

When the Digital Media do the Magic of Effective Advertising of Health Supplements in Owerri Metropolis

Abstract

Today, people depend on the digital media in order to get information that will make them stay healthy. The digital media have become indispensable in the field of advertising and health because of its numerous benefits. This study investigated the effectiveness of digital media platforms in advertising of health supplements in Owerri metropolis. The elaboration likelihood model was adopted as the theoretical foundation. The survey research approach was used. The study had a population of 555,500 from which 384 was derived as the sample size using Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator. The multistage sampling technique was used. Questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection and the simple percentage was used for the data analysis. Findings revealed that 69.3% of the respondents confirmed that advertisements of supplements on digital media platforms promote sales of health supplement products among consumers. It was also revealed that at an average of 66.3% respondents confirmed that digital media have been effective in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis. Further findings revealed that many of the respondents 111 (31.2%), were of the view that societal ideologies stand tall as challenges that hinder the acceptance and patronage of these supplements in Owerri metropolis despite the digital media advertisement. It was recommended that advertisers should not stop being creative in their advertising outings on the digital media so as to keep influencing consumers positively and to maintain its effectiveness in the promotion of health supplement products.

Keywords: Advertising, Effectiveness, Advertisement, Digital media, Health Supplement, Owerri metropolis.

Introduction

In recent times, with the invention of digital media platforms, many products' manufacturers and service providers as well as marketing companies employ various marketing strategies just to reach target audiences so as to trigger purchase. In doing so, they invest on different digital media platforms in order to have a maximum impact while at the same time minimize costs. Through these platforms, consumers are left with so many channels of gathering and accessing information on supplements of different sorts with or without subscription or consents as many

of these outlets employ pop-up advertising and messages to people who visit these digital platforms and who can be potential consumers. In some cases, some of these pop-up messages can be either authentic or fake information (Chaiwchan, Nookhong, Hemnithi, & Chutikarn, 2019).

Scholars have carried out many studies on health related products advertising for many years. Studies have examined a number of different issues and forms of health related products advertising including nutrition claims in food advertising (Parker 2003; Kim et al, 2009), understanding of advertisers' tactics by children (Rozendaal *et al* 2011), advertising of weight-loss products (Amos & Spears, 2010), alcohol and tobacco advertising (Dorsett Sc Dickerson 2004; Capella et al, 2008), cosmetic surgery advertising (Hennink-Kaminski et al, 2010) and so on. Therefore, supplement and health advertising is not a new phenomenon in the field of research especially with regards to visibility and accessibility of various information both real and fake which is made public to consumers through various digital media platforms. Consumers across the globe often source for and obtain information on supplements both health, skin, beauty, food and so on from a variety of sources, including health professionals and professionals of different related fields, but most recently from the digital media because of its great advantage of high connectivity among diverse audience (Sylvia & Cheryl, 2003). Among the extant studies reviewed there seem to be a gap on effectiveness of advertising on health supplement products especially in the region this study is being carried out. It is therefore imperative to examine the effectiveness of digital media in the dissemination and acceptability of various supplements for consumption through advertising amongst Owerri metropolis users to either expand its usage or correct facts that often relegate the aims of the advertisements through digital media to the background.

Advertising through the digital media has come to stay and may in fact take over all other forms of advertising; this was not the case a few decades ago, when it was basically the print and the electronic media that were widely accessible. Then, one had to get a newspaper or watch or listen to TV/Radio before one can see an advertisement and one had to tune in at the right time allocated or scheduled for that advertisement which failure to do so would amount to missing out on it except it is replayed. But that is not the case with advertisement on digital media as one can have access to it at any time.

Today, the digital media have penetrated all nooks and crannies of the society and human endeavours. News and information can be gotten at our fingertips with just a click. Zarella (2010) supports the above by stating that social media (a subtype of digital media) advertising is more effective than the traditional advertising (Radio/TV, magazine, newspaper etc.). Over the years, we have seen tremendous change in the method of business transactions and interactions, with the digital media playing very significant roles.

Baruah (2012) states that with the world in the midst of a social media revolution, it is more than obvious that digital media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace Skype etc are used extensively for the purpose of communication. This study will focus on how digital media are used to advertise the following health supplement products, Herbs connect Ashwagandha Powder, Wins Jown Fibroid Tea; Womb Cleanser, Vital GI Softgels, Wan Song Tang Flat Tummy Tea, Touch Me Butts and Breasts enlargement capsules, Lump Sugar for Sex, TOWG Organic Raw Maca Powder, Max Strength Male Penis Enlarger Pills and so on.

