

# The Impact of Unethical Practices in Advertisement on the Lifestyle of Youth in Jos Metropolis

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## **ABSTRACT**

An advertisement on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis. The study employed quantitative research design method and the data were gathered using a structured questionnaire. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents for this study. Bavarians' correlation and linear regression were used to test the impact. The finding of the relationship reveals that there is a positive relationship between unethical practice in advertisement and lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis as reveals by the r – value of 0.618 and p < 0.01. The result also shows that unethical practices in advertisement have negative impact on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis. Based on the finding, the study recommended that: Unethical practices in advertising such as deceptive, untruthful, sex appeal products, and stereotype should be evaded by the advertising agencies. Regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) and other stakeholders in advertising industries should frequently checkmate the use of unethical practices in product advertising. The study suggested that relevant authorities such as, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) should emphasize on the use of the APCON Act so as to regulate the excesses of advertisement targeted at youths.

**Keyword:** advertising, deceptive, puffery, sex appeal, stereotype. unethical

### INTRODUCTION

Advertising plays an important role in our everyday life. Advertising is known as the activity of attracting public attention to a product or business as by paid announcement in the print, broadcast or electronic media. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) in their Act titled The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice defines advertising as a form of communication through the media about products, services and ideas paid for by an identified sponsor (APCON 2005). Advertising comprises different types of media including; oral

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(town criers), print media (flyers. magazines, newspapers, posters, etc.), electronic media (cinema, radio, and television) and new media (internet and virtual reality). The aim of advertising is to spread information and ideas about product and services in an attempt to influence potential buyers (Charles, 2012). Daramola, Okafor and Bello, (2014) opined that the objectives of advertising are to induce immediate action, to create liking and preference for a product and create awareness.

Youths are considered the builders of any nation and advertising industry has a tremendous impact on their thinking. Advertising agencies know how to appeal to their senses by telling them what to wear (because everyone is wearing it), what to eat (because everyone is eating it), and what to do (because everyone is doing it). They use peer pressure very heavily which have confused the youths with the difference between "need" and "want" (Usman, Umer & Faiza 2011). Ideally, advertisement should portray actual functions of the product for needs patronage rather than want from targeted audience. The youth now a day grows while watching these adverts and that is why the culture of almost 70% of the world is changing (Ali & Yusaf, 2015). The existing studies from Asia, Europe and Africa shows that most advertisers tend to ignore human psychology of perception and the emotional attachment to the advertised products and services.

In view of the above discrepancies, this research seeks to ascertain the impact of unethical practice/issues in advertising on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis. The findings of this study will enable the government, public and other stakeholders identify the impacts of product advertisement on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis and address related issues. It will enable the government, public and other stakeholders identify the impacts of product advertisement on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis and address related issues. It will also control impulse buying and imitation by youths and also regulate unethical practices by advertisers. It will also serve as a reference material to other researchers for further studies.

# **Ethics in Advertising**

Ethics in advertising are sets of well-defined principles which govern the ways of communication taking place between the advertisers and the consumers. Ethics is the most important feature of the advertising industry. Though there are many benefits of advertising but then there are some points which don't matches the ethical norms of advertising. An ethical advert is the one which doesn't lie, doesn't make fake or false claims and is in the limit of decency. Nowadays, advertisements are more exaggerated and a lot of puffing are used. It seems like the advertisers lack knowledge of ethical norms and principles. They just don't understand and are unable to decide what is correct and what is wrong (Sharma, 2015). The main area of interest for advertisers is to increase their sales, gain more and more customers, and increase the demand for the product by presenting a well decorated, puffed and colorful adverts. They claim that their product is the best, having unique qualities than the competitors, more cost effective, and more beneficial but most of these advertisements are found to be false, misleading customers and unethical. The best example of these types of adverts is the one which shows evening snacks for the kids, they use coloring and gluing to



make the product look glossy and attractive to the consumers who are watching the adverts on television and convince them to buy the product without giving a second thought.

