



Exploring the contribution of green advertising to enhancing environmental sustainability in Nigeria

Carim AbiolaAbass¹, Oke Joseph Adewale², Alabi John Adejare³, Odeyemi Tosin John⁴, Abdulkareem RonkeKehinde⁵

^{1,3} Marketing Department, Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa, Nigeria

² Purchasing & Supply Department, Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa, Nigeria

^{4,5} Business Administration Department, Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa, Nigeria

Abstract

Marketing practitioners and consumers, in their attempts to positively impacts on the environment are becoming increasingly and progressively sensitive to the need to switch to green products and services. Correspondingly, green advertising has emerged which speaks for growing market for sustainable and socially responsible goods. This paper as a theoretical research seeks to provide a comprehensive literature review of green advertising, green consumers, environmental awareness and environmental sustainability. It therefore recommends the practice of Green advertising, especially by business firms in Nigeria, to enhance environmental sustainability.

Keywords: exploration, green advertising and environmental sustainability

Introduction

Environmental sustainability has being an issue of great concern around the globe. Various governments and organizations, as well as many advocacy groups are canvassing for the need for business firms to be more concerned about the environmental impacts of their operations, in the light of the current climate changes and global earth warming (Brown and Russel 1998) ^[4]. It is a known fact that consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of their environment and the impact the goods and services they consume have on the environment. Therefore, business firms should embrace the green initiatives and incorporate the same into their production and distribution activities. Environment protection should be the main objectives while satisfying customers' needs, not only as a proof of social responsibility, but to protect consumers' rights, and also ensure quality of life for the incoming generations (Passaro, Perchinunno and Schirone 2015) ^[18].

Advertising is the means through which business organizations introduce their products and services to potential consumers so as to gain their attention towards the products and services and to convey messages easily (Kotler and Keller 2006) ^[14]. Given the increasing demand for eco-friendly goods and services, and considering the safety of consumers, green advertising is becoming popular in both developed and underdeveloped economies. Business firms are turning towards offering more ecological friendly products for the betterment of self, as well as the environment. Green advertising is now used as arouse the interest of many consumers, especially, those who are very conscious of the impact of advertising on the environment (Pathak 2017) ^[19]. Green advertising is carried out in form of labels with green color schemes on products, advertisement with "natural claim", and some natural images that show the consumers that the business organization takes cognizance the environment and imbibes the principles of green

orientation.

Green Advertising is adopted generally for those products that have direct impact on the environment. It is a new method of attracting consumers who share the views of green communication, for sustainable development, and to also meet their expectations as regards green orientation. Green communication tends to retain consumers for a long period of time, given today's scenario where virtually every system is going green.

Statement of the Problem

"Go Green" is a natural phenomenon. Green advertising assists in projecting those products and services that satisfy consumer's needs, namely, quality, affordability, and availability without any adverse effect on the environment. As a marketing communicator, efforts on green advertising must be directed towards: (i) Meeting *customer requirement* about the products by demonstrating the products performance. This tends to enhance long-time relationship with the consumers. (ii) Giving assurance that the product is environmental friendly in terms of its consumption and its waste.

To meet up with environmental standards, both marketing practitioners and consumers being alive to environmental impacts of goods and services yield positively towards green products and services. In compliance with green orientation, green advertising as an emerging promotional tool to present a firms products as socially and environmentally responsible goods and services. Therefore, for many businesses, going green may be not only to save the environment, but to also save their businesses. Indeed, the concept of green advertising has become an important subject for discussion among marketing practitioners and the academics. Green advertising has become a useful marketing tool for projecting an organization's green image and also unveil its environmental awareness and its environmentally friendly behaviour. Therefore, this paper

aims at carrying out a comprehensive literature review of green advertising, green consumers, environmental awareness and environmental sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the impact of green advertising on environmental sustainability.
2. To give possible recommendations that would assist practitioners while planning suitable advertising strategies for their products.
3. To also contribute to knowledge in the area of advertising.

Methodology

This research work as a qualitative research makes use of information from secondary sources. Available information from existing literature was assessed with the purpose of drawing conclusion on the environmental impact of current green advertising practices.

Conceptual Framework

An Overview of the Concept of Environmental Sustainability

Sustainability has been described in differs ways in literature. Some authors have defined sustainability with respect to ability of man to preserve the available natural resources for present and future use; others have defined it in relation to policy making (Taylor, 2002). The definition given by the United Nations Commission on Economic Development in its 1987 Brundt report seems to be generally acceptable. According to the report, sustainability is defined as that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own goals” (United Nations, 1987). While, some writers view this definition to be problematic (Taylor, 2002, Jabereen, 2008, Lele, S1991), some believe that it covers all areas of sustainability in its wild applications (Dale, 2001, Adams, 2001).

