

**THE INTERNET AND MEDIA OUTPUT IN ADVERTISING:  
THE VIEWS OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF PORT  
HARCOURT**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to find out to what extent the Internet has affected media output in advertising. It was also the interest of the study to establish the direction of the effects of the Internet in advertising media output in Nigeria – whether positive or negative. To achieve its aims, the study assessed the perception of postgraduate students of communication studies at the University of Port Harcourt on the subject matter. The study adopted both the library and survey research methods. It was found that the Internet has helped immensely in improving media output in advertising in Nigeria. It was, however, realized that in spite of its growing popularity, the potentials of the Internet as an ancillary to media output in advertising in Nigeria is yet largely untapped. The study, therefore, recommends that advertising practitioners and scholars alike should mount intense research efforts in this area, so that the potentials of the Internet as an ancillary to media output in advertising could be exploited to the benefit of advertisers, advertising practitioners and the advertising audience.

**Keywords:** Internet, media output, advertising, communication studies, postgraduate students.

**Introduction/Problem**

The Internet may be the highest information resource ever known to man. It is at the centre of information and communication flow around the world. Nwachukwu (2010) says that the Internet is at present the highest purveyor of media fare ever known to man. He adds that the Internet is a network of individual computers connected to each other to facilitate information exchange and message sharing hence the name “Internet”, short for International Network.

The Internet enables users to operate as both content creators and content consumers. This has engendered unfettered access to information to many around the globe at any given time of the day. On the Internet today, we have access to virtually any kind of information we seek. The only requirement is to possess an internet enabled communication system. Fortunately, most cell phones are equipped with GPRS facility, which enables users to access the Internet at will. This situation has made the Internet attractive to business people as a marketing and products promotion tool. To this end, Nwachukwu (2010) says that the popularity of the Internet as a marketing tool in Nigeria is growing very fast. He adds that this awareness has given rise to increased desire by business people to employ the Internet to promote their varied interests. The bulk of these interests come in the form of advertising. The value of the Internet as an advertising media cannot be overemphasized. This is because on the Internet users can view advertisements, request and receive specialized products information, make immediate purchase and save time and expense.

When looked at from the above perspective, we observe that the Internet may be contributing in no small measure to media output in advertising in Nigeria. It is, therefore, important to find out through some empirical studies the extent Internet advertising has contributed to increased media output in advertising as well as the direction of this contribution in Nigeria.

### **Objectives/Research Questions**

1. To what extent has the Internet engendered increased media output in advertising in Nigeria?
2. What factors are responsible for the influence of the Internet on media output in advertising in Nigeria?
3. What is the direction of the influence of the Internet as an ancillary to increased media output in advertising in Nigeria?
4. What are the possible challenges facing the Internet as an advertising medium in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **The Nature of Advertising on the Internet**

It is paramount to know that Internet ad does not follow the traditional model of advertising employed by the traditional media. It should, therefore, not just constitute an electronic version of a print, radio or television advertisement, but must have a different layout and design techniques (Chapman, cited in Hanekom and Scriven, 2007). In the traditional model, advertising must be paid communication. But now, some of the most valuable advertising may be unpaid, or indirectly paid as in the case of CGM (consumer-generated media), some aspects of social media advertising, and the viral spread of brand messages (Tuten

cited in Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere, 2013). Internet ad has brought about what is called viral advertising. Porter and Golan (cited in Chu, 2011, p. 3) define viral ad as "unpaid peer-to-peer communication of provocative content originating from an identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others." This kind of advertising is common among Nigerian Facebook users. Reports indicate an increase in ad recall, awareness, and purchase intentions when a user's news feeds indicates that friends have become fans of a particular brand's profile page (Neff cited in Chu, 2011).

Advertising was traditionally one-way communication but social media as well as other forms of Internet ad bring a new degree of interactivity and consumer involvement to advertising process. Online advertising becomes more about conversations, connections, and shared control (between advertisers and consumers) and less about passive consumption of packaged content. Again, advertising through traditional media relied on a model of interrupting and disrupting consumers' lives (Chaney cited in Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere, 2013). On the Internet consumers can decide to do away with any advertisement trying to disrupt their online activity (like people do away with some pop-up ads). According to Diamond (cited in Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere, 2013), the paradigm shift is a transfer of power as customers want to actively engage in and participate in the product conversation.

