

## **Influence of New Media on Media Buying among Selected Lagos-based Advertising Practitioners**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper describes the study designed to examine how new media impacts on advertising media planning and buying, particularly from the perspectives of media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies. The study, qualitative in design, utilized an interview guide to obtain data from ten (10) purposively selected respondents among registered members of Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MIPAN) and registered members of Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), all based in Lagos. Findings show that, despite awareness of the existence of new media technologies relevant to media planning, majority of respondents' exposure to such media platforms is still nascent. Findings also indicate that while majority of the respondents use new media as an effective way of reaching target audience, virtually all respondents consider new media as the future of the media planning and buying industry, despite some of the criticisms targeted at such media. Consequently, the study recommends more focus on new media research and the available opportunities offered by such media to complement, rather than the sole deployment of the traditional media planning methods by advertising practitioners during advertising campaigns.*

*Keyword: Advertising, Media planning, traditional media*

*JEL Classification: M37*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

New media is a broad term in media studies that emerged in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New media holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Another important promise of new media is the democratization of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content (Crosbie, 2002).

Most technology described as “new media” are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible and interactive. Some examples may be the internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games, Cd-Roms and DVDS. New media do not include TV programmes, feature films, magazines, books or paper based publications-unless they unchain technologies that enable digital interactivity (Manovich 2001). Interactive media buying or new media buying involves the planning, negotiation, purchase and tracking of digital video, audio, image and text-based advertisements delivered to a variety of devices over a variety of networks. These include, but are not limited to, advertisements displayed on websites and search engines, video adverts, streamed to set- to boxes and advertisement delivered via synching or wirelessly to next generation cell phones (Crosbie 2002).

Online marketing seems to have completely revolutionized advertising techniques, although it has limitations on usage, privacy issues and security. The different traditional and non-traditional advertising media such as newspapers, TV, newsletters, direct mail, telephone and

internet (new media) may have to be compared more thoroughly and extensively to understand whether in the future, online advertising would replace traditional advertising completely. Apart from ease and convenience of internet advertising, one major advantage of the new media is customization or personalization of products and services to suit the needs and tastes of individual customer (Holmes, 2005; Flew, 2002).

In today's highly competitive advertising environment, new media advertising act as a cost effective medium with a wider reach targeting a huge online audience. New media makes it possible to communicate with the audience using the benefits of technology on an interactive platform. Unlike traditional media, it is possible to track the audience's usage and traffic by using new media as a marketing medium. Due to its unique features and benefits, it has become popular among users and advertisers alike (Holmes 2005).

The advertising industry, as noted by Crosbie (2002), has capitalized on the proliferation of new media with large agencies investing heavily on interactive advertising subsidiaries. Crosbie (2002) also affirmed that interactive websites and kiosks have become popular. Stuart (2010) also stressed that, in a number of cases advertising agencies and media independents outfits have also set up new divisions to study new media (Stuart, 2010).

Hence, this study which seeks to examine the extent to which Lagos-based advertising practitioners adopt the new media in media planning and buying, is premised on the following assumptions:

- Advertising agencies, media independent outfits, as well as individual media buyers, select and use new media as part of the media types used for exposing advertising messages to target audience.
- The rise of new media has increased communication between people all over the world, and the internet has allowed people to express themselves through blogs, websites, pictures and other user-generated media and as such creating a platform where advertisers can readily reach their target audience.
- The availability and use of new media has given media buyers more options to choose from in media type selection and consequently influence the entire media buying process.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent are media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies exposed to new media technologies in their media buying and placement functions?
2. What are the attitudes of media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies towards new media technologies?
3. In what ways do media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies use new media technologies for media planning and media buying?
4. To what extent are media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies influenced in their media selections for advertising campaigns by new media technologies?

### **2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

This section deals with an exposition of the relevant concepts related to the study.

**New Media Advertising**

New media advertising employs new technology to reach customers specifically on the internet. While print radio and television advertisement still exist, traditional advertising influence has decreased, forcing the marketing industry to consider new media awareness. Consumers are increasingly on the internet to communicate and possibly purchase products. A computer screen may be the most efficient way to reach these technologically savvy consumers. (Venueva, 2006). New media advertising is usually interactive and internet- driven. It consists of website blog (Weblogs), logs (video logs) visual and audio newscast, RSS news feed (Really Simple Syndication), web updates and social networking. These choices are available to anyone with an internet connection and are a way to gain global audience (Venueva, 2006).