Therefore, this study investigated the effectiveness of the digital media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp in advertising of health supplements in Owerri metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

In this present dispensation where freedom of speech and expression thrive, a lot of people have leverage on it to mislead people on the social media space through fraudulent messages. This seems to be increasing on a daily basis in most of these social media platforms because there seem to be little or no regulations. Fraudsters now use these platforms to scam potential customers. In some cases they pretend to be advertisers and would be waiting for whom to prey on. As frustrating as that may seem, the audience and consumers are left as prey for the vultures to snack on by various companies' advertisement and marketing messages with little or no filter from the social media and left as fair game for all. Though, the social media is said to be a veritable tool in advertising. The question is, how effective have the digital media platforms been in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis?

Research Questions

1. Do advertisements of supplements on these digital media platforms translate to sales and patronage?
2. How effective have the digital media platforms been in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis?
3. What are the challenges that hinder the acceptance and patronage of these supplements in Owerri Metropolis despite the digital media platforms advertisement?

Review of Related Literatures

Digital Media

Digital media are media that are encoded in machine readable formats which can be viewed, distributed, modified and preserved on digital electronic devices. It may also be defined as content that internet or computer network can be used to transmit (Smith, 2013). The following

according to Spacey, (2019) are common types of digital media; audio, video, digital publishing, photo, social media (Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

In fact, virtually every aspect of human endeavour may now be reached through digital media. Writing letters and correspondence are now done via e-mail, and social media messaging such as Whatsapp chats, Facebook chats, and other social media platforms provide access to news and entertainment with just a few mouse clicks on a computer or, better yet, on internet enabled mobile phones and devices (Jumbo et al., 2020).

Lutz and Lutz (2013) state that publicity is frequently a goal of dissidents and terrorist organizations and what better way can be to gain publicity than through the use of the digital media?

Another factor to consider when talking about the digital media is the manner in which information is being churned out to the audience both factual and unverified, one can decide for whatever reasons suited to him/her, release on the internet information which may or may not be true which may likely mislead the audience at the end of the day (Etumnu, 2020; Harper, 2010).

Digital Advertising and Health Supplements

Food or dietary supplements are concentrated sources of vitamins, minerals and/or other substances (such as amino acids, essential fatty acids, fibre and various plant and herbal extracts) sold as pills, tablets and other dose forms (European Communities, 2006). Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA), a dietary supplement is defined as “a product intended for ingestion that contains a dietary ingredient intended to add further nutritional value to [supplement] the diet”. A dietary component can be vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanical extracts, amino acid, concentrate, metabolic element, extract, or any other dietary substance that people might use to supplement their diet by increasing their overall dietary intake (Lee et al., 2015).

Diet supplement advertising through digital media is important because the platform has the propensity to make the product reach wide potential consumers across the digital media space (Mintel 2009; Samadi 2011). The features the digital media provide have made advertisers of health products in recent times to leverage on it so as to increase sales of health supplement products (Mason & Scammon, 2011)

The number of companies producing and distributing health care products has been continuously increasing. The available range of products is very wide, at different price levels. In many cases customers - in the hope of healing - are willing to pay extra for food supplements. The most frequent forms of advertisements of health care products are: paid advertisements, leaflets, other promotional tools, direct mail, electronic media advertisements, information via Internet, professional events, conferences (Nemeth, 2012).

Empirical Review

Lee, Vásquez, Wing Chi, and Jaekyu conducted a cross-sectional study on dietary supplement advertising in 2015, using popular Spanish, Chinese, and Korean media outlets as the study's foundation. During this study, the researchers looked at daily and weekly television advertisements for dietary supplements in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean. It was discovered that none of the items identified in English media outlets made a therapeutic claim, however 18.6% of products identified in non-English media outlets and claims in Dietary Supplements marketing were found to be ineffective. Also, DeLorme, Jisu, Reid and Soontae (2012), conducted a study with the aim of ascertaining the current state of Dietary Supplements advertising within the context of marketplace trends and the regulatory environment. Utilizing an empirical form of research methodology, it was revealed by the researcher that Supplements are purchased and consumed for various and often overlapping combinations of physical,