According to Sharma (2015), Ethics in Advertising is directly related to the purpose of advertising and the nature of advertising. Sometimes exaggerating the advert becomes necessary to prove the benefit of the product. For example, a sanitary napkin advert which shows that when the napkin was dropped in a river by some girls, the napkin soaked whole water of the river. Thus, the purpose of advertising was only to inform the consumers about the product quality. Obviously, every woman knows that this cannot practically happen but the advert was accepted. This doesn't show that the advert was unethical.

#### **Unethical Practices in Advertisement**

Unethical advertising is any form of advertisement that misrepresents a product, service, or brand. It could be exaggerating the benefits, using false statements, or simply taking advantage of people's trust. In the worst-case scenario, it would be intentional, but many companies can be genuinely unaware that they are making ethical missteps in their ad campaigns. Unethical advertising is everywhere, from the toothpaste commercial featuring a dentist recommending the product to the weight-loss ads that overpromise drastic results. Aside from the fact that these ads are unethical (i.e. they are making false statements), they are also part of bigger problems, such as: the lack of regulation on advertising allows companies to make misleading statements, particularly online, the effects these ads can have on younger audiences, the gradual growth of mistrust in advertising and marketing in general, the consequences of these ads on consumers, who experience frustration and disappointment (Online) shopping addiction and the financial instability associated with it (ClickGuards, 2022).

From a deontological viewpoint, a publicizing case is conceivably beguiling in the event that it can be indicated to empower mixed up activities by buyers. From mission to profession to industry, the world of advertising has come a long way. Some people describe it as a parasitical, untrue, misleading and obscene. Advertising Industries have been facing a lot of criticism in the recent times as the advertising practices have not always been ethical. Advertisements should be socially, culturally and morally ethical. In today's competitive market, it is free for all, thus advertisers are sometimes following the unethical practices to fight the competition (Singh & Pandey, 2014).

Advertising communicates the message some of which may not be acceptable to the society. These immoral and unethical values are controlled by self-control, control of consumers and by the government. Some say that some of these adverts degrade the ethical values of the society. For instance, some advertisers project their medicine as giving immediate relief like magic is not acceptable. There are a number of unrealistic situations. The fairness of presentation is essential for any advert. Value system is also getting eroded. Obscene and nudity are example of these. Gambling and lotteries should not be promoted (Ferrell, 2014).



## Puffery/Fraudulent

Very often we hear that advertisement exaggerates about the product qualities. Now a days 'puffery' i.e. "metaphor of idea" forms to be main element in advertising. On the one hand critics accuse it, while on the other defenders i.e. advertisers and advertising professionals opined it as a helping agent to differentiate their brands from the competitors. Puffery is considered to be an 'opinion' and not 'factual information'. Advertisers claim that the consumers are intelligent enough to distinguish between truth and exaggeration. Moreover they are not blindly going to believe everything as such presented in an advertisement. Studies reveal that, often many people start believing what they see in advertisement and buy those products that have exaggerated claims in their advertisements. With the use of special effects exaggerating the "quality" and using various "appeals" advertisers dramatized their products to such an extent that reality takes a back seat. Puffery, though legal, but is not harmful to an extent. But false claim and dishonesty are unethical practices and regular deception, leads to losing costumers trust and confidence (Permut, &Haefner, 2015).

## **Untruthful or Deceptive**

A number of studies have shown a general mistrust of advertising among consumers. Deceptiveness is defined as not only as false and misleading statements but also as false impressions conveyed, whether intentional or not. False and subjective claims about the products, is sometimes believed but are untruthful and misleading. The problems of untruthful or fraudulent advertising exists more at the local level and in specific areas such as mail order, telemarketing and other forms of direct marketing. Advertisement should be informative and shouldn't be use puffery or embellished messages (Shabbir, & Thwaites, 2007).