Taylor (2002), in his critic of the United Nations definition, maintained that it is often difficult to ascertain the future needs of the incoming, which may of course be different from the needs of the people today. He stressed that the way the developed countries view the concepts of needs is quite different from that of the developing countries. However, despite the fact that the UN definition of sustainability is confronted with a lot of criticism, it still encompasses the two fundamental areas, the pressing problem of environmental degradation as it affects economic growth, and the impact of economic growth on poverty level of the society (Attah, 2010).

Environmental sustainability can further be described as maintaining the factors and practices that contributes to the quality of the environment on a long-term basis (Dictionary.com). Daly, (1973, 1992, and 1999), and Daly and Cobb (1989) view environmental sustainability from two perspectives:

- a. *Output Rule: Waste emission from a project or action being considered should be kept within the assimilative capacity of the local environment, without unacceptable degradation of its future waste absorptive capacity or other important services.*
- b. *Input Rule: Renewable resources: (e.g. forest, fish) harvest rate of renewable resources input must be kept*

within regenerative capacities of the natural system that generates them. Non-renewable resources: Depletion rates of non-renewal resources inputs should be set below the historical rate at which renewable substitutes were developed by human invention and investment according to the Serafian quasi-sustainability role. An easily calculable portion of the proceeds from liquidating non-renewable should be allocated to the attainment of sustainable substitutes.

All these human activities are not without their negative impact which include, depletion of earth's resources, degradation of the environment and consequentially, loss of biodiversity (Uchegbu, 1998). These human activities take place in an environment Known as outer physical and biological systems in which man and the outer organisms live. Though complex, there are many interrelated components (Adeniyi, 1986). Environment can also be viewed as comprising the physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon organisms or an ecological community (Encyclopedia Britannica vol.4). This of course, determines its form and survival. Canter (1975) classified the environment into air, water, noise, biological, cultural and socio-economic environment. These views are all encompassing. However, from physical point of view, Holderness and Lambert (1982) opined that the physical environment is made of air, water and land. From all indications, human activities impinge on the environment, and may eventually have either positive or negative impact on man. However, while the positive effects may be accepted by man, the major concern now is the negative effects as they threaten human existence.

Saxena and Khandelwal (2010) ^[21], quoting the USA national environmental policy Act (1969) defined sustainability as: “*Create and maintain conditions under which [humans] and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans*”. Based on these opinions, sustainability can be viewed as the process of creating and sustaining conditions under which humans and nature can coexist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of the present and future generations. Environmental sustainability entails taking decisions and carrying out activities that are capable of protecting the natural world, with particular emphasis on preserving the capability of the environment to support human life. It focuses not only on the amount of waste generated by business firms, or energy consumption, but developing processes that will lead to businesses becoming completely sustainable in the future. Businesses are expected to lead in the area of environmental sustainability as they are considered to be the biggest contributors to environmental activities and are expected to make a significant difference

The Concept of Green Advertising

Advertising is a significant aspect of marketing, s given the wide coverage of marketing communication. The Journal of Advertising first devoted a special issue to green advertising in the summer of 1995. The guest editor of that issue, EaswarIyer, indicated that the use of the word ‘green’ in describing a particular type of advertising was meant to connote pre-environmental behaviors on behalf of both companies and consumers (Sheehan & Atkinson, 2012).

Green marketing in a broad perspective entails marketing of goods and services that are adjudged by people to be environmental friendly. Thus green marketing integrates various activities, such as product modification, changes to production process, sustainable packaging, and modified advertising (Jain & Kaur 2015). Moreover, Jain and Kaur (2015) stressed that environmental consciousness is increasingly becoming a global issue, and of course a subject for discussion in many academic fora. There is increasing awareness of environmental challenges among business firms, and as such, the use of green marketing strategies is becoming popular. Green consumerism as a concept of green initiative has also played a significant role in bringing-to-fore, corporate environmentalism which makes business firms to be 'green marketing' oriented.