psychological, social and economic reasons. Nemeth, (2012) did a study with the aim of examining consumption patterns of adult dietary supplements users, highlighting some of the determinants of food safety as well, such as quality, availability of information and risks, using the survey and focus group research methodologies, it was revealed that use of food supplements are judged differently by the respondents with the solid understanding that healthy nutrition diversity is the key. Baltas (2003) conducted a study of determinants of Internet advertising effectiveness and investigated the structure of advertising effectiveness on the Internet as-well as the importance of creative and media factors for banner effectiveness. Econometric modeling of actual data on banner ads demonstrated that creative factors such as banner size, animation, message length and logos, as well as media factors such as campaign length, number of host web sites, use of off-line media, and campaign cost, may influence the direct response of the target audience as measured by click-through rates. The online survey method was used. The results lead to important practical implications for Internet advertising for products and services. Maurer and Wiegmann (2015) investigated the effectiveness of advertising on Facebook, Facebook, MySpace, and other social media platforms that have recently exploded in popularity for marketing communications. Facebook, in particular, touts itself as the ideal marketing tool since its creators devised an advertising system that allows businesses to tailor advertisements based on the information provided by each Facebook user. Despite the present marketing boom on Facebook, the study found that adverts have little influence on users' buying decisions, and that consumers do not actively use Facebook as a source of information. Facebook, on the other hand, provides the ideal medium for direct connection between businesses and their customers. Marketing on social networking sites must adhere to new norms and principles, and each company must assess whether social media marketing is right for them. Jumbo et al. (2020)

conducted a study on the effectiveness of advertising placement on digital media platforms in Nigeria and it was revealed that ads placed on digital media platforms were effective. Digital media ads were very effective in influencing consumer buying behaviour. Findings also revealed that social media and Google Ads are the most engaging digital platforms for ads placement. Also, findings showed that ignorance was one of the major challenges affecting the use of digital media platforms for advertising among others such as poor digital facilities, poor funding, and illiteracy.

Theoretical Framework

The study was underpinned on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) propounded by Petty and Cacioppo (1979) who was of the belief that the ELM was based on the idea that attitudes are important because attitudes guide decisions and other behaviours. While attitudes can result from a number of things, persuasion is a primary source. The model features two routes of persuasive influence: central and peripheral. The ELM accounts for the differences in persuasive impact produced by arguments that contain ample information and cogent reasons as compared to messages that rely on simplistic associations of negative and positive attributes to some object, action or situation (Asemah et al., 2017). The amount to which an individual is willing and able to 'think' about the perspective espoused and its supporting materials is a critical element in this process. Elaboration is high when people are motivated and able to ponder about the message's content. Evaluation, recollection, critical judgment, and inferential judgment are some of the cognitive processes involved in elaboration (Asemah et al., 2017). The theory is relevant to the study which sought to examine how digital media have influenced decision making process of people with regards to supplements of different kinds based on advertisements of these products on the digital media platforms.

Research Methodology

The study applied the survey research method. The survey approach is the best research design for this study because it allows respondents' opinions to be sampled regarding digital media advertising (Tayo-Garbson, Njoku & Etumnu, 2019). The population is 555,500 residents of Owerri metropolis according to National Bureau of Statistics (2017). The Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator was used to derive 384. However, out of the 384 copies distributed 356 were valid for analysis. The response rate stood at 92.7% which means it is valid to be used for analysis as it cannot affect the results. The multi-stage sampling technique was used. The researchers divided the metropolis into different clusters and randomly selected individuals who were part of the study. The areas which were studied as clusters were Aladinma, Amawom, Arugo, Ikenegbu, Okigwe Road, Nekede, New Owerri, Ugwu Orji, Umueche, Umuodu, Umuoyima, Uzi layout and Works layout. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The researchers used simple percentages to analyze collected data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with data presentation and analysis. Out of the 384 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 374 was returned, while 10 copies were not returned meanwhile, out of the 374 returned 18 copies were invalid. Therefore, analysis was done using 356 copies of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Respondents' responses on whether advertisements of supplements on digital media platforms translate to sales and patronage

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	247	69.3%

No	80	22.4%
Cant' say	29	8.1%
Total	356	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Analysis of data from the above table 1 revealed that 69.3% of respondents confirmed that advertisements of supplements on digital media platforms promote sales of health supplement products among consumers. This implies that advertisements of supplements on digital media platforms promote sales of the health supplement products among consumers.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on whether they have come across digital media platform advertisement on health supplement

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	356	100%
No	-	-
Cant' say	-	-
Total	356	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Analysis of data from the above table revealed that 100% of the respondents have come across digital media platform advertisement on health supplement. By implication, all the respondents have come across digital media platform advertisement on health supplement.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on whether they have been influenced by digital media platforms ads to buy health supplement products

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Very effective	256	71.9%
No	82	23%
Cant' say	18	5%
Total	356	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Analysis of data from the table 3 above showed that 71.9% of the respondents indicated that they have been influenced by digital media platforms ads towards buying health supplement products. This simply means that majority of the respondents affirmed that they have been influenced by digital media platforms ads towards buying health supplement products.

Table 4: Respondents' responses on how effective have the digital media platforms been in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis.

