

# **Evaluation of Awareness and Knowledge of Planned Obsolescence Technique in Product Advertising Among 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo Residents, Enugu State**

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on evaluation of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents, Enugu State. The study was anchored on Diffusion of Innovation theory. This study used survey research method and employed purposive sampling technique. A sample size of 401 was drawn from the population of 91,344. The study relied on structured questionnaire as instrument for the collection of primary data. The quantitative data collected were presented with frequency distribution tables and analyzed with the aid of computer through the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0 Version). The findings show that the respondents indicated that the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents' level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were high. The study concluded that for 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents, the awareness and knowledge level on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were high. The study recommended that the Federal government through the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment should always investigate the claims of the organizations that fade away their former products to new ones in order to protect the interest of the consumers especially, the youths and children.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Knowledge, Planned Obsolescence, Advertising, Consumer Behaviour

## **Introduction**

Planned obsolescence technique is the practice whereby new products are developed to replace older models, thereby deliberately making the older products obsolete and old-fashioned. The practice has often drawn strong criticisms from members of the public who feel that products are often withdrawn prematurely from market thus leading to unnecessary expenditure on the part of consumers.

All over the world, every organization came into existence in order to fulfill its mission and vision statements. It puts many strategies in motion in order to ensure that the consumers switch brands and continue to patronize the new products which have replaced the older models that were intentionally rendered old-fashioned. The attention of consumers is arrested and held when an advertising that commands special interest is displayed with the help of positioning which is the placement of any product picture in the mental frame of mind or constant memory of the public and in particular, the consumer in the target market. Advertising has the task of putting products pictures in the minds of consumers. However, tactical advertising approach is to focus on the uses of the products through the physical features including the efficacy or actual work effectiveness and economic interest that can appeal strongly to the eyes, especially by demonstration on bill boards and television presentations (Ehikwe, 2016:169). In a competitive oriented market, organizations deliberately create in the minds of consumers real or imagined differences between their former products and current products. They often rely on advertising which help to shift emphasis from price competition to product competition and the attention of consumers is arrested and held when an advertising that commands special interest is displayed. This makes the consumers to switch brands and continue to patronize the new ones.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the several warnings by the Consumers Protection Commission (CPC) to the organizations to restrain from shoddy deal like planned obsolescence technique in creating impulse purchase of products in consumers,

many organizations have deliberately employ it as a means of surviving the competitive oriented market. Unfortunately, the innocent consumers are always the target as organizations regard this group of people as distinct market segment and efforts to discourage the organizations have not paid off. As a result, there are signals of obvious misalignment. Although, there are many research findings on advertising, some of these findings only succeeded in establishing the relevance and use of advertising. These studies did not, however, dwell much on evaluation of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo Residents. It is against this background that it becomes pertinent to evaluate the awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo Residents. Therefore, this study is a bold attempt to depart from the past in suggesting a targeted approach.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo Residents. However, other objectives include to:

1. Determine the level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents.
2. Find out the extent at which planned obsolescence technique in product advertising led to impulse purchase among the 9 Mile, Ngwo residents.
3. Discover the nature of perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study include:

1. What is the level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents?
2. To what extent has the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising led to impulse purchase among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents?
3. What is the nature of perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents?

### **Significance of the Study**

This will contribute to the enrichment of literature on advertising and advert studies. The relevance of this study will go a long way to ensure that the country utilizes its advertising's financial resources towards strategic development and mobilization for its citizenry. Secondly, it will enlighten the consumers on nature of products available in the market. Thirdly, it will provide baseline information through its analysis and discussion to assist the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria and other national advertising policy makers in articulating developmental policies that will positively impact on national affairs. The study will also help the members of public to have more understanding and appreciation of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising.

### **Brief Review of Literature**

#### **Advertising and Consumer Behaviour**

Okoro (1998:13) stated that the term, "Advertising" originated from the Latin word, "advertere" which means "to turn the mind towards". Advertising as a persuasive communication can be used to turn the mind towards a product, service, idea, movement, opinion, cause or any fad or fashion or even to get people to consume less of a particular product or service. Advertising gets to us through various organs of communication or media. These include: radio, internet, cinema, newspaper, magazine, billboard, poster, television etc.