Internet ad comes in several forms. According to Chapman (cited in Hanekom and Scriven, 2007) the earliest forms which Internet advertising took include; Standard banners, Pop-up windows, Dual advertisements, Sponsorships, Online shopping malls, and E-mail marketing. Rodgers and Thoron (cited in Esiri, Kolade, Oloyede and Ogungbamigbe, 2014 and Tavor, 2011) asserts that there are five major formats of online advertising. They include sponsorship, keyword linking, commercial sites, pop-up advertising and banners. Other forms of Internet advertising listed by Moseley (cited in Hanekom and Scriven, 2007) include: Liquid image advertisements, Point roll advertisements, Enliven advertisements, Messaging plus, and Web pages within a larger page. Majority of these new forms of Internet ad are highly interactive.

### **Internet Advertising in Nigeria**

The Internet with all its trappings has given the advertising industry access to faster and more interactive communication. Internet advertising (ad) can be called online advertising, web-based advertising, viral advertising, or interactive advertising because of the feature of interactivity that the Internet brings to advertising. Before now Nigerian advertisers depended on mainstream media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) as well as below the line media like billboards to get product and service messages to target audiences. The Internet has now brought about a dramatic change in Nigerian advertising landscape.

Advertising in Nigeria is encountering, the most dynamic revolution and technological developments made possible by the growth of the internet. The Internet has given birth to numerous innovative advertising opportunities (for example blogs, wikis, social media, and all Web 2.0 technologies) for marketers and advertisers in Nigeria.

The scope of advertising media selection and the very philosophy of advertising according to Tuten (cited in Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere, 2013) have changed largely due to opportunities provided by the Internet. The once passive advertising target audience have become active advertising participative audience. Businesses and consumers are now enclosed in an interactive web. Consumers have become viral advertisers, creating their own ad messages (User Generated Content-UGC) and passing them to fellow Internet users. Marketers and advertising agencies are compelled to re-evaluate traditional advertising media and methods (Esiri, Kolade, Oloyede and Ogungbamigbe, 2014).

Nigerians (especially the younger generation) welcomed the Internet with great enthusiasm. Since its inception in Nigeria, records show growing access and availability of the Internet. It has been reported that 82% of Nigerians connect to the Internet at least once a day, 25% are connected round the clock. Also, a minimum of two hours is spent surfing the web per day (Husain and Adamu, 2014). Between 2000 and 2009, Internet penetration grew by 1,810% in Africa and in this same period by almost 12,000% in Nigeria. By the end of 2009, Internet penetration stood at 16.1% with almost 24 million users (Husain and Adamu), thus exceeding the entire population of Ghana or Cameroon. It was found that 27% of all African Internet users are Nigerians. As at 2010 and 2011, Internet penetration in Nigeria was 28.9% and 29% respectively at estimated 43,982,200m and 45, 039, 711m users respectively (Adeola, 2014a; Akingbade, 2012). It is believed that Internet ad in Nigeria becomes effective by the activities of these yet increasing Nigerian Internet users.

Tavor (2013) comments that the Internet is the world's most powerful advertising media for two main reasons: First, almost every home has continuous access to the Internet. Second, the Internet has a daily audience that is greater than the sum of the entire historical audience of traditional media. While the latter assertion may be correct in Nigeria, the former is arguable. Husain and Adamu (2014) rightly observed that connectivity remains an issue in Nigeria. Though Wireless connections (71%), mobile devices (30%) and GSM modems (27%) have been found to be the most commonly used modes of Internet access in Nigeria, the access cannot be said to be continuous for almost every home. Mobile devices however are providing Nigerians with access to the Internet due to the varying bundle plans that network providers offer. Akingbade (2012) reports that with 82,617,510 active mobile lines, 56% of Nigerians access the Internet through mobile phones while 44%

access through desktop. This is in line with Pew Research Center, a Washington-based think tank (cited in Husain and Adamu, 2014) estimate that by 2020, a mobile device will be the primary Internet connection tool for majority of the people round the globe. Collaborating the above, BusinessDay (2014) online reports show that the number of mobile Internet subscribers in Nigeria was 7.7 million in 2013 and is forecast to reach 50.4 million in 2018.

### **The Internet and the Nigerian Business Community**

Consequent to the large and continuously growing number of Nigerian Internet users, businesses have begun to establish online presence by building (official) websites where they can advertise their products and services to users even as they provide information about their company. Amidst this growth of Internet users in Nigeria, there is a trend that cannot go unnoticed. The trend is the percentage of Internet users that belong to one or more social media. Margit (2010) reports that 95% of Nigerian Internet users are members of one or more social networks among which Facebook has the greatest number of members (4, 369,740 as at 2011) followed by twitter and LinkedIn. Consequently, this trend made social media advertising one of the recent additions to organizations' integrated marketing communications plans (Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere, 2013). Husain and Adamu (2014) acknowledged that now social media are playing an important role for advertising the products and buying the product in Nigeria.