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very effective	86	24.2%
Effective	97	27.2%
Moderate	79	22.2
Not effective	61	17.1
Cant' say	33	9.3%
Total	356	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Analysis of data from the above table 4 showed that 27.2% of the respondents confirmed that digital media have been effective in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis. This means that digital media have been effective in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis.

Table 5: Respondents response in the challenges that hinder the acceptance and patronage of these supplements in Owerri Metropolis despite the digital media advertisement

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Competitions	50	14.4%
Funds	52	14.6
Visibility potent	62	14.4
Falsified Claims	81	22.8
Societal Ideologies	111	31.2
Total	356	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

For the table 5 analysis above, it can be said that many of the respondents 111 (31.2%), were of the view that though many issues and challenges hinder the acceptance and patronage of these supplements in Owerri metropolis, despite the digital media advertisement. Societal ideologies stand tall amongst others as the people tend to move towards a more generally acceptable form of health and alternative route to wellbeing and fitness therefore, cutting the works out for the supplements' marketers and producers to break through the walls and promote acceptance which may translate to sales.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that majority of the respondents amounting to 69.3% were of the view that advertisements of supplements on digital media platforms promote sales of health supplement products among consumers. This finding is consistent with a study by DeLorme et al. (2012),

which found that digital dietary supplement advertising entails connecting with consumers who are making decisions regarding a large number of various types of dietary supplements on the market with the goal of inducing purchase. In a similar vein, the study of Nemeth, (2012) revealed that advertisement promotes consumption of adult dietary supplements it equally revealed that the availability of information through advertisement makes consumers to consider food safety as well as the quality of the product to be purchased. This finding resonates well with the elaboration of likelihood model that this study was anchored on. The elaboration of a particular health supplement will lead to change in attitude of the consumer which will in turn lead to purchase.

Further finding revealed that at an average of 66.3% respondents confirmed that digital media have been effective in the advertisement of health supplements in Owerri metropolis. This finding conforms to that of Jumbo et al. (2020) which revealed that ads placed on digital media platforms were effective and that digital media ads were very effective in influencing consumer buying behaviour. It further revealed that social media and Google Ads are the most engaging digital platforms for ads placement. Also in line with the finding Baltas (2003) in a study revealed that Internet advertising is effective in promoting products however, creative and media factors for banner effectiveness such as banner size, animation, message length and logos, as well as media factors such as campaign length, number of host web sites, use of off-line media, and campaign cost, may also influence consumer purchase of products. In contrary to the finding the study of Maurer and Wiegmann (2015) revealed that in as much as advertising on Facebook, MySpace gained enormous popularity for marketing communications the current boom of Facebook for marketing, that users' purchase decisions were not influenced by its advertisements; as users do not actively use Facebook as an information source. The

finding of this study conforms to the tenets of the elaboration likelihood model that this study was anchored on.

Notwithstanding the numerous challenges facing the general acceptance of these supplements amongst the study area such as funds, competitions, falsified claims and so on, majority of the respondents 111 (31.2%), were of the view that societal ideologies stand tall as people tend to move towards a more generally acceptable form of health and alternative route to wellbeing and fitness, therefore, cutting the works out for the supplements' marketers and producers to break through the walls and promote acceptance which may translate to sales. This is in tandem with a study by Lee et al., (2015), who was of the view that Chinese and Korean dietary supplement advertisements were significantly more prevalent in Korean and Chinese media outlets than in English and Spanish counterparts, suggesting that advertisements may be a primary source of information on dietary supplements that Koreans rely on when deciding whether or not to purchase a dietary supplement product. In a similar vein, the study of Jumbo et al (2020) revealed that ignorance was one of the major challenges affecting the use of digital media platforms for advertising among others such as poor digital facilities, poor funding, and illiteracy.

Conclusion

The power of the digital media cannot be overemphasized especially in this technological driven age **where everything depends on information.** Due to the numerous benefits the digital media provide, advertisers leverage on it to maximize sales. Based on the findings, it can therefore be concluded that despite the bottlenecks the digital media are doing a great job in promoting sales of health supplement products among consumers of Owerri metropolis. **That is to say, digital media platforms are effective in advertising health supplements.**

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

Recommendation

The digital media space is a veritable platform where maximum sale can be achieved. Therefore, advertisers should not hesitate in using the opportunity to reach out to wide range of potential customers so as to keep having maximum sales. Advertisers should not stop being creative in their advertising outings on the digital media so as to keep influencing consumers positively and then maintain its effectiveness in the promotion of health supplement products. Advertisers should adopt advertising approaches that are in line with societal ideologies that always stand as a challenge that hinders patronage so that maximum acceptance and patronage will increase among consumers in the society.

1. COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

2.

3. Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

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