



## EFFECTIVENESS OF USING IGBO LANGUAGE IN ADVERTISING OF MTN AND GLO NETWORK: A SURVEY OF OWERRI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The research work evaluated the effects of using Igbo language in advertising MTN and Glo networks among residents of Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. The study had the following objectives: To find out if residents of Owerri Municipal Council were exposed to MTN and GLO advertisements created in Igbo Language; If the adoption of Igbo language in the advertisement created adequate awareness for the networks and if the use of Igbo language in the advertisement increased the patronage of the advertised networks. The dependency theory formed the framework on which the study was anchored. It adopted the survey research design and a total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents. It was found among others that a significant number of Owerri Municipal residents were exposed to advertisements of MTN and GLO networks created in Igbo language. Also, the adoption of Igbo language in advertising the said networks created adequate awareness for them. Furthermore, it was found that the use of Igbo language in advertising the two networks led to increased patronage of the networks. The researchers therefore recommended that more companies should adopt indigenous languages in advertising their products and services.

**Keywords:** Igbo Language, MTN, GLO, Effects, Owerri Municipal Council

### Introduction

Organizations get involved in various marketing and promotional strategies to ensure profitability (Cook, 2018). Promotion, according to Goddard (2015) is one of the four elements of the marketing mix (product, price, promotion, and distribution) it is the communication link between seller and buyer for the purpose of influencing, creating awareness, or persuading a potential buyer's purchase decision.

Mullikin (2016) notes that it is purely because of the competitive nature of the market that companies, businesses, firms, etc. adopt all techniques, promotional tools, and advertisements just to take their products to the customers. Over the years therefore, advertisers have come up with many strategies to market their products because they want their brands to be on top of all shopping lists. One such strategy that companies have adopted in recent times is the use of indigenous languages in advertising their products and services. Indigenous languages are those languages spoken by the natives of the language.

According to Owens (2017), advertising persuasion is hinged on many factors, central to which is language. Language serves as the vehicle for communication thought and creativity. Olagoke (2019) says that of all the elements that characterize a social group and distinguish it from other groups, whether in arts, music, dance attitude and beliefs, festivals, behavior, etc., the most central is language. What this means is that indigenous language is imperative if truly effective communication is to occur.

Given therefore that, advertisements permeate our daily lives, it has become so ubiquitous that it is generally believed that no product can survive without them. However, it is rather a thing of concern that many advertisements in Nigeria are created in a foreign language 'English' and that may make them culturally alienating to a good number of target consumers especially those who reside in rural areas.

Consequently, the value and essence of the message may be lost on the majority of the target market. Meanwhile, an advertiser expects the target audience to react in a predetermined positive way to his message. When this happens it is believed that the advertising campaign has achieved some level of effectiveness but since the advertiser employs language, images, ideas, and values from the culture and assembles messages that are fed back into the culture, how effective would such messages be if they are encapsulated in a foreign language.

This study, therefore, examined how the problem could have been surmounted, looking at the suitability and applicability of indigenous language as an option to their marketing objective using MTN and GLO telecommunication service providers as case studies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Advertisers spend a great deal of time and money to make advertisements memorable and effective. They try to discover the best ways to advertise a given product to a given market. The purpose of creating advertisements according to Dyer (2017), is to persuade and convert potential consumers and the creator of the advertisement assumes that the target audience will understand the advertiser's message. This is because both the communicator and receiver share a common culture or frame of reference.

Unfortunately, a good number of advertisers create advertisements in the English Language which is foreign to a good number of the target audience especially to the semi-literate and uneducated rural dwellers. When this is done, the message is ineffective because the target consumer may not fully understand the message, consequently the patronage of the advertised product is low. Some companies such as MTN and GLO however have branched out to adopt Igbo Language which is an indigenous language in Southeast Nigeria in creating their advertisements.

This study therefore investigated the effects of such a strategy. The research questions are obvious such as; To what extent does the use of Igbo language in advertisements of MTN and Glo networks create awareness of the existence of the telecommunication service providers in the minds of the consumers; Does the use of Igbo advertisement improve the patronage of the two service providers; How effective has the use of Igbo Language influenced the purchasing behaviour of the customers of the two service providers. These were some of the pressing questions the study provided answers to.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the effects of using Igbo language in advertising MTN and Glo networks among residents of Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. Specific objective was to:

1. Find out if the residents of Owerri Municipal Council were exposed to MTN and GLO advertisements created in Igbo language.
2. Ascertain if the adoption of Igbo language in advertising created adequate knowledge of the advertised MTN and GLO networks in Owerri Municipal
3. Find out if the use of Igbo in advertising MTN and GLO networks improved the patronage of the MTN and GLO networks.

4. Find out the perception of residents of Owerri Municipal Council to the adoption of Igbo language in advertising MTN and GLO networks.
5. To what extent were residents of Owerri Municipal Council exposed to MTN and GLO advertisements created in Igbo language?