Social media, a huge component of new media, consists of channels set up to form on- line committees. Users can communicate and spread information widely and instantly known as viral marketing. Strategically placed advertisements on these sites get people talking and marketing evidence suggests that advertising is no longer the main influence on a consumer purchase. Potential customers visit other buyers' blogs or forum discussion; they read buyers' comments and write their own user ratings. These people - driven interactive platforms are giving customers the power of voice and choice (Banes, 2005).

Online Media Advertising helps in targeting a selected audience for conveying specific information. Millions of users log on to the internet daily, which gives greater visibility to the online advertiser. Internet advertising is also useful to track information about the number of users who visit a website daily. Marketing and advertising on the internet also help in lowering the cost incurred through traditional form of advertising. Internet advertising enables an advertiser to conduct transaction using an interactive medium targeting a particular audience based on their age, gender, background demography, interest as well as specific needs (Banes, 2005).

According to Moscovitz (2006), internet advertising is done through advertising banner which is an interactive medium to communicate with the user. Advertising banner has been in use for online advertising since 1990 and has become a popular marketing tool. Many advertisers use banner advertisement to give publicity to their product and service, while marketing and advertising companies use banner to seek further information on their offerings. This gives greater visibility to the advertiser with more audience reach and helps in branding.

**Advertising Media Buying**

According to Terry (2002), media buying is a sub function of advertising management. Media buying is the procurement of the best possible placement and price of a piece of media vehicle within any given media type. The main task of media buying lies within the negotiation of price and placement to ensure the best possible value that can be secured. Media planners and media specialists have a vast array of media outlets at their disposal, both traditional and new media. Traditional media would include radio, TV, magazines, newspapers and out of home. New media might include satellite TV, radio, and internet. The internet offers a number of online media that has surfaced with the improvement of digital technology and the accessibility of the internet.

Online media can include e-mails, search engines and referral links, web portals, banners, interactive games and video clips. Media planners and specialists are opportuned to pick and choose what and/or which combination of media is most appropriate and effective to achieve their goal, whether it is to make a sale and/or to deliver a message or idea. Inserting advertisements as print ads in newspapers and magazines, buying impressions for advertisement on the internet, and airing commercials on the radio or television, can be utilized by direct response advertisers as well as product advertisers (Howard, 2005)

### **Internet Media Buying**

According to Holmes (2005), internet media buying is the process of planning, negotiating, purchasing and tracking advert placement on multiple websites, including search engines and web portals. Internet media buying has become an essential marketing service alongside television and radio media buying. Every year, more and more advertising budgets is shifted to the internet as companies seek better ways to target consumers and achieve a measurable return on investment (ROI). To most traditional marketers, the internet is a complex advertising medium with numerous channels, vast amount of content and advertising options, and an array of technologies to plan, deliver, track and analyze online campaigns (Holmes, 2005).

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Three theories that underpin this study include:

**Uses and Gratification Theory:** According to Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), uses and gratification theory is a popular approach to understanding mass communication. The theory places more focus on the consumer or the audience, instead of the actual message itself by asking “what people do with media” rather than “what media does to people?”. The theory assumes that members of the audience are not passive but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory also holds that the audience is responsible for choosing media to meet their needs. The approach suggests that people use the media to fulfill specific gratifications. This theory, therefore, implies that the media compete against other information sources for viewers’ gratification.

The postulations of the uses and gratification theory imply that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Virtually every form of new media is interactive in nature suggesting that the active media audience, from the uses and gratifications perspective, selects and uses new media for gratifications usually for communication, information and entertainment, which makes them goal-oriented in their media use. Likewise, new media users seek out their media source, which are usually through various Internet - enabled devices. Since new media are interactive in nature, advertisers and media buyers as well as the new media users would, at a certain point, be the source of a message and at other times be an audience (receiver) to a message, emphasizing why the uses and gratification theory places more focus on the consumers or audience rather than the message itself.

**Technological Determinism Theory:** According to the technological determinism theory propounded by Marshall McLuhan, media technology shapes how we, as individuals in a society, think, feel, act and how, in our society, we move from one technological age to another. Technological determinism is a reductionist theory that presumes that a society’s technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values (McLuhan, 1964). Most

interpretations of technological determinism share two general ideas. That the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural or political influence and that technology in turn has “effects” on societies that are inherent rather than socially conditioned or produced because that society organizes itself to support and further develop a technology once it has been introduced (Inglis, 1990). The technological determinism theory assumes that there is a simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of new technology and the changes in society’s way of thinking, feelings, acting or believing. It predicts that with every new system of media technology are the changes in society’s way of thinking, feelings, acting or believing. It predicts that with every new system of media technology, society would change and adapt to that technology (Innis, 1951; McLuhan, 1964; Inglis, 1990).