It is a fact that every advertiser wants to be/go where consumers are/go. Nigerian advertisers are beginning to follow consumers online (mostly on the social media) and are developing new forms of advertising to interact with consumers in their virtual world. This gave birth to social media advertising/marketing which according to Nyekwere, Kur and Nyekwere (2013) is dominated by the big three networks: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. We now find businesses signing up an account on Facebook or Twitter in order to connect with customers to promote a product/service, share company information, respond to complaints, etc. This is common in Nigeria. Examples of such Nigerian businesses with Facebook pages are Hotel Presidential, Lolana Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Startimes Nigeria, Thermocool Nigeria, Leadway Assurance Limited, NEM Insurance Plc, Visafone Communications Limited (whose page is really interactive), etc. What happens is that after a business page is liked by one's facebook friend, the liked page then appears on other friends' Facebook pages suggesting to them to like the page too and the message keeps spreading.

What we may call viral businesses are now common place on Facebook. These Nigerian businesses (e.g. Asset 360 an online property agency in Nigeria) which most times only have their Internet and Facebook page or Twitter addresses (without real shop addresses)

disseminate their ad messages by imploring users to like their pages. Once a person's Facebook friend likes any of these business pages, his/her friends get to see their ad messages and a host of people that have also liked the page. This pattern of advertising is not the only advertising opportunity that Facebook provides for advertisers. Other social media also provide various advertising opportunities. According to Wind and Todi (2008) Facebook Platform and MySpace Developer Platform, enable businesses advertise through the creation of applications. Other customizable advertising methods include Facebook and MySpace pages/groups, Facebook gifts and YouTube channels for businesses.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Technological determinism (TD), simply put, is the idea that technology has important effects on our lives (Adler, 2006). For instance, the idea that the Internet is revolutionizing society and consequently changing the very philosophy of advertising is supported by this theory. Some of the basic precepts of the theory of technological determinism according to its proponent McLuhan (2010) are; (1) all technology is communication, an extension of ourselves that allows us to reach further through time and/or space (2) all media is, to some degree, "hot" or "cool." Hot media being those that experiencing them makes a person more or less a passive audience member (e.g. television and film) and cool media being those that have animation and approaches pure interactivity—between the user and the content, between the user and the medium as well as between each user (e.g. video games and Internet platforms like social media). The theory posits that technology is the dominant factor in social change but its influences derive from the cultural meanings or importance that people give to it (Bimber, 1990). This theory supports this paper as it focuses on how advertising in Nigeria is experiencing, the most dynamic revolution and technological developments due to opportunities presented by the Internet as well as Nigerian advertisers and consumers' response to this technology (Internet ad).

### **Method**

The study adopted the qualitative and quantitative research methods. First, there was in-depth search of the literatures on the Internet, Internet advertising and related variable which already exists as research products. Second, a survey was conducted on 142 (100% of the total number of postgraduate students admitted in the 2013/2014 academic session) postgraduate students of communication studies at the department of Linguistics and Communication Studies of University of Port Harcourt. This includes all the students admitted for the Postgraduate Diploma (PGD), Masters and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programmes of the Department. The instrument used was the

questionnaire and the sampling procedure adopted was the census sampling. The data collected were presented and discussed in quantitative and qualitative formats alongside the research questions.

### **Data Presentation and Discussions**

#### **Research Question 1**

#### **To what extent has the Internet engendered increased media output in advertising in Nigeria?**

The study first sought to find out the extent the Internet has engendered increased media output in advertising in Nigeria. Data obtained from the research indicated that the Internet has to a very large extent engendered increased media output in advertising in Nigeria. Information on table 1 below indicated a weighted mean score of 3.8 which show that the respondents to a very high extent agree that the Internet has engendered increased media output in advertising.