## **Literature Review**

### **Indigenous Language in Advertisement: An Overview**

Indigenous language can be said to be the language of a particular locality, in most cases, the inhabitants of the language community have it as their mother tongue. The language is predominantly part and parcel of the culture of the community. Indigenous language is synonymous with the mother tongue.

In other words, it is the speech form of the natives within a speech community. The language must emanate from the inhabitants and must not be alien to them. According to Chambow (2018), the mother tongue is also how orientation in the cultural environment is made. It is considered as the language that is closely related to culture in that it is an expression of common cultural experience of the members of the linguistic community who speak it.

Given the psychological and sociocultural importance of language to man, it follows that the mother tongue as the first language learned by the child to express him/herself about the world in which he lives will tend to have a certain psychological and sociocultural effect on the child. Owens (2017) sees language as a socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and a rule-governed combination of those symbols. Each language has its native speakers, the language might be the language of the immediate environment or their mother tongue.

Suffice it to say that when one is talked to in the language that he understands, the message makes more impact. This is why it is very expedient to use indigenous languages in advertising. For an advertisement to be meaningful and yield fruitful results, the target audience must be considered.

The language must be one he is at home with and the one he understands with ease. According to Albairm (2015), indigenous language is very important in advertising because the words and details of adverts often come to people's minds readily, people can easily recall and recite those adverts consciously and unconsciously.

### **Empirical Review**

Thecla (2019) in research explored the relationship between language (particularly Igbo language) and the promotion of business enterprises in Nigeria. Some local jingles from Radio Nigeria, Purity FM Awka, and some billboard advertisements displayed around Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka were analyzed to discover some linguistic features that helped in the promotion of businesses and information. The findings were that illiteracy in the mother tongue was a major factor militating against achieving the desired goals of advertising in Indigenous languages and that if Indigenous languages were accorded their appropriate status, the masses and advertisers would benefit more.

Nwachukwu (2005) examined the advantages of indigenous languages over the use of English as a tool for advertising goods and services in Nigeria. The researcher content analyzed Bournvita and Vitalo advertisements done in Igbo language and the Social Democratic Party advert done in English to spot some significant differences in terms of message effectiveness. The result of the research indicated that adverts done in Igbo Language showed greater cultural suitability and appeared to be more persuasive and appealing than adverts done in English language. The study concluded that if advertising must reflect the

society in language usage and style of presentation, then the business community and those involved in marketing communications must embrace indigenous languages. These languages are rich in proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions.

Agbede (2016) did a comparative analysis of selected bank advertisements in newspapers and magazines from South Africa and Nigeria. The study discovered that advertisers, especially bank advertisers paid serious attention to the use of language that could attract the audience to their services. It also discovered that bank advertisers adopt linguistic, textual, contextual, and visual devices to convey the excellent nature of their services, such techniques could make advertisers communicate more effectively with customers it was therefore recommended that companies and organizations should adopt the language that customers are familiar with in order to generate more sales and by implication more profit.

Though majority of the empirical works reviewed point emphatically to the effectiveness of the use of indigenous language in achieving set advertising objectives, yet the results cannot be said to be conclusive. This is because on the face value, majority of promotional advertisements are still created and disseminated in English language. This seems to weaken the propensity to adopt the use of indigenous language in promotional advertising. The outcome of this study, would however strengthen the need or otherwise of the adoption of Igbo Language in promotional advertising.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work was hinged on the media dependency theory. This theory was propounded by Sandra Ball Rokeach and Malvin Defleur in 1976. According to this Theory, there is an integral relationship between audiences, the media, and the larger social system.

Since learning from experiences is limited in real life, what the audience relies on depends largely on the media they gather, they gather the information they need. Prolonged use of media triggers a dependence relationship by the audience. The degree of this dependence is directly proportionate to the capacity of the media to satisfy the needs of the individual as much as possible.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey research design. Owerri Municipal Council Imo State serves as the Area of study. The population of the area according to the National Population Census 2006, was 253,144 (Two hundred and fifty-three thousand, one hundred and forty-four).

According to UNDP growth rate index of 2.28%, the population of study is 258,915 (Two hundred and fifty-eight thousand, nine hundred and fifteen) Using the Australian calculator for sample size determination, a sample size of 384 was arrived at.

The researchers adopted the multi-stage sampling technique in the administration of the questionnaire for data collection. Stage one involved the division of Owerri Municipal Council into five villages namely Amawom, Umuororonjo, Onyima, Umuonyeche and Umuodu that make up the council. In stage two, one street was randomly selected from each village where the research instruments were administered.

The data collected through survey of residents of Owerri Municipal Council was analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions.

## Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

From the 384 copies of the questionnaire that were administered to the respondents to the communities sampled, the response rate of the valid retrieved items was 376 (97.7%) copies were retrieved, found valid and analysed for the study. This means that 8 (2.3%) copies were found invalid. The analysis was based on the retrieved and valid copies (97.7%).

