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Online Advertising and Online Shopping Behaviour: Perspectives of Uses and Gratification Theory

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Abstract:

The use of the web for marketing and promotion consists of a significant part of a firms' budget and most of this spending is wasted. Given that internet users have motivations for surfing the web, the extent online advertising fulfils these goals have been scarcely investigated. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of online advertising on online shopping behaviour among undergraduate students of a South-eastern University in Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the effects of online advertising entertainment, information, interactivity, and irritation on online shopping behaviour. Data was collected from 394 respondents and the hypotheses tested using multiple regression analysis via SPSS version 17. The result showed that consumers use online advertising to seek entertainment, information, and interaction gratification. Also, the irritation associated with online advertising negatively affects online shopping. It was therefore recommended that advertisers should design adverts that are attractive, fun, and exciting to viewers for it to achieve its intended objective. Also, Advertisers can use content marketing strategy to design and develop informative and entertaining contents.

Keywords: Online shopping, online advertising, uses and gratification, entertainment, interaction

Introduction

The rapid advancement in internet technology in recent time and the expanding number of internet users globally have not only shaped the evolution of online advertising and produced different forms of digital advertising, but has also introduced new advertising business models and new market levels and players (Bundeskartellamt, 2018). This development has exacerbated the dependency on the internet as the ultimate source of information and communication, making it a standard advertisement platform (Deshwal, 2016). It has also taken business away from traditional modes of advertising, such as newspapers, TVs, and radio (Rubinfeld & Ratliff, 2011). Accordingly, Online advertising is now a significant business sector with an estimated global spending of 325 billion dollars in 2019 and estimated to reach 526 billion dollars in 2024 (Statistica, 2021).

Online advertising, also known as internet advertising, digital advertising, or web advertising, is a form of marketing and advertising which uses the internet to deliver promotional marketing messages to consumers. These promotional messages are delivered using search engines, banner ads on website, affiliate marketing, email marketing, pop-up ads, skippable ads (Mishra, 2014) and newer formats and inventions such as advergames, mobile advertising, and retargeted advertising (Nizam & Jafaar, 2018). For its ability to target intended audience with messages based on their web activities, online advertising is considered more cost-effective than the traditional advertising platforms (Hoftman & Novak, 1996; Mishra, 2014). Advertisers are also able to publish messages seamlessly and altering contents conveniently without time or geographical barrier (Mishra, 2014). Importantly, it is very effective for changing consumer behaviour and preferences, facilitating purchase decision, and enhancing customer-company relationship (Mishra, 2014).

Furthermore, given that online shopping has gained wide acceptance and consumers more efficient and goal-directed following their proclivity with the consumption of information and interactions online (Tariq & Tanveer, 2021), the extent online advertising fulfils these goals have been scarcely investigated. Previous research showed that consumer surf the web for entertainment value, information involvement, interaction, and irritation (Luo, 2002; Ko, 2002). People use the internet to actively search information or exchange messages (Kaye & Johnson 2001). Interactivity of the Internet is another significant factor, in that it allows users to express their reaction to an advertisement by clicking links or hyperlinks. However, this interactivity may not always translate to purchase despite the costly nature of the adverts

(Horbal, Naychuk-Khrushch & Orlykova, 2017). Thus, consumer behaviour may be influenced by the informativeness, entertainments, interactivity, and even the irritability of online advertising.

An online ad that is informative but lacks an entertaining content may not elicit positive response from consumers (Nizam&Jafaar, 2018) while both the entertainment and informative contents has been reported to correlate positively with the perceived value of adverts (Mishra &Mahalik, 2017). Nonetheless, its interactive nature contributes to its effectiveness (Ronald &Barbara, 2002) and allow for greater flexibility than traditional media in the type of information transmitted and the medium of transmission. It also provides more exposure and control to customers enabling them to skip or block ads. Besides, consumers often find online advertising disruptive and annoying which may cause negative evaluation of the advertisement and the advertiser (Tavor, 2011). These perspectives are in line with users' gratification to complete their goals while online following the uses and gratification theory. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the effect of online advertising on online shopping behaviour. Specifically, the study examines the online advertising informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, and irritation on online shopping behaviour among undergraduates.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Concept Online Advertising

Online advertising is defined as the various forms of advertising which are delivered through the Internet, both desktop and mobile. This strategy of marketing involves the use of electronic means to get the website traffic to capture, target and deliver the message of marketing to the potential customer. Online advertising frequently involves both a publisher, who integrates advertisements into its online content, and an advertiser who provides the advertisements to be displayed on the publisher's content. Other potential participants include advertising agencies that help generate and place the advertisement copy, the advertisement server who technologically delivers the advertisement and tracks statistics, and advertising affiliates who do independent promotional work for the advertiser (Anusha, 2016).

