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African Cultural Representation in Alcohol Commercials on AIT and Channels Television

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Abstract

The media have the responsibility to communicate, integrate, and transmit beliefs, norms, values, information gathering and dissemination, as well as other vestiges of the culture of people, and transmit them from one generation to another. Commercials are advertisements that have to do with the promotion of products, services, or ideas through various media channels. Most times, commercials are crafted to introduce new products and to further tell customers and others that the product is still in the market, and to persuade both old and new customers to continue patronage of such products and services. In Nigeria presently, many of the commercials of alcoholic beverages are done with the culture of the people in mind. This study seeks to examine the African culture representation in the commercials of alcohol on AIT and Channels Television Station. The study adopted content analysis with a population of 244, which was derived from the total number of days in September 2024 to December 2024 multiplied by 2. The study adopted the Census sampling based on the size of the population, with purposive sampling techniques using a constructed and continuous calendar. The theoretical base was the reflective-projective theory. Findings indicated that language, lifestyle, customs, and identity were key factors for the African cultural representations in the alcoholic beverages. Furthermore, what was projected on the stations depended on the individuals and members of the community, giving a deep interpretation and understanding of the message, emotional and sensory response to what is presented through the media. It is, therefore, recommended that commercial should be used to harness the culture of the people, especially those that portray positive cultural heritage in the commercials of their products and services to encourage patronage.

Keywords: Cultural representation, commercials, Alcoholic beverages, cultural heritage, advertisements.

Introduction

Advertisers make use of symbols, music, drama, fliers, audio, visual mass media, and the internet to create awareness in the audience in a way that the awareness, in most cases, leads the audience to like and purchase the products for their satisfaction or needs through the persuasive medium of communication. Every advertisement is aimed at communicating about a product, service, or idea that is goal-oriented. This persuasive medium of communication is an economic activity that involves the use of the mass media to inform and persuade consumers. Without advertising, buyers would not be aware of the existence of products and services. This promotion of goods and services is through signs, symbols, face-to-face, mass media, the internet, or other mediated channels with a designed communication strategy to sell, promote goods and services (Edegoh & Nze, 2017; Ejuh, 2020).

In the era of globalisation of content, every society tries to promote its cultural heritage, which has an impact on the buying and selling of goods and services. Nwabueze et al. (2012) note that advertising is a way of telling the world about the products, which could be relatively new and persuade and remind the audience about their continuous support of the product. For any advertisement that uses African culture in its representation mirrors to the world the cultural heritage in terms of values, culture, belief and lifestyle and thus takes the consumers' way of life into the market with the bearing of its target of selling (Afolabi, 2017). With the cultural representation, the images used in the advertisement are radically divergent in such a way that they provoke the audience into an interesting question and belief for consumption of the advert's products.

Culture has an enormous impact on advertisements; therefore, the survival of any human society is dependent on its ability to transmit its material and non-material cultural heritage from one generation to another. The base of

traditional communication is cultural, and the intergenerational transmission of these cultural heritages will continue to keep the traditional communication system alive in every society as long as the culture is operational (Ezekiel-Hart, 2019; Akpabio, 2003). The traditional method of communication is a solution to crisis in rural communities, and it takes care of equality in the distribution of information, socio-economic benefits and gives the people full participation in all activities that could lead to self-development, self-reliance, community-based planning and execution on a decentralised method with key emphasis on outcome of individual strength and potential of the local resources based on the ability of each person (Batta, 2010).

Nwaolikpe (2013) believed that the cultural heritage and lifestyle of a people in a geographical area are learned and passed from generation to generation, with new ideas that are learnt, leading to changes in behaviours. Ugboajah (1985), cited by Wilson and Ekanem (2006), affirmed that communication involves all the acts of transmitting information through channels that link people to the speech used in the communication processes and symbolic codes that are used to transmit the message. The message that is received and stored has rules, customs and conventions that define and regulate the flow of information, thereby creating human relations as the events that ensure the meaning sharing unfolds. Without cultural heritage, man will live a life without purpose; not knowing his way of life and history will be lost, as cultural and effective communication with his society is the basis on which man establishes a relationship with himself and the things in his environment.

In every society, there is a true reflection of the cultural system and beliefs in that society. Some are through the words of mouth (oral: folksongs, folktales, myths, riddles and proverbs, tattoos and other aesthetic designs which are used for ceremonial activities), these forms not only fulfil the need of the society but they also add value and thereby fulfil the physiological belief, life span and the survival need of the people (Daniel 2021).

