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## The Creative Planning Strategy and the Question of Social Advertising in Nigeria's Democracy

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**Keywords:** *creative planning, social advertising and democracy.*

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# The Creative Planning Strategy and the Question of Social Advertising in Nigeria's Democracy

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## I. INTRODUCTION

There is no dearth of creativity in social adverts in Nigeria, yet the efficacy of adverts on political candidates or ideas, adverts on national image building and adverts designed to advocate a national course is the course of concern in this paper. Whether the social adverts in the Nigeria's mass media are effective in promoting democracy in reality or not is the basic question of social advertising in Nigeria's democracy under study. Some questions to consider in this paper are: Do social adverts promote Nigeria's democracy effectively? Does the audience understand the social adverts' appeals? Are the social adverts spectacular or interesting in the dramatization? What interest you most in the adverts? Does the creativity in social advert work in the face of reality?

In Nigeria, several efforts have been expended through social advertising in the mass media to promote

democracy. Such social adverts include messages on promotion of orderliness during elections and the need for eligible voters to exercise their rights as citizens during elections, advocacies for stable, peaceful and corrupt free democracy and the clamour for payment of government tax. Other social adverts include security consciousness and advocacy for the sitting president's demand for a second term in office through the exhibition of his achievements.

Advertising in Nigeria has come a long way, with success stories in the non personal sales communication about goods and services by private and corporate organizations. Thus, advertising has recorded success in product advertising, known also as consumer advertising. Consumer advertising is directed at audiences who purchase a product for its own sake and for end-use consumption (Iyorza, 2009:23). Consumer advertising differs from social advertising which primarily promotes a social cause or matters of social importance to the inhabitants of the society. Like consumer advertising, social adverts in the media are executed in printed words and/or pictures in the print, or through spoken words and dramatization exploiting the audio advantage of radio or the audio, visual and motion advantage of television.

Social adverts in Nigeria are most common on the nation's national and international television stations – The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA and NTA International). The adverts are directed at Nigerians in the country and those in diaspora. They are adverts that are sponsored by the Federal government of Nigeria through the Ministry of Information and National Orientation or some Non-Governmental Organizations. The adverts are primarily intended to inform and educate the citizens on social and national issues that can help the citizens to support the democratic process in Nigeria. Examples include the current adverts on the achievements of the Nigerian President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan by the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria (TAN), the adverts aimed at supporting the unity and collective existence of all ethnic groups in the country and campaigns against religious violence in the country. Others include campaigns against electoral violence during campaigns and voting. All these social adverts are aimed at sustaining Nigeria as a united and democratic society.

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However, the producers of social adverts for Nigerians appear to have misplaced the essence of creativity in the contents of their productions. Two schools of thoughts have argued for and against creativity of social adverts in Nigeria. One argues for instance that until recently, mass media advertisements of goods, services and ideas in Nigeria were predominantly in the English language. This is because the adoption of English in Nigeria as an official language presupposes that it is the major language of mass media. However, there are many people who do not understand English. Hence when advertisements of goods, services and ideas are mainly in English such people who are among the intended audience of the advertisement messages or the prospective customers are being marginalized or alienated (Oluga 2010: 218). The second school of thought supports that Nigerian adverts have excelled in creativity. This school holds that the world is celebrating our country's creative explosion in advertising and that advertising to Nigerians is best been done by Nigerians who understand Nigeria (Nwosu, Okogun and Alumona, 2013: para 5). The thrust of this paper is to evaluate the efficacy of creativity in social adverts in Nigeria and the extent to which creativity in social adverts have helped in promoting democracy in Nigeria.

## II. CREATIVITY THEORY AND THE SOCIAL ADVERT MESSAGE PLANNING STRATEGY

Advertising creativity is the ability to generate fresh, unique and appropriate ideas that can be used as solutions to communications problems; to be appropriate and effective, a creative idea must be relevant to the target audience (Belch and Belch 2006:249). Creativity alone is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others. (Franken 2013: 396). From a psychological angle, creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one...what counts is whether the novelty he or she produces is accepted for inclusion in the domain" (Csikszentmihalyi 2013: 28).