Online advertising is quite different from traditional advertising because of its versatility. Advertisers can conveniently modify its message even while the advert is 'live' (Anusha, 2016). Online advertising has a wide reach and like the traditional advertising, it is intended to persuade, inform, convince, remind and retain customer (Awais, Samin& Bilal, 2012). A salient advantage of online advertising over the traditional advertising is that while it targets a specific group online, the traditional ads are mass marketing oriented (Anusha, 2016). Many scholars have investigated different aspects of online advertising. For instance, Sanje and Senol (2012) studied the importance of online behavioral advertising for online retailers while Aqsa and Kartini (2015) examined online advertising influences consumer purchase decision. Online advertising can be classified according to the type of advertising medium (text, image, audio or video) or where it is embedded (in a website, pop-up window or another video). Some of the most common online advertisings are search advertising, Display advertising (also known as banner ads), mobile advertising, social media advertising (Bundeskartellamt, 2018; Horbal et al., 2017).

Search advertising involves placing bookable ads (often text) either in a sidebar to the right of or above the actual (so-called organic) search results. In search advertising, advertising space is generally sold through an auction process known as pay-per-click method (PPC). In the *Pay Per Click Advertising (PPC)* advertisers only pay based on information on the number of users who ran through the publisher ads and clicked on it. It is flexible to manage advertising budgets, and usually command high conversion and clear targeting based on geo-location or browse history (Horbal et al., 2017). Search advertising is generally delivered by search engine operators. *Search engine optimization* (SEO) is related to search engine advertising. It is based on optimizing key words by creating contents on the webpages and other online presence of the advertiser. It uses appropriate keywords and other metadata to improve a website position in a search engine's unpaid organic results lists (Bundeskartellamt, 2018).

Display advertising (also known as banner ads) consists of banner ads, text ads, pop-ups, pop-unders, and in-line ads. Banner ads use a graphic image on a website with a catchy and concise information and some flash headers or videos to attract consumers. Pop-ups, and pop-unders are ads that appear on the top or under the current web-page that a user views. One widely used form of display advertising incorporates a banner on a website, for example a skyscraper (a long sidebar banner) or a content ad (embedded into a site's content). Another form of display ad is e-mail advertising which involves receiving ads via electronic letters. E-mail advertising are used to encouraging customer loyalty, inducing clients to buy, and as a form of customer relationship management.

Mobile advertising is specially designed for smartphones. They are optimized to use smartphone apps such as location and contact data and other specific features to display advertisement on the small-screens of mobile phones (Horbal et al., 2017). Social media advertising is those advertising widely seen on social networks sites such as Twitter, Face-book, Instagram, Pinterest etc. It also uses influencers whose blogs, posts and videos appear on YouTube, Instagram or Facebook to drive ad messages. Influencers are people whose comments younger Internet users in particular read and rate highly, and whom advertisers use to deliver their ad messages. According to Horbal et al. (2017), this type of advertising incorporates some special targeting such as geo-targeting, contextual advertising, and behavioral advertising.

2.2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

This study draws from uses and gratifications theory (Herzog 1944; McGuire 1974) and seeks to examine the influence of informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, and irritation on consumers' online shopping behaviors. The U & G theory explore how individuals use media to gratify needs and to understand the motivations of individuals for media use. This theory assumes that media users are aware of their needs, motivations, and expectations of the media, leading to

media choice and gratification. Even though motivations for using a certain type of media are different from person to person, basic media usage motivations have not changed throughout the development of new media technologies (Flanagin & Metzger 2001). For instance, most uses and gratifications studies deal with some or all of the following motivational dimensions: relaxation, companionship, habit, pastime, entertainment, social interaction, information/surveillance, arousal, and escape (Lin, 1999).

