

The Impact of Advertising on the Coverage of Sports in Nigeria: An Assessment of the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL)

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Abstract

The study focused generally on the assessment of the impact of advertising on the coverage of sports in Nigeria. It focused specifically on the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL). The study made use of descriptive statistics in the presentation of findings. It used inferential statistic (chi square goodness of fit) to test its hypothesis. Members of the Awka and Onitsha Sports Clubs constituted the 500 population of the study from which a sample size of 222 was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula. The findings revealed that the increased performance of the media to furnish their numerous audiences with football matches, views, comments and general sport facts owe the success to the tremendous support of advertising. The study recommends the media should look out for sponsors too in the coverage of sports in the country so as to enhance their capacity to reach larger audiences.

Keywords: Impact, Advertising, Coverage, Sports Sponsorship

Introduction

The decision of someone to buy a product is a result of many influences. With the gradual industrial development in Nigeria, advertising is becoming more and more important as an instrument of marketing products of the old and new industries parts of the marketing mix, advertising is mainly concerned with identifying in as much details as possible what the consumer needs and persuading him that a specific product or service will provide the most effective means of satisfying the expressed need.

This project is conducted to examine the impact or influence of advertising on the coverage of sports in Nigeria with a close up on the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL). Sports lovers in the country are in their tens of millions. A high percentage of this number like football more than other sports. These sports audiences tune in to their favourite broadcast stations, particularly on weekends (for that is when most sporting activities take place) for live actions on football, wrestling, tennis, boxing, golf, basketball, etc. Some of them go to newspaper stands to read and acquaint themselves of those sporting events. Some rely on magazines and some other sources for their information.

The success of an advertisement is evaluated in terms of the response the advertisement gets from the target audience receivers. We are going to look at the impact, if any, that advertising has made on the coverage of the Nigeria Premier Football League by the media we have mentioned above, and whether this impact has contributed to the sports audience's awareness of, knowledge about, feelings toward, and intentions to act with regards to the league coverage.

Statement of the Problem

The NPFL has not been enjoying a good followership and response, despite the use of certain communication devices as word of mouth and other sources of marketing information. The media as veritable tools of information are not giving it a good enough coverage, either.

At the start of every league season, football lovers look forward with excitement, to listen to match commentaries on radio or watch it on television. Most of these football audience do not have the wherewithal to go to the stadia where the matches take place. So, as a last resort, they rely on their radio and television sets for proceedings on

the football matches.

But the problem is that in most cases, this audience gets disappointed in the end due to the inability of the media to relay live coverages of the matches. It will amount to an exercise in futility, if the people for whom the sporting events are meant, do not know about them. To this, the researcher embarked on seeing the contributions of advertising to the rectification of the problem.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to;

1. Define and introduce a functional overview of the advertising profession in relation to the coverage of sports in Nigeria, generally, and the NPFL particularly. An effective advertising message should create awareness, recall and favourable attitudes from consumer exposure.
2. The researcher wants to know how advertising as a field of communication, has performed in this regard.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Advertising's coverage support has not stimulated audience consciousness of the NPFL

Review of Relevant Literature

Theoretical Framework

The general reasons why advertisers advertise are to launch a new product to promote an existing product; to add value to a product or brand. All of these factors involve a process of learning, preceded by perception on the part of the consumer.

According to Bovee and Arens (2006), there are numerous theories of learning but advertisers classify most into two broad categories: cognitive theory and conditioning theory. The two constitute the theoretical framework for this study. The cognitive theory may be an accurate description of the way people evaluate a complete purchase such as insurance, stocks and bonds, or industrial goods and services. The conditioning theory also called stimulus response theory- is more applicable to the less complex, basic purchases consumers make everyday. Some stimulus riggers the consumers need or want, which in turn create the drive to respond.

