

ANALYSIS OF PLACEMENT OF PRODUCTS, SERVICES, AND IDEAS FOR SALES PROMOTION IN NIGERIAN ADVERTISING

Idegu A. Solomon

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Adaji Haruna

Abstract

The objective of this is to establish the image or identity of a brand or product so that consumers perceive it in a certain way. It is designed to find out the degree of application of the placement concept in Nigerian advertising, using display advertisements in The Guardian and the Daily Times Newspapers. The decision to use these two newspapers was influenced by easy access to the papers and the fact that at any particular period, the kind of advertisements that appear in Nigerian newspapers are essentially the same, it is not necessary to use more than two. The Consumer Choice Behaviour Theory was used as theoretical framework for this study. The researchers used simple random sampling technique to select the issues of the newspapers whose display advertisements were to be studied. This study was conducted, using the content analytical method to find out the status of placement of goods and services in Nigerian advertising. The findings show that the concept of placement is copiously employed in advertising creation in Nigeria. The findings also show that the frequency of use of the Consumer Benefit and Appeal Statement cues is quite instructive and revealing.

Key words: Advertising, Behaviour, Consumer, Frequency, Placement

Introduction

Modern advertising thrives on the proper application of the placement concept in the sales of products, services, or ideas and candidates for political offices or movements. It is in full realization of this fact that products and services are carefully designed to meet the

needs of specific market segments. As a result of this, advertising practitioners are always looking for techniques that would be effective in influencing the purchasing behaviour of consumers.

Placement means placing a product, idea, service or whatever is to be sold in a certain way in the consumer's mind. The aim is to condition the consumer to always consider the product each time he needs the kinds of benefits the product offers. It is a modern concept which is employed by advertising professionals in their bid to sell goods and services, ideas and/ or candidates for political movements. In modern marketing communications, this technique is so central and highly relevant in the face of mass production, mass marketing and ever-increasing differentiated product attributes as a result of wide application of modern technology.

The fact remains indisputable that there is hardly any product in the market that is good for everyone. This therefore, calls for the concept of placement to secure the desired market segments. Strategic and appropriate placement practice entails endowing a product or service with real or psychological attributes and locating the appropriate market segment for which the product or service is meant. Therefore, the first thing in advertising to consider is how to place a product or service to attain desired objectives.

The primary goal of placement is to produce advertising that works, especially in an environment of keen competition and the projection of the principle of superior advantage to achieve outstanding results. According to the words of Okigbo (1990), "The name of the game isn't just results, it is substantial results. Off-target campaigns, regardless of their creative razzle-dazzle, just don't produce them. Advertising may be part art and it may be part science, but above all, it is business. And business is measured by bottom lines."

Over the years, advertising and marketing researchers have conducted a lot of studies on advertising. Advertising and marketing literature, show that not much work has been done to portray the

application of the placement concept in advertising and their results. This study aims to fill this gap.

Theoretical Framework

The Consumer Choice Behaviour Theory was used as theoretical framework for this work. According to this theory, the consumer's behaviour is greatly influenced by systems of options to expectations of rewards or needs satisfaction. Elaborating on this theory, Flemming (1972) says that the recipient of a message will pay more attention if he perceives that the reward he will get from the message is great. He calls this benefit "Perceived Instrumentality."

To buttress this argument, Marques (1977) asserts that the likelihood that a receiver will respond to a message enhanced when the benefit is more than the effort required to acquire it.

Research questions

To find out the extent to which Nigerian advertising employs the placement concept in creating advertisements for products or services, these five questions were formulated: To what extent do print advertisements in Nigeria reflect the concept of placement? What placement cues are most frequently used? Does the type of products or services advertised determine the placement strategies to be used or it is done arbitrarily? What level of influence, if any, does competition have on the choice placement strategies in Nigerian advertising?

Methodology

This study was conducted, using the content analytical method to find out the status of the concept of placement in Nigerian advertising. The research design was, therefore, aimed at ascertaining whether advertising practitioners in Nigeria employ the concept of placement in creating advertisements and the extent to which they apply this concept.