In a seminal paper, Luo (2002) explored effects of informativeness, entertainment, and irritation on various online consumer behaviors, such as attitude toward the site, Internet usage, and satisfaction. He showed that Internet users who perceive the medium as entertaining and informative generally indicate a positive attitude toward the site, while those who perceive the Internet as irritating show a negative attitude toward the site. To measure the motivations of individuals for using media, U&G theory has been widely applied to different media such as newspapers, television, smartphones, and internet option (Ko, 2002). U&G theory has multiple underlying constructs. In the literature, the most important and robust dimensions of U&G theory include entertainment, informativeness, and irritation (Luo, 2002; Ko 2002).

2.2.1. Information

People use the internet primarily to gather information of various kind (Maddox, 1998). Informativeness is the extent to which users expect resourceful and helpful information from the Internet (Luo, 2002). In online advertising, it is the extent to which the online adverts contain useful, informative, rich and accurate information (Wu, Wang, & Li, 2019). An advert is informative if it conveys details about advertised brands to the target market at relatively low cost. Most of the online advertising campaigns are composed of a clickable links to a specific landing page, where users get easier, greater access to advertisers through a series of links to more in-depth information (Horbal et al., 2017; Ko, 2002). Advertisers can also collect information about consumers to improve their advertising message and intended target. Previous research report that the need to gather information influence attitude to website (Chen & Wells 1999; Luo 2002; Ko 2002), attitude to the advertising (Ducoffe 1995; 1996), approach behaviour (Wu et al., 2019).

- H₁: The informativeness of online advertising will have a positive and significant effect on online shopping behaviour.

2.2.2. Entertainment

The value of media entertainment lies in its ability to fulfill users' needs for escapism, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional release (McQuail, 1983). The entertainment refers to the extent to which users seek fun, amusement or excitement from the internet medium (Lin, 1999). Online adverts are entertaining if they are exciting, enjoyable, pleasing to attract viewers (Mishra & Mahalik, 2017). Online advertising offers interesting and entertaining contents to viewers in the forms of comedy, drama, or animated adverts (Deshwal, 2016). Previous research found that that web users who perceive a banner ad on the Web as entertaining demonstrate increased loyalty and purchase intention (Stem & Zaichowsky 1991 cited in Luo, 2002). Also, entertainment is positively related to advertisement value and attitude to advertising (Ducoffe, 1995; 1996) and approach behaviour towards online store (Wu et al, 2019).

- H₂: The entertainment value of online advertising will have a positive and significant effect on online shopping behaviour.

2.2.3. Interactivity

The increased use of the internet as an advertising platform is due to its ability to allow interactivity between the advertiser and the consumer (Nizam & Jaafar, 2018). Interactivity is the extent to which users perceive that the communication is two-way, controllable, and responsive to their actions (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). In the context of online advertising, it is defined as the paid and unpaid presentation and promotion of products, services, and ideas by an identified sponsor through mediated means involving mutual action between consumers and advertisers (Leckenby & Li, 2000 cited in Ko, 2002). Online advertising can be highly interactive. From incorporating videos and games to audio messages and sections for query input, there are many methods to keep the consumer keenly and constantly engaged (Horbal et al., 2017).

The interactivity of the Internet provides advertisers opportunities to identify customers, differentiate them, and customize purchasing and post-purchase service (Pavlou & Stewart 2000). It also makes it easy for the audience to engage with ads or products and for advertisers to get feedback from the audience to improve the quality of ads (Deshwal, 2016). Also, consumers easily can find information about a number of products and services, pick specific ads in which they are interested, and control the content of the information presented to them (Ko, 2002). Previous studies have shown interactivity increases the persuasiveness of online ads (Sundar & Kim, 2005), advertising effectiveness (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005), and click-through rates (Rosenkrans, 2010).

- H₃: The interactivity of online advertising will have a positive and significant effect on online shopping behaviour.

2.2.4. Irritation

Irritation can be defined as the extent to which the Web is messy and irritating to surfers (Luo, 2002). An advert is irritating when it generates annoyance, discontent, intolerance (Atkan, Aydogan, & Aysuna 2016) and does not blend with web users' need (McCoy et al, 2004). Ducoffe (1996) adds that irritating ads may exploit human anxiety, distract consumers' attentions, and dilute human experiences. Irritating adverts result from contents that are considered manipulative, misplaced, frequent and excessive, forced exposure, and unintended audience (Atkan et al., 2016). Irritation

may even lead to a general reduction of ad effectiveness and perceived value to audience (Ko, 2002). Adverts that are too flashy with big-size graphics are perceived as unwanted, offensive, and annoying. Previous studies show a negative relationship between irritation and attitude towards the web (Luo, 2002; Atkan et al., 2016), online buying intention (Cahyani&Artanti, 2020).