The Nigeria football federation (NFF) was officially inaugurated in 1945. It also got affiliated to the Federation of International Football association (FIFA) in that same year. Football as a sport was also officially recognized that same year. But this recognition was not all encompassing, as football was then in its amateur stages in Nigeria. There was nothing special about it to attract sponsorships from the very few advertisers available. The trend continued until 1990 when it was professionalized. The makers of Bournvita, Milo and 7-Up are among the first to strike sponsorship deals with the league board.

The ability to recollect this past trend and relate it to present situation comes to the consumer through cognition and his ability to act at point is facilitated by conditions (any stimuli) at that point.

Empirical review

In a study sponsored by the American Association of advertising Agencies (4As) as reported by Bauer and Greyser (1986) consumer without prompting mentioned that one reason they liked advertising was that they supported the media, providing free television and affordable magazine and newspaper.

Some advertisers believe that because consumers see advertising supporting the media, they believe the advertisers to be responsible for the quality of programming. For this reason many advertisers are unwilling to have their advertisements appear in programmes that are controversial or violent.

But for the most part, advertisers have no direct influence on the content of the media in which they advertise.

Yet the advertiser can choose not to advertise in media with content that creates consumer dissatisfaction. Most criticized media content is that focusing on violence or sex. Advertisers of the NPFL were not guilty of this whether on television, radio, newspaper, and magazine.

Areans and Arens (2011) posit that television is one of the most effective and efficient media for reaching mass audiences. It has the potential of communicating action, sound, colour, motion and demonstration better than any other, non personal medium. The widespread use of colour television has given advertising a new dimension that greatly enhances the visual effects of commercial.

The rate of coverage of the NPFL before it became professionalized by both the print and electronic media was very poor. In most cases, results of league matches are not known after more than four days of playing such matches. This according to a former chairman of the NFF was Rtd. Air Commandore Emeka Omeruah, in an interview with the sporting champion in 1992, became a hard blow to the progress of our league. Because of this lapse adequate attention is not given laudable concepts as the Bournvita highest scores award, and even when it is remembered the media do not furnish their audiences with timely statistics as to which player(s) scored which goal(s)

Although television advertising of the NPFL did not start as early as that of radio, when it did the effects were marvelous. More people than before followed the league. The fan base of clubs increased especially those of the top ones such as Enyimba International Football Club of Aba, Kano Pillars Football Club of Kano and Rangers International Football Club of Enugu. The major sponsors of the NPFL for the 2024_2025 season is the star times the company selects three out of the ten leagues matches played wealthy for coverage as agreed with the NFF. This is spread across the geopolitical zones of the country at the earlier stages of advertising support, football lovers in the south east were almost sure to watch at least once in a fortnight, league actions involving Rangers international and Iwuanyanwu National football clubs in Enugu and Owerri ; those in the South West watched IICC Shooting Stars and Bendel Insurance Football Clubs in Ibadan and Benin; those in the North watched Ranchers Bees and BCC Lions Football Clubs in Kaduna and Gboko respectively, perform. It gradually spread to other clubs.

Cadbury Nigeria PLC, in 1988 made a mark in the league by introducing and sponsoring the highest scorer's award to promote the beverage, Bournvita among sports men and sports audience. The winner each year carted home a prize money of N20,000 and a carton of Bournvita. This created more awareness for the league and in a way added to its competitiveness and lucrativeness. In an interview with Complete Football in 1994, Cadbury's Managing Director Mr. Olubunmi Oni had said, "We want to bring out the best in Nigerian footballers, hence we decided to support the game by sponsoring the highest goal scorer's award and a lot of other things associated with football".

The impact of radio advertising on the coverage of the NPFL cannot be overemphasized. This accounts for why at the start of each League season, advertisers use radio to test-run the effectiveness of their messages. Sports fans usually enjoy the first six weeks of the league through radio than television commentaries. The makers of Milo, at the early stages of the league bought the sports news air time on Radio Nigeria Network. The air time was used then to furnish sports audiences with results of the passing week, fixtures of the current week, and date for future sport events.

Football lovers looked up every Saturday, at 7:20am, to Milo Sport News to get acquainted with proceedings in the NPFL. The beverage Milo was then promoted among sports lovers as "the food drink of future champions". While the company recorded tremendous success in the marketing of Milo, the league was made more conscious in the minds of the football audience than what obtained in previous years.