The display advertisement in the Daily Times and The Guardian newspapers provided the universe of study from where a representative sample was drawn. These two newspapers were purposively selected because of their wide circulation which is a vital factor usually considered by big-time advertisers. The intention was to have access to desired number of advertisements.

The advertisements that were analysed were drawn from the two newspapers using the simple random sampling technique to select the issues of the newspapers whose display advertisements were to be studied.

The period of study covered January 1 to December 31, 2023 (12-month period). This was divided into four three-month periods namely: January-March; April-June; July-September; and October-December. This arrangement made the sampling procedure much easier.

From a total of 626 issues of the two newspapers spanning the study period, 200 issues (100 from each paper) were randomly selected. The selection was done without replacement to ensure that no issue was selected twice. One display advertisement was chosen for study from each issue. The 200 advertisements were for different products drawn from the product categories (see Table 1)

Table 1
Product Categories

Categories	Jan- March	April- June	July- Sept.	Oct.- Dec.	Total	%	Placement
Automobile	4	6	4	6	20	10	5 th
Household Appliances	4	5	3	4	16	8	8 th
Medical	8	7	8	5	28	14	2 nd
Financial	8	7	9	5	29	14.5	1 st
Food & Clothing	6	4	5	5	22	11	3 rd

Jewellery & Cosmetics	5	5	4	3	17	8.5	7 th
Institutional	3	2	4	4	13	6.5	10 th
Recreation & Travel	3	5	3	4	15	7.5	9 th
Wine & Liquor	4	5	4	8	21	10.5	4 th
Others	5	4	5	5	19	9.5	6 th
Total	50	50	50	50	200	100	

To ascertain the level of application of the concept of placement, seven placement elements were used as placement concepts in the advertisements selected for study. They are:

Consumer Benefit: This means the benefits consumers are to derive from the product. The emphasis here is on the benefit line.

Use Pattern: The advertisement should show how the product or service is to be used, when to be used, and for what results. Many products are used in different situations and for various reasons.

Target Market: This refers to the specific market segment the product is meant for. Care was taken to delineate the demographic/psychographic characteristics of the segments.

Price Statement: This vital element was used in this study to find out whether pricing occupies a key position in the placement process in Nigerian advertising.

Product Categorization: This is aimed at fitting the product or service into a particular category of need/want-satisfying considerations of the consumer. The objective here is to “rent a space” in the minds of the prospects.

Image Statement: This refers to the overall perceivable image that is projected by an advertisement. This image is usually created by the combined effect of advertising elements that make up a specific advertisement. It shows how a product or service is to be perceived; and

tries to stand the product or service in a favourable competitive condition to other competing products or services.

Appeal Statement: This means assessing the advertisement in the light of established advertising appeals like love, immorality, health, affluence, fear, fun and pleasure, comfort, security, egotism, vanity and acquisitiveness.

The selected advertisements were later categorized using the four-point scale of analysis namely:

The Unique Claim: This means stating a claim which cannot be made by the opposition or a value which the competitors cannot or do not offer.

The Strong Claim: This means projecting the benefits or claims in a bold manner so as to portray the idea that the advertiser is in a better position to satisfy a need/want or solve a problem than the competitors.

The Weak Claim: In this, the advertisement does not come out bold with a claim. The claim stated can also be easily made by the competitors.

No Claim: This refers to advertisement that does not claim anything at all. The advertised product is just laid out without any discernible promoting or prodding.

The aim was to clarify the place of placement concept in Nigerian advertising. The overall objective was to determine the place an advertised product wishes to occupy in the minds of the consumers.

To make for an effective application of the above-outlined analytical cues, the advertisements that were analysed were classified according to product categories.

Analytical Procedure

The advertisements were analysed using the evaluative cues mentioned above. An element-by-element approach of analysis was used to determine the degree of use of the placement signals. The analysed advertisements were then coded according to the placement cues and

advertising appeals employed, and the four-point scale test. Coding was also carried out for the product categories. The entire assessment was later distilled into percentages to portray a vivid picture of the level of application of the placement concept in Nigerian advertising.