With relevance to this study, the technological determinism theory suggests that there is a simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of new technology such as new media, and changes in society’s way of thinking, acting or believing such as new media buying. The society would change and adapt to such new technology, which is the eventual adoption of new media by several advertisers and new media planners and buyers. Since the society has no choice than to follow trends in media technology, likewise media buyers and advertisers have to consider the use of new media in reaching target audience.

**Media Dependency Theory:** The media dependency theory states that the more dependent an individual is on the media to fulfill needs, the more significant the media becomes to that person. Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) illustrate dependency as the relationship between media content, the nature of society, and the behavior of audiences. Littlejohn (2002) also explains that people will become more dependent on media that meet a number of their needs than on media that touch only a few needs. Dependency on a certain medium is influenced by the number of sources open to an individual. Individuals are usually more dependent on available media if their access to media alternatives is limited. The more alternative there are for an individual, the less is the dependency on, and influence of a specific medium.

Relating the theory to this study, most of the audience of new media depends on the internet to fulfill their entertainment, information and communication needs usually through social networking sites, and gradually become dependent on the new media technology. The media dependency theory states that people would be more dependent on a medium that fulfills several of their needs than on media that fulfills only a few needs. New media provides users with a platform where several of their needs can be satisfied and as such making them dependent on new media. Advertisers also recognize the fact that new media enables them fulfill several media needs such as advertising, product display, product demonstration, interactivity and a host of others, so they depend on new media to help them channel their messages to their target audience at the right place at the right time at a cost the advertising can afford as well as depend on media buyers to enable them achieve this.

### **3. METHOD OF STUDY**

Since the study is descriptive, the in-depth research method was adopted to gather qualitative data. According to Tejumaiye (2003), the face-to-face interview is a highly reliable technique that guarantees prompt and much return rate and completeness of answers. It is possible for the researcher to persuade the respondents to answer some difficult questions or questions regarded

as sensitive. The population of this study includes registered members of Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MIPAN), and registered members of Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON). The sample size of the study consists of eight registered members of MIPAN as well as two registered members of (APCON) totaling ten in number. The sampling method was purposive based on respondents' availability and relevance in terms of data generation for the study. An interview guide containing open ended data gathering questions, informed by the study's research questions, was used to gather relevant data from respondents. Data were collected from respondents using a digital voice recorder.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

A total of ten respondents were interviewed. Respondents' demographics show that two were from full service advertising agencies, the other eight were from media independent outfits. All the media independent outfits and full service agencies where the respondents were drawn are all within Lagos State. Six of the respondents are male, while the other four are females.

##### **Answer to Research Questions**

##### **Research Question 1: To what extent are media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies exposed to new media technologies in their media buying and placement functions?**

Regarding exposure to new media technologies in media buying and placement, respondents expressed varied or mixed opinions. While some were of the view that there is limited exposure of media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies to the internet as well as mobile and multimedia facilities, emphasizing more of traditional than new media in media planning and buying, others are of the opinion that there is an appreciable level of exposure to new media technology among media buyers. A respondent puts it aptly:

Before, all you need to do is book a media campaign and write it down on paper. But today, the new media technology has made this simple. With the application of software, media buying is easy and the exposure is better than what it used to be.

From another perspective, other respondents emphasized client apathy as the major impediment to the adoption of new media technologies in media buying. Such respondents were of the view that exposure to, and use of new media technologies as complementary media buying tools, is dependent on the appreciation of the functional values of such technologies to valid and effective media planning and buying. A respondent, in line with this submission affirms:

If the media buyer is serving a global client, he or she has no choice than to expose client's message(s) through the new media. Hence, exposure of such a media buyer to new media technologies is imperative

Similarly, in line with the limited exposure submission, some respondents were of the view that, though exposure to relevant new media technologies is imperative, usage proficiency by media buyers is professionally more significant. This perspective is succinctly advanced by a respondent:

Most media buyers don't know the nitty gritty and the best way to leverage the available new media. Professionals in the western

world understand the techniques of using the new media better than media buyers in Nigeria generally. Foreign media buying professionals are very exposed to such relevant new media that they can put people like us through, so we could better understand and appreciate new media-related media buying and as such, guide clients in that direction.

Furthermore, consensus of respondents regarding the indisputable relevance and functional values of new media technologies to contemporary media buying is that from the advertising perspective, level of exposure of a predetermined target audience to a new media technology has a significant impact on media selection. This is explained in light of the interactive nature of the social media platforms, making them attractive to different categories of advertising audiences, and by implication, making such platforms more attractive and important to advertisers.