The following acts are considered unfair or deceptive practices: False promises, incomplete descriptive, misleading comparisons, bait and switch offers, visual distortions, false testimonials, false comparisons, partial disclosures, small – print qualifications and laboratory application.

## Offensive or in Bad Taste

Another one of the major complaints against advertisements is offensive, tasteless, irritating, boring, and obnoxious and so on. Taste is subjective i.e. what is good taste to one may be bad for someone else. Tastes changes with time even as what is offensive today may not be tomorrow. Consumers can be offended by advertising in a number of ways. For instance, the advertisements for products like contraceptives or personal hygiene are not acceptable to some consumers as they often use nudity in their advertisements, condoms adverts are not acceptable by some of the people, the advertisements of women's undergarments and hemorrhoid products are found to be irritating commercials. The type of appeal or the manner of presentation often irritates consumer. For example, fear appeal in deodorants, mouthwash and anti-dandruff shampoo adverts are criticized to create anxiety and fear to be rejected in



the society; portraying female as sex objects in masculine products like shaving creams, undergarments etc (Khan, 2007).

#### **Materialistic Demand**

Advertising provides different alternatives to the consumers to choose from and also creates derives and fantasies for the consumers. Some people crave for material possessions and others for cultural and spiritual enhancement (Kasser, &Kanner, 2004). Some critics claim that advertising encourages materialism attributing it to creating needs rather than merely showing how a product or service fulfills them, surrounding consumers with the images of good life and convinces how the materialistic possession leads to happiness in life and portrays these possessions as symbol of status, success, social acceptance, popularity, sex appeal and so on.

# **Impulse Buying**

Advertising creates artificial needs. Advertises motivates and persuades consumers to buy the things that are not needed even. According to many critics advertising should not persuade by playing with consumers emotions, anxieties, psychological needs & desires such as status, self-esteem, attractiveness and others but should just provide information useful in making purchase decisions such as price of the products, performance and other objective criteria. Critics say persuasive advertising foster discontent among consumers and encourage them to purchase products & services to solve deeper problems (Vohs, & Faber, 2007).

Defenders believe that very informative advertisement is often very persuasive and if persuasive adverts will not be permitted then there will be no ad as advertising's main objective is to persuade. People buy mobile phones, Frozen Orange Juices, cars and so on, even if they do not need them. People spend and status or self-actualization to satisfy their self-esteem and status or self-actualization.

## **Comparative Advertising**

Comparative advertising is another unethical practice of advertising besides fraudulent and deceptive advertising. E.g.: The advertisements of Pepsi and Coca Cola: Both the brands try to compare their brands. Putrevu, (1994) suggested that comparative advertising has become a major weapon though it is very risky. Likewise, claiming and playing with numbers and facts while comparing with competitors in form of testimonials sometimes can lead the advertisers to the legal authorities. Plagiarism or imitation in advertising copy is also flourishing in advertising world today. One copy says, "Believe in the best" and another "better than the best". One claim 'for the flattest screen', other 'flatter than the flattest' (Putrevu, & Lord, 1994).



# **Stereotype**

Advertising, news industries and entertainment, usually portray men and women with stereotypes, in which women and girls are likely to be placed in disadvantaged situations, for example passive and submissive roles. Several TV shows and commercials show women usually playing the role of a housewife while men are shown to be more career-oriented, focusing on their occupations. As a consequence, traditional gender roles and power relations have been deeply imputed in people's sub-consciousness through the mass media which limits the development of human personalities as well as social equality. This stereotyping can be seen for all ages. For example, you can see little girls playing with Barbie Dolls and Teddy bears or having tea parties while boys are shown playing with action figures. Male teenagers are usually portrayed as sporty whereas female teenagers are shown as girls who have interest in fashion. Women are more often presented in commercials doing grocery because they are seen as responsible for making daily purchases. Men commonly advertise cigarettes, cars, business products or investments, while women are shown rather in the commercials with cosmetics, shoes, bags and clothing (Popova, 2010).