Sample Characteristics/Performance

The 200 display advertisements analysed in this study came under 10 product categories. The tenth category consisted of advertisements which did not fall under any of the preceding nine categories. This was designated “others”, (see Table 1). The analysis of the data generated showed that financial advertisements topped the list. It accounted for 14.5% of the sample (29 advertisements). Medical Products took the second position with 28 advertisements (14%), running almost neck-and-neck with financial advertisements. Food and Clothing yielded 22 advertisements, (11%) of the sample, followed closely by Wine and Liquor which had 21 advertisements (10.5%). Wine and Liquor reached its peak in the final quarter of the study period with eight advertisements. Automobile advertisements occupied the fifth position, accounting for 10% of the sample (20 advertisements). Following automobile was “others” which had 19 advertisements (9.5%). The seventh position went to Jewellery and Cosmetics which hit 8.5% mark with 17 advertisements. Household Appliances missed the Jewellery and Cosmetics mark by 5%, shifting down to 8% and 8th position level with 16 advertisements. Recreation and Travel fell short of Household Appliances performance by 5%, settling to 10th position with 15 advertisements (7.5%). Institutional advertisements tailed along with 13 advertisements (6.5%). It made its highest showing in the third and final quarters of the study period with a 4% impact on the total sample.

A very interesting phenomenon of the sample characteristics is the closeness at which the products follow each other on the range of ratings. This is indicative of the spirit of competition.

Analytical Framework/Data Analysis

This study tried to ascertain the status of placement in Nigerian advertising, using display advertisements as objects of analysis. For a thorough analytical study, the data were distilled into six tables that showed the level of application of the concept of placement in the production of the advertisements which constituted the sample. The tables contain the percentage representations of the evaluation cues which portray the degree of application. The positions at the end of the tables indicated the performance of the cues and product categories in the study period.

Evaluative Cues and Their Scores

Table 2 reveals the level of application of the placement concept in the study sample.

Table 2

Application of the Placement Elements (Cues)

Placement cues	Adverts	%	Position
Consumer Benefit	193	96.5	1 st
Use Pattern	76	38	6 th
Target Market	136	68	5 th
Price Statement	23	11.5	7 th
Product Categorization	142	71	4 th
Image Statement	159	79.5	3 rd
Appeal Statement	190	95	2 nd

Consumer Benefit cue was found in 193 advertisements which accounted for 96.5% of the sample. The Appeal Statement cue took the second position having been found present in 190 adverts (95%) of the sample. Image Statement cue featured in 159 adverts (79.5%). This earned it the 3rd position on the score-chart. The 4th position went to the Product Categorization cue. It featured in 142 adverts (71%), while the Target Market cue was articulated in 136 adverts, constituting 68%

of the sample. The Use Pattern cue was expressed in 76 adverts (38%), while the only 23 adverts (11.5%) carried the Price Statement cue.

The frequencies of the application of these cues in advertising production are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequencies of Use of Placement Cues

Placement Cues	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sept.	Oct-Dec	Total	%	Position
Consumer Benefit	46	48	50	49	193	96.5	1 st
Use Pattern	19	22	15	20	76	38	6 th
Target Market	35	33	38	30	136	68	5 th
Price Statement	7	8	5	3	23	68	7 th
Product Categorization	31	40	34	37	142	71	4 th
Image Statement	38	45	41	35	159	79.5	3 rd
Appeal Statement	43	50	47	50	190	95	2 nd

Table 4 paints a picture of the use of advertising appeals in Nigerian advertising creation.

Table 4

Application of Advertising Appeals

Appeal	Advert	%	Position
Health	108	54	5 th
Security	145	72.5	1 st
Fun and Pleasure	128	64	3 rd
Acquisitiveness	130	65	2 nd
Egotism	46	23	7 th
Vanity	38	10	8 th
Physical Comfort	94	47	6 th
Convenience	115	57.5	4 th

No Appeal	7	3.5	9 th
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Security grabbed the first position in one appeal ranking as it was found to be evident in 145 adverts (72.5 %). Appeal to the interest of acquisitiveness was expressed in 130 adverts. This constituted 65% of the sample. Fun and Pleasure took a very close third position with its appearance in 128 adverts (64%); while Convenience installed itself in the fourth position with its showing in 115 adverts (57.5%). One hundred and eight of the adverts revolved around the health theme. This accounted for 54% of the sample, placing health in the 5th position. Appeal to Physical Comfort was made in 94 adverts (47%), while Egotism was pushed to the 7th position with its showing in 46 adverts (23%). In 38 of the adverts analysed, appeal to Vanity was evident. This placed Vanity in the 8th position. It accounted for 19% of the sample. Seven of the adverts analysed contained no appeal. This secured No Appeal in the last position, having constituted only 3.5% of the sample.