**Research Question One:** To what extent are residents of Owerri Municipal Council exposed to MTN and GLO ads created in Igbo Language?

**Table 1: *Exposure to MTN or GLO adverts created in Igbo Language.***

| Option     | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes        | 301       | 80.1       |
| No         | 69        | 18.4       |
| Don't know | 6         | 1.5        |
| Total      | 376       | 100        |

**Source:** Filed Survey (2024)

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of respondents' exposure to adverts of MTN and GLO networks created in Igbo Language of which 80.1% indicated they had seen such adverts. This shows that a higher number of the respondents have been exposed to adverts of MTN and GLO networks created in Igbo language. From the table, it was concluded that a significant number of residents of Owerri Municipal were exposed to MTN and GLO adverts in Igbo Language.

**Research Question Two:** Does the adoption of Igbo language in advertising create adequate awareness of the advertised MTN and GLO networks?

**Table 2: *Frequency distribution of respondents' opinion on whether or not the adoption of Igbo language in advertising creates adequate awareness of advertised MTN and GLO networks***

| Option     | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes        | 223       | 74.1       |
| No         | 30        | 8          |
| Don't know | 48        | 12.8       |
| Total      | 301       | 100        |

**Source:** Filed Survey (2024)

Table 2 revealed that 79.2% of the respondents agreed that the adoption of Igbo language in advertising created adequate awareness of the advertised MTN and GLO networks in Owerri Municipal. It could be deduced from the data that the adoption of Igbo language in advertising created adequate awareness for the two network providers.

**Research Question Three:** How effective is the use of Igbo language in advertising in increasing the patronage of MTN and GLO networks?

**Table 3:** *Respondents reaction to the effectiveness of the use of Igbo language in advertising in improving the patronage of MTN and GLO networks*

| Options             | Frequency  | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Very effective      | 222        | 73.7       |
| Minimally effective | 63         | 20.8       |
| Not effective       | 16         | 5.5        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>301</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** Filed Survey (2024)

Table 3 shows that 73.7% of the respondents indicated that the use of Igbo language in the advertisement was very effective maximally with regard to patronage. This means that the use of Igbo language in the advertisement of MTN and GLO networks was very effective.

**Research Question Four:** What is the perception of Owerri Municipal residents to the adoption of Igbo language in advertising MTN and GLO networks?

**Table 4.** *Perception of Owerri Municipal residents to the adoption of Igbo language in the advertisement of MTN and GLO networks*

| Options       | Frequency  | Percentage |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| Very Good     | 260        | 86.4       |
| Good          | 29         | 9.6        |
| Not too good  | 12         | 4          |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>301</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** Field Survey (2024)

Table 4 revealed that 86.4% of the respondents indicated that the adoption of Igbo language in the advertisement of MTN and GLO networks was indeed very good. This implies that the adoption of Igbo language in the advertisement of MTN and GLO networks is indeed very good.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the findings showed that 80% of the residents of Owerri Municipal Council were exposed to MTN and GLO advertisements created in Igbo language. This is in agreement with

Owen (2017) that when a person is talked to in the language (mother tongue) that he understands, the message makes more impact. Albairm (2015) also reinforced this proposition that indigenous language is very important in advertising because the words and details of adverts often come to people's minds readily. People can recite and recall easily those adverts consciously and unconsciously.

The findings revealed that 79.2% of the respondents agreed that the adoption of the native language created sufficient awareness for the two network providers. This was in agreement with the findings of Nwachukwu (2005) on the message effectiveness of Bournvita and Vitalo advertisements done in Igbo language. The result showed greater cultural suitability and appeared to be more persuasive than adverts done in the English Language.

The outcome confirmed that they were very effective, in fact, 73.7% of the respondents affirmed that it was so. This is in consonance with the Theoretical Framework which adopted the Dependency Theory. The theory states that there is an integral relationship between audiences, the media, and the larger social systems. Prolonged use of media triggers a dependence relationship by the audience, the theory posited.

The findings showed that a clear majority of Owerri Municipal residents indicated that the use of Igbo language was very effective in influencing the favorable patronage of the two network providers. The findings agree with the views canvassed by Dyer (2017) in the statement of the problem that the purpose of creating advertisements is to persuade and convert potential consumers and that the creator of the advertisement assumes that the target audience will understand the advertiser's message. This underscores the concern raised in the background to the study that advertisements in Nigeria are created in English language, a foreign language as that, with the tendency to make such advertisements culturally alienating a good number of target consumers.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

After a thorough analysis of the data that determined the outcome of the study, it is worth concluding that advertisements remain a strong tool of persuasive communication that attracts potential customers to the advertised products. Also, the use of indigenous language goes a long way in creating awareness and understanding of the message advertised.

Following the outcome of the study, the following recommendations were therefore made: It is recommended that more companies adopt Indigenous languages in advertising and promoting their brand ii. Also, marketers should use Indigenous languages in their overall marketing strategies

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