- H4: The irritability of online advertising will have a negative and significant effect on online shopping behaviour.

3. Research Method

3.1. Sample and Design

A total of 384 respondents were selected from Students of NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka Anambra State who shop online. Copies of the research instrument questionnaire were self-administered to the respondents based on their motivation for using the internet advertising and to shop. The characteristics of the respondents show that more than half(55%) are between 18 & 23 years of age. While about 17% of them are less than 18 years.About 65 % of the respondents are single while 34.7% are married. Mostly all the respondents (85%) always shop online.

		Frequency	Percent
Age	Less than 18 years	37	17.6
	18 - 23 years	116	55.2
	24 – 30 years	54	25.7
	31 years & above	3	1.5
Marital Status	Single	137	65.3
	Married	73	34.7
Online Shopping frequency	Occasionally	6	2.9
	Sometimes	12	5.7
	Frequently	13	6.2
	Always	179	85.2
	Total	210	100

Table 1

Source: Field Survey, 2021

3.2. Measurement

All of the measures used in the survey instrument were adapted from previous studies. Uses and gratification constructs – informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, and irritation - that consist of the independent variable were adapted from Luo (2002) and Ko (2002). The questionnaire was divided into two sections A and B. Section A contained the main items for the study while section B contained demographic items. The questionnaire items were mostly closed-ended. All of the measures were captured on five-point Likert-type scales, anchored by 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree'. the dependent variable online shopping behaviour was measure with 5 items frequency scale item also anchored on 5-points from never = 1, to 5 = always.

4. Results

From the 384 copies of questionnaire administered to respondents only 210 copies were returned valid and used in the final analysis. This represents about 90 per cent return rate. The returned questionnaires were consequently summarized and analyzed. To ensure the validity of the measures senior academics in marketing and mass communication face validated the items. Internal consistency was achieved using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the constructs was all above the 0.70 threshold (Nunally, 1990).The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis via SPSS version 17.The overall regression model for online shopping behaviour produced is a good fit ($F=17.58$, $p=.00$) and explains 68% of the change in the dependent variable. The result for the hypotheses test shows as follows:

Hypothesis 1 sought to test the effect on online advertising informativeness on online shopping behaviour among undergraduates of NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka.The result showed that informativeness ($\beta = .24$, $t=2.19$, $p < 0.05$) has a significant and positive influence on online shopping behaviour. Therefore, H1 was supported. It therefore means that online shoppers find online ads are informative, helpful and an inexpensive means for finding products and brands information. Similarly, support was found for Hypothesis 2. Specifically, the result showed that entertainment ($\beta = .37$, $t= 6.38$, $p < 0.05$) has a significant and positive influence on online shopping behaviour. Therefore, online shoppers find online ads to be entertaining, fun to see, and enjoyable.

The effect of online advertising inter activity on online shopping behaviour was tested in Hypothesis 3. The result showed that interaction ($\beta = .10$, $t=2.32$, $p < 0.05$) has a significant and positive influence on online shopping behaviour confirming H3. This suggest that online shoppers click on links and hyperlinks in online ads for more information, sign-in to online advertisers' website, and when necessary, contact online advertisers. Finally, the H4 examined the effect of online advertising interactivity on online shopping behaviour. The result showed that irritation ($\beta = -.10$, $t= -3.64$, $p < 0.01$) has a negative and significant influence on online shopping behaviour. Thus, confirming H4.Online shoppers do find online ads to be irritating, annoying, and messy when intrusive.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	3.197	.379		8.435	.000
Interactivity	.097	.042	.195	2.318	.022
Irritation	-.103	.028	-.222	-3.635	.000
Informative	.241	.110	.344	2.194	.031
Entertainment	.365	.057	.564	6.381	.000
F	17.57				.000
R ²	.675				
Adjusted R ²	.636				

*Table 2: Hypotheses Test Result
DV: Online Shopping Behaviour*

5. Discussion

As the in business now turn to the digital media to relay their brand messages to consumers, the extent such messages elicit the desired behavioural response depends on its use and gratification. The present study examined online advertising on online shopping behaviour from the theoretical lens of uses of gratification theory. Overall, the results support our hypotheses. Importantly, the result showed that online adverts that are entertaining and provide web surfers with the fun and rich contents increases their online shopping tendency. In particular, the findings about the entertainment provided by online adverts supports previous research by Wu et al. (2019) who find positive effect on approach behaviour towards online store. The finding also supports earlier work by Luo (2002) which reported that entertaining web contents increases consumers' positive attitude toward the Web.