Implied from the foregoing findings is the suggestion that there is limited exposure to the opportunities and possibilities of the new media, as a media type, among media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies compared to their counterparts in the western world. Contextualizing the uses and gratification theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974), media planners and media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies are responsible for choosing media types to meet their advertising campaign media needs. The media planners and media buyers also use media for specific gratifications i.e. for reaching target audience at the right time and cost. The uses and gratification theory assumes that members of the audience are not passive but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. As such, since media planners and media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies have limited exposure to new media, consequentially, there is limit to their knowledge on the possibilities and potentials of the new media.

### **Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies towards new media technologies?**

Similarly, attitude of majority of respondents towards new media technologies as veritable complementary media planning and buying tools seem to be strongly positive. Most respondents' expressed views in this regard include: the new media being very interesting, cost-effective with a real time presence; level of engagement being higher than traditional advertising media; new media's impact being easier to measure; clients' high potential of getting more interaction with the target audience; as well as new media being an extra medium to put the right message across to the right consumers at the right time. A respondent's emphatic positive perception of the new media as the future of media planning is captured in the following words: "The romance between the pen and the paper has been digitalized. This is the digital era where everything has to do with technology."

Other positive attributes of new media technologies which make them attractive to media buying professionals, as expressed by respondents include the platform's innovative appeal, its exciting and compelling viral effect, its measurable impact, its immediate and instant feedback as well as its high interactivity. A respondent captures the compelling appeal of new media to media buying professionals as follows:

Online, mobile and other digital media are considered as major media vehicle in reaching set target audience. It is the most interactive and most engaging. It is the only form of media that gives the advertisers some measure of control over what they are getting, while the audience have the opportunity to pursue and replay the advert or even download it.

In contrast however, a significant minority of respondents who expressed a somewhat skeptical disposition towards the new media as a relevant media buying tool or platform are of the view that prevailing lack of appropriate digital facilities, especially in Nigeria, is a hindrance to effective use of new media technologies for result-oriented media planning and buying. Hence, by implication, there is a limit to which new media-oriented advertising media planning and buying can be deployed by media planners.

Going by the foregoing findings, despite the limitations of inadequate relevant digital facilities militating against optimal utilization of the functionalities of new media technologies as alternative media buying platforms, most Lagos-based media buyers can be said to be strongly positively disposed to the platform as a veritable and indispensable working tool.

By implication, the technological determinism theory assumes that there is a simple cause and effect relationship between the introduction of new technology and the changes in society's way of thinking, feelings, acting or believing. It predicts that with every new system of media technology, society would change and adapt to such technology. Contextualizing this theory, media buyers and planners in Lagos-based advertising agencies, believe new media is the future of the media buying and planning industry as a result of the simple cause and effect analysis between the introduction of new media and the eventual changes in media planners and media buyers' way of thinking, feelings, acting or believing in the possibilities and potentials of new media technologies in advertising media planning and buying. Media buyers believe in new media as the future of the media buying industry. This is in line with the predictions of the technological determinism theory to the extent that with every new system of media technology, society would change and adapt to such technology.

**Research Question 3: In what ways do media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies use new media technologies for media planning and media buying?**

Regarding how new media technologies are utilized in media planning and buying activities, respondents were emphatic in the conduct of new media buying through the GSM (Global System for Mobile Telecommunication) and the internet. A respondent captures usage platform aptly:

The GSM and internet are the basic media platforms we have presently. On the internet, we have the banner, flash and complete audio visual adverts. For the mobile phones, the most commonly used, still remains the SMS (Short Message Service).

Another respondent provides a similar perspective:

Media buyers in advertising agencies, particularly those in Lagos, use new media through the internet, the use of digital media, social networking and mobile digital media. It is anything different from the traditional media such as television, radio, newspaper etc., providing a two-way communication between the advertiser and the target audience and allowing placing information in front of the audience which they can consume at their own pace.

Regarding specific professional new media tools used in contemporary media planning and buying, respondents affirmed the use of softwares such as Media Star used to know how to apportion media campaign budget and the level of media penetration, as well as Media Express used to conduct the actual media buying and placement which enables the sending of advert materials to media houses through the internet. These practical uses of new media planning tools are aptly captured by one of the respondents thus:

There are tools that automate media planning and buying. We have tools to profile the existing media such as Star which helps to query the data base. Also, prior to the evolvement of new media technology, media planning and buying activities were done using excel for the calculation of media campaign budgetary allocations which was cumbersome and delays the media planning process. But, with the advent of new media technologies, media planning is conducted using the Media Express software.

And regarding target audience of new media planning and buying campaigns, respondents affirmed the most targeted audience to be the youths who constitute heavy users of the new media. Hence, consensus of all respondents is that the new media provides an effective platform of reaching the younger generation.