**Table 1: The extent the internet has enhanced media output in advertng in Nigeria**

<b>Values</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>No of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>WMS</b>
4	To a very high extent	93	65	3.8
3	To a large extent	42	30	
2	To a low extent	5	4	
1	To a very low extent	2	1	
0	To no extent	-	-	
Total		142	100	

Source: Field survey, 2015

This outcome from the above agrees with Tavor (2013) comments that the Internet is the world's most powerful advertising media for two main reasons: First, almost every home has continuous access to the Internet. Second, the Internet has a daily audience that is greater than the sum of the entire historical audience of traditional media. According to Alexa.com (cited in Adeola, 2014b) the top 20 most visited websites in Nigeria used for advertising goods and services are; Facebook, Yahoo.com, Google.com.ng, Google.com, Blogspot.com, Youtube.com, Twitter.com, Wikipedia.org, Nairaland.com, Live.com, Punchng.com, Vanguardngr.com, Msn.com, BBC.co.uk, Goal.com, GTbank.com, Amazon.com, Sunnewsonline.com, Linkedin.com, and

Conduit.com. Also according to Alexa.com (cited in Adeola, 2014b) the top 5 indigenous most visited sites in Nigeria are Nairaland.com, Vanguardngr.com, Punchng.com, 234next.com, and Gtbank.com. Nigerian businesses advertise their products and services on these sites due to their traffic. Other sites for free ads in Nigeria are 123Nigeria.com, Google Trader, TradeStable.com.ng and Whitedrum.com. Another advertising site is Alternativeadverts.com. Alternative Adverts Medium offers Nigerians relevant online and mobile platforms for advertising. These include Nigerian newspapers websites and blog sites, Yahoo, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Adwords, Email Newsletters, Bulk SMS, different banner dimension- 728 by 90 Horizontal banner, 468 by 60 Horizontal Banner, 120 by 600 vertical banner, 160 by 600 Vertical banner, 300 by 250 square banner, 200 by 200 box banner and 250 by 250 Square Banner-etc. Their clients include Total, Ecobank, Festrut, Niger Insurance PLC, NIMA, Lode Stone, Integrated Resources Limited (IRL), Debonairbookstore.com, Rivers State Micro Finance Agency, (RIMA), Garil, Amazon Energy, etc. They have GSM number database (for Nigerians) as well as a wide range of Internet ad Bundle plans (e.g. Silver, Gold, Diamond, and Premium Plans for N100, 000, 250,000, 500,000 and 1,000,000 respectively (Alternativeadverts.com, 2014). With these, we can conclude that the internet has greatly increased media output in advertising in Nigeria.

## **Research Question 2**

### **What factors are responsible for the influence of the Internet on media output in advertising in Nigeria?**

As a follow up to the above, the study sought to find out the factors responsible for the influence of the Internet on media output in advertising in Nigeria. Data generated from the field indicate that some of the factors responsible for the influence of the internet on media output in advertising in Nigeria include the global reach of the Internet, its interactive nature, number of persons accessing the Internet in Nigeria, Cost and the Internet's no time or space bound attributes (See table 2 below).

**Table 2: Factors responsible for Internet's influence on increased**

**media output in ad in Nigeria**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Global nature	14	10
Interactivity	21	14
Web traffic	13	9
Accessibility	8	5
Cost	6	4
All of the above	84	58
Total	146	100

Source: Field survey, 2015

There is, however, a consensus in previous studies that the Internet has made it possible for organizations to advertise their products and services to a global target audience as well as their increasingly fragmented consumer audience at a much lower cost than traditional advertising (Hanekom and Scriven, 2007). Other advantages of the Internet as advertising medium as revealed by literature search are:

- It is not time or space bound as it enables cost-effective presentation of large amounts of information in a wide range of formats.
- Social networks enable customized and targeted advertising by providing advertisers access to a great deal of information about users and their interests. For example, if a user lists fashion as an interest on their Facebook profile, the website's advertising system generates advertisements based on that particular interest.
- Presents advertisers opportunity to interact with potential buyers, generate feedback and in the process, create a more meaningful communication experience.
- Does not interfere so much with the consumer or come in a non-controlled way and the content can be changed instantly.
- Interactivity of the Internet is another significant factor, in that it allows users to express their reaction to the ad by a mere click.
- It allows advertisers to evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing on an almost instantaneous, that is, it is measurable- usually in cost-per-click or impression (Tavor, 2011; Rai and Sharma, 2010; Evans, 2009; Wind and Todi, 2008; Hanekom and Scriven, 2007).

To further find out the strength of the internet in increasing media output in Nigeria, it was necessary to find out the direction of the influence from the respondents. Responses on this provided answers to the research question 3.

**Research Question 3**

**What is the direction of the influence of the Internet as an ancillary to increased media output in advertising in Nigeria?**

In relation to this, majority of the respondents (80%) perceive the direction of the influence of the Internet in increasing media output in advertising in Nigeria to be positive (see table 3 below).