The result also showed that the informativeness of online adverts positively predicts online shopping behaviour. In other words, adverts that convey useful information affect consumer behaviour. This finding also supports Luo (2002) and Ko (2002). It also supports previous finding that report that the need to gather information influence attitude to website (Chen & Wells 1999; Luo 2002; Ko 2002), attitude to the advertising (Ducoffe 1995; 1996). Similarly, the extent online adverts are interacting will affect its effectiveness. In line with past studies which showed that interactivity increases the persuasiveness of online ads (Sundar & Kim, 2005), advertising effectiveness (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005), and click-through rates (Rosenkrans, 2010), our result found support for the positive effect of interactivity on online shopping behaviour.

Finally, show a negative influence of irritation on online shopping behaviour confirming previous findings (Luo, 2002). It also shows supports past studies which reported a negative relationship between irritation and attitude towards the web (Luo, 2002; Atkan et al., 2016) and online buying intention (Cahyani & Artanti, 2020). Furthermore, the result showed that entertainment and informativeness had the strongest influence on online shopping behaviour while interactivity had the least effect. Hence, the entertainment online ads are able to provide and the information consumers can extract from brand messages online will engender consumers towards patronizing the brand and shopping online.

6. Conclusion

The study sought to investigate the influence of influence of online advertising on online shopping behavior among undergraduates. It was concluded that the motives for seeking information, entertainment, and interaction from online advertising affects consumers' online shopping behaviour. Also, online advertising irritation negatively affects online shopping behaviour. Online shoppers find online ads to be informative, helpful, and as an inexpensive means for finding products and brands information. They also find it entertaining, fun to see, and enjoyable. Online advertising is an important interaction means shoppers can click links to get more information, sign-in to online advertisers' website, and when necessary, contact online advertisers. Finally, online advertising can be irritating, annoying, messy, and negatively affect behavior.

7. Implications

Internet is providing users with tremendous access to information about products and brands. Moreover, with the combination of less time available for shopping and limited offline information processing capability, consumers are showing more interest in shopping online. And inevitably companies are taking advantage this huge opportunity sells online. The findings have some implications for practice.

First, irrespective of the format – graphics, text, and video - marketers should design adverts that are attractive, fun, and exciting to viewers for it to achieve its intended objective. Marketers can also use celebrities and influencers to promote the attractiveness of their messages. Also, such appeals as humor, drama, and emotions can be used to make online adverts more entertaining and exciting. Second, consumers actively engage with online media to search and share information. Therefore, marketers can use content marketing strategy to design and develop informative and entertaining contents. They can also optimize the value of their messages using key words and improve on the quality of contents on their blogs, websites, and their social media pages. Marketers can also provide relevant product and pricing information in different formats – text, graphics, and videos – to actively engage online shoppers.

Third, Marketers should design and develop websites that are interactive and easy to use. Users should feel they are having a conversation with the site. Marketers should also customize the features of their websites and marketing

communication to personal preferences of consumers. Marketers should provide links and use landing pages to maximize customers' interaction. They could also use customer interactions with their websites and adverts to build and sustain relationship with the customers. Finally, marketers should know that online adverts could be irritating especially when they are intrusive. Therefore, emphasis should be on behavioural targeting using the browsing history of consumers to bring them related adverts in formats that are subtle and yet effective such as in-line ad banners that blend into the web pages on which they are displayed.

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Appendix

Entertainment (Source: Ko 2002; Luo 2002)

- I find online ads entertaining
- Online ads are fun to see
- I enjoy using the web

Information (Source: Ko 2002; Luo 2002)

- Online ads are informative
- I find information from online ads helpful
- Online ads are inexpensive means for products and brands information

Irritation (Source: Ko 2002; Luo 2002)

- Online ads can be irritating
- Online ads can be annoying
- Online ads can be instructive

Interactivity (Source: Ko 2002)

- I click links and hyperlinks in online ads for more information
- I sign-in to online advertisers website
- I contact online advertisers when necessary

Online shopping behaviour

- How often do you buy things online
- How often do you spend money buying things online
- How often do you visit online shopping sites
- How often do you recommend online shopping websites