Table 5 portrays the reoccurrence of the above stated-appeals in the sample studied.

Table 5: Frequencies of Use of Advertising Appeals

Appeals	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sept.	Oct.-Dec.	Total	%	Position
Health	23	30	23	32	108	54	5 th
Security	37	33	35	40	145	72.5	1 st
Fun and Pleasure	26	41	24	37	128	64	3 rd
Acquisitiveness	38	37	21	34	130	65	2 nd
Egotism	9	13	14	10	46	23	7 th
Vanity	13	8	11	6	38	19	8 th
Physical Comfort	29	24	19	22	94	47	6 th
Convenience	31	28	34	22	115	57.5	4 th
No Appeal	-	2	3	2	7	3.5	9 th

The four-point scale of analysis illustrates the weight of the adverts studied with reference to placement strategies. One hundred and sixteen of the 200 adverts analysed made strong claims about what they were advertising (see Table 6).

Table 6: Four-Point Scale of Analysis

Claim	Advertisements	%	Position
Unique Claim	4	2	4 th
Strong Claim	116	58	1 st
Weak Claim	67	33.5	2 nd
No Claim	13	6.5	3 rd
Total	200	100	-

From the above table (6), Strong Claim placed first on the scale with 58% of the sample. Weak Claims on the other hand netted the second position, while 13 adverts (6.5%) contain no claim at all. Unique Claim was pushed to a distant fourth position. It was expressed in only four adverts (2%).

Discussion

It can be seen from the above analysis that the movement of the product categories and the analytical cues follow a crescendo-diminuendo pattern. This rise-and-fall movement is attributable to the level of perceived instrumentality attached to the product zones and cues significant at each period. For the product categories, financial adverts, which took the 1st position in the ranking, illustrate the up-and-down motion. It peaked in the first and third quarters; and nose-dived to valley level in the second and final quarters of the study period.

In placement cue applications, Consumer Benefit topped the list with its vivid presence in 193 adverts. On frequencies, it reached its peak in the third quarter of the study period, having risen from the valley level in the first quarter (46 adverts) and through the second

quarter (48 adverts). It eventually clinched a whopping 96.5% after stepping one down from its peak.

For advertising appeals, Security emerged the clear leader. Its presence in 145 adverts won it the first position with 72.5%. On appeal frequencies, it hit its peak in the final quarter of the study, having risen irrepressibly from the second through the third quarters with 33 adverts and 35 adverts respectively. It was also evident from the results of the data that products and values which are usually classified as “necessities” or “essentials” were highly rated. For instance, the products that occupied 1st-15th position were financial, medical, food and clothing, wine and liquor, and automobile (see Table 1). Undervalue rating and relevance, security, acquisitiveness, fun and pleasure, convenience, and health took choice positions. On the low patronage flank are product groups and values which the advertising researcher(s)/creative crews’ interface did not consider so profitable within the period. For example, less attention was paid to institutional adverts, recreation and travel, egotism and vanity in creative strategy and advertising production. This can be seen in Tables 1 and 5.

Usually, advertising is too serious a business to be left to the whims and caprices of chance. Thirteen of the advertisements analysed seemed to have put their trust in the gods as they could not even make an appeal of any sort. The bold display techniques used in these advertisements are at variance with modern marketing communications (see Table 6).

Another pointer was the factor that appeared to have informed the advertising direction of the period of study, namely: the hard times. These hard times forced the people to look inward for the satisfaction of their needs producing a condition of suffering and frustration. Advertising seems to have cashed on this, as one can see from the data, with a large promise of relief and good times. Thus, consumer benefits, security, health and wealth, fun and pleasure, and convenience were prominent in the adverts that featured in the study period. On the other

hand, values that appeared not to be in consonance with the time were strongly mirrored in the adverts.