**Table 3: Direction of internet influence on media output in advertising in Nigeria**

Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Positive	116	80
Negative	3	2
Neutral	27	18
Total	146	100

Source: Field survey, 2015

This positive influence may account for increased use of the internet by many business people to promote their goods and services. In a study, Omotunde, Babatunde and John-Dewole (2013) assessed the influence of information communication technology on advertising industry in Nigeria using Lagos State as a case study. The study sampled hundred workers from five advertising companies, basically medium and large scale companies. The study showed that advertising companies have shifted to ICT based advertisement which has influenced advertising industry in the area of coverage, time saving, accuracy, and patronage of the industry. This shift has also brought financial benefits to both the advertising companies and advertisers and even the advertising audience themselves.

**Research Question 4**

**What are the possible challenges facing the Internet as an advertising media in Nigeria?**

Finally the respondents were asked to mention some of the likely challenges facing the Internet as an advertising medium in Nigeria. Data gathered on this show that in spite of the immense progress and value of the Internet in promoting advertising business in Nigeria there are still a lot of challenges facing the Internet as an advertising medium in Nigeria. Some of these challenges, according to the respondents, include that consumer privacy could be abused since sometimes Internet ad messages invade users screen without solicitation. They also mentioned the challenge of inability to measure advertising effectiveness on the Internet and also the challenge of insecurity. Beyond these research findings reveal other forms of challenges to Internet advertising. For instance, Husain and Adamu (2014) maintain that this new form of

advertising is not yielding the desired results in Nigeria. These scholars checked the Facebook presence of Cadbury's Bournvita, Nestle's Milo, Cowbell, Peak Milk, Globacom and MTN. They found that MTN's local business page on Facebook, suffers from blatant neglect. Globacom's page was found to be more successful in providing content, therefore, attracting more fans. It is a fact that there is absence of updated content on the numerous Nigerian business pages on the different social media as well as on their official websites. Again, these pages are uninteractive forgetting that the Internet ad audiences are largely interactive as the Internet is all about interactivity. These consumers post comments on advertised products and services and are most times ignored. Husain and Adamu also discovered another challenge which is the inability of some companies to integrate information on their official websites and on Facebook pages.

Another disturbing challenge is that organizations do not seem to be ready to spend adequately on the Internet ad. Wind and Todi (2008) observed that the time consumers spend on the Internet far outweighs the ad spend on the Internet. This is our experience in Nigeria currently. According to Adeola (2014a) and FinIntell (2015), total ad spend in Nigeria as at 2009 stood at over \$400 million, with digital media accruing less than 1%. In 2012 and 2013 reported ad spend was N91.8 billion and N125 billion respectively with television ad leading by N66.3 billion (Obi, 2014). The outdoor sector came second followed by radio and print (Ekwujuru, 2014). Some reports have it that print came third (Obi, 2014). While reports on traditional media ad spend are easily spotted, that of Internet ad spend is not. This shows that greater attention needs to be paid to Internet ad by advertising and marketing agencies in Nigeria. It has also been found that some Nigerian ad agencies do not measure Internet display ads for clients (Adeola, 2014). This makes it difficult for organizations to know which website is working for their campaign or not. This is a pointer that there are still very few specialized digital marketing agencies/consultants that do offer professional services. This is likely to affect the output and results got from test campaigns and make the effectiveness of internet ad latent.

### **Conclusion**

Research findings are pointing to the fact that the internet is fast changing the face of the world in many respects. The technology is definitely the cause of the technological and cultural upheaval we are experiencing around the world today. It is the information super-highway and the greatest purveyor of information ever known to man. Its presence is ubiquitous and its value as a tool for business promotion is unquantifiable. This phenomenal growth of the information industry engineered by internet advertising has made tremendous contributions to the Nigerian Gross Domestic Product (GDP). That is to say, the media

output engineered by Internet technologies has contributed positively to the Nigerian economy. This, no doubt, must have some positive economic effects on business organizations, advertising companies and the advertising audience in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. Modalities have to be put in place concerning how to measure Internet effectiveness and efficiency. For the internet to become a truly competitive advertising medium, an accurate way to measure site traffic is needed. However, currently, there are no clear industry standards monitored by third parties, as in traditional media.
2. Anybody that uses the net can download text images, and graphics from the Internet. There has to be a viable policing document to protect the unauthorized copying of advertisers' trademark and logos. Currently, there is no viable policing of this practice by users.
3. Consumer privacy has always been an issue of concern in advertising due to the fact that the Internet is a powerful medium with unlimited potential for providing valuable services, custom-tailored to users. Internet operators must find a way of protecting consumers' privacy online. This will help to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the users.

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