Francesca emphasized.

Abdullahi Muhammad Experience: For Abdullahi Muhammad, he once contemplated going to court over a popular printer brand he bought that didn't work as advertised. He had a change of mind when he was reminded by his friends that "our judicial system will take forever to adjudicate on the matter in addition to the legal expenses" he revealed.

Chinedu Experience: These people lie and they are taking us for granted...how they could consistently be advertising their products claiming what they cannot

deliver" Chinedu asked referring to a popular tooth paste that "guarantees white teeth". Chinedu added "Despite that many Nigerians have been using it over the years, they still have yellow teeth" [14].

Demola Experience: According to Demola, "Even when one tries to seek redress in court, remember they encode their deceit in 4 words 'TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY!'. Continuing Demola asked "What do you do in such situation and you know the letters and words in the TERMS AND CONDITIONS (T&C) are too long, and you know Nigerians don't really like reading, so you can see that we are at their mercy" Day in, day out, consumers bear this brunt without any seeming help in sight. However, in a situation like this, one wonders the role of Consumers Protection Council (CPC), a parastatal of the Federal Government of Nigeria, supervised by the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment, with the mandate amongst others "to eliminate "hazardous products" from the market, provide speedy redress to consumers complaints and ensure that consumers "interest" receive due consideration at the appropriate forum [16].

Also one equally wonders the role of Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) in the protection of consumers. It is good to highlight here that APCON is vested with powers to "control and regulate the practice of

advertising in Nigeria, in all its aspects and ramifications and also to promote “responsible and ethical” advertising practice, “acts as the conscience” of society in matters of commercial communications and as a “watchdog” for consumers [6].

APCON is also vested with the mandate to manage the need and interests of stakeholders in Nigeria’s advertising industry. It however seems APCON is lopsided in managing the “need and interests of stakeholders” in that they are silent on the misleading advertisements some of its stakeholders put out to its public.

The reality is that if the Consumers Protection Council (CPC) and the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) are committed to their mandates, there will be some respite, if not full protection from misleading advertisement, for consumers.

The Evil of Deceptive Advertising: Effect on Corporate Businesses

Deceptive advertising is found when what is advertised differs from what the product is when it is purchased [7] cited in [9]. Deception comes into advertising when advertisers outrightly lie or make false promises about the quality and quantity the product being advertised. Lying in this context consist not simply in making false advertising promises, but it also consists of making a statement which one believes is false, to another person,

whom one has reason to think will believe the statement to be true (Bok 1988, p.153).

At every point in time, every society detests lying because it is immoral. Anything immoral is destructive to society. Therefore, there is no any just course, for society to promote falsehood and kill truthfulness. Lying is an immoral act because it is tantamount to fraud. This is why every form of advertising that involves coercion, manipulation and exaggeration is immoral because it negates the concept of truthfulness. Deceptive advertising is manifested in the abuse of the use of figures of speech which is manifested in bluffing, puffing, exaggeration, humour and overstatement. Inherent in the semantic advertising are the notion: of lying, misrepresentation, deception, manipulation and other questionable immoral practices.

Therefore, Deceptive advertising contains:

- ✓ Statements, suggestions or pictures offensive to public decency.
- ✓ False or misleading statement or exaggerations visual or verbal
- ✓ Testimonials, which do not reflect the real choice of a competent witness.
- ✓ Comparison, which unfairly disparages competitive product or service.
- ✓ Price claims which are misleading

- ✓ Claims insufficiently supported or which distort the true meaning or practicable application of statements made by professional or scientific authority.

Deceptive Advertising [7] has hurt the legitimate business by reducing patronage and the overall confidence in products. Consumer confidence can make or break a market, and as the rate of deceptive advertising raises the repeat consumer declines. This break in the consumer/business relationship can go unnoticed longer the larger the market. Car sales, finance payment plans, service agreements often have “disclosure” statements, which in very small print outline the additional charges or limitations that are not apparent to the purchase of the product or service. Even with the government watchdog,

consumers are ultimately responsible for making wise choices in the purchases of goods and services.