Nsereka (2013) posits that traditionally, African culture has three main principles of communication, which are:

1. That traditional culture is part and parcel of the way of life of the people
2. That it utilises symbolism from the community and hence readily connects with the people
3. That values of the community, as well as age-old institutions, come into play in the communication processes with the use of drinks, both spirit and non-alcoholic drinks.

The African culture and traditional system have existed before the advancement of modern media, with new applications and techniques and the formal, organised bureaucratic system of information dissemination. In traditional African society, information is disseminated through sounds, signs and symbols, etc. that are known to all members of the society. The channels used in the dissemination of information in the traditional environment vary to some extent from place to place, with their attendant problems. The use of traditional instruments clearly makes message delivery when sending a message that is important to the grassroots or rural dwellers, and such messages are better understood because of the means or the channel of communication, such as the town criers, the talking drums, the gongs, signals, songs and symbols.

These channels have perpetual distinctive features and values such as the language of communication, social organisation, religious and spiritual values, modes of productivity, laws, and institutions that are well respected by all members of the society, thereby leading to self-identification and respect for authorities. These advertisements come with traditional attire, music and dance, celebrating the rich cultural values of the African societies. Showcasing the community bonding of the people and their ancestors, depicting that they are still in touch with the affairs of men, friends and family gathering and the unity within the African spirit of familism.

Darley and Blankson (2008) did a conceptual investigation on the African culture and business markets, and the implications for marketing practices. The study aimed to provide an understanding of culture with a focus on the implications for business-to-business marketing. The theoretical base of the study was the value orientation. Findings indicate that African culture promotes the principles of reciprocity and respect for the elderly. It was recommended that advertising agencies should pay attention to the issues of cultural heritage in the African way of life, if such products are targeted towards the African consumers and also promote the Africans. Furthermore, advertisers should explore more when formulating their advertising strategies and collaborate with the local community in producing their advertisements to have the expected outcome, which is patronage. The gap in this study is that it did not look at how African cultural representations in the advertisement affect promotion and patronage.

Nwabueze et al. (2012) carried out an investigation on culture, product advertising, and advertising agency operation. The study sought to seek and proffer solutions to the issues of cultural and linguistic problems, as there are cultural impressions that hamper product advertisement and the operations of advertising agencies. It was

revealed that culture plays a good role in advertising and also has some negative impediments if not well understood. Furthermore, product advertising and the advertising agencies should cooperate and operate within the cultural beliefs and linguistic understanding, thereby creating harmony between what is said and what it means.

It was recommended that there should be a synergy between cultural values and norms of the people in every advertisement to achieve the purpose of the advertiser and the advertising agencies. Furthermore, that pre-test of any advertisement that will use any African traditional cultural representation should be carried out in a select group of certain cultural origin will be good to ascertain the reaction of the people before projecting such into the global space, avoiding discrimination. The gap in this study is that it this study did not look at how the African culture can be used in representations in the advertisement and how it affects promotion and patronage, but it was focused on the linguistic issues surrounding that hamper product advertisement.

Bosson et al. (2016) examine the influence of national cultural factors influencing the marketing strategies of international firms in Africa. The study was carried out in thirteen African countries, such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo and Egypt. The methodology adopted for the study was both quantitative and qualitative, using interviews and questionnaires to generate data. The study had a population of fifty managers working in the marketing departments of the various international firms within the respective countries. The theoretical basis of the study was the national cultural framework.

Findings reveal that sales promotions are impacted by language, religious beliefs and ethnic values, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Furthermore, the low price of the commodity also encourages patronage than a market with a high price. It was recommended that advertising agencies and business managers should design and implement their business strategies based on the cultural environment, as it will aid acceptance and patronage within and promote cultural heritage outside the continent of Africa. The study is related to the present study in the area of culture, but failed to establish how the culture is presented using alcoholic beverages. The current study seeks to close this gap.

Nwaolikpe (2013) examines the cultural impact of globalisation on Nigeria's cultural heritage and the role the print media plays in inculcating Nigerian cultural heritage in the citizens and in its preservation. The objective of the study was to investigate the impact that the print media has played in the sensitisation, promotion and education of the Nigerian society on their cultural values and how it has helped the public to understand their cultural identity and maintain it. The study was anchored on the media dependency theory.