Another important distinction is the face-ism phenomenon in the advertisements, which refers to showing the entire figure in case of a woman and close-up shots in case of a man (Beard, 2008). All of this indirectly injects the idea in the minds of the people that girls and boys should be educated differently. It is typical for girls to be tender and have concerns with being beautiful and popular, while boys are encouraged to be tough and consider more about their careers than appearance. Therefore, teenage boys and girls behave and reflect as the expectation of their society and culture instead of the way they really want. Critics accuse advertisers to often depict women as decorative objects or sexually provocative figures. Very few adverts recognize the diverse role of women in society (Popova, 2010).

# **Advertising and Sex**

Critics often accuse advertising for portrayal of women as glamour props. Sex in Advertising is the most controversial aspect, which is much of social issue than an ethical issue. As discussed earlier about the stereotype in portraying women as housewives let us now discuss about objectifying women in the advertisements. Decently portraying women in an advertisement for condom is acceptable as it is required. But women provocating sex in advertisements of suitcases, shaving foams or creams, tyres, pens, shoes etc. does not make any sense at all. Critics concerns about the sexual appeals in advertising that demean women or men by depicting them as sex objects (Whipple, 2003).

Appeal to sex and drugs, appeal to obscenity, nudity etc. have been criticised by people. The cumulative effects of these appeals are very dangerous and can change the behaviour of human beings towards indulgence in these things. Sometimes, consumer is repelled rather than be attracted by repetition of the advertisements, sometimes it irritates the audience and creates a clutter, and also information overload that confuse the audience. It also has an adverse effect on children and youths because they are vulnerable to sex, nudity and violence. It leads them to adopt different kinds of behaviour and they became disinterested in other



activities like studies, sports and presuming their career. They dream of the sexual objects day and night may spoil their lives. Many people especially women's organizations have objected to sexy advertisement and too much exposure of women in the advertisement (Whipple, 2003).

## Improper Language

One of the major complaints against advertising is that the advertising copy is too breezy, too casual i.e. improper. Advertising is believed to have destroyed the dignity of the language and researches on advertising shows that, consumer's better responds to the simple and down to earth language than to the more dignified and formal copy. A successful copy is that which is descriptive, colourful and pictures are as warm, human and personal (Yi-ming, 2007).

#### **Excessive**

In today's world on an average are exposed to 1000 commercial messages per day. The advertising clutter is even worrying the advertising professional about the negative impact of advertising proliferation. With the increase in brand and the mass media options to choose from, there is a boom in advertising industry today (Netter, 2010).

# Methodology

## **Research Design**

This study is quantitative (descriptive) in nature because it used literature review to uncover facts about its background and problems, and the development of appropriate research instruments focusing on specific and narrow questions, collection of primary data and analysis of data using statistical tools.

## Study Area

The study was carried out in Jos metropois, Plateau State, Nigeria. Plateau stateis located in the north central part of Nigeria and it lies at an elevation of about 1,238 meters or 4,062 feet high above sea level, the state was created on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1976 when it was carved out of Benue-Plateau State. It is the twelfth (12) largest state of Nigeria with population of about 3.5 million people. The state has 17 Local Government Areas which includes; Jos North, Jos South, Jos East, Bassa and so on. The original name of the state capital, Jos, was actually "Gwosh" but it was erroneously pronounced as 'Jos' by the Hausas who settled on the site and turned it into a trading center. The study area, Jos metropolis, includes of some part of Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas.