To the five research questions formulated to guide the conduct of this research, the findings show that:

1. Judging from the application of the placement cues used in this study, print advertisements in Nigeria employ the concept of placement in advertising production.
2. On average, each advertisement was found to reflect about five placement cues. This number is on the high side since it included most of the placement elements, namely: Target Market, Consumer Benefit, Product Categorisation, Use Pattern, Price Statement, Image Statement, and Appeal Statement (see Okigbo, Ad and PR, 1990).
3. The most frequently used placement cues, in descending order of magnitude, are: Consumer Benefit, Appeal Statement, Image Statement, Product Categorisation, and Target Market, as seen in Table 3.
4. The type of product or service advertised determines the placement strategy. An element-by-element analysis of the adverts used in this study showed that placement is not done arbitrarily.
5. Competition has a domineering influence on the choice of placement strategies in Nigerian advertising. The high level of competition was found to be reflected in the copywriting approach and slogans. Apart from 13 adverts that claimed nothing, virtually every advert strives to create the impression of “if not me, you’ve made a bad choice”. Sometimes this degenerates into a barefaced “duel”, like in the case of Bristar: “WHO CARES...if your company produces six out of every 10 dry cell batteries in Nigeria? ...We don’t want to be the biggest. We care to be the best”. (Bristar’s copy in reaction to Berec’s claim that he is the clear leader in the production of dry cell batteries in Nigeria).

Findings

The findings that emerged from the data analysis portray, in graphic dimensions, that the placement concept is abundantly employed in advertising creation in Nigeria. This is illustrated by the fact that each advertisement in the study sample reflected about five placement cues. The cues reflected seemed to have been considered by the research/creative departmental interface as being capable of spurring the consumer to the desired action.

The frequency of use of the Consumer Benefit and Appeal Statement cues is quite instructive and revealing. Their performance on the frequency spectrum reinforces the rewards/needs satisfaction line which forms the essence of the theoretical framework used for this study.

The findings also show that even though the placement concept is copiously used in advertising production in Nigeria, it is still far from being used qualitatively, effectively and efficiently (see Table 6). Quality here refers to the placing of products accurately while effectiveness refers to the desired vigour and ability required to bring about the intended results. Efficiency in this context points to the economy and high level of proficiency needed to accomplish a task well. The interplay of these three factors in the creative/communication processes enables the communicator to reach the right target market.

The level of placement concept in Nigerian advertising today may have something to do with slipshod research and poor execution of advertising strategies. As the study sample revealed, the words always used in writing copy fail to convey, in clear terms, what the product or service is supposed to do for the consumer. Some of our copywriters appear to overlook the important advice of W.B. Yeats which encourages the communicator to "Think like a wise man, but communicate in the language of the people" (see F.J. Bergin, *Practical Communication*, 1981, P.4). In some advertisements, the pictures/artworks used are not congruent with the advertised products.

Such advertisements are automatically robbed of believability which is the engine of advertising.

To cap it all, the clear picture arising from the data generated shows that advertising is planned and executed with the placement concept in mind. The problem seems to lie in the lack of skilful use of the concept in advertising creation.

Recommendations

The four-point scale of analysis says a lot about the status of the placement concept in Nigerian advertising. A more analytical creative approach needs to be applied to search out and project the significant beneficial attribute of a product or service. Advertisements should then come out bold with the attribute to stake a unique claim in the market.

In advertising, the creation and use of elements must be taken into consideration to achieve harmony and unity. When the copy strategy goes in one direction and the elements head towards another direction, we are saying something else. An advertisement is a unit. Divided, it falls. And when it falls, the advertising naira goes down the drain. The research results, which should form the building blocks of advertisement must be distilled into a clear and persuasive thought and stepped down to the language level of the consumer. The copywriter should remember that the consumer is not God and, so must not be spoken to “in tongues”.

Creators of print advertisements must strive to give a candid answer to the question: How well is the product or service placed? The aim is to ensure that the consumer considers your product each time “he needs the type of benefit or problem solution the product offers” (Shultz 1981).

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