Findings reveal that the media in general affect relationships, attitudes and the ways of life within and outside of the world, which also have a transformational impact on our culture. Furthermore, people are connected to their culture through the media, as some know nothing about their culture but are dependent on what they read articles in in the print media. It was recommended that the mass media should be adequately used in order to bring about cultural behavioural change and integration in sustaining and preserving the Nigerian culture. The gap in this study is that it the study did not look at how African culture can be used in affecting relationships, but it focused on how the media can be used, not how it affects advertising.

Nwagbara and Umor (2012) studied the impact of Nigerian cultural elements on the design of print advertisements and the level of effectiveness of those elements in the patronage of the products. The study employs content analysis and a survey as research methodology. Data were generated using the questionnaire and observation tools. It adopted purposive sampling to select twenty-five advertisements and two hundred and fifty-nine respondents from the population.

Finds indicate that the Nigerian cultural elements were used in the design of the advertisements, which were informative as well as persuasive enough to enhance product patronage, as the people believe and see it to be original and indigenous. Furthermore, the patronage of any given products, services or ideas could receive well patronage if the advertisers applied these cultural elements in the design of their advertisements. It was recommended that for better advertisement copies, Nigerian advertisers and advertising agencies must understand the communicative values of cultural elements and endeavour to use them in the design of advertisements. The gap in this study is that Nwagbara and Umor (2012) did not look at how the African culture can be used in representations in the advertisement, such as dry jinn, and its promotion and patronage.

Adams, Coleman and White (2014), examined alcohol marketing in international television football with a view to analysing the level of frequency. The study aimed to determine the level of frequency and nature of visual

references to alcohol in a representative sample of matches in the EURO2012 broadcast in the UK. A coding framework was used to determine the frequency of visual references to alcohol in the included broadcast. The findings indicated that the mean number of visual references to alcohol per minute did not vary between match broadcasts on BBC1 (a non-commercial free-to-air broadcaster) and ITV1 (a commercial free-to-air broadcaster), reinforcing how the commercial embedded alcohol marketing during the football tournament. Furthermore, findings revealed that the absence of a commercial break on BBC1 had an impact on the overall burden of alcohol marketing. The study concluded that visual references to alcohol were identified in a representative sample of matches from the EURO 2012 broadcast in the UK, at a rate of approximately one per minute. The gap in this study is that Adams et al. (2014) did not look at how the African culture can be used in representations in the advertisement, such as dry jinn, and its promotion and patronage, but their focus was on television during sporting activities, which was global but not limited to a given cultural usage.

The study was anchored on the reflective-projective theory proposed by Lee Loevinger in 1968. This theory asserts that the media is a mirror that reflects the attitude of society. In this contest, the media is seen as an ambiguous mirror. This can be justified based on the fact that in this advertisement, the media project a given audience or some regions within an organised group. The reflection (media) project members of the society in the light of what and how they project their own individual reflections into the images that are presented. The theory believes that advertisements are a reflection of society, and what is advertised is a true observation about what the society is and believes in. Furthermore, the theory affirmed that the audience is composed of individuals whom the media views as individuals (Asemah et al., 2017) and generally reflects on.

The theory believes that what is shown is just a portrayal of the cultural setting and the ways of life in a society. Therefore, it is believed that only the cultural values of the society can have a greater effect and drag consumers into patronage of dry jinn and other alcoholic drinks. The perception of what is projected depended on individual interpretation, and that varies with understanding of the message, emotional and sensory response to what is presented through the media. This could be seen from the representation that is projected, based on the empathy and understanding that is developed by the understanding of the advertisement as projected using the cultural representations. These advertisements shape their happiness, thereby improving relationships and coexistence among members of society through their way of life as projected.

This theory indicates the balance between showcasing cultural heritage and not promoting cultural superiority, but reflects a responsible culture and things that make them happy. It does not in any way project the drinking habit when it comes to the African people or the culture it represented. Based on the fact that some individuals drink a lot, it is imperative to note that drinking and getting drunk are not to be seen as a way of life in Africa. Critically, advertisers of these beverages have prioritised authenticity, cultural sensitivity and responsible drinking to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes and cultural appropriation. Since pictures of victims of roadside accidents are not tagged, as it was due to too much drinking habits by the drivers one could justify the theory to be accepted in this study. This is based on the fact that almost all the advertisements represent the positive aspect of culture as the use of dry jinn and other alcoholic drinks, and do not overemphasise drinking to get drunk.