UNESCO (1981:61) posited that the rise of television as an advertising medium is obviously more striking since it started from a zero base only a few decades ago. It's phenomenal development has been not only in the

proliferation of receiving set but also in the quality of its output. Television has multiplied the amount of visual information and entertainment available to the public to a vast degree and has introduced new dramatic sensations which involve the viewers in far flung events and advertising messages.

Advertising messages have the task of putting products pictures in the minds of consumers. The tactical advertising approach is to focus on the uses of the products through the physical features including the efficacy or actual work effectiveness and economic interest that can appeal strongly to the eye senses, especially by demonstration on billboards and television presentations (Ehikwe, 2016:167).

Television combines the aural quality of sound and the visual impact of photographs to produce pictures as an interpretation of situations. For instance, it uses the complementary nature of sound to explain the meaning of the photographs, seen on the screen. It is the sound that makes the universality of the photographic codes, more meaningful to a homogenous audience, through a commonality of expressional codes. The strategy brings people into an identifiable mass, as a group of information consumers, within the same attention aggregate. The television medium has a tremendous informational impact on viewers. The programmes have audio-visual qualities, which make appreciation very compelling due to the combination of events, as they happened (Owuamalam, 2008:34) Agbonifoh *et al* (2007:411) maintained that a complaint against advertising is that it manipulates defenseless and gullible consumers to buy many products which they actually do not need or which they can ill afford. In a similar vein, it is accused of promoting materialism which has become a deadly malaise in our society. Defenders of advertising respond with the alibi that it does not have the power to compel people against their wishes and so cannot be guilty of creating demand for goods not actually needed by consumers. On the question of materialism, they argue that advertising cannot and does not create needs but only arouse latent ones by making people realize the different ways in which they can satisfy their needs. They argue that advertising actually increase society's standard of living using tactical advertising. The consumers, therefore, strive to have the product and remain satisfied or become restive until the product is purchased.

### **Planned Obsolescence Technique in Product Advertising**

Planned obsolescence has been seen by some scholars as a controversial product strategy, built around the concepts of style, fashion, and the fashion cycle. Fashion, essentially is a sociological and psychological phenomenon, it follows a reasonably predictable pattern and, affects the decision of the youths and children.

Agbonifoh *et al* (2007:323) stated that planned obsolescence technique is the practice whereby new products are developed to replace older models, thus deliberately making the older products obsolete and old-fashioned. The practice has often drawn strong criticisms from members of the public who feel that products are often withdrawn prematurely from the market thus leading to unnecessary expenditure on the part of consumers.

Etzel, Walker & Stanton (2017:101) submitted that consumers seem to be constantly searching for what is new but not too new. They want newness like new products, new styles, new colours and others. However, they want to be moved gently out of them. Consequently, many manufacturers use a product strategy of planned obsolescence. The intent of this strategy is to make an existing product out of date and thus to increase the market for replacement products. Consumers often satisfy thirst for newness through fashion. And producers of fashions rely heavily on planned obsolescence. The term, "planned obsolescence" is used to refer to either of two developments: technological and style obsolescence. Technological obsolescence is the significant technical improvement which results into a more effective product. For instance, cassette tapes made phonograph records out moded, and then compact discs rendered cassettes obsolete. This type of obsolescence is generally considered to be socially and economically desirable, because the replacement product offers more benefits and a lower cost. Style obsolescence is the main characteristics of a product that are changed so that the new model is easily identified and differentiated from the previous model. Style obsolescence, sometimes can be called psychological or fashion obsolescence which is intended to make people feel out of date if they continue to use old models.

Products subject to this type of obsolescence include clothing, furniture and automobiles. Normally, when people criticize planned obsolescence, they mean style obsolescence.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on Diffusion of Innovation theory. Bittner (1989) cited in Okunna (2002:22) affirmed that diffusion of innovation theory recognizes that the media can lead someone into getting aware of the existence of an item. From there, he gets interested, makes an attempt to evaluate it, and gives it a trial before making up his mind to acquire it. Hence, this study is about product advertising which informs its audience or consumer through the media about a new product which its audience or consumer needs to acquire. However, the tenets of the diffusion of innovation theory support this study.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Bearing the nature and objectives of this study in mind, survey research method was used for this task. Nworgu (1991:34) stated that survey is the study which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population.