The primary reason why deceptive advertising is harmful to a company is trust [8]. In order to be successful, a business has to build a reasonable level of trust with consumers. We all know that bad news spreads faster than good news. When one cheat someone, it is obvious that it will reduce the number of people who will ever trust him/her again. It will shut down future business opportunities, both with customers, as well as with distributors and other businesses you could run cooperative advertising and marketing promotions with. Your reputation is worth something, even in an online world where no one sees your face. It still means something [9, 10].

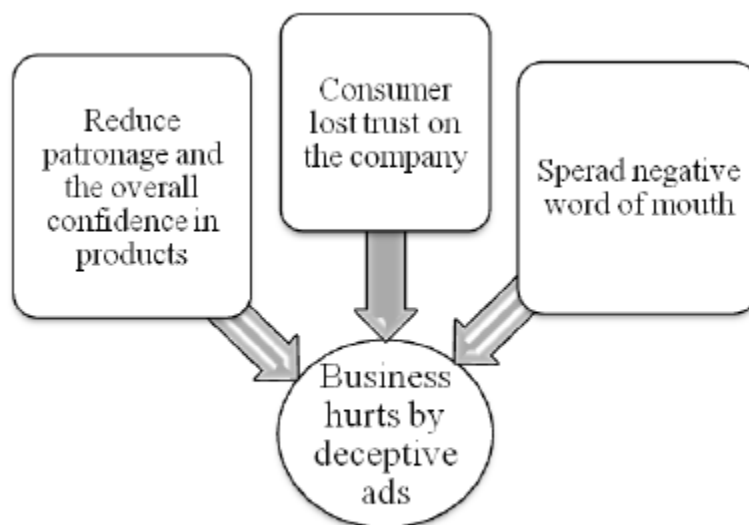


Figure 01: Logical Analysis of how deceptive advertisement hurts business

Deceptive advertising also produces negative effect on advertiser because it shows that whoever deceives others lacks integrity. More seriously, deceptive advertising often produces negative effect on the public to which the advertisement is targeted. For example, it leads to (in economic terms) a misallocation of resources of buyers he spends his money on invaluable things especially when what he pays for goods outweigh the quality of goods purchased). The end result is a disappointed buyer.

To deceive the public through advertising is a moral evil because it shows that the advertiser does not respect the public, consequently, the public will treat advertiser with contempt.

In addition to the above, the goods so advertised deceitfully will eventually receive low patronage because naturally every person will want to allocate or use his/her resources maximally, meaningfully and beneficially.

APCON as Regulator

The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigerian (APCON) codifies what it is called the essence of good advertising in section 2 of its codes. It reads that all advertisements in Nigeria should:

1. Be legal, decent, honest, truthful and respectful of Nigeria's culture.
2. Be prepared with a high sense of social responsibility and should not show disregard for the interest of

consumers and the wider Nigerian society.

3. Conform to the principles of fair competition generally accepted in business, and fair comment expected in human communication
4. Enhance public confidence in advertising.

Theoretical Framework

Social Responsibility Theory is considered appropriate in anchoring this work. According to [10], the theory focuses on the consequences of the media and the attendant activities on the society, and places demands of responsibility on the operators without undermining the importance of freedom.

It is not in doubt that the mass media owe the society some responsibilities in packaging of advert messages. As noted by [11] cited by [13], such responsibilities include:

- The media as watchmen,
- The mass media widen horizon,
- The media raise aspirations,
- The media can focus attention (agenda setting),
- Can create a climate for development,
- Partake in the decision process and,
- The media touch all facets of human existence.

This theory was adopted because it stresses the importance of being socially responsible to the society generally, by adhering to extant ethical advertising

practices, by not allowing advertisers, agencies and sponsors to place adverts that seek to make false promises on their media channels, even with the temptation of surviving in contemporary free market and competitive economy in Nigeria.