Statement of the Problem

Generally, alcoholic beverages are used differently. The usage could be for the celebration of birth, naming ceremonies, entertainment of guests, incantation, coronations, invocation, etc. To some, it is believed that illicit spirits are the right instruments to be used during traditional worship, as they give direct rights for adoration of the ancestors. When elders drink, the right and strong jinn, the amusement and expressions that are derived from drinking these spirits are generally accepted by the locals in most cases, with expressions of proverbs. In traditional African religious ceremonies, associations or other events, without alcohol served in such ceremonies is seen as not in line with the pattern of the African way of life (Ndolo, 2006), or there was no drink at all.

Cultural representations in advertisements of products can mobilise the people towards patronage of such goods and services, community development and national consciousness. These adverts enlighten the people on the new brands like the schnapps and other spirits, emphasising the maintenance of the cultural heritage. Any product without effective and efficient consumer demand for such goods and services faces information and economic crises. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) indeed has guidelines that prohibit deceptive, misleading, or offensive advertising content. Most time, it looks like the guidelines are only in the pages of the books and not activity being carried out.

There are schools of thought that indicate that too much intake of alcohol has been the major reason for road crashes in Nigeria. Also, warnings are always given to road users that “if you must drive, don’t drive” (Bello,

2018). Outside roadside accidents, there are indications that pictures of men are often seen on the social media of men who got drunk and were found sleeping on the roadside or inside the gutter. With all these events, one still finds men in bars and other gatherings drinking illicit spirits and other alcoholic beverages. As such, one wonders if the consumption of these spirits is based on their advertisement or if other things influence their high level of alcohol consumption. It is based on these premises that this study seeks to investigate if the African cultural representation in the advertisement of alcohol and other dry jinn is a catalyst for encouragement of consumers' preferences in their purchase of Schnapps, beer products and other spirited jinn.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

1. Identify the frequency of various cultural representations used in alcohol commercials
2. What inclined the use of African culture in the advertisement of illicit jinn and other alcoholic beverages
3. Find out the prominent given to the alcohol commercials of the two selected television stations

Methodology

The study adopted content analysis to look at the African cultural representations in advertisements. The population of the study was 244. The population was derived from the total number of days in September 2024 to December 2024 multiplied by 2. That is September 30, October 31, November 30, December 31; this gives a total of 112 days multiplied by two (television stations). Based on the size of the population, which is 244, the census sampling was adopted. It also employed the purposive sampling techniques using a constructed and continuous calendar. Out of 18 weeks contained in 122 days, 9 weeks were constructed while the remaining 9 weeks were continuous.

Data Presentation and Discussions

Table 1: Frequency of various cultural representations used in alcohol commercials

| S/No | Options | N | % |
|------|------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Ethnicity | 8 | 3.0 |
| 2 | Setting | 7 | 3.0 |
| 3 | Demographic | 20 | 8.0 |
| 4 | Language | 51 | 21.0 |
| 5 | Customs/Identity | 91 | 37.0 |
| 6 | Lifestyle | 67 | 28.0 |
| | Total | 244 | 100 |

Source: Field work 2025

Table 1. This table indicates that Customs and identity has 37%, lifestyle has 28%, while language has 21%. Showing the African cultural representation in alcohol commercials on two selected televisions under review.

Table 2 Prominent given to alcohol commercials of the two select television stations

| S/no | Prominent | N | % |
|------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 0 – 1 | 114 | 47.0 |
| 2 | 1 – 2 | 85 | 35.0 |
| 3 | 2 – 3 | 25 | 10.0 |
| 4 | 3 – above | 20 | 8.0 |
| | Total | 244 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 2. This table indicates the prominence given to alcohol commercials in the two stations under review. 0 – 1 minute length had 47% frequency, commercials that are within 1 – 2 minutes had 35% and 2 – 3 minutes had 10% prominence in the commercials of alcoholic beverages.

Table 3 Prominent given to alcohol commercials of the two selected television stations

| Weekdays | | Weekends | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 6 am to 3 pm | 4 pm to 11 pm | 6 am to 3 pm | 4 pm to 11 pm |
| 43% | 57% | 32% | 68% |
| | | 9 pm -midnight | 12 to 6 am |
| | | (45%) | 55% |
| Total 100% | | Total 100% | |

Sources: Fieldwork 2025

Table 3 indicates that on weekdays, 43% of alcohol commercials are aired from 6 to 3 p.m. and 57% 4 to 11 p.m. and on weekends, 32% aired from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 68% 4p.m to 12 midnight, which includes news hours. For weekends after the news hour at 8 pm and 10 pm from AIT and Channels TV stations respectively, other alcohol commercials that were aired were mostly from 9 p.m./11 pm to midnight had 45% and from 12 midnight to 6 a.m. had 55% on both stations during the night hours of the weekends.