#### **Scope of the Study**

This study covered evaluation of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents.

#### **Area of Study**

The area of study was 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo in Udi Local Government Area, Enugu State.

#### **Population of the Study**

The population of study consists of the total number of 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo community which is 61,719 (**Source: National Population Commission, 2006**). However, considering the fact that 2006 is too far a time, the researcher aligned himself with Owuamalam (2012:107), which maintained that the population of Nigerians has increased significantly since the last census which was held in 2006, and did a projection of 15 years (2006- 2021= 15) using an annual growth rate of 3.2 per cent (UNDP cited in Owuamalam, 2012). The projection formula provides that  $P_p = G_p \times P_i \times T$

Thus,  $P_p = 41,832$ ,  $P_i = 3.2\%$  or  $0.032$

$T = 2021 - 2006 = 15$

$P_p = 61,719 \times 0.032 \times 15 = 29,625.12$

When added to the population of the community, it shall be:  $61,719 + 29,625 = 91,344$ . So, the population of the study is 91,344.

#### **Sample Size**

Having determined the population, the researcher then proceeded to determine the sample size. Based on this, the sample size was determined using Taro Yamane Simplified formula (Isreal, 2012:28) which stated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{91.344}{1 + 91.344 (0.0025)}$$

n= 400.632. Thus, 401 served as the sample size for this study.

#### Sample Technique

Here, the purposive sampling technique was used for the study. This method of sampling, Nwodu (2006:32) observed that it is often called judgmental sampling. Here, the respondents were selected on condition that they meet certain criteria.

#### Sources of Data

The primary and secondary sources of data were used for the study.

#### Instrument of Data Collection

This study used structured questionnaire as instrument for primary data collection. The copies of structured questionnaire were administered with the help of research assistants to the respondents.

#### Method of Data Analysis

The primary data collected were presented with frequency distribution tables and analyzed using simple percentage approach with the aid of computer through the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis, (SPSS 16.0 version).

#### Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

As noted earlier in this study, 401 copies of the structured questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. However, a total of 396 copies of structured questionnaire were returned. Three copies were not returned while two copies were mutilated. Hence, 396 copies of questionnaire constituted the actual number of validly returned questionnaire used in the analysis.

**Table 1: Respondents' Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	173	43.68	43.68	43.68
	Female	223	56.32	56.32	100.0
	Total	396	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1, shows that 173 respondents representing 43.68% were males while 223 respondents representing 56.32% were females.

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents?

**Table 2: The Level of Awareness and Knowledge of Planned Obsolescence Technique**

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Very high	40	11.1	11.1	11.1
	High	220	44.5	44.5	55.6
	Low	100	37.0	37.0	92.6
	Very low	36	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	396	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows that 40 respondents representing 11.1% indicated that the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents' level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were very high; 220 respondents representing 44.5% indicated high level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising; 100 respondents representing 37.0 % indicated low level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising while 36 respondents representing 7.4% indicated very low.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent has the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising led to impulse purchase among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents?

**Table 3: The Planned Obsolescence Technique in Product Advertising and Impulse Purchase**

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Always	147	37.12	37.12	37.12
	Most often	74	18.69	18.69	55.81
	Sometimes	83	20.96	20.96	76.77
	Not at all	92	23.23	23.23	100.0
	Total	396	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The table 3 shows that 147 respondents representing 37.12% believed that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising always lead them to impulse purchase; 74 respondents representing 18.69% believed that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising most often lead them to impulse purchase; 83 respondents representing 20.96% believed that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising sometimes lead them to impulse purchase; while 92 respondents representing 23.23% indicated that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising does not at all lead them to impulse purchase.