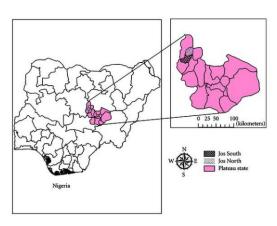


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing Plateau State Source: Google, 2017

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Map of Jos Metropolis (Study Area) Source: Google, 2017

## **Population of the Study**

The populations for this study were youths between the ages of 15 to 35 years residing within Jos metropolis. The population of the study includes students, civil/public servant, traders/business owners, as well as graduates (employed and unemployed) of both sexes. This is consistent with the study of (Lightner, Yenisey, Ozok&Salvendy, 2002; Pijpers, Bemelmans, Heemstra & vanmontfort, 2001). However, advertising to this group has become an integral part of their world. (Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Newell, 2002).

# Sample Frame and Sample Size

The sample frame for this study consists of youths in Jos metropolis. Jos metropolis has population of about 900,000 residents and youths constitute about 72.65% of the population based on the 2006 census (National Population Commission, 2006). The study adopted the approach of using published tables of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 384-sample size to be determined for the study based on the population of 653,850 youths within the study area. The sample size of this study was pegged at three hundred and eighty four (384) using a table for determining sample size from a given population of 100000 = 384 by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

## **Sampling Techniques**

This study adopted simple random sampling method in selecting the appropriate survey respondents. This is in line with the study of (Asika, 1991).

## **Instrument for Data Collection**

Primary source was used for the data collection. The primary data were obtained mainly through the instruments of a structured questionnaire. Questionnaires were administered to 384 (using a table for determining sample size from a given population of 100000 = 384 by Krejcie and Morgan) youths within the study area. Information on advertisement and unethical practices in advertising were gathered through the instrument of the questionnaire.



## Method of Data Analysis

The findings from the field survey research collected via questionnaires was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics v 22 X64) from the results of targeted population about the impact of unethical practices in advertising on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis with respect to their attitude, taste and moral standard. The analysis undertaken is descriptive statistics using SPSS and the inferential statistics used are correlation and regression.

## **Results and Discussions**

A total of Three hundred and eighty four (384) questionnaires were administered to respondents within Jos metropolis. A total of three hundred and eight (308) questionnaires were retrieved from respondents representing 80.20% of the total questionnaire administered which were used for the analysis.

## **Socio-Demographic**

This conveyed information regarding the general information of the respondents which covers: sex, age, highest qualification, marital status and occupations of the respondents. Analysis of such data assists the researcher to ensure that all the variables that may have an influence on the correctness of the data have been analyzed. This by implication ensures that the respondents used for the study are appropriate sample for the intended universe or domain of content (Pallant, 2011).

Table 1 below shows that respondents for this study comprise 182 (59.1%) of males and 126 (40.9%) of females. This indicates that both male and female represent the total sample for this study. The respondents were distributed in 4 age groups as illustrated.; the age structure of the respondents reveals that the largest age group is ages (26-30) group representing 118 (38.3%) followed by ages (21-25) group representing 90 (29.2%) and ages (31-35) representing 86 (27.9%) and lastly, ages (15-20) group representing 14 (4.5%) of the total sample. It can be concluded that most of the respondents for this study fall into the younger age-group who are the main target of advertising agencies.

Table 1 also shows educational background of the respondents with majority of the respondents having at least Diploma certificate representing 90 (29.2%) of the total sample. Followed by respondents having B.Sc. degree representing 80 (26.0%) of the total sample. Respondents having H.N.D certificate represents 76 (24.7%) of the total sample, and respondents with SSCE degree represent 57 (18.5%) and 3 (1.0%) of the total respondents have MSc certificate with 2 (0.6%) of the respondents representing others. It can be concluded that the respondents were primarily well educated and should have a basic understanding of product advertising. The table also shows that, 66.9% which constitute 206 respondents of the total sample were single while 96 (31.2%) of the respondents were married and only 6 (1.9%) of the respondents represents divorce. This indicates that most of the respondents were single and will probably respond more to product advertisement.