Batra and Ray (2010) opined that consumers' feelings and judgments are influenced by advertisement. Therefore, a green advertising message tends to create positive feelings in the mind of consumers towards the product. Green advertising also promotes environmentally oriented consumption behavior (Kilbourne 1995); being a message directed to environmental conscious consumers (Zinkhan and Carlson, 1995). Green advertising message unveils the environmental attributes of a product or service (Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius 1995). Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012) also maintained that green advertising emphasis environmental claims of a product. In this changing business environment, green advertising, have the potential to clarify environmental issues. Although, on the other hand, Fowler & Close (2012) are of the opinion that a corporate image of being green or targeting eco-friendly consumers with green advertising messages does not make an organization 'green'. However, green advertising can assist an organization to build a green image, but having a green image in the advertising campaign alone does not constitute authentic green advertising (Chun-Tuan, 2012). The practice of green advertising, showing all features that enhance environmental friendliness of a product or service is generally improving in many economies of the world (Chun-Tuan, 2012). Effect of advertising can be seen in consumers' attitudes towards a product and their behavioral intentions. Persistent ratings on attitudinal and intentional measures are the extent of change in behavioural attitude of consumers towards a product and its green features is a yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of a green advertising. Green advertising can also be viewed from many perspectives, namely: education focused, which aims at enhancing consumers understanding of nature and environment; commercial focused, which aims at improving the sales of products or services; as well as green image perspective with focus on enhancing the green image of a firm in order to generate long term customers' loyalty

Empirical Framework

Exploring the Impact of Green Advertising on Environmental Sustainability

According to Neeraja, Aravind, and Prasad (2012), "freedom of choices," of individuals and organizations and their rights to have their needs met; challenge of limited natural resources confronted by business firms, calls for developing innovative alternative ways of satisfying those unlimited wants. Green advertising as an innovative practice attempts to effectively utilize the available limited resources, to satisfy wants of individuals and industries

while achieving organization's environmental objectives.

Advertising and product packaging are vital tools for marketing environmental friendly products. Advertising message needs to guarantee a commitment towards protecting the environment. For example, the use of attributes such as degradability, recyclability, lower pollution is considered to be environmentally friendly (Akter, 2012) ^[1]. Furthermore, the extent of pollution minimization guarantee contained in an advertisement can project the green image of a new automobile company. Many organizations - public or private, having embraced green strategy have incorporated the same into their operations. A green strategy complements other business strategies and put the business at an advantage over its competitors. A green strategy has the potential for assisting a firm to make decisions that tends to have positive impact on the environment (Olson, 2008).

A 'green certification' can be use by a firm as a strategy for building green corporate image as it shows the extent of the organization's commitment to environmental sustainability. A green certification is a registered stamp of approval on a company's website, which can be used in advertising to show consumers that the organization has been assessed and certified by relevant authorities environmental compliant. Expert third parties with respected standards for environmental testing for example independent laboratories, government agencies, private consultants, or nonprofit advocacy organizations can provide green product The endorsements and "seals of approval" of these authorities such as independent laboratories, relevant government agencies and private consultants tends to lend credibility to a firms advertising claims (Ottman et. al, 2006) ^[17]. Organizations can assist consumers to choose and use their goods and services in compliance with the requirements of environmental sustainability. This can be achieved by supplying products and services that meet their functional and emotional needs for the present and future generations and also consider the impact on the environment (Saxena and Khandelwal 2010) ^[21].

Need for Green Advertising

Green advertising has emerged as a viable solution to address environmental issues and market the product of the company at the same time.

According to Davis, (1992) ^[12] the following are factors that compel organization to go green.

- **Social Responsibility**
- Business organizations make use of green advertising while carrying out their social responsibility. It integrates nicely with the strategies of business. Business firms have discovered the need to behave in a more environmentally friendly fashion.
- **Competitive Advantage**

Going green provides a certain degree of competitive advantage to a business firm and assist the firm's product to compete and be rated high among its business competitors. Consumers with green initiatives are believed to pay more for green products.

- **Consumer Awareness**

General consumer awareness and concern for the environment and the environmental impact of goods and services has positively influenced consumers' attitude towards green advertising. Organizations can leverage on this, and make use of green advertising as a tool for winning

consumers' loyalty, especially, the environmental conscious consumers.

Government pressure

Government has the responsibility to protect the environment and the interest of its citizens (the consumers). Hence, the reason for many government campaigns on environmental protection and various government regulations to achieve this goal. Government regulations as regards environmental marketing cover areas such as (1). Reduction of production and marketing of harmful goods and products. (2). Modification consumers or industry use. (3). Ensuring and enhancing consumers' ability to measure the environmental impact of goods and services.

Cost Reduction

Reduction of harmful waste tends to reduce operational cost, as many firms adopt recycling and re-use of wastes generate from production of a particular product, as raw materials for another product or for another organization.