This theory is germane for this work because it explains the role of the mass media to protect public interest against false advertising promises, amidst the quest for revenue generation by adhering to ethical advertising practices as a way of sustaining the mass media.

METHODOLOGY

This work adopts the explanatory mixed method. This approach was adopted so as to generate quantitative data. The justification for this is based on the fact that the nature of the study requires that the researcher solicits for product users' responses (quantitative data) in order to determine the implication of false advertising promises on product perception and patronage.

This study surveyed undergraduate students of Abia State University Uturu

students in the 2017/2018 academic session. Here, this population is made up of departments selected from each of the Faculties in the institution. The institution has ten faculties from where the researcher used simple randomization to select one department each from all the faculties in the school. The table below shows the distribution.

Table 1: Population of Students in Selected Department in ABSU

Faculties	Population	%
Law	790	2.8
Humanities and Social Sciences	7891	27.5
Engineering and Environmental Sciences	3911	13.6
Business Administration	5026	17.5
Basic Medical Sciences	409	1.4
Health Sciences	879	3.1
Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine	4099	14.3
Education	4200	14.6
Clinical Medicine	541	1.9
Biological and Physical Sciences	943	3.3
Total	28,689	100

Source: Admissions Office, ABSU

From the table above, the population of this study according to information obtained from the Office of the Registrar is 28,689.

The undergraduate students, in this study are regarded as youths and are aged between 15-30 years. The inclusion criteria for this study were; being within the youthful age of 15-30 years range. It is

reasoned that these undergraduate students have various perception of advert messages and attendant varying patronage behaviour. Because of the largeness of the population size, (28,689) the researcher, at 0.05 error margin, used Taro Yamane's statistical formula to take a manageable and representative sample size of 393.

To effectively test all the variables in this study and give every element in the population an equal chance of being selected, the researcher used "Multi-stage Cluster sampling technique [4]. The population of this study (Students of ABSU) is already in a Cluster of students in the ten Faculties of the school.

Table 2: Proportionate Sample Size Distribution

Faculties	Selected Departments	Sample
Law	Dept. of Civil Law	11
Humanities and Social Sciences	Dept. of Mass Communication	108
Engineering and Environmental Sciences	Dept. of Civil Engineering	53
Business Administration	Dept of Management	69
Basic Medical Sciences	Dept. of Biochemistry	6
Health Sciences	Dept. of Optometry	12
Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine	Agronomy	56
Education	Dept. of Guidance & Counselling	58
Clinical Medicine	Community Medicine	7
Biological and Physical Sciences	Biology	13
Total		393

Source: Field Statistics Calculated.

Next, the researcher used simple randomization approach to select one department from each of the faculties. From each department, 100 level students were purposively selected.

Structured Questionnaire specifically designed for the study was used to source research data. Experts in Testing and Measurement were used to do the face and content-validity tests of the measuring instrument. Reliability test was done through a test-retest strategy. The research instrument was administered by the researcher through the Course Representatives of each Department selected for this research. They were

given formal training in line with the research objectives and methodology. The researcher adopted the simple percentage and statistical table (descriptive statistics) as the basic tools of research data presentation for this study, while hypothesis was testing using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Data Presentation

Having administered the 393 copies of the questionnaire to the undergraduate students ABSU, 376 copies were returned, while 17 copies were not returned. Also, 4 copies out of the 376 returned were badly filled, hence could not be analyzed.

Therefore, 372 copies of the questionnaire representing 95% were analyzed, giving room for 21 or 5% mortality rate. Relevant statistics are hereunder presented and analyzed.

Research Question One: To what extent have product users actually identified false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods in the media?

Table 3: If product users actually identified false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods in the media

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Of Course	286	77%
Somehow	76	20.4%
Not at all	2	0.5%
Can't Say	8	2.15%
Total	372	100%

Source: *Field Data, 2018*

Presentation of research data on Table 3 show that out of the 372 respondents, 286 or 77% of the responding undergraduate students claimed they have actually identified false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods in the media at one point or the other; 76 representing 20.4%

of the students claimed have somehow identified false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods in the media at one point or the other; 2 or 0.5% of the respondents differed, while 8 representing 2.15% of them were indifferent.