Newspaper and magazine adverts complemented those of radio and television in promoting league. Approaches to

measuring their impacts have been suggested by some scholars.

Nylen (1986) postulated that impact in advertising can only be effectively measured first by juxtaposing the qualities of products or services with audience and media characteristics, and second, by engaging in a process of evaluation after performance. Is it, for instance, possible that the number of persons following the NPFL has increased as a consequence of more coverage of the league as facilitated by advertising's sponsorship?

Percy and Rossiter (1980) examined advertising impact in terms of "reach and frequently". The amount of information included in a persuasive message and the degree of repetition can have important effects on advertising response. Has the number of spectators at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu increased as a result of repetition of advert messages built in the coverage of the league matches of Rangers International Football Club?

Bauer and Greyser (1986), in a survey assessed the impact of advertising in terms of positive or negative relevance to the audience with regards to its "informational, entertainment, economical and social values" to consumers. With enough information, advertising allows consumers to make comparisons of products or gain knowledge about products in which they are interested; to make choices; to learn about sales, prices and bargains. Have league matches sponsored been necessarily getting better coverage than those not sponsored?

Bovee and Arens (2006) measured the impact of advertising through a series of technique they called "maxi marketing" or "direct marketing". The three denominators of the technique are reaching the prospect, making the sales and developing the relationship". According to them, measuring impact in terms of response offers four major benefits: (i) it helps to correctly target advertising; (ii) it helps in comparing the efficiency of media, offers, brand images, and product benefits; (iii) it shows who is interested in the product; and (iv) it provides information for refining the data base of customers and prospects. Has there been relationship between football lovers and products and/or companies sponsoring the coverage of league games?

Chandan, Singh, and Malhan (2015), measured advertising impact in terms of message appeal. They argue that it is only when the message construction appeals to the consumer, either in his moral principles, emotions or intellect, that the basic for evaluating the effect of such advertisements will be laid. The appeal according to them can be positive or negative. Can the organizers of the league (the league board) be said to be satisfied with the level of development coming to the league from advertising sponsorship? Can they be certain of audience satisfaction without which they would be programming in a vacuum?

Nickles and Williams (2004) equated advertising impact assessment with time. Research, according to them, has shown that greater impact is realized in persuasive communication with the passage of time than immediately after presentation. Has the number of advertisers sponsoring the league translated to greater coverage of the NPFL thirty-four years after it was professionalized or has it been on a dwindling course?

Methodology

The descriptive research method was adopted for this study. Using Taro Yamane (1967) formula, a sample of 222 was drawn from a population of 500 members of the Awka and Onitsha sports clubs. It was expressed thus:

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

where

n= sample size

N= population

e= level of significance

I = correlation factor

$$n = \frac{500}{1 + 500(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{1 + 500(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{1 + 1.25}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{2.25}$$

2.25

$$n = 2.22$$

The primary source of data was used to obtain information from the sample. Therefore, the major research instrument used in conducting this research work was questionnaire. The questionnaire was structural and the respondents found it easy to write their responses. With all 222 copies of the questionnaire returned, the response rate was 100 percent. The presentation of data was done using the tabular form and percentages featured in the analysis. The nature of the hypothesis easily lent itself to tests with chi square testing tool. The results are given below.

Analysis and Result

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	172	77
Female	50	23
Total	222	100

Source: Field survey

Out of the 222 respondents, 172 representing 77 percent of the population were males. 50 respondents representing 23 percent were females.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Age	17	8
21-25	94	42
26-30	68	31
31-35	23	10
36-40	20	9
41 and above	222	100

Source: Field survey

From the result on age distribution, majority (42%) of the respondents were within the age range of 26-30. This is very likely because sports requires youthful energy a lot.