Creativity is often characterized by solving a problem situation (a desire) in an original and unexpected way, whilst also remaining useful. Creativity may be something quite obvious, such as the development of a suitable logo for a company, but applies equally to complex situations in politics, science, economics and many other fields (Lenaerts 2013: para 5). The Humanistic Theory of Creativity is championed by Abraham Maslow and his theory of hierarchy of needs, a theory he developed, which maintains that humans have six basic needs. These needs need to be met before we can thrive. Once these needs are met we

can reach self-actualization and are now free and comfortable enough to express ourselves in a creative manner.

## III. MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

This theory argues that environment is not a factor in creativity because if the designer of media message promises some or all of the six basic needs, he can be said to be creative and his message will be effective. The humanist school of thought leans towards the development of techniques that promote positive response and develop trust, acceptance, and lack of judgment and a freedom of expression. Application of this theory leads to the use of peer review of designed social messages, brainstorming techniques on the social adverts and focus on encounter groups to aid in the development of creativity ( Harman, W. & Rheingold, H. 1994:).

The creative planning strategy involves researching the advert idea, designing a creative brief and strategy statement and stating the communication objectives for the social adverts. The aim is to transform inputs into advertising message by writing a copy, designing layouts and illustrations or producing commercials that effectively communicate the central theme on which the campaign is based (Belch and Belch 2001:251). Rather than simply stating the features or benefits of a product or service, the principle of creative planning design demands that social adverts designers must put the advertising image into a form that will engage the audience's interest and make the adverts memorable. The task of creative planning may be challenging because every social anomaly is different and each social advert or campaign may require a different creative approach.

Researching the social advert or campaign idea involves a situation analysis for a strategic design. It also involves checking what the target audience already knows and what could motivate them, what skills they need to act and assessing possible barriers to their knowledge and practice of change. It also involves researching the audience prevailing norms, attitudes and beliefs that place them at risk, concerns that inhibit action, learning styles and media preferences and literacy and language abilities (C-Change Change Module 3, 2013;4).

A creative brief is the next step that is necessary in the creative planning strategy. It is a short tool (one to two pages) to guide the development of activities and materials. It is based on the communication strategy agreed upon and has five basic components. The first is identification of goal and target audience. It involves stating what the social advertiser is trying to achieve from the identified primary, secondary and tertiary audience. The second component is the articulation of desired changes, barriers and communication objectives. At this level the social advertiser states the

impact he wants his message to have on the audience, what barriers may stand in his way and how to deal with the obstacles. The third component is the identification of the message brief which is the main message appeal or need promised the audience. The message brief is the key promise, support statement, impressions and perceptions in the social advert message.

The fourth component of the creative brief includes an outline of key content and tone of the message or the social advert including what appeals to the target audience; what draws them to action and their information needs. The tone should be decided on the basis of fun, warmth, surprise or combination of two or more depending on the desire impact the advertiser wants to achieve. The fifth component involves selection of media mix and other creative considerations. This involves determining the context in which the material or activity that carries the social advert will reach the audience (C-Change Handout, 2014;1-4).

As part of the creative planning strategy, the social advert should be evaluated based on outlines for evaluating creative output using the following questions: Is the creative approach consistent with the social adverts' communication objectives? Is the creative approach consistent with the creative strategy and objectives and does it communicate what it is suppose to? Is the creative approach appropriate for the target audience? Does the creative approach communicate a clear and convincing message to the target audience? Does the creative execution keep from overwhelming the message? Is the creative approach appropriate for the media environment in which it is likely to be seen? Is the social advert truthful and tasteful? (Belch and Belch 2001; 298-300).

#### IV. THE ART AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL ADVERTISING IN NIGERIA

The term art is associated with the forms and skills of representing ideas about life in the society. It is an outlet of human expression, usually influenced by behavioral patterns and driven by human creative impulse. Art forms include basic constituents namely: literary arts, visual arts, performing arts and media arts. Social advertising is executed through the combination of performing and media art forms, even though others are executed through literary and visual forms adverts. Advertising is any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor through the mass media in an attempt to persuade or influence behavior (Ike 2005:3). With regards to the performing and media art forms, the advertising industry is the bastion of creativity; producing 'short' films by way of commercials and telling stories for brands (Nwosu, Okogun and Alumona 2013: para 2). Through all the art forms, advertising can serve to persuade and change behavior

in the socio-cultural, political, religious and economic circles of a nation.