Research Question Two: What impact does false advertising promises have on product perception and patronage?

Table 4: If Respondents hate and avoid products advertised with false promises

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	358	96.2%
No	9	2.42%
Can't Say	5	1.34%
Total	372	100%

Source: *Field Data, 2018*

Research data as presented on Table 4 show that out of the 372 respondents, 358 or 96.2% of the respondents claimed they hate and avoid products advertised with false promises; 9 or 2.42% of the

students differed, while 5 representing 1.34% of them were undecided.

Table 5: Respondents having a repeat purchase of products advertised with false promises

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	34	9.14%
Somehow	11	2.96%
Not at all	322	86.6%
Can't Say	5	1.34%
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Data, 2018

Presented research data on Table 5 show that out of the 372 respondents, 34 or 9.14% of the respondents claimed they could have a repeat purchase of products advertised with false promises; 11 or 2.96% of the students claimed they may somehow have a repeat purchase of such

products, 322 representing 86.6% of the respondent claimed they cannot make a repeat purchase of products advertised with deceptive promises, while 5 representing 1.34% of them were undecided.

Research Question Three: In what ways can the consumers be protected against deceptive advertisement?

Table 6: ways through which consumers can be protected against deceptive advertisement

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Reporting to Law Enforcement Agencies	34	9.14%
Go back to point of purchase for complaints	219	58.9%
Call Consumer Protection Council for Action	15	4%
Seek Redress in Court	43	11.6%
Stage a protest if possible with others	61	16.4%
Total	372	100%

Source: Field Data, 2018

Research data as presented on Table 6 show that out of the 372 respondents, 219 or 58.9% of the respondents claimed going back to the point of product purchase will serve them better against products advertised with false promises; 61 or 16.4% of the students preferred to stage a protest with others, 43 or 11.6% believe seeking redress in a court of law is a better way of protecting themselves against deceptive advertisements, 34 representing 9.14% preferred to report to

the law enforcement agencies, while 15 representing 4% of them prefer to call the Consumer Protection Council (CPC) for the protection of their rights against false advertisement promises.

Test of Hypothesis

H_{01} : Deceptive advertisements do not have a significant relationship with the buying behavior of consumers in Nigeria.

H₁: Deceptive advertisements do have a significant relationship with the buying behavior of consumers in Nigeria.

TESTED DATA: Quantitative research data collected presented on Table 5 was used in testing the lone hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Respondents having a repeat purchase of products advertised with false promises	372	93	2.00	1	4

Chi-Square Test

Respondents having a repeat purchase of products advertised with false promises

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	34	93	-88
Somehow	11	93	-82
Not at all	322	93	229
Can't say	5	93	-88
Total	372		

Test Statistics

				Respondents having a repeat purchase of products advertised with false promises
Chi-Square(a)				168.824
df				3
Asymp. Sig.				.000
Monte Carlo Sig.				.000(b)
95% Confidence Interval		Lower Bound		.000
		Upper Bound		.000

Decision Rule and Test Result for the Hypothesis

At 5% level of significance and at 3 degrees of freedom, the chi-square table

value is 0.352, while the chi-square calculated value is 168.82. Since the chi-square computed value is greater than the

chi-square table value, that is $168.82 > 0.352$, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Therefore, we accept alternate hypothesis (H_1), and from the test statistics conclude

that deceptive advertisements do have a significant relationship with the buying behavior of consumers in Nigeria.

Findings

Premised on evidences from research data and academic literature, the following findings are hereunder stated:

1. Evidence from research data shows that false advertising promises or deceptive advertising of some consumer goods are not only present in the media at one point or the other, but are recognized and experienced by product users.
2. Finding shows that product users will always hate and avoid products advertised with false promises.
3. This study finds evidence that a positive and significant correlation exists between deceptive advertising factors and the

patronage behavior of users. This is because, users with failed experience of the false advertising promises, will usually not make a repeat purchase of such products.