**Research Question 3:** What is the nature of perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents?

**Table 4: The Nature of Perception of Agbani Residents**

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Favourable	62	15.66	15.66	15.66
	Unfavourable	263	66.41	66.41	82.07
	Neutral	71	17.93	17.93	100
	Total	396	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 shows that 62 respondents representing 15.66% indicated that the nature of their perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were favourable; 263 respondents representing 66.41% indicated that their perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were unfavourable while 71 respondents representing 17.93% were neutral.

**Summary of Findings**

Based on data gathered, presented and analyzed so far, the following findings emerged.

1. It is obvious from the findings in table two (2) that 40 respondents representing 11.1% indicated that the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile, Ngwo residents' level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were very high; 220 respondents representing 44.5% indicated high level of awareness and knowledge on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising; 100 respondents representing 37.0 % indicated low level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising while 36 respondents representing 7.4% indicated very low.
2. The findings from table three (3) indicated that 147 respondents representing 37.12% believed that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising always lead them to impulse purchase; 74 respondents representing 18.69% believed that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising most often lead them to impulse purchase; 83 respondents representing 20.96% believed that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising sometimes lead them to impulse purchase; while 92 respondents representing 23.23% indicated that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising does not at all lead them to impulse purchase.
3. The findings from table four (4) showed that 62 respondents representing 15.66% indicated that the nature of their perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were favourable; 263 respondents representing 66.41% indicated that their perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were unfavourable while 71 respondents representing 17.93% were neutral.

**Discussion**

For the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile Ngwo residents, their level of awareness and knowledge of the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising is high. This may be as a result of the media advertising messages which tend to create a product's picture in the minds of the residents and turn their minds towards the product. This result supports the findings of Ehikwe (2016), who averred that advertising messages have the task of putting products pictures in

the minds of consumers. The tactical advertising approach is to focus on the uses of the products through the physical features including the efficacy or actual work effectiveness and economic interest that can appeal strongly to the eye senses, especially by demonstration on billboards and television presentations.

Additionally, 9<sup>th</sup> Mile Ngwo residents indicated that the planned obsolescence technique in product advertising always lead them to impulse purchase. Impulse purchase simply means a sudden purchase of a product which the consumer did not plan to engage on at that point in time but due to earlier on desire and current positioning of the product, he/she buys the product at the market. This goes with the psychological appeal. This result supports the findings of Etzel, Walker & Mason (2017), who observed that that consumers seem to be constantly searching for what is new but not too new. They want newness like new products, new styles and others. However, they want to be moved gently out of them. Consequently, many manufacturers use a product strategy of planned obsolescence (to create impulse purchase in them).

Unfortunately, the residents showed that the nature of their perception on planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were unfavourable. This result supports the findings of Agbonifoh *et al* (2007), who maintained that a complaint against advertising is that it manipulates defenseless and gullible consumers to buy many products which they actually do not need or which they can ill afford.

### **Conclusion**

This study has clearly but specifically demonstrated that the level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising among the 9<sup>th</sup> Mile Ngwo residents was high. The findings drawn from the empirical data revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that the level of awareness and knowledge of planned obsolescence technique in product advertising were high. This may be as a result of the media advertising messages which tend to create a product's picture in the minds of the residents and turn their minds towards the product. Planned obsolescence technique is a result of a competitive oriented market and a strategy use by some organizations to create demand for their products and to remain in business. Even though, organizations that adopt this strategy argued that consumers seem to be constantly searching for what is new but not too new. They want newness, new products, new styles, new clothes, new music, new dancing strategy and colours. The implication is that the older products are intentionally laid to rest thereby creating the new models that will attract their attentions. But sincerely, the organizations intentionally use the technique to create impulse purchase decision among the consumers in order to achieve their marketing goals.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment should always investigate the claims of the organizations that fade away their former products to new products in order to protect the interest of the consumers more especially, the youths and children.
2. It is true that Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), NAFDAC and Consumers Protection Commission (CPC) are doing their best in carrying-out public enlightenment campaigns on products and consumers' rights, they need to increase the tempo of their campaigns.
3. On individual level, we should refrain from buying products because they are new models when we still have the old models still capable of satisfying our interest and discharging its function effectively and efficiently.



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