Social advertising is therefore one of the advertising types that promotes causes and activities generally accepted as desirable. Characteristically, social adverts are also public service adverts and they have a non-product, non -service and non-profit perspective. The main focus of this advertising is on some matter of social importance. The socio-economic or cultural issues dealt with in the advertising are worthy of public attention, and often, need public action. The advert is sponsored by government, voluntary organizations and sometimes by business houses. It promotes those causes and activities which are generally accepted as desirable or about which there is general consensus. It is usually non-controversial with rural concern as the main target of the advert (Fashomi, Nwanne, Onwubere, 2013:3).

Specifically, social advertising has been sub divided into nine (9) namely: Political Advertisements, Charitable Advertising (it is used to raise donation on regular or emergency basis where the money will be used to help the needy, unfortunate or sick), Social Cause Advertising, Government Advertising (such as encouraging tourism, tax payment or Police departments issuing message to the general public on safety issue) and Private/non-profit advertising. Others include Association Advertising, Advertorials (which deals the advocacy of particular points of view on controversial view), Institutional Advertising and Advocacy Advertising (which is usually argumentative and deals with controversial subject and directed at either specific or general targets or opponents) (Fashomi, Nwanne, Onwubere, 2013:28).

Social adverts sponsored by governments and non-governmental organizations abound on the Nigerian air waves. They include social campaigns against stigmatization of persons living with HIV/AIDS, campaigns against pipe line vandalizing and road safety campaigns for safe and defensive driving. Others include campaigns for safe sex, use of crash helmets, seat belts and life jackets, and National Administration for Food and Drug Control (NAFDAC)'s life saving adverts. Other health campaigns such as campaigns for ante natal services for pregnant women and immunization of infants are also additional examples of social adverts in Nigeria. The social adverts are transmitted through government owned electronic media namely Nigerian Television Authority (NTA local and international) and Federal Radio Cooperation of Nigeria (FRCN also known as Radio Nigeria). The campaigns on Radio Nigeria are transmitted on satellite stations situated in different regions of the country. However the State owned television stations transmit their own social adverts according to the needs of their cases in the state.

National dailies like Punch, Vanguard and The Guardian, including The Sun and The Nation newspapers are also carriers of social adverts in Nigeria. Magazines such as Tell and Newswatch also promote social causes through social adverts even though this is done on a scarce note. Bill boards are also used in different locations as vehicles of transmitting social adverts. Other media such as specialties (calendars, wall clocks and T-shirts) have also been explored as media of social adverts. However, the use of transit media has been on the low side.

The greatest challenge of social advert in Nigeria is the non-intensive transmission of social messages in local languages for the population that needs the information most as reflected below:

Until recently, mass media advertisements of goods, services and ideas were predominantly in the English language. This is because the adoption of English in Nigeria as an official language presupposes that it is the major language of mass media. However, there are many people who do not understand English. Hence when advertisements of goods, services and ideas are mainly in English such people who are among the intended audience of the advertisement messages or the prospective customers are being marginalized or alienated (Oluga 2010:318-324).

The dramatization and transmission of social adverts in English language in the electronic and print media dominate the transmission of same messages in local languages. In addition, the social adverts sponsored by respective organizations and governments lack the creative force to drive the messages to the final recipient. This has attracted criticisms of scholars. Marinho writes:

...organizations merely scratch the surface of social advertising in spite of the fact that every state government has a Ministry of Information for the purpose. NAO tries but it has not yet got the funds available to or the creativity and visibility of the lifesaving adverts of NAFDAC. The Nigerian Medical Association is largely silent on the dissemination of life threatening or life saving information. The FRSC cannot even get lorries to Keep Right on the expressway. However the over 100 radio and 70 television stations in Nigeria are awash with media activities and corporate self aggrandizement and satisfaction at its attempts at CSR Corporate Social Responsibility which is often merely a thinly disguised attempt to self-promote in the marketplace by abusing CSR principles by using over-branded activities. (Marinho 2006: para 3).