4. To protect consumers against deceptive advertisement, research finding indicate that consumers do not know much about the existing regulatory bodies such as the Consumer Protection Council. Hence, they opted to go back to point of purchase for complaints, Stage a protest if possible with others, Seek Redress in Court or Reporting to Law Enforcement Agencies.

CONCLUSION

Gone are the days when the audiences were passive, ignorant and uncaring about false advertising claims and their outright lies. Today, the Nigerian customers have become more aware of the gimmicks of advertisers in the advertising industry. If the customer is aware of this realism, the advertisers have to be aware of that as well, and take this fact into account, because customers are an existential source of their livelihood.

Although this work focused on assessing the implication of false advertising promises on product perception and patronage, it should also be pointed out, that customer behaviour is not affected by advertising only, but affected also by many other influences such as the economic situation, the seasons, the need for the goods which is offered, its attractiveness, uniqueness, newness, etc. Every advertiser should remember that

telling a lie to the public is wrong because the truth is usually revealed sooner or later.

Beyond reasonable doubt, truthfulness is indispensable to advertising because the public will gain from it but loose from deceptive advertising. Since every social relation is built on truth, therefore, truthfulness in advertising makes good background for effective communication (Thayer 1973, p.5). To the best of our knowledge, language is an instrument for action and such language should be devoid of deception because deception is always detrimental to public interest. No wonder why Ifemesia warns that:

For it has been said
that one gains a
much sinister

effect if, instead of
calling spade a
spade one calls it
an instrument of a
certain nature. This
attitude can lead to
heinous
misunderstanding
between groups in
a society (Ifemesia
1985, p.205).

Therefore, effective communication in human society involves truthfulness. This is why the need for truthful advertising is herein emphasize. On the basis of above, it can be concluded that in Nigeria, current system of legal protection to the consumers from deceptive advertisement is inadequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been put forward:

1. Sponsors of advertisement must refrain from any form of verbal manipulation or to be at least very careful with that kind of promises made. It is important to follow the rules and it is always better to build advertisement on a truthful foundation.
2. The government should enact a law with all provisions to promote and protect the rights of a consumer and establish an authority like The Advertising Standards Council of India. Such rules, regulations and policies

- regarding advertising will at the end of the day, will help to check the incidences of deception or false promises in modern day advertising.
3. Advertisement must not be false or misleading and generally must comply with conditions imposed on it by following laid down legal regulations of advertising within industry.
4. To avoid deception which produces misunderstanding that can lead to product rejection, the advertisers should endeavour to tell the truth at all time. This is a good way to create integrity,

establish high sense of confidence and mutual trust between the advertiser and the product users.

5. More emphasis should be put on compliance with regulations which affect advertising and media. Consumer protection should focus on forbidding any advert that seeks to mislead the consumer by marketing untrue, unsupported, and exaggerated information.
6. Government should create awareness for the general public, by educating the public about existing consumer rights. To do this, it is necessary to hold regular conferences, seminars, workshops, meeting etc. and to publish advertisements in the print and electronic media in this regard.
7. Social responsibility should be taken more seriously. Advertisers and advertising agencies should realize their social responsibility and put more emphasis on their responsibility towards the public.

Advertisers are investing large sums in advertising and product marketing, but they should be aware of the negative impact of a misleading advertising on customers and disillusionment which is often caused by disappointment induced by a dissatisfying purchase.

8. Care must be taken about customer dissatisfaction. There is a small gap between customer expectations and product performance. Accordingly, no products should promise unrealistic and fake expectations created by advert that "over-promise", because the result will be dissatisfaction of a customer.
9. This study should serve as a benchmark for further studies while measuring the impact of deceptive advertisements on product patronage.

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