Golden rules of green advertising

- **Know Your Customer:** Be very sure that your consumers are aware and clearly understand your concept of green advertising and how your product will complement your efforts on this.
- **Educate Your Customer:** You also need to let your consumers know your efforts and policies, in fact, all you are doing to protect the environment. Without this, your green advertising message may achieve nothing.
- **Being Genuine and Transparent:** Be sure you are doing what you claim in your green advertising campaign and let all your policies complement your green initiatives. This helps a lot to win their trust and confidence in you and your product.
- **Reassure the Buyer:** The product's performance is very important as well to the consumer. Your product must meet consumers' expectation in terms of suitability for intended purpose that is quality. Consumers may not want to compromise this for environmental protection.
- **Giving Your Customer an Opportunity to Participate:** Allow your consumers to also participate in the green initiatives. Let them see the personal benefits of being environmental compliant and key into your policies towards achieving environmental sustainability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As global warming continues to be a major environmental threat, many nations and people have great concern for environmental protection. Organizations should equally pay close attention to the environmental impact of their operations and contribute their quota towards environmental sustainability. Businesses should therefore, adopt better methods of production and marketing strategy like green advertising to create awareness on environmental protection and thereby project their green corporate image. Green advertising, if effectively practiced, also gives good impression about the organization to relevant government agencies in charge of environmental protection.

References

1. Akter J. Consumer attitude towards Green Marketing in Bangladesh. *ASA University Review*, 2012, 6(1).
2. Banerjee Subhabrata B. "Organizational Strategies for Sustainable Development: Developing a Research Agenda for the New Millennium," *Australian Journal of Management*. 2002; 27:105-119.
3. Banerjee Subhatra, Charles S Gulas, EaswarIyer. "Shades of Green: A Multidimensional Analysis of Environmental Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*. 1995; 23(Summer):21-31.
4. Brown Joseph D, Russell G Wahlers. "The Environmentally Concerned Consumer: An Explanatory Study," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. 1998; 6(2):39-48.
5. Bush Michael. "Sustainability and a Smile," *Advertising Age*, 2008, 79(8).
6. Buss Dale. "Green Cars," *American Demographics*. 2001; 23(1):56-62.
7. Chan Ricky YK. "Determinants of Chinese Consumers' Green Purchase Behavior," *Psychology & Marketing*, April. 2001; 18(4):389-402.
8. Chen Yu-Shan. "The Positive Effect of Green Intellectual Capitol on Competitive Advantages of Firms," *Journal of Business Ethics*. 2008; 77(3):271-286.
9. Chitra K. "In Search of the Green Consumers: A Perceptual Study," *Journal of Services Research*. 2007; 7(1):173-191.
10. Churchill Gilbert A. "A Paradigm for Developing Better Measures of Marketing Constructs," *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1979; 16(1):64-73.
11. Choudhary A, Gokarn S. Green Marketing: A means for sustainable development. *International Refereed Research Journal*, 2013, 4(3). www.researchersworld.com.
12. Davis Joel J. "Ethics and Environmental Marketing," *Journal of Business Ethics*. 1992; (11):81-87.
13. Davis Joel J. "Consumer Response to Corporate Environmental Advertising," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*. 1994; 11(2):25-37.
14. Kotler P, Keller KL. *Marketing Management*. 12E. Pearson Prentice Hall. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458, 2006.
15. Nadaf YBR, Nadaf SM. Green marketing: challenges and strategies for Indian companies in 21st Century. *International Journal of Research in Business Management (IMPACT: JRBM)*. 2014; 2(5):91-104. © Impact Journals.
16. Oslon EG. Creating an enterprise-level "green" Strategy. *Journal of business strategy*. 2008; 29(2):22-30. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, ISSN 0275-6668.
17. Ottman JA, Stafford ER, Hartman CL. Avoiding Green Marketing Myopia. Ways to improve consumer appeal for environmentally preferable products. *Environment*, 2006, 48(5). www.heldref.org/env.php
18. Passaro P, Perchinunno P, Schirone DA. Green Marketing and Sustainable Development: A statistical survey on Ikea customers' perception. Springer International Publishing Switzerland. ICCSA 2015, Part III, LNCS 9157, 2015, 130-145.
19. Pathak D. Role of Green Marketing in Satisfying the Customers and Its Impact on Environmental

- Safety. International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies (IRJIMS). 2017; 2(12):17-29.
20. Sarkar A. Green marketing and sustainable development challenges and opportunities. International Journal of Marketing, Financial Services & Management Research, 2012, 1(9).
 21. Saxena R, Khandelwal PK. Sustainable development through green marketing: The industry perspective. The International Journal of Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability. 2010; 6(6):59-79.
 22. Singh S. Green marketing: Challenges and strategy in the changing scenario. International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences, 2012, 1(6). www.garph.co.uk.