#### V. THE SOCIAL ADVERTISING QUESTION IN PROMOTING NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY

Democracy as a system of government thrives on constitutionality, citizens' participation, respect for the rule of law, delivery of services and the advancement and protection of individual and collective freedom (Pate

2007:2). These elements are the fundamental pillars that differentiate democracy from other forms of governance. Indeed, the essence of democracy is that citizens must be able to ventilate their views through unrestrained debates and that there should be active citizens' participation in governance as well as unrestricted communication between the government and the governed.

Here in Nigeria, Nigerians have embraced the democratic option for greater development of the nation. With it came the enthronement of the democratic process characterized by the existence of the three arms of government, regular elections, increased citizen's participation in public affairs, founding of democratic structures like political parties and an active civil society sector, among others. The system can do better in terms of enlarging citizen's participation in governance and the respect for individual and collective rights through service delivery, free and fair elections, accountability and respect for due process. All these are partly achieved through social mobilization and behavior change communication such as social adverts.

Social adverts are significant in the promotion of individual and collective interests of the general society. A responsible nationwide democratic system requires effective participation of the citizens in the process of governance. Social adverts are therefore means of announcing the programmes of government to the citizens and the services that the government has to offer as a responsibility to the ruled. In Nigeria, the mass media, through social adverts, have remained in the forefront in the struggle to protect the rights of the people through a credible process of promoting social cause.

The main social advertising question in supporting Nigeria's democracy in the efficacy of the creativity needs in the social adverts in Nigeria. The basic question is: To what extent have the creative needs in social adverts promoted the democracy in Nigeria? These creative needs are also known as advertising appeals which refer to "the approach used to attract the attention of consumers and/or to influence their feelings toward the product, service or cause; something that moves people, speaks to their wants or needs and excites their interest" (Belch and Belch 2006:275). The creative needs or advertising appeals include the need for ego gratification, need for sense of power and need for immortality (Larson 1992:154-157). Others are informational or rational appeals and emotional appeals or needs (Belch and Belch 2006:275-278). In addition, there are appeals to bandwagon, appeals to status and appeals to sex (Banko, Barlow and Bonkwosky 1989:25-28).

In a simple random survey of 100 viewers of social adverts in Calabar, Nigeria, 86% of the participants are of the opinion that social adverts in the Nigerian mass media have not significantly motivated

Nigerians to refrain from anti social behaviors that are inimical to sound democratic principles. The reason had been that the creation of the social adverts does not address the needs of the citizens. From the foregoing survey, it does appear that most of the social adverts in Nigeria have lost their essence and as such are less effective in terms of achieving reasonable or significant effects of social stability in the society. Social adverts have been around for years in Nigeria, yet there is an upsurge of social vices and ills in the society. This is largely attributed to the advertiser's failure to enthrone the creative planning strategy.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Social adverts in Nigeria are primarily designed to plead a cause and encourage Nigerians to change their attitudes towards a direction that would support government in nurturing democracy. These adverts are however designed without the necessary creativity that should make them effective hence the persistent attitude of the citizens' anti social behavior evident in acts of terrorism, ethnic clashes, pipeline vandalizing and drug faking and abuse. Others include child trafficking, kidnapping and acts of corruption in all spheres of the nation's economy and polity. The continuous production and transmission of such ineffective social adverts in Nigeria through different media of communication indicates the social adverts and their designers lack the quality of creativity and creative planning strategy respectively. It also indicates that the funding for the production and transmission of most social adverts in Nigeria could be considered as a waste because their aims are little or not achieved despite been around for a long period of time.

The creative planning strategy which ensures that the social advert message is planned with factors like the audience needs or appeals as reflected in Abraham Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs, the articulation of the communication objectives and the identification of the key message and appropriate media for the audience can make social adverts very effective in supporting the Nigerian population towards the sustenance of democracy. Social advert script writers and producers should therefore employ the creative planning strategy during the production of social adverts in order to make them effective for the sustenance of Nigeria's democracy.

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