Table 1 below also shows that respondents that are students constitute 123 (39.9%). Respondents that are unemployed constitute 97 (31.5%). Respondents that are employed constitute 45 (14.6%) and 35 (11.4%) represent business owners with only 8 (2.6%) representing others. It can be concluded from table 1 above that the respondents were primarily students who were more familiar with product advertisement.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Socio-demographic Characteristics;

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	59.1	59.1
	Female	40.9	40.9
Age	15-20	14	4.5
	21-25	90	29.2
	26-30	118	38.3
	31-35	86	27.9
Qualification	SSCE	57	18.5
	Diploma	90	29.2
	HND	76	24.7
	B. Sc	80	26.0
	M. Sc	3	1.0
	Others	2	.6
Marital Status	Single	206	66.9
	Married	96	31.2
	Divorce	6	1.9
Occupation	Student	123	39.9
	Employed	45	14.6
	Unemployed	97	31.5
	Business owner	35	11.4
	Others	8	2.6

**Source:** Field Survey 2017.

The Bivariate correlation coefficient below shows a strong positive correlation between unethical practices in advertisement and the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis. This is shown by the Pearson correlation of 0.618 tested at 0.01 level of significance. Also, the



correlation indicate that the strength of the relationship between variables is large as the r – value is greater than 0.

This finding is in agreement with the results of Zaman, Mahmood and Muhammad (2015) in their work on effect of ethical issues on advertising effectiveness: a study of pakistan. The findings of their work reveals a strong positive relationship between unethical concern on advertising and the lifestyle of youths in Pakistan as reflected in the r – value of 0.638\*\* and p < value of 0.002. The finding also agrees with that of Nelson and Jabeer (2015) in their work advertising as information. Their findings reveals that there is a positive relationship between deceptive advertising and youth's behavior which is shown by a Pearson correlation of 0.833 tested at 0.01 level of significance.

Table 2: Correlation between unethical practices and lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis

_		Unethical Practices	Lifestyle of Youths
Unethical Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.618**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	308	308
Lifestyle of Youths	Pearson Correlation	.618**	1
•	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	308	308

<sup>\*\*</sup>Correlation is significant at 0.01 level. (2-tailed)

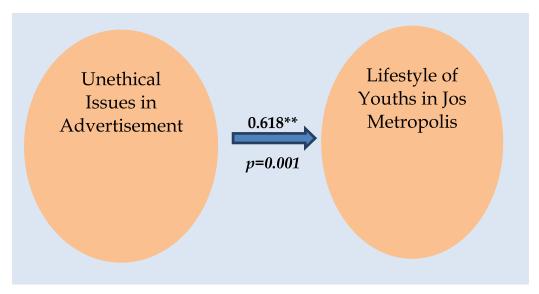


Figure 2: Pearson Correlation of unethical practices in advertisement and the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis.

However, table 3 below shows the coefficient value which reveals that unethical practices have Standardized coefficient B of .873 and a significance value of .000. This shows that unethical practices affect the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis by 87.3%. Referring to table 3 above, the regression values shows that unethical practices in advertising has a



significant impact on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis. From table 3 above, the results are in agreement and support with the finding of Kamal & Pedram, (2013) on their work materialism, attitudes, and social media usage and their impact on purchase intention of luxury fashion goods among American and Arab young generations.

Table 3:Regression on unethical practices and lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis

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		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
Model		В	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	8286.786	1852.256		4.474	.000
	unethical practices	.564	.074	.873	7.598	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Lifestyle of Youths

#### Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a substantial relationship between unethical practices in advertising and the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis. In addition, the study also reveals those unethical practices in advertising has negative impact on the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis in respect to their belief, taste, attitude and moral standard. Finally, the study concluded that unethical practices in advertising influence the lifestyle of youths in Jos metropolis negatively.

### Recommendations

The study recommends the following base on the outcomes of the study carried out;

- Unethical practices in advertising such as deceptive, untruthful, sex appeal products, and stereotype should be evaded by the advertising agencies.
- Government, public and other stakeholders in advertising industries should make sure that advertising agencies adhere to the regulations and policies of the regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON).



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