Table 3: Percentage response to awareness of advertising support to the coverage of NPFL

S/N	Item	Strongly agree(%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree(%)
1.	Advertising has supported the coverage of the NPFL significantly	102(46)	71(32)	41(18)	8(4)
	Total	173(100)		49(100)	

Source: Field survey

46% of the respondents strongly agreed that advertising has supported the coverage of be NPFL significantly while 32% only agreed. While 18% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Percentage response to degree of growth of the NPFL from advertising’s coverage support

S/N	Item	Very High (%)	High (%)	Low (%)	Very Low (%)
2	To what degree has the NPFL grown on account of advertising’s coverage support?	51 (23)	106 (48)	54 (24)	11 (5)
	Total	157 (100)		65 (100)	

Source: Field survey

23% of the respondents were of the view that advertising’s coverage support had very highly led to the growth of the NPFL while 48% opined it had done so only highly. While 24% of the respondent agreed that advertising’s coverage support had led to low growth of the NPFL, 5% were of the view that it had caused a very low growth of the NPFL.

Table 5: Percentage response on the effect of advertising on the coverage of the NPFL

S/N	Item	Increased number of advertisers (%)	Increased followership of the NPFL (%)	Emphasis on advertised products and services than on the NPFL (%)	Patronage of advertised products and services by football fans (%)
3	What noticeable effect without would you suppose that advertising has had on the coverage of the NPFL?	69(31.1)	112(50.4)	10(4.5)	31(14)
	Total	181(100)		41(100)	

Source: Field survey

On the effect of advertising on the coverage of the NPFL, 31:1% of the respondents were of the opinion that it has led to the increased number of advertisers in the league while 50.4% of them were of the opinion that it has brought about increased followership of the league. While 4.5% were of the view that it has placed emphasis on advertised product and services than on the NPFL, 14% opined that it has led to patronage of advertised products

and service by football fans.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: advertising's coverage support has not stimulated audience conciseness of the NPFL

Table 1: X2 test of relationship between advertising's support and audience consciousness of NPFL

	Awka Sports Club	Onitsha Sports Club	Total
Strongly agree	12 (7.8)	2 (6.2)	14
Agree	88(68.7)	35 (54.3)	123
Disagree	18(35.1)	45 (27.8)	63
Strongly disagree	6(12.3)	16 (9.7)	22
Total	124	98	222

Source: Field survey 2024

The result of χ^2 of relationship, shows that, with $\chi^2 = 42.7 > \chi^2_{.05, 3} = 7.815$, there is a significant relationship between advertising's support and audience consciousness of the NPFL. Therefore the null hypothesis one is rejected. This implies that advertising is a predictive factor towards audience followership of the NPFL.

Discussion of Findings

Advertising has been found in this study have an impact on the coverage of the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL). The increased performance of the media to furnish their numerous audiences with sports events, views, comments and general sport facts owe its success to the tremendous support of advertising. Advertising's support has also registered positive effect on the coverage of the NPFL by especially increasing its followership. It has equally appreciated spectator attendance at match venues. It was never the case before the advent of advertising's sponsorship. This is consistent with the findings in Nickles and William's (2004) study of the impact of advertising on customer attitude. It revealed that the impact of advertising as a persuasive communication can be assessed better with time than immediately after presentation.

Conclusion

This study, points out the existence of a strong relationship between advertising and coverage of the NPFL. The likelihood of any league match to be covered by the media, depends to a large extent on the sponsorship such media attract to cover the match. The bulk of this sponsorship, more often than not, comes through advertising. This shows that advertising has really done a lot in the coverage of the NPFL.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions aimed at establishing better relationships between advertising and a coverage of the NPFL are given:

- i. Result from the test of hypothesis shows that a highly significant 38.30% of the respondent do not see a significant relationship between advertising and coverage of the NPFL. This could mean that the league's organizers should do more to attract greater sponsorship for the league. This will enhance better followership of the NPFL.
- ii. The media as partners with the NPFL should actively be involved in the scout for advertisers for the league. Success here could have a mitigating effects on gate takings at the football stadium. It would enhance the media's capacity to reach larger audiences also.

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