Discussion

The effectiveness of the advertisement of any product is based on its cognitive dimension. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) noted that when advertisements are based on attention-getting and awareness, the cognitive dimension is an important variable as it gives explosive, recognition, comprehension, and recall. The level of consumers' acceptance of a brand is alleged to be based on the level of exposure to the product, either through advertisement and their attitude towards the advertised product.

The study found that there are African cultural representations in the alcohol commercials on AIT and Channels television, with customs and identity having 37%, lifestyle has 28%, while language has 21%. This answers the objective one: (Identify the frequency of various cultural representations used in alcohol commercials). The finding is similar to the findings of other scholars, for instance, Nwabueze et al. (2012) noted that culture and language give an impression above the product being advertised, revealing that culture plays a good role in advertising. Furthermore, product advertising and the advertising agencies should cooperate and operate within the cultural beliefs and linguistic understanding, thereby creating harmony. Furthermore, Nwaolike (2013) stated that the cultural heritage and lifestyle of a people in a geographical area are learned and passed from generation to generation with new ideas that are learnt, leading to changes in behaviours. Similarly, Afolabi (2017) affirmed that any commercial that uses African culture in its representation mirrors to the world the African cultural heritage in terms of values, culture, belief and lifestyle and thus takes the consumers' way of life into the market with the bearing of his target of selling. Bosson et al.(2016) affirmed that national culture influences the marketing strategies by international firms in Africa, noting that sales promotions are impacted by language, religious beliefs and ethnic values, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Furthermore, for businesses to grow, advertising agencies and business managers should design and implement their business strategies that are based on the culture of the environment, as it will aid acceptance and patronage to promote cultural heritage within and outside the continent of Africa.

To answer objective two: What inclined the use of African culture in the advertisement of illicit jinn and other alcoholic beverages? The finding justified the theoretical base of the study, which believed that what is shown is just a portrayal of the cultural setting and the ways of life in a society. In principle, it justified the reflective-projective theory that cultural values of the society have an effect and can drag members of the community into reflection and acceptance. Therefore, what is projected depends on individuals and members of the community, giving a deep interpretation and understanding of the message, emotional and sensory response to what is presented through the media. These adverts shaped their happiness, thereby improving relationship and coexistence among members of the society through their way of life as projected. Indicating the balance between showcasing cultural heritage and promotion of cultural superiority as it reflects a responsible culture and things that make them happy with the enchantments "uru dia" showing the hero and what makes one a hero.

To answer objective three: Find out the prominent given to alcohol commercials of the two select television stations. Findings from the study indicated that prominent was given to commercials of 0 – 1 minute length had 47% frequency, commercials that were within 1 – 2 minutes had 35% and 2 – 3 minutes had 10% prominence in the commercials of alcoholic beverages. Prominent and frequency indicated that on weekdays, 43% of alcohol commercials are aired from 6 to 3 p.m. and 57% 4 to 11 p.m. and on weekends, 32% aired from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 68% from 4 p.m. to 12 midnight, which includes news hours. For weekends after news hour at 8 pm and 10 pm from AIT and Channels TV stations respectively, other alcohol commercials that were aired were mostly from 9 p.m./11 pm to midnight had 45% and from 12 midnight to 6 a.m. had 55% on both stations during the night

hours of the weekends. This finding is close to Adams, et al (2014) investigation of view analysis at the level of frequency and nature of visual references to alcohol in a representative sample of matches in EURO2012. As alcoholic beverage commercials were more per minute and their frequency was higher and it was identified as a representative sample of the matches from EURO2012 broadcast in the UK. Following Nwagbara and Umor (2012), that the patronage of any given products, services or ideas could receive well patronage if the advertisers applied prominent and frequent cultural elements in the design of their advertisements, it affects the marketing as well.

Conclusion

This study has justified the representation of African culture in the commercials of alcoholic beverages in AIT and Channels television stations. The study concludes that commercials with African cultural help in sells if the messages are properly crafted to represent customs, lifestyle and language of the people. Representation of cultural traits not only shows the African heritage but also persuades customers and prospects to patronise products and services. The study, therefore, recommended that commercials should harness the culture of the people, especially those that portray positive cultural heritage in the advertisement of their products and services to encourage patronage.

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