The foregoing findings, in essence, suggest that media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies use specific new media planning and buying tools to maximize the benefits of easy access to advertising media audience members, particularly the youths, because of the interactive and engaging nature of new media platforms.

#### **4: To what extent are media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies influenced in their media selections for advertising campaigns by new media technologies?**

Regarding new media technologies' influence on media selection, consensus of opinions of respondents is in the affirmative. Respondents affirm that, for reasons of cost effectiveness, availability of preparatory software, social networking among diverse audiences, high interactivity as well as reality of audience fragmentation, which is well accommodated on the internet, particularly on social media platforms, new media technologies remain a strong

determinant or influencer among media planners in the selection of the appropriate media types for advertising campaigns.

While not ruling out the strong influence of overall media objectives of a particular advertising campaign in the final media selection, as expressed by some respondents, majority of respondents assert the significant influence of new technology in the selection of the appropriate media mix for contemporary advertising campaigns. A respondent captures the essence of new media technologies in contemporary media selection for advertising campaigns succinctly:

To a large extent, it influences me as a person and because of the nature of my work, new media is capable of delivering to the masses and it is cost effective. This is more so considering the experience of what media buyers see when they go round, considering the result of the preparatory software and considering the need of the brand in question. All these, make new media technologies to be a must use in today's advertising world. The reality is that, if you are a big brand and you don't go online, you haven't done anything yet.

Another respondent, emphasizing audience fragmentation as the compelling reason for the new media's appeal as a strong determinant of contemporary advertising media selection, asserts:

New media has come to stay, and because of fragmentation, you have to consider the new media. People now spend more time on the internet and phone, unlike fifteen to twenty years ago when the internet and GSM were not widely spread. But it is not like that anymore. Fragmentation is very real in media consumption. Large numbers of diverse users make the new media, particularly the social networking platforms important to advertisers. Therefore, for you to have a good media plan, you must consider the new media.

The foregoing findings therefore, suggest that to a large extent, media buyers in Lagos-based advertising agencies are influenced in their media selection for advertising campaigns by new media technologies. The media dependency theory states that the more dependent an individual is on the media to fulfill needs, the more significant the media becomes to that person. Contextualizing the theory, most advertisers depend on the new media to satisfy their media needs, such as product display, advertising, product demonstration, interactivity and a host of others. Similarly media buyers depend on new media as an effective way of reaching target audience, mostly the youths, because of its interactive and engaging nature and the unique chance it gives the audience to watch an advertisement at a convenient time and space or even download it.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the strength of its major findings, this study has been able to show that majority of media planners and media buyers in Lagos-based media independent outfits and advertising agencies are not exposed to the possibilities and potentials offered by new media technologies in reaching target audience for advertising campaigns. Also, while majority of the media planning and buying operatives studied are aware of the existence of new media technologies relevant to media planning, their exposure to such media platforms is still nascent.

Furthermore, the study has also shown that the studied media planning and buying practitioners view new media as the future of the media planning and buying industry despite their reservations about the application of these emerging technologies to advertising media planning. Despite these reservations, it has also been shown through the study that most media planners examined, use and are also of the view that new media technologies are an effective way of reaching desired target audience. A fall out of this is that new media technologies, as established by this study, have been found to a large extent, to influence the media buyers studied in their selection and purchase of the appropriate media mix for an advertising campaign.

In view of the foregoing conclusion, particularly the study's revelation that the utilization of new media technologies in advertising media planning, among media planners in this part of the world (Nigeria to be specific), is still at its developmental stage, and hence, currently faces the challenges of recognition and acceptance among stakeholders in the advertising industry. As such, it is believed that the influence of new media technologies on media planning and buying among advertising media planners in Lagos, and by extension, Nigeria, can be enhanced through the adoption of the following recommendations by the industry's relevant stakeholders:

1. Media planners and buyers should think globally while acting locally. In other words, they should keep up with the pace of their professional trend while serving local clients.
2. Constant exposure to training related to new media technologies should be encouraged among advertising practitioners.
3. Practitioners in the media planning and buying industry should educate advertisers on the relevance and opportunities rendered by the new media as a means of reaching target audience.
4. Advertising practitioners need to be more focused on new media research and the available opportunities offered by such media to complement, rather than the sole deployment of the traditional media planning methods by advertising practitioners during advertising campaigns.
5. Advertising practitioners should embrace the evolvement of new media as a positive development in the media planning and buying industry.

The adoption of these suggestions, these researchers believe, would enhance the quality of service delivered to advertisers by Nigerian media planners in terms of the articulation of creative media strategies and the selection of the appropriate media mix for